

## Ideas on PEMPAL program development for FY2011-12.

*This note was drafted to initiate the discussion on the strategy for PEMPAL program development for the next two years (mid-2010 – mid-2012). The zero draft was developed by the World Bank Team Leader for the program and is based mainly on the observations made through monitoring program activities over the last 9 months. Comments are strongly encouraged. The note is shared with COP leadership and the Steering Committee members as part of the documentation for the meetings planned for June 14-15, 2010.*

### **1. Rationale for initiating this note.**

**PEMPAL program development during 2009-2010 was expected to be guided by the findings and recommendations of the 2009 evaluation report produced by Mokoro.** The main conclusion of the report was that the sustainability of the PEMPAL network is still fragile and should still be nurtured, as the network is at an incipient stage of development and each of the COPs is at the coalescing stage. It was emphasised that a lot of attention in these early years needs to be paid to how the network develops and the strategic interventions that are required to nurture growth, quality membership and sustainability. It was noted that overall network resources could be developed far more strategically. An important conclusion was that too many key roles were still vested in donors and not yet in members or permanent capacity for the network itself. A key set of roles that were still far too strongly vested in donors was around content development and support.

**As of mid-2010, the findings of 2009 evaluation report remain largely valid.** While there was no repeater evaluation since 2009, there is enough information available through the secretariat reports and COP and Steering Committee documentation to conclude so. Although the dynamics of COP development during the period since evaluation was somewhat different compared to pre-evaluation period, this does not affect the essence of the evaluation report recommendations.

**The progress in implementing the recommendations of the evaluation report was less than we were hoping for.** The summary of implementation status can be found in annex 1. Overall, quite a few recommendations were either only partially implemented, or not implemented at all. In particular, the web site is still not actively used. The program of study visits was discontinued. Cross-COP plenary was not organised since 2008 meeting in Istanbul. CEF still does not have a capacity to support the work on the contents of COP activities.

**Tight program financing situation was one of important factors that prevented a fuller follow up on the evaluation findings.** Under the circumstances, the program remained very dependent on the staff of the sponsor organisations, including the World Bank team. At the same time, the majority of sponsor staff involved in the program has quite limited time to spend on the program. We have probably also underestimated the time required for the network of this type to develop and mature and expected that the members take the full lead too soon.

**The program financing outlook has changed significantly in the last months.** The amount of resources available to support the program in the next two years has almost tripled, compared to the previous years. There is also now more flexibility in using the resources and longer-term planning is possible. Trust Fund financing has longer timeframe (current closing date of the MDTF is June 30, 2012), we do not need to be locked into a single year budget planning any more.

**We are also in the third (and final year) of the DGF program to build CEF Secretariat capacity, so it is time to draw lessons from the DGF support. We also need to prepare for the next round of program evaluation (obligatory requirement for 2011).**

## **2. Some observations on the current status of the program activities**

### ***A. COP specific activities.***

**COPs are the heart of PEMPAL and the target of the program support.** They are at different stages of development and their evolution since the time of the 2009 program evaluation was uneven. IA COP continues to be the most dynamic and advanced among the three COPs. TCOP became more active in the last year, especially after the leadership group meeting in Tirana in spring 2009. BCOP was the least active during the last 18 months, and there are signs that it requires additional external help to get re-energised.

**The most typical form of COP activities are workshops.** Both full COP events and small group meetings are on the agendas of all the COPs. Budget resources are invested predominantly in the logistics of COP events. IA COP and TCOP express a clear preference to have meetings in the member countries, but also see value in meeting from time to time at CEF.

In BCOP and TCOP, **the development of the contents of the agendas is heavily dependent on the donors.** This is less the case in IA COP. In all three COPs, selected external experts are invited to the events, most frequently through the donors. Preference was given so far to low cost ways of attracting external resources (no fees in most cases, sponsorship of the donor partner organisations, etc.)

Overall, **use of external resources for COP activities is limited,** and internal COP capacity to identify and attract such resources is not strong. At the same time, COP members are indicating a strong interest in attracting such resources. For example, prior and post-events surveys of TCOP members indicate that they are interested in inviting practitioners from new EU member states and OECD countries to share their experiences in selected thematic areas.

**Study visit program was discontinued** at some point in the past as a stand-alone activity and integrated into COP activities. That did not bring positive results. COP budgets were so far quite tight, and COP tended to give preference to organising larger group events, rather than study visits that benefit just a few participating countries. The actual number of study visits during the last 18

months dropped compared to the earlier years of the program. However, as COP surveys show, the demand is there. Some good practice is emerging in TCOP for combining study visits with the group meetings. (Study visit to Albania combined with the leadership meeting in Tirana, study visits of 3 countries to Moldova MOF combined with the Chisinau TCOP meeting)

**Knowledge management activities are very limited** across the COPs. Analytical resources are used to a minimum extent. Thematic questionnaires are used in preparation for the events and during the meetings to explore the needs. In the case of TCOP, the contents of the questionnaires is developed by external experts, and results are processed and analyzed by the resource team. Repeated demands are expressed for creating an electronic library of legal and methodological documents in the relevant areas to which we were not able to respond so far. Some initiatives of joint analytical or technical assistance type activities that could benefit a group of COP member countries or even the whole COP are floated from time to time at COP meetings. Only IA COP has advanced in implementing such an initiative in the area of training and certification with targeted support from Inwent.

**Some member interaction between the events is taking place, but it is not very active** and the level of activity differs by COP. The interaction is largely focused around preparation of the workshops. Web site remains to be not very popular. The forum attached to the web site is basically inactive. COPs are testing alternative forms and tools of communication (wiki page, Skype used by IA COP. TCOP discussed the possibility of using webinars). VCs are used regularly, predominantly for leadership groups meetings (organizational issues).

**Various types of concerns exist about the level of participation and membership.** 2 persons per country per event used to be the standard limit of PEMPAL sponsored participation. In practice, some countries find resources to finance additional people to attend the events. Our target group was management (heads of departments). We have retained that target group to a large extent. We also tried to encourage stable representation (the same people to come to all the COP events). It is not obvious whether it is the right way to go in all cases.

**It is not clear to what extent the knowledge obtained by the members is shared at the country level,** and whether the program has a noticeable impact at the country level.

### ***B. Cross-COP activities***

CEF is the main cross-COP resource. Services and resources provided by the Secretariat include:

- Administrative support for COP events (recent movement towards assigning a designated person to provide administrative support for each COP is welcome)
- Web site and archives
- Organisation of Steering Committee meetings and dissemination of information related to SC decisions

CEF has limited internal resources to support the development of the contents of COP activities. Donor representatives continue to fill in the gap.

No shared analytical and knowledge management resources are available.

No active mechanism of cross- COP exchange / communication / cooperation other than the Steering Committee meetings exists.

### **3. Ideas on what could be done differently**

#### ***A. COP specific***

- Expand the types of support for the workshops
  - Invest in building the resource base (allocate resources for preparation of events and the follow up, not only the events themselves, envisage resources for the invited speakers / experts, technical experts to contribute to the agendas, preparatory surveys and analytical activities, follow up activities).
  - focus on strengthening member participation (e.g., allow more participants for the countries that contribute actively to the agenda, avoid automatic invitation of the same participants irrespective of the interest demonstrated to the past events).
- Expand the range of possible activities – encourage smaller but more frequent thematic meetings / cross - country visits, within – COP thematic group activities.
- Make sure that the core resource team supporting the COP is in place and the roles are clearly defined and known to COP leadership and members.

#### ***B. Cross – COP***

- Support experiments with various communication tools and cross- COP learning in this area
- Assure support for follow up to COP events and dissemination of information on COP activities – support with formatting /editing of materials for the web site, newsletters , advise on the use of electronic survey instrument, etc.

- Develop shared documentation and analytical resources – electronic library of legal and methodology documents, contacts / web sites of all the participating Ministries of Finance, translation support, etc.
- Facilitate cross-country exchange – revive study visit (small grant) program, detach it from COP activities, allow for country applications
- Facilitate cross-COP leadership meetings.

#### **4. Some thoughts on how we could assure that:**

Make sure that we have the same type of resources equally available for all COPs:

- Advisors for each COP leadership group (in place for IA and TCOP on an experimental basis– part-time assignments, not based at CEF, well integrated into COP activities, seem to work quite well)
- Pool of short-term technical experts available to support preparation of the contents of COP events (not based at CEF, but committed to provide technical advise to COPs at a distance and help with preparation of the contents of the events)
- COP facilitator (based at CEF, cross COP, strategic shared resource)
- Knowledge management resources (the lead role in this area needs to be clearly assigned, supporting roles could be shared between COP members and technical experts, not obvious that the lead role is combinable with COP facilitator role, taking into account the experience of the failed attempt to recruit the facilitator on the basis of the existing TORs).
- Communication support (editing /web publishing, communication instruments expertise, electronic survey support)
- Administration of small grant program (clear application rules and assignment of the lead responsibility to a resource person, is combinable with other roles)
- Russian-speaking resource(s) for logistical and communication support (CEF does not have staff comfortable to communicate with the COP members in Russian)

If these ideas are accepted, this would have direct implications for the way PEMPAL budget is distributed and the work of the secretariat is organised. Draft budget proposal attached in a separate file reflects that.

## **5. Some additional provocative questions for collective thinking**

- Shall we think about new COPs, or stick to the three existing ones?
- Should we consider incentives for disseminating knowledge obtained through PEMPAL at the country level? (e.g., small grants program for follow up events in the countries, or other type of support from PEMPAL for such events)
- Shall we keep all the Secretariat functions at CEF, or consider extending the secretariat by establishing a branch in one of the Russian speaking countries?

## Annex 1: Status of Implementation of Recommendations from Mokoro Evaluation Report

1. There are several specific recommendations contained in the text throughout the report. This section does not seek to repeat these recommendations – that are specific to the areas discussed – but rather to distil a limited set of key recommendations.

2. These are:

- *The Steering Committee should continue to facilitate the conducting of plenary events.* Given that the network is still coalescing these events are crucial to hold on to existing members, pull in new members and to build a brand name and recognition for the network. Plenary events should be held frequently, at least once a year at the cross-COP level and at the COP level. The long gap since the beginning of 2008 can be of concern and all three COPs should put there strategic plans in motion as soon as possible.

**Progress:** Cross- COP plenary did not take place since 2008, is planned now for 2011. 2009, 2010 plenary meetings of IA COP and TCOP were quite successful. BCOP did not have a plenary since Istanbul

- *These plenary events should be supplemented with smaller language, region or ‘system development status’ meetings* between sub-clusters of countries around specific topics of interest. These meetings should be carefully strategised to ensure that they contribute maximally to network development.

**Progress:** Some meetings of that nature took place in all three COPs, but they are not very frequent. TCOP had such meeting in Tirana in 2009, IA COP had thematic workshop on training and certification in 2009.

- *Contributions by members are crucial to building a cohesive network.* In early years it is almost worthwhile to trade-off contribution and quality of contribution to encourage participation. Event agendas should therefore provide enough space for members to contribute, and to discuss. Small group discussions are appreciated.

**Progress:** IA COP made good progress in this area, and TCOP is moving, BCOP was idle, difficult to assess the progress in this area without additional information.

- Plenary meetings should also take care to still demonstrate the value of the network. *The agendas should therefore balance organising tasks with learning sessions better.*

**Progress:** Achieved by IA COP and TCOP.

- *All three networks should allow members to set the agenda for the network:* event agendas should be developed with maximum input by members. Donors can provide a guiding role, but should take care not to dominate. Care should also be taken to balance participation at events between

members and between members and donors to encourage ownership by members.

**Progress:** There is progress, but far from being achieved in TCOP and BCOP, IA COP is more advanced.

- *All three COPs will have to be strategic to expand the pool of core, dedicated members.* There should be a more strategic awareness of who these members are currently and how they can be used to expand the pool. Perhaps an interim strategic task before the next evaluation can be a more comprehensive assessment of how people connect informally.

**Progress:** IA COP and TCOP are making progress in this area

- *All three COPs should attempt to build up their resource base.* The existing resource base is out of date and does not appear to be comprehensive. The resources that are provided should respond to the needs in the network. The resources can be both analytical in nature or operational, since both types of resources fulfil existing needs in the network. However, there is a definite need for sharing operational materials amongst countries. The website can function as a repository of country example materials.

**Progress:** Limited progress across COPs.

- *Further thought is required to develop the website.* Even assuming that the new website offers all that members might need, there is still a need for a strategy to make members aware of the website and to increase their use of it. It is important that members' needs are understood, as well as why they use or might not use the website. This can be perhaps an area of follow up work.

**Progress:** No visible progress.

- *The basic governance structure works and should continue.*

**Progress:** Maintained

- *However, there is a need to develop the secretariat to include professional, substantive, strategic and content support for each network.* Currently these crucial tasks for network development are loosely shared between the leadership and the donor experts that support each network. Gaps develop and there is an argument to be made that the distribution of tasks are not always optimal. Furthermore, this is not sustainable and not effective. There is cause to appoint for each COP initially at least one individual who can take on the burden of, amongst other
  - Coordinating between stakeholders
  - Strategising for network development, resource base development
  - Oversee the quality of marketing, communications and the resource base
  - Develop content ideas and make leadership content ideas happen
  - Strategising connections between countries and individuals in the network

- Act as programme director for events, in consultation with leadership and donor experts
- Act as quality check on inputs and support for members to develop inputs.

***Progress:*** Very limited progress in this area.