



## Accelerated Peer-Support Partnership in Sierra Leone 2020-2021 Annual Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of progress and plans in the PAP-APP project in Sierra Leone for the period June 2020 through April 2021. It includes background information, an update on results achieved, major challenges, and spending.

### Background

The Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) and the Accelerated Peer-Support Partnership (PAP-APP)<sup>1</sup> signed a cooperation agreement in March 2019 to strengthen the ASSL's strategic management and external support coordination capacities. The project came at a good time because the ASSL's strategic plan had less than two years remaining. This meant the peer team could quickly add value by conducting a mid-term review of progress and challenges implementing the plan, which would in turn inform future support activities.

The parties then signed an extension agreement in July 2020 to cover ASSL's new strategic planning process and secure new external support for the office's top priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Accelerated Peer-Support Partnership programme is a joint initiative of IDI, AFROSAI-E, and CREFIAF.

## Results

Despite COVID-19, the ASSL was able to deliver a remarkable strategic development plan, made possible by staff members' insight, creativity, and perseverance throughout the planning process. To quote one IDI expert not directly involved: "Looks like one of the best strategic plans ever made!! Real result oriented, simple, easy to read, fit to context." The plan also reiterated the office's commitment to gender equality and inclusion.

Procedures for the next planning process—based on lessons learned from this one—are expected shortly.

Where the project fell short is in the area of external support coordination. However, this is due more to shifting circumstances and needs rather than a lack of commitment by the project team. The ASSL has been happy with ongoing bilateral discussions with major donors like the World Bank, so felt that a Project Support Group (PSG) meeting and detailed project proposal were no longer necessary to secure support for the office's most pressing priorities.

## Updated Results Framework

Indicator	Key expected outputs	Status details
<b>Outcome 1. The ASSL has a strong strategic management cycle</b>		
<b>Baseline:</b> The current strategic plan with the addendum meets all the SAI-PMF indicator 3(i) criteria	a) A strategic plan for 2021-2025 <i>ready to launch before the end of 2020</i>	The strategic plan was finalized in March 2021 and meets all the criteria of SAI-PMF indicator 3(i)
<b>Target:</b> The new strategic plan meets all the SAI-PMF indicator 3(i) criteria and is guided by clear external results (e.g., stronger PFM practices)	b) Documented procedures for the next strategic planning process <i>approved before the end of February 2021</i>	A draft of the procedures is being revised by the strategic planning working group chair this month
<b>Outcome 2. The ASSL is able to drive externally supported capacity development projects in a coordinated and strategically-based way</b>		
<b>Baseline:</b> The ASSL has a concept note for its top short-/medium-term priorities	c) At least one PSG meeting <i>held before the end of 2020</i>	Cancelled because the SAI felt such a meeting was not ultimately necessary given ongoing bilateral discussions with development partners, and at times unsuitable due to sensitivities around the COVID-19 audit
<b>Target:</b> The ASSL has a detailed project proposal for long-term support based on the new strategic plan	d) A detailed proposal for a multi-year, multi-component project <i>shared with potential partners before the end of 2020</i>	Also cancelled because the SAI felt such a proposal was not ultimately necessary given ongoing bilateral discussions with development partners, in particular with the World Bank
<b>Outcome 3. The ASSL leads by example in the areas of gender, diversity, and inclusion</b>		
<b>Baseline:</b> Gender & diversity is identified as a priority in the strategic plan addendum, but there are no specific measures identified	e) Measures to enhance gender equity and inclusion included in the new strategic plan <i>approved before the end of 2020</i>	The strategic plan prioritises gender and diversity as a key element of organizational efficiency, noting "we need to be able to recruit more staff and retain them within a system that recognises performance, supports career growth, considers gender and diversity." The implementation plan also includes a specific measure to develop a new gender and inclusion policy in 2022.
<b>Target:</b> Measures to enhance equality and inclusion are included in the new strategic plan		

## SAI-PMF Indicator Details

SAI-PMF Indicator 3 - Strategic Planning Cycle		
Dimension	Criteria	Assessment
<b>(i) Content of the Strategic Plan</b>	a) The current strategic plan is based on a needs assessment covering the main aspects of the organization and an identification of gaps or areas requiring performance improvements. <i>IDI Strategic Planning Handbook</i>	met
	b) The strategic plan incorporates a results framework, logical framework or similar which has a logical hierarchy of purposes (e.g. mission-vision-goals-objectives; or input-activities-output-outcome-impact). <i>IDI Strategic Planning Handbook</i>	met
	c) The strategic plan contains a manageable number of indicators measuring the achievement of the SAI's strategic objectives (E.g. related to its external deliverables (e.g. reports), internal capabilities, communication with stakeholders and legal framework). <i>IDI Strategic Planning Handbook</i> .	met
	d) The strategic plan is complemented by an implementation matrix or similar document which identifies and prioritises the projects that need to be undertaken to achieve the goals and objectives of the strategic plan, and which identifies risks to achievement of the strategic plan. <i>IDI Strategic Planning Handbook</i>	met
	e) "Stakeholders' expectations and emerging risks are factored into strategic (...) plans, as appropriate". <i>ISSAI 12:5</i>	met
	f) The current strategic plan is based on an assessment of the institutional framework (e.g. the formal and informal practices that govern the SAI's operations, as well as country governance, political economy and public financial management systems) in which the SAI operates, and the current capacity of the SAI's key stakeholders to make use of the SAI's reports. <i>IDI Strategic Planning Handbook</i>	met
	g) <i>Where necessary and appropriate</i> , the strategic plan includes measures designed to strengthen the SAI's institutional environment.	met

## Challenges

Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 presented the biggest challenges to the project. Peers were prevented from travelling, most stakeholder consultations had to happen virtually, and in-person strategic planning meetings had to be limited and held in the office.

Wider staff time to participate in the planning process was also a challenge given the wide range of competing priorities the office was navigating, including and beyond COVID-19. However, the office was able to overcome this through the commitment and agility of the Strategic Planning Working Group chair, Mrs Sheila John, and the guidance of the SAI team lead, Mrs Adama Renner.

## Updated Risk Matrix

Risk	Description	SAI control	Peer control	Risk	Notes/Updates
<b>Covid-19 travel restrictions</b>	The peer team may be unable to visit for the majority of the project and stakeholder consultations may not be able to happen in person	Virtual communication	Be in regular contact with key ASSL staff, ensure that the technical guidance provided is as clear as possible, and be flexible in the approach	The impact of this risk is medium because the ASSL could manage the strategic planning process completely on its own if needed	No peer travel was possible since the signing of the agreement, but remote support was provided and the SAI team did an excellent job running the strategic planning workshops without peers present
<b>Limited ASSL staff time to participate in the strategic planning process</b>	ASSL staff are already incredibly busy and it may be difficult for them to participate fully in the process	Ensure that the Strategic Planning Working Group implements the assigned responsibilities and timelines, and that there are regular email updates, a whatsapp group, etc.	Be in regular contact with the chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group about what work is manageable at any one time and how the approach should be adjusted	The impact of this risk is high	ASSL staff were even busier than expected and an illness in the SAI team caused further delays; however, the final plan was still delivered remarkably quickly given everything that was happening, thanks in large part to the dedication of the relevant DAG and the chair of the strategic planning working group
<b>No donors are interested in supporting a multi-year, multi-component Phase 2 project</b>	Especially with the Covid-19 crisis affecting aid budgets, it is possible that donors will be unable to commit to a major long-term project or any other support programming	Engage regularly with government and development partners on support needs and the important role of the SAI, and liaise with AFROSAI-E especially with areas relating to capacity development	Support the ASSL to be in regular contact with potential partners and to prioritise the support needs	The impact of this risk is high	The ASSL is in talks now with the World Bank about possible support, and that is preferred to the multi-component phase 2 project as rolled out in other PAP-APP SAIs

## Spending

We spent considerably less than even the minimum planned primarily because in-person events with external stakeholders were limited by COVID-19 and the SAI opted to hold all internal planning workshops on site. The SAI also covered the costs of printing the strategic plan and the design was done by the chair of the working group.

## Updated Budget

All figures below are reported in US dollars and exclude staff costs.

Activities	Estimated Costs	Actual Costs
<b>Strategic Planning</b>		
Hold an internal workshop to kickoff the strategic planning process	0	0
Assess cultural values	0	0
Hold an internal workshop to identify strategic questions	2,380	0
Consult stakeholders to brainstorm strategic options	4,600	0
Hold an internal workshop to develop strategic decisions	17,440	0
Draft the strategic plan	0	0
Consult stakeholders to validate strategic decisions	4,600	0
Finalise the strategic plan	4,000	48
Develop the 2021 operational plan based on the new strategic plan	6,000	N/A
Launch the strategic plan	2,250	0
<b>External Support Coordination</b>		
Call a meeting with current and potential development partners	0	cancelled
Design phase 2 and identify potential partners	0	cancelled
Call a meeting with current and potential development partners	0	cancelled
<b>Project Management</b>		
Sign the cooperation agreement addendum	0	0
Check in on project progress and iterate the activity plan accordingly	0	0
Evaluate and report on the project's achievements during the extension (in 2021)	5,800	0
	<b>4,000 - 47,270*</b>	<b>48</b>

\**Caveat noted in the cooperation agreement:* Due to restrictions linked to the Covid-19 crisis, there are three 2020 budget scenarios:

1. Travel and domestic meeting restrictions ease early in the period = \$41,270
2. Travel and domestic meeting restrictions remain as is (preventing peer visits and external stakeholder consultation events) = \$23,820
3. Restrictions are expanded (the ASSL is not able to have staff-only workshops) = \$4,000 (covers only the printing of the SP)