



OSCEval News is the evaluation newsletter of the Office of Internal Oversight.

Its aim is to provide insights into the OSCE's work in evaluation, by sharing key evaluation findings and conclusions, as well as new developments regarding the OSCE's overall evaluation culture.

Evaluation is a management tool that contributes to decision-making, strategic planning, and organizational learning.



This edition of OSCEval News is dedicated to the Synthesis Report on the

Evaluation of Capacity Development and Learning in the OSCE

This evaluation was managed and conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) with the help of one external consultant in 2018 / 2019. It consists of five individual case studies.

Introduction

Capacity development has been and continues to be a core activity of the OSCE's executive structures, aimed at assisting participating States (pS) to comply with OSCE commitments in the Organization's three Dimensions. However, in the context of the OSCE, little is known about which capacity development methods are most effective in building knowledge, and changing attitudes and behaviours, and which methods are most efficient in terms of labour intensiveness and costs related to planning and implementation.

In 2018, OIO carried out a cross-organizational thematic evaluation of capacity development and learning activities delivered by the OSCE. Apart from constituting routine oversight of the OSCE's interventions, the purpose of this thematic evaluation was to help the Organization to increase the effectiveness of its activities in support of capacity development of staff and counterparts. The evaluation pursued this objective by (i) assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the OSCE's capacity development activities; and by (ii) identifying lessons learned and good practices in this area that can contribute to learning across executive structures.

Case Studies

The evaluation comprised five case studies of purposely-selected OSCE capacity development and learning assistance projects that targeted OSCE staff (one project) and OSCE pS (four projects). Each project was chosen because it was seen to take an innovative approach to capacity development, which allowed OIO to examine whether and to what extent various approaches have been effective.

The selected case studies were:

- ⇒ The Executive Gender Coach Programme (Secretariat)
- ⇒ Promotion of Women's Participation in Public and Political Life at the Local and National Level (Programme Office in Dushanbe)
- ⇒ Combating Human Trafficking along Migration Routes Live Simulation-based Training Course (Secretariat)
- ⇒ Ensuring the Effective Processing of War Crimes Cases in BiH through Comprehensive Capacity Building (Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- ⇒ The OSCE Border Management Staff College (Phase I), 2009-2017 (Programme Office in Dushanbe)

Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

Relevance

One overall conclusion is that the assistance was relevant in that it addressed knowledge and skill gaps among the recipients that had been well-documented in OSCE documents and third party studies, as well as identified by OIO during interviews and surveys that were carried out as part of the evaluation. In all instances, the nature and scope of the assistance to be delivered was agreed upon by recipients before it was launched.

Effectiveness

Another conclusion is that highly interactive capacity development and learning methodologies are more effective in enhancing knowledge and skills, and in extension also lead to changed practices, than non-interactive approaches. Data collected during this evaluation also indicates that more experiential and social learning methods, like simulation exercises, are more effective when the aim



is to change beliefs, attitudes and deep-seated stereotypes.

Monitoring of results

OIO found that monitoring of activities and outputs was conducted routinely by the projects, but only two of the projects monitored outcomes/results. A weakness across all the projects was the limited capacity for monitoring and for assessing long-term outcomes. This challenge is partly due to the extended time period it may take before long-term outcomes materialize, which is considerably longer than many of the OSCE's individual projects. Thus, there is no plan, let alone resources, devoted to following up on such outcomes. Often, staff awareness of the need and ambition to follow-up on longer-term results are also limited.

Contribution to Gender Equality

Two of the five evaluated projects had gender equality as a principal objective. The other projects mainstreamed gender equality beyond ensuring equal participation of women and men, by also paying attention to gender considerations in the training content. Two of the projects demonstrate that there are clear value added opportunities to incorporate gender considerations within the content of broader capacity development efforts that do not have gender equality as a primary objective.

Sustainability

The case studies present a mixed picture in terms of sustainability. OSCE projects commonly rely on partnerships with government entities, civil society organizations and international organizations. Collaborative partnerships of this type are a means to foster local ownership and can contribute to the sustainability of the capacity development outcomes. Several of the evaluated projects also show that former trainees can be engaged in other roles, namely as experts, mentors or trainers.

OIO identified a substantial turnover among participants in some of the projects, which means that capacity development needs to be delivered continuously, and that knowledge gaps within institutions will continue to arise. None of the evaluated projects aimed to create self-sufficiency in capacity development, and thus it is unlikely that any of the activities would continue in the same manner in the absence of OSCE support. Staffing and funding intensive interventions are also less likely to be replicated by counterparts in the pS that have the most limited resources yet also have large-scale and multi-year capacity development needs. The greatest potential for replication of such interventions seems to be in "scaled-down" forms that are less labour and cost intensive.

The way forward

The overall conclusion from the evaluations is that there are attempts within the OSCE to move away from classical teaching methods and a willingness to experiment with innovative practices. Combining more formal learning methods with interactive ones, as

well as including elements such as coaching, mentoring and experiential learning, can have great benefits. The nature and sustainability of these benefits, however, depend on the context, the particular issue at hand, and the specific learning objective. More consistent efforts are needed to articulate why, how and for what purpose these methods are being used, and then to share these insights across the organization.

This thematic evaluation concludes with several emerging lessons that can guide future learning and capacity development activities:

- ⇒ *Interactive and experiential forms of learning are optimal for knowledge gains and skill-building when they are used in combination with formal learning. When the balance is tipped too far in favour of social and experiential learning, effectiveness and efficiency of knowledge transfer seems to decrease.*
- ⇒ *Social and experiential learning methods might be more effective in fostering changes of beliefs and attitudes among learners, and in challenging deep-seated stereotypes.*
- ⇒ *Decisions to use highly interactive methods within larger projects should be carefully weighed against issues of sustainability, efficiency, and the potential to achieve the same results using other methods.*
- ⇒ *Short-term outcomes (changes in knowledge and attitude) often lead to changes in practice (medium-term outcomes), but the kinds of capacity development projects implemented by the OSCE often lack clarity about how to achieve longer-term results, in the form of institutionalised change and impact.*
- ⇒ *Project designs often lack plans for how participants will become leaders in their own institutions and 'cascade' their acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes to others.*
- ⇒ *Capacity development projects would be better served if they set fewer and more concrete training objectives and were more strategic in meeting them.*
- ⇒ *Formal training should complement (not replace) social and experiential learning. There is a need for the OSCE to better support counterparts with the establishment of such comprehensive learning mechanisms.*



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