



Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Department for Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination

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1. Purpose and Scope: The purpose of this document is to define the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination (DePAC) in the Parliament of Sierra Leone. The Parliament of Sierra Leone has attracted interest from a couple of Development partners over the years that are interested to play a central role in its transformational development effort. Due to the critical role of Parliament in representational, law making, oversight, resource allocation, most Multilateral Agencies and Development partners have seen this arm of Government machinery as a key partner in need of critical support.

With the establishment of the Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination in Parliament; charged with the primary responsibility to manage and harmonise Development partnership support, there has been a growing need for well-defined procedures to manage the relationship between Parliament and Development Partners. This Standard Operating Procedure is therefore a procedural approach that aptly describes the key processes and consideration for Parliament to utilise in order to improve its partnership collaboration with Development Partners when projects are planned and implemented to support the transformation of Parliament.

2. Partnership Considerations

Most successful partnership engagements contain key components which should be considered when developing partnership relations with donors and Development Partners. It is significant for both parties to be familiar with what true partnership entails. There are several key components inherent in most approaches to partnering. This Standard Operating Procedure will examine the considerations that the Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination (DePAC) will take note of when engagement is done with potential Donor Organisations or Development Partners. This includes the following:

2.1 Leadership

Partnerships imply a shared leadership among respected individuals who are recognized and empowered by their own organizations to build consensus and engage in development programme of mutual interest. It is significant to recognise the Leadership structures at both levels and ensure

there is general acceptance on who takes the lead on managing the process. What is crucial here is that there should be trust in each other's ability to lead effectively and honestly. At the level of Parliament and for the purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure, the Speaker and the Clerk of Parliament will provide strategic leadership for all donor or partner engagement. The Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination Team will provide coordination responsibilities and will interface with other departments through a Steering Committee structure, which should be consistent with all levels of development partnership.

2.2 Common Understanding

There should be a clear understanding between Parliament and any Development Partner seeking to support Parliament in any required area. This should be established at the inception phase, so that there is clarity as to the role of the Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination and clear understanding of each other's organizational framework, culture, values, and approach. Clarity need to be sought on the roles and the key responsibilities in line with the partnership and what the partnership's division of labour will be. This should therefore account for the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with any Development Partner engaging Parliament for project implementation or other support areas.

2.3 Purpose

The Partnership between Parliament and other Development Partners must be guided by a shared vision and purpose that builds trust and recognizes the value and contribution of all members. Each partner must understand and accept the importance of the agreed-upon goals. This will lead to improved coordination of policies, programs, and service delivery. There should be Shared and transparent decision-making processes and it is important that each partner work towards a shared common purpose.

2.4 Culture and Values

Shared "can-do" values, mutual understanding, and an acceptance of differences (e.g., norms, ways of working) should all be key consideration in ensuring successful partnerships. This should therefore be reflected in any partnership engagement discussions. There is need for consideration to be given for each partner to discuss their organizational cultures and clearly identify their work strengths and weaknesses. It is important partnership makes room for patnership engagement

consideration for each partner to respect their contributions and regard each other as equals. It is critical that there is active involvement from organization representatives who are expected to play a valued role in the partnership.

2.5 Learning and Development

A healthy partnership promotes an atmosphere of learning. Any partnership engagement should also provide an opportunity for learning and development from both sides. This may involve monitoring and evaluation aimed at improving members' performance. An open mind-set and the desire to invest in partners' skills and knowledge will create opportunities to shape each other's work and learning together. In this environment, there will be honest reflection on identifying what is working well and also what needs to be improved.

2.6 Communication

If a partnership is going to succeed, there must be effective communication at all levels within the partnership and inside each partner organization. In addition, strong feedback loops should be outlined from the beginning of the relationship so that all stakeholders receive timely information.

2.7 Performance Management

The appropriate partnership structure, management practices, and resources must be in place to achieve the intended purpose of the partnership. Members must demonstrate both accountability for their actions and ownership for delivering on the objectives and targets for which they are responsible.

3. Procedures

3.1 SOP 1. Partnership Formation

It is important that all Development Partners choosing to support Parliament, develop strategic partnership engagement with Parliament and they are able to recognize the various structures they should work with during this engagement. It is significant to ensure that the first entry point to Parliament should be the Parliamentary Leadership which takes into account the Speaker and Clerk of Parliament. It is critical for other relevant structures within Parliament to be involved in the various processes, which are significant to ensure a smooth partnership development process.

The reasons for the involvement of parliamentary structures border on identifying partnership benefits and ensure the support is in line with the Strategic Development Plan of Parliament.

It is important to note the three distinct steps in the formative stage of the partnership engagement process and ensure specific procedures are maintained. The first step is to define the partnership needs, engage in project or programme planning discussions and set the tone for the partnership formation process engagement. The second step is to start the partnership process, while the third step is to set up and maintain the partnership. It is critical to have a clear understanding at this point to maintain procedures on who is responsible for each action during the formation stages.

Formation stages	Key Actions	Parliament Lead	Support
Step 1 Entry point and initial engagement on defining partnership rationale	-Discuss project interventions and concept ideas.	Parliamentary Leadership (Speaker & Clerk)	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination
Step 2 Partnership Process discussions.	-Development of a partnership management structure	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination	Parliamentary Partnership Steering Committee
Step 3 Setting up and maintaining the partnership.	-Development of a Partnership terms of Reference; identifying the strategic and operational details in operationalizing partnership engagement.	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination.	Parliamentary Partnership Steering Committee

3.1 SOP 2. Communications structure and pathway

Development partners who want to engage Parliament for any project implementation will need to pay attention to the communication structure that will account for a successful partnership relationship. Open, honest communication is a cornerstone of good partnership. It can be built by creating communication norms and using structures for facilitated discussion. Successful partnerships use consistent communication norms in every interaction and meeting and engage in open dialogue within established parameters.

The work of actively managing a partnership can be supported through partnership communication structures. Communication structures are practical guidelines and frameworks that will help individuals managing the partnership hold productive discussions, manage conflict, and reach decisions. For example, partners might use a specific process for having open dialogue about difficult topics. Development Partners engaging with Parliament will need to ensure the right communication structure is consulted which ultimately will promote a healthy communication partnership.

What is more critical is the need for Parliament and the Development Partner to adequately communicate their organisational norms, so that they recognize the importance of cultivating healthy working relationships. It is significant that the guidelines on which partnership members will work together is communicated. Significant also to note is the recognition of the communication pathway through which information related to partnership engagement is maintained. Communication norms need to be established right from the partnership kickoff meeting, and “ground rules” sufficiently maintained. Suggested areas will include the ideal communication pathway, knowledge management, resource management and decision on critical general management decisions.

It is important that both the Development Partner and Parliament always take time to listen to each other’s perspective during the various phases of the partnership engagement and decide on what their shared values and norms will be and this must be communicated regularly. By communicating the partnership norms frequently, emphasis will be placed on accountability to the shared values.

Engagement Phase	Communication Norms	Parliament Lead	Parliament Support
Inception meetings	-Clear communication on project idea -Confirmation on alignment with Parliament Strategic Plan and Guidelines on	Parliamentary Leadership (Speaker and Clerk of Parliament)	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination.

	communication requirement established.		
Project Planning, Design and development	-Input and buy-in from Parliament. -Project information sharing	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination	-Library, Research and Documentation Department Parliamentary Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
Project implementation and monitoring phase	-Shared Project work plan -Shared project implementation update during quarterly steering committee meetings	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination	-Parliamentary Partnership Steering Committee Meeting -Parliamentary Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.
Project end and close out	-Shared learning about the project -Information on sustainability issues -Impact and success stories	Parliamentary Leadership (Speaker and Clerk of Parliament)	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination

3.1 SOP 3. Project design and development

Partnership engagement at the project design and development stage is critical to the successful implementation of any project within Parliament. The process of planning and designing a project follows a logical, continuous cycle and it is critical that those who are going to serve as direct beneficiary be engaged at every stage. The needs assessment process and eventual design of the project will require buy-in from Parliament which determines the specific needs and problems to address.

The Project planning which leads to the design and development normally entails a series of steps that determine how the project goals and objectives are informed. It is important for the goal and objectives to be reflected in the strategic plan of Parliament which is why a participatory process is required at this stage. During planning meetings between Development Partners and Parliament, it is important to identify specific problems that stand in the way of meeting strategic goals and create a work plan for addressing problems and attaining the required goals. The involvement of Parliament in the design phase is thus critical to implementing a successful project.

Another rationale for engagement within the design phase is for discussions bordering on potential leveraging of resources which normally requires credible internal consultations and a critical component in determining project sustainability, beyond the conclusion of the grant funding.

Engagement will also be useful to gather information from Project beneficiaries like Parliament on experiences gained with similar projects in the past and how best practices could be used to design the implementation strategy. It is useful to design the strategy so that its activities, tasks, and phases build incrementally to establish a clear path for achieving the strategic goal of Parliament.

Project design and development phase	Parliament Lead	Parliament Support
Needs assessment and problem identification	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination	Library, Research and Documentation Department Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
Project description-setting up goals, objectives and activities.	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination	Library Research and Documentation Department Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
Project Approach and Strategy	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination	Library, Research and Documentation Department Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
Discussions on	Department of	Department of Library, Research

Assumptions, Challenges, Risk and mitigation strategies	Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination	and Documentation Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
Discussions on sustainability plan and funds leveraging	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination	Department of Finance and Department of Human Resource
Human resource related discussions	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination	Department of Human Resources
Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination	Monitoring and Evaluation Unit

3.4 SOP 4: Collaborative Work Plan Management

Once a project has been approved and the partnership goals, structure, and procedures have been established, it is important for a detailed work to commence. At this point, it is essential to develop a collaborative work plan in order to manage the partnership activities and guide members' efforts. The work plan must establish buy-in from members, ensure it contain realistic, and measurable outcomes, and hold people accountable. Collaborative work plans should also support partnership norms.

It is critical that the Department of Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination (DePAC) set-up a Project Steering Committee that will support and provide strategic guidance to all the project activities within Parliament. The Composition of the Committee will however also include representatives from the Development Partner. The collaborative work plan will outline the structure of work for the partnership which will serve as a specific initiative within the partnership.

A good work plan will be useful for effective project implementation and should bear the following characteristics:

a) **Establish buy-in**

Collaborative work plans document the work breakdown for specific task, but cannot by itself motivate people to action. The success rate is assured by first establishing buy-in for the plan from both the Development Partner and project beneficiary.

b) **Being realistic**

It is important to be realistic when developing a collaborative work plan. It is enriching to see progress, no matter how incremental, so that we stay within the scope of the project.

c) **Have measurable outcomes**

It is fulfilling to consider developing immediate, short-term, and long-term outcomes for the collaborative work plan, so that we identify how we will determine the success of our activities and efforts. What is critical to note at this point is to be clear on the apt indicators that we will measure

d) **Hold people accountable**

It is good to communicate group accountability and interdependence of activities. The Project implementation steering Committee with a composition of members from both Parliament and the Development Partner should be able to demonstrate how people's specific tasks impact the completion of the overall task. Having an effective structure for open, honest communication can support conversations about accountability as issues arise.

Collaborative work plan implementation progress meetings can be periodically conducted; either on a monthly, quarterly or half yearly basis and this should be followed by a report in order to assess progress. Such meetings can be hosted at Parliament or at the office of the Development Partner. Once each partner in the engagement has an opportunity to host meetings, facilitate gatherings, and produce update reports, responsibility is shared and this in turn increases feelings of ownership and long-term commitment to the partnership.

Collaborative Work plan actions	Key Targets	Parliament Lead	Parliament Support
Set up Project implementation Steering Committee	-Composition reflective of the both Parliament	Department of Parliamentary Assistance and	Parliamentary Partnership Steering Committee

	and the Development Partner -Development of Committee TOR	Coordination	
Collaborative Work Plan Implementation progress update engagement	-Monthly and Quarterly Project Steering Committee Meetings -Progress update monthly and quarterly report	Project Implementation Steering Committee and DePAC	Department for Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination
Project implementation review engagement	-Quarterly project review sessions	Project Implementation Steering Committee and DePAC	Department for Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination

3.5 SOP 5: Partnership Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective partnership is also assured through participatory monitoring and Evaluation processes to determine whether project outcomes are achieved. Partnerships need to create methods for evaluating and revising aims and objectives. This means providing opportunities to learn what has been successful and what has not and to build these lessons into revised plans. The Project implementation Steering Committee at this phase will be required to assess the impact of the project on the direct beneficiaries and to determine the project implementation status. Formal performance management processes, such as clarifying performance expectations and providing feedback, also contribute to partnership monitoring and evaluation.

In addition, it is important to monitor and report on the partnership status by assessing the working relationship between partners through use of a formal mechanism. This helps identify relationship risks, which can then be constructively addressed before they undercut the partnership. It is essential to look across multiple relationships to identify organizational barriers to effective partnering. Monitoring and evaluation also helps partners anticipate changes that may affect the partnership so they can collaboratively plan for the implications of such change. For instance, this helps the partnership to strategically shift the focus of the partner relationship and respond to potential reorganization.

Monitoring and Evaluation actions	Parliament Lead	Parliament Support
Monitoring and Evaluation project location visits	Project Implementation Steering Committee and DePAC	Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
Partnership status monitoring	Project Implementation Steering Committee and DePAC	Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
Monitoring and Evaluation Follow-up meetings	Project Implementation Steering Committee and DPAC	Monitoring and Evaluation Unit

3.6 SOP 6: Partnership Transitions and Endings

Transition and closure are natural stages in a partnership process and must be considered by all partners. This could be used by some partners as a time to renew goals and commitments. It is important at this stage to have an open and honest discussion to understand when the partnership is transitioning into a stage of renewal or ending.

Partnership closure is an opportunity to consolidate learning and is part of the natural cycle to reinforce learning. It is also a moment to reflect what worked, what didn't, people they learned from, and from whom they want to continue to learn.

It is worth noting that all partnerships experience transition and, ultimately, closure. This must be deeply considered by Parliament and any Development Partner and need to be reflected in the engagement Terms of Reference. At this stage, it is worth raising the questions as to whether the partnership purpose has been accomplished. The Development Partner and Parliament need to provide a project closure report and there should be a document framework on how remaining project assets will be utilized. It is also relevant to clearly discuss matters related to sustainability and whether the project implementation will transition into another location or priority area within Parliament.

Project Closure discussion areas	Key actions	Parliament Lead	Parliament Support
Staffing Issues	-Action on retaining staff and who will be responsible to pay salaries.	Department for Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination/Project Implementation Steering Committee	Department of Human Resource
Asset management	-Develop and Finanlise the end of project Asset utilisation Plan	Department for Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination/Project Implementation Steering Committee	Department of Human Resource
Unutilised Funds	Funds reallocation Plan	Department for Parliamentary Assistance and Coordination/Project Implementation Steering Committee	Department of Finance
Project extension discussions	-Cost or no cost Project extension Plan	Parliamentary Leadership (Speaker	Department for Parliamentary

		and the Clerk of Parliament	Assistance and Coordination/Project Implementation Steering Committee
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4. Reference Documents

- 1) Donor agencies and multi-stakeholder partnerships - No. 204, November 2016
- 2) Partnerships: Frameworks for Working Together-A Capacity Builders Resource Library
- 3) Prioritising actions in line with the strategic plan 2016-19 for the Parliament of Sierra Leone
- 4) The strategic plan 2016-19 for the Parliament of Sierra Leone