

Mid-Term Evaluation of PASAI Strategy 2014-2024 (Phase 1 – 2014-2018)
DFAT Response to First Draft
09th April 2019

A. Introductory comments

Thank you for the opportunity to allow DFAT to make comments on the draft Mid-Term Evaluation of PASAI Strategy 2014-2024. We would also like to thank the review team for the efforts made in reviewing the PASAI performance in Phase 1 and sharing the documents with all the relevant stakeholders. Overall, DFAT is of the opinion that the review is comprehensive, useful and makes some sound recommendations which are evidence based.

The report raises some significant issues around strategic over-reach, risks to sustainability and apparently limited impact on SAI performance to date. The information provided is a useful tool for PASAI and its stakeholders to make necessary changes to SAI reforms although some of the recommendations may be challenging to implement.

While noting the importance of the review to DFAT funding any future PASAI activities, it is important that the report clearly explains the extent to which the evidence supports the conclusions and judgements made and that the implications of the key findings are fully explored. It is also important to DFAT that the overall position of the review team is clear and their professional judgements are unambiguous. The value of the evaluation could be improved by estimating significant cost implications of recommendations and by fully exploring implications of key findings. It would also be helpful if the recommendations are sequenced in order of priority.

Finally, we assume that there has been a genuine consultative and transparent process involved in the review process.

We would be grateful if the review team would consider the following points we believe would strengthen the review findings in order that the evaluation provides the evidence we require for accountability, management, learning and supporting future PASAI activities for the betterment of the region. These comments are consistent with and build on the comments provided during discussions at the Governing Board meeting in Auckland, New Zealand.

B. Specific review recommendation comments

Recommendation 1: The analysis shows that a participatory approach to capacity development produces enabling conditions for enhancing capacity, but does not necessarily yield sustainable results. Firmer commitment is needed to ensure that PASAI's support produces sustainable results at national level

DFAT strongly supports the recommendation around capacity development and the programs ability to build sustainable results. While the report is often critical, it indicates that PASAI is already taking action in several of the key areas where change is needed. However, it would have been interesting to see SAI response based on the level of development they are in. Does this recommendation apply to all the SAIs or are there any exceptions?

DFAT and other contributing donors can use the report as an opportunity to encourage changes that will help improve PASAI effectiveness and sustainability over the final five years of the current strategic plan. It is in our interest as a contributing member that PASAI's work is demonstrably effective and sustainable.

Recommendation 2: The Secretariat to consider reducing its role as a program implementer and strengthen its role as facilitator and coordinator.

DFAT fully supports the view that the role of the Secretariat staff needs to be further explored between planning, designing and implementing activities rather than solely being program implementers. There needs to be a right mix of use of resources between long term and short term expertise and between tasks that need on-going capacity supplementation which is unavoidable in the Pacific context.

DFAT is positive that these will be appropriately address in the second phase of the strategy.

Recommendation 3: Factors contributing to diminishing (enhancing) the effectiveness and efficiency of programs.

The report broadly notes PASAI had limited understanding of the capacity gap areas of SAIs and hence had shortcomings in assessing the resource requirements to support a particular program strategy as compared to alternatives. The report fails to identify if this had been the case with all the SAIs in the region and also testing of different modalities in itself being innovative and a global product of recognition for PASAI.

Recommendation 4: Monitoring and evaluation

DFAT supports the view that performance indicators are set at a high level and that there are insufficient resources in measuring progress. It would have been appropriate if the review team shared their experience of other best case/practice scenarios for comparison purposes.

DFAT is positive that these will be appropriately address in the second phase of the strategy.

C. Other comments

Gender and social inclusion

The report provides very little information about the program's performance on gender and social inclusion, including disability. There seems like a missed opportunity to give thoughtful consideration of gender and disability issues as part of this review.

The review makes no reference to the gender strategy for PASAI which was approved by the governing board in August 2016. There is no reference to the recommendations in the Pacific Women case study and no assessment of whether they have been implemented, especially considering the review team likely had access to the case study done by Pacific Women. The case study provides very thoughtful analysis and recommendations that highlight the relevance of gender to the program and provide practical recommendations for further strengthening the way the program addresses gender including women with disability. At the very least this review should be referenced in the mid-term review and even better the section on gender in the review could have included and built on the analysis and recommendations in the case study. The review team could have used the case study to frame its consultations on gender with stakeholders rather than simply asking about the relevance of gender. It is suggested that the review team update the review report section on gender to include and build on information in the Pacific Women case study.

Annex 1 of the report includes some sex-disaggregated data with regards to SAI staffing and SAI gender policies. The main body of the report has 2 paragraphs on gender. At least the starting base of the review should have been that gender is relevant, and the review should assess how well it has been addressed by the program. This is better reflected in the actual section on gender with the team looking at “How effective have PASAI’s programs been in addressing and contributing towards other development issues such as gender equality, social inclusion, poverty, prosperity, stability, etc.?” However, the review team has done a very cursory job at best of answering this question. They simply asked members if they thought gender was relevant to the program to which many replied they did not believe so. If members lack understanding or capacity on gender, then it is likely they don’t understand how it is relevant.

The review notes that SAIs’ oversight capacities can potentially be strengthened through developing closer cooperation and relationships with the legislature, civil society organisations and through making better use of the media. What opportunities are there to engage with women’s groups and organizations such as FemLINK in order to promote accountable public financial management? On page 54 of the review for example, it notes that members of media organisations and other stakeholders commented that the communications of their SAI would improve if they produced press releases related to their audits and distributed via an e-mail list to media organisations and other stakeholders. This would give more visibility to audit results and facilitate the dissemination of audit findings and recommendations to the public.

On page 57 the review notes that most stakeholders would like PASAI to become more of a learning organisation, as they think that this is a more strategic approach to address the objectives of PASAI and more in line with the role of a regional organisation with limited resources. This should be linked to recommendations in the gender case study that outline gender budgeting and other gender work occurring in the region that could be better shared via PASAI across the region.

On page 65 the report concludes that PASAI does not have the expertise and resources to address development issues such as gender equality, social inclusion, poverty, prosperity, and stability at

program level. It also notes that in addition, there is no strong demand among stakeholders for PASAI to address these issues in any substantive way. It also notes that such issues can be addressed by other organisations who are specialized or have expertise on development. This is a very simplistic conclusion that fails to take account of DFAT, regional and national level gender and social inclusion (disability) policies. DFAT policy and national gender and disability policies all highlight it as a priority for action. So, it is the role of the program to provide a framework for education and action, not to simply say it better fits elsewhere. While it may be the case that there is scope to PASAI to collaborate more with others to address these because it does not have the technical skills in house, collaboration would then be part of its overall strategy.

Page 69 notes that the key message coming from this review is for PASAI to define what “leading by example” means within the PASAI partnership. If PASAI is to lead by example on gender, social inclusion and disability, what would this look like?