



MINUTES

PEM PAL Steering Committee meeting July 8, 2011; Bern, Switzerland

1. Present

Members: Salome Steib (Chair, SECO), Anila Cili (T COP Chair, Albania), Maksim Ermolovich (B COP Chair, Belarus), Tomislav Mičetić (IA COP Chair, Croatia), Elena Nikulina (Task Team Leader, The World Bank), Marius Koen (The World Bank), Senka Maver (PEM PAL Secretariat);

Permanent Observer to the Steering Committee (SC): Deanna Aubrey, Community Facilitator (CF);

Excused: Judith Hoffmann (GIZ), Regina Bernhard (GIZ);

Observers: Diana Grosu Axenti (Moldova), Cristina Scerbina (Moldova), Rustam Boboev (Tajikistan), Arman Vatsyan (The World Bank Office Armenia), Florence Beraud (Facilitator), Alta Fölscher (Evaluator; Mokoro Ltd), Svetlana Radovanović (Bosnia), Zamira Omorova (Kyrgyz Republic), Maya Gusarova (The World Bank Office Russia), Ion Chicu (TCOP advisor, Moldova), Vladislav Karadžić (Montenegro), Albana Gjinopulli (Albania), Senka Šogorović (Croatia), Bojana Crnadak (PEM PAL Secretariat), David Tsekvava (Georgia).

In her introductory remarks to the observers, the chair of the SC (Salome Steib) explained the role of the SC as governing body of PEMPAL, its purpose, its functioning as well as its composition. She also pointed out the importance of the SC as a decision body, also with respect to donor coordination and funding. In that sense, the purpose of the Bern event was clearly to initiate the discussion on the Mid-Term Strategy 2012-2017 for the PEMPAL (Strategy) in order to be able to present the network's strategy early enough to attract potential donor funding for the next cycle. She reiterated the importance of PEMPAL as a network which lives and will live because of the contribution each of the members are ready to make which is in the end the true spirit of peer learning.

2. PEM PAL 2011 Evaluation

2.1. Background:

Mokoro Ltd (Alta Fölscher) will conduct the second evaluation of the PEM PAL network against the TOR confirmed by the SC at its meeting on April 5, 2011. The first evaluation was completed in early 2009 by the same evaluator. Taking the same evaluator will benefit a comparability of the progress of PEMPAL against baselines defined in the first evaluation.

2.2. Discussion and conclusions:

The evaluator will prepare by August 1 an inception report, including timelines, questionnaire, additional data gathering instruments, etc.; by November 1 a draft report; and, by December 15 a final report. Feedback from the SC will be sought on the inception and draft reports. Interviews of active and non-active PEM PAL members, conducted in English, Russian (with Mokoro's help), Bosnian (involving an interpreter), will start immediately. Equal representation of all three COPs will be provided; guidance will be sought from the COP Chairs in order to set up a representative sample, and to increase the response rate. As it has been proposed by the April 5 SC meeting, interviews shall also be conducted with Government representatives not involved in PEMPAL to get their point of the network. The evaluator will be given an opportunity to access the IA COP wiki page as well as other material that might prove to be useful for conducting the evaluation.

3. PEM PAL Strategy 2012 - 2017

3.1. Background:

The CF prepared a background paper for the Bern cross-COP discussions to seek input and thoughts from the network's executive on the proposed Strategy, which is to guide PEM PAL future work. A first draft of the Strategy for internal consultations will be available in September 2011, the first draft for external consultations in January 2012, and the final version in June 2012. To ensure all participants in the Bern cross-COP meeting had a common knowledge about the network to fully participate in these discussions, the paper described the current characteristics of PEMPAL including a preliminary assessment of the network's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; the potential attributes of a sustainable and effective network; an overview of how network performance is currently measured; an environmental scan of regional and international PFM learning institutes and networks; and a proposed action plan of initiatives gathered from event evaluations and preliminary consultations. The action plan, which will be implemented over the coming year, aims to strengthen the network's effectiveness and sustainability in the lead up to the Strategy's release. The PEM PAL Secretariat and the CF will report on progress of implementing the action plan at the SC meetings.

3.2. Discussion:

The Strategy should be short and concise and contain COP specific strategic perspectives and indicators to measure the performance. A working program will be attached to the Strategy which could include a rolling plan for two years. The CoPs should have full ownership of the Strategy and their early involvement in the design and drafting of the Strategy was welcomed. Issues if and how to enlarge the CoPs to other topics or add another CoP should also be decided upon in the Strategy.

As for donors' involvement, the GIZ informed the PEM PAL Secretariat that notwithstanding their strong interest for participation in the PEM PAL discussion, there has been, in light of the recent merger, no decision taken yet on their future engagement with the PEM PAL.

3.3. Conclusions:

The CF will prepare, by end July, an outline of the Strategy including a structure and envisaged process and timeline for its first draft for external consultations by January 2012 and its completion and approval by June 2012. The CF will check donors' expectations as to the components of the Strategy. It has been strongly suggested that CoPs will be active in the development of the Strategy and comment extensively on the proposed outline.

4. PEM PAL Secretariat progress report for January - June 2011 and work plan

4.1. Background:

The “PEM PAL Secretariat progress report for January – June 2011 and a work plan” consists of two parts. The first provides an overview of the past events, financing and costs, important developments and performance indicators. The second reviews the planned activities and offers some proposals for future work.

The report provides the following main messages and recommendations:

- (i) The network has grown and activities have intensified in terms of participating COP members.
- (ii) High accommodation costs in some countries and increased attendance at events (increased from 26 participants, in average, in 2010 to an average of 40 participants in 2011) contributed to increased costs per event (USD 102,000, in average, in 2011 compared to USD 67,000 in 2010).
- (iii) Post-event surveys demonstrate participants’ high satisfaction with regard to their peer-learning with the help of PEM PAL, but there is still scope for their more active engagement.
- (iv) PEM PAL web page evaluation shows a remarkable increase in the visits, but indicates that improvements in terms of content would be desirable.
- (v) The work plan offers the following proposals:
 - a. Knowledge sharing, including a virtual library, enhanced reporting, daily debriefs during events, best practice benchmarking;
 - b. Evaluation framework, including indicators measuring outcomes and impact of the PEM PAL network;
 - c. Going green initiative;
 - d. Wiki for all three COPs initiative.

4.2. Discussion:

In H1/2011, the costs per event differed reflecting different accommodation and travel costs and attendance at individual events. The average cost per participant in H1/2011, however, remained unchanged compared to 2010 and 2008. It was suggested that the COPs should take into consideration, when deciding on the next event, both the indicative budgets and costs per event (to set an example of prudence and accountability) and the pre-set action plans. But it was also said that even though higher costs might incur by holding events in different PEM PAL countries, it would increase the impact of the PEM PAL network. Given the network’s significant expansion, the current financial situation until 2012 would allow for some additional activities. It was, therefore, suggested that the COPs would present their updated budgets and work plans by early September for the next SC.

Some members said that the *financial information* in the PEM PAL Secretariat report was not easily comprehensible and suggested that graphic tables would in future be welcomed and that some of the information should be added to the actual report. It was also noted that the PEM PAL Secretariat is not responsible for the whole budget for the PEM PAL program; therefore, the Secretariat report cannot show the funds that are not channeled through the Secretariat.

It was discussed that it was not feasible to hold a *plenary meeting* in 2012, but that a cycle of holding it every two to three years would be reasonable. The cross-COP format of activities, in combination with a SC meeting, would bring additional value to discussions, and should instead be used more frequently.

As to the draft *virtual library*, suggestions were made to re-design it to reflect a COP-specific perspective, and, although all topics are relevant, link it to more COP specific topics in order to make it more practice oriented. The issue should be further discussed at the next SC as a separate agenda point. It was suggested that a specific overall strategy for a virtual library should be elaborated.

Suggestions for further activities such as *enhanced reporting*, *daily debriefs* and *best practice benchmarking* require additional discussion and might be implemented in the next phase, and, therefore, made part of the medium-term strategy.

While the *going green initiative* makes sense, paper copies of the event documents are helpful to participants; how copying could be provided by the hosting country will be part of a separate discussion at the next SC taking into account the responses of the survey.

4.3. Conclusions:

- (i) The SC approved the PEM PAL Secretariat report for January – June 2011. The WB TTL will report on the overall use of the MDTF funds at the next SC meeting in early September 2011 to complement the financial information provided by the PEM PAL Secretariat report.
- (ii) The PEM PAL Secretariat should inform the COPs after each event about the balance still available in their budgets.
- (iii) The COPs should update their action plans and budgets by the third week of August to be presented at the next SC meeting (early September). The up-dates should contain an explanation / justification of the revision and an overview of the budget.
- (iv) A proposal/strategy for the virtual library, including a glossary of terms, should be prepared for the next SC by the PEM PAL Secretariat together with CF. Given it is a resource-consuming project, it should be discussed at the next SC meeting.
- (v) It has been decided that the Wiki / Website standards should be discussed further in order to have all members of PEMPAL benefit from it. A respective proposal should be elaborated for the next SC.
- (vi) The going green initiative should be discussed at the next SC meeting; participants' view will be sought through the post-event survey.
- (vii) Enhanced reporting, daily debriefs and best practice benchmarking initiatives should be discussed additionally and could be made part of the Strategy.

5. External Audit COP: Information on the status of activities

5.1. Background:

Options for setting up an additional COP on External Audit have been discussed at two previous SC meetings. Decision was made to check other partners' and participants' interest, and financial implications.

5.2. Discussion:

Armenia, Georgia and Russia expressed interest for an External Audit COP. Donors, including OECD/SIGMA, WB, GIZ, and maybe some others, would be willing to support it. Interest of other donors should be examined. Evaluation should look at this issue. There are other relevant topics that deserve attention too.

5.3. Conclusions:

Discussion on the External Audit COP (interest, financial implications, impact) should be made part of the broader discussion on the rationale and feasibility of establishing additional COPs in the context of the overall Strategy discussion. Issues related to development of the concept notes for establishing additional COPs will be discussed at the next SC meeting in early September 2011.

6. Next meeting

The next SC will be held in early September 2011. The PEM PAL Secretariat will make some proposals through doodle to check availability of the SC members.

July 27, 2011