

CREATING LEARNING ALLIANCES LEARNING ON FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY AND OPEN GOVERNMENT

UPDATE NOTE

Part of Regional-Level Milestone PO 7999

15 November 2017





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Introduction

This is an initial report on the Learning Alliance on the Fiscal Sustainability Plan (FSP) and Open Government Partnership (OGP) held in Ibadan at Carlton Gate Exclusive Hotel on 2nd November 2017. The meeting saw the participation of Honourable Commissioners of Finance and Economic Planning and Budget and other relevant stakeholders in South West Nigeria.

This note reports on the process of organising and delivering the event, the extent to which it met the objectives of a Learning Alliance, and the lessons learned from this experience. This note is intended for Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL) and UK Department for International Development (DFID) audiences for the purpose of taking the Learning Alliance concept forward. A more detailed note on the proceedings of the event will be provided shortly and circulated more widely to participants.

Background

In line with its mandate, the Learning, Evidence and Advocacy Partnerships (LEAP) pillar of PERL organised the first event in a thematic Learning Alliances in partnership with the Accountable Responsive and Capable Government (ARC) and Engaged Citizens (ECP) pillars. The event took place on 2nd November 2017, with the support of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) and the Development Association for Western Nigeria (DAWN Commission), both ongoing partners to LEAP and PERL more broadly. This is also a way in which LEAP is deepening its work in the 'places' in line with its commitment to DFID and as part of the joint PERL work plan as part of the overall PERL Results Framework.

This was the first of a planned series of thematic Learning Alliances, all of which will focus on identifying and learning from existing sources of good practices. The theme for this event was the implementation of the FSP at state level and the associated cascading of the OGP from federal to state level.

For the purpose of convening a manageable and focused event, participation in this event was limited to the six South West Nigerian States of Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Ekiti and Osun. The aim was to enable the six States in South West Nigeria to identify relevant good practices in the implementation of the 22-point FSP agenda, explore/share complimentary approaches (existing open government, IGR, budget engagement etc.), adapt them to existing needs and contexts, apply them more widely and document and share the outcomes.

As explained in the PERL Concept Note (June 2017), Learning Alliances are a mechanism to identify, share, and adapt good practices in research and development in specific contexts with the aim of strengthening capacities, generating and documenting development outcomes, identifying future research needs or areas for collaboration, and informing public and private sector policy decisions. They are intended to serve the following functions:

- i) strengthening learning around particular themes or thematic clusters;
- ii) linking PERL to broader learning and policy communities and other development programmes;
- iii) strengthening horizontal linkages between PERL delivery teams in the seven PERL places;
- iv) facilitating cross-pillar learning; and
- v) strengthening vertical linkages between PERL delivery teams and PERL national and thematic teams.

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Process

The theme of the **FSP** and **OGP** was selected for the first Learning Alliance because of the urgency of the present fiscal crisis, and the mounting debts and arrears position of Nigerian states, which is particularly serious in the southwest of Nigeria. This theme draws on PERL-supported work with the NGFto assess the progress and challenges of implementing the FSP. This work has included a self-assessment questionnaire completed by 33 states, followed by more in-depth state level case studies. Consultations through PERL, NGF, and the DAWN Commission indicated a high level of interest amongst Southwest Nigerian states for a learning event.

To prepare this event, the LEAP team sent a concept note to other PERL pillars to generate buy-in and to secure their inputs. This was followed by the identification of partners to be invited to the event. To achieve this, meetings were held with the representatives of NGF, DAWN, ARC and ECP. Two States were selected as the focus or case studies for the event, Lagos and Ogun. The selection of these two States was based on their ratings by the NGF in the recently conducted self-assessment. This indicated that of the six southwestern states the greatest progress in implementing the FSP had occurred in these two states, and that there were lessons from this experience that could be shared more widely.

As part of the preparation, LEAP attended a meeting of South West State Commissioners of Budget and Planning held in Lagos. The PERL South West Regional Hub played a key role in organising these contacts, and gaining the support of Ogun State to join the NGF assessment procedure for the FSP. Throughout the process, there has been excellent collaboration between the three PERL pillars, the NGF and DAWN.

Participation in the event

The event was very well attended by 48 participants. These included Commissioners of Finance and Economic Planning and Budget, senior civil servants, representatives of State Houses of Assembly, civil society organisations, business membership organisations and media. Considering that the event was organised with limited advance notice, the level and quality of participation was impressive and indicates the convening power of PERL and its partners as well as the interest in the topic. The attendance list in Annex 2 testifies to the great turnout and varied participation.

Format of the event

The one-day meeting included both plenary and group work sessions to facilitate sharing and learning. Experts from FSP and OGP were brought in to co-facilitate the event, and to promote wider Nigerian ownership. Introductory presentations included an analysis of lessons learned from the implementation of the FSP by the NGF, a presentation on the OGP, and three presentations on measures taken in Oyo, Ogun, and Lagos States. Question and answer sessions provided the opportunity for States to gain deeper knowledge on particular areas of interest. The group work sessions focused on identifying lessons from each State from the experience of implementing the FSP, a discussion of prospects for implementing the OGP at State level and measures to be taken to strengthen the 2018 budget preparation including encouraging greater citizen participation.

Observations on the Learning Alliance

This section provides some observation on the extent to the event contributed to the broad objectives of a Learning Alliance.

• Promoting learning on a particular thematic area.

The event was tightly focused on the Fiscal Sustainability Plan and Open Government Partnership and provided a valuable opportunity to take stock of the results of recent studies and to share practical experiences between states on detailed points of implementing the 22-point FSP. The discussions also highlighted the importance of complementary reforms that support the FSP/OGP including measures to strengthen Internally Generated Revenues and to increase the ease of doing business.

• Linking PERL to broader policy communities and other development programmes.

The event provided an opportunity for an exchange of ideas between PERL and the wider Public Sector Reform (PSR) policy community. The breadth of participation referred to above allowed PERL to strengthen contacts with key stakeholders, and for these organisations and individuals to become more familiar with the work of PERL. It was intended that other DFID programmes and development partners would participate in the programme. Although other development partners expressed considerable interest in the event, the rather short notice provided prevented their participation. Invitations for future events will be sent out at least two weeks in advance.

• Horizontal linkages between PERL delivery teams in the seven PERL places.

Because this event was organised in one region it did not bring together different PERL delivery teams. However, a more detailed write up of the proceedings and presentations will be shared across the seven places to ensure that these linkages are made. Future events will also be organised at national level, which should also contribute to the objective of strengthening horizontal linkages between the places, although it is still intended to maintain some Learning Alliances in specific regions. Furthermore, as the series of events unfold across regions, learning across these regions and across States may be facilitated by means of a further meeting to bring selected partners and staff from different delivery locations to share experience and learning, or by using an e-platform (leveraging on NGF's ongoing pilot) to share outcomes/ innovations.

• Cross-pillar learning.

This was the **first major external event that was jointly organised by all three PERL pillars**. Each pillar provided material support and drew on its network to identify and invite participants. Key areas of collaboration included: i) LEAP, following up with DAWN to ensure Ogun State is bought into NGF's FSP self-assessment and case-study to enable the verification and analysis of claims made by the State ; ii) LEAP, ARC and ECP cost-sharing on the budget for State participation; iii) ECP working with DAWN to ensure the participation of CSOs and Private Sector representatives from the South West in the event; and iv) team leads of ARC and ECP and representatives from LEAP supporting the NGF and OGP co-facilitators in responding and reshaping the methodology to bring out salient points and generate deeper dialogue between States.

 Vertical linkages between PERL delivery teams and PERL national and thematic teams. Learning Alliances are intended to strengthen opportunities for exchange between staff from delivery teams and national level, with the intention of developing a synthesis of lessons generated by delivery teams and at the same time considering their implications for the programme strategy and Theory of Change. A more detailed write up of the proceedings of the event will be shared with national teams. Vertical linkages have also been forged outside the programme context: LEAP facilitated links between NGF, the OGP Secretariat and DAWN, and DAWN's shadowing of the Ogun State case study and between OGP and DAWN throughout the event. This opens up the opportunity for national and regional collaboration, which could facilitate the cascading of national initiatives down to the States and vice versa. Such national/ sub-national collaborations will be promoted in future Learning Alliance events.

Key lessons shared at the event

The event generated a rich set of observations and learning that will be documented in a more detailed proceedings paper. The following key points were highlighted by each state in feedback following groupwork sessions.

Lagos State

- Lagos is seeking to institutionalise citizen participation in budget and planning processes by creating a Citizens Engagement Office;
- To sustain public sector reforms, States must ensure the buy-in and ownership of reforms by MDAs and citizens. This requires capacity building in MDAs and awareness raising amongst citizens using media channels;
- Lagos has used international benchmarks to set limits on key ratios, such as total personnel cost to total budget, debt servicing to total revenue.

Ogun State

- FSP implementation has ensured prudence in public resources management and accountability in the State;
- Ogun State has made citizens engagement in budget processes a government policy;
- To ensure accountability and transparency, MDA budgets must be published at a sufficient level of detail to allow for external stakeholders to engage in meaningful monitoring and tracking.

Osun State

- The implementation of the FSP has instilled the need for fiscal discipline and prudence in financial management;
- The above is sustained by a robust monitoring and evaluation system that showcases achievements and challenges of implementation.

Ekiti State

- Openness and inclusive budgeting must be practical in terms of regular publication of budgets and budget performance;
- The proper implementation of FSP can reduce the challenge of revenue leakages to a large extent and hence, improvement in IGR;
- Openness and transparency can enhance the attractiveness of the state to investors.

Oyo State

- The proper implementation of FSP requires institutional strengthening and capacity building;
- Data and information management system is a must for achieving transparency and accountability;
- Creating an Efficiency Unit to oversee implementation and ensure compliance is important.

Ondo State

- The State has recognised that the FSP is not a condition imposed on it in return for FGN allocation, but the best way to achieve economic sustainability for the State;
- To achieve transparency and openness, there is need to publish the budget implementation report not just on the State website but in some selected National Dailies;
- Building the capacity of Staff implementing the FSP is key for successful implementation.

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It was evident from these discussions that there was a strong commitment to learn from peers and share experiences. Several states expressed interest in replicating some of the measures proposed by other states.

This potential for cross learning and replicating is indicated in the matrix below:

Table 1: Potential for cross learning and replication

S/N	Key actions and learning	Initiating state	States which expressed interest in replicating this
1.	Creation of a Citizens Engagement Office	Lagos	Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo and Oyo
2.	Use of international benchmarks to set limits on key budget rations	Lagos	Osun
3.	Publishing the budget at a higher level of detail	Ogun	Ekiti, Oyo
4.	Taking ownership of FSP as key to achieving state economic sustainability and not regarding this as a Federal government imposed condition for further resources allocation	Ondo	Lagos Oyo, Ogun, Ekiti and Osun
5.	Publication of budget performances reports on website and National dailies	Ondo	Ekiti

During a debriefing session held just after the event, organisers from PERL, NGF and DAWN identified the following points:

What went well?

- The event generated an excellent turnout and participants remained engaged throughout the long day. The level and diversity of participants was appropriate, and all participants had a good grasp of the subject matter.
- The format of the sessions was participatory and lively. The event was well moderated by the co-facilitators who succeeded in completing the packed agenda on time.
- The mixing of government, civil society and private sector participants had generated lively and challenging exchanges, but the atmosphere remained polite and constructive.
- The event revealed gaps in the implementation of the FSP
- While the event provided an opportunity to showcase good performance, states were also very frank in revealing their weaknesses.
- The event appeared to generate greater appreciation amongst participants of the need for citizen participation in budget processes.
- Cross-pillar working had been strong and provides a model for future events.
- A clear set of next steps was identified at the end of the meeting (see below).

What went less well/ room for improvement

- Many participants considered that the agenda was overloaded for a one-day event, and that there was not enough time for interaction and networking.
- The quality of the state level presentations could have been improved by asking facilitators to comment on these presentations in advance and to suggest where points needed further development.
- The acoustics of the room and sound system were poor.
- There was insufficient probing and challenging of some of the claims made by states.
- There was sometimes a tendency to get confused between points of learning and points of action
- The breadth of representation of civil society could be broadened.

Next steps

- LEAP will provide a more detailed write up of the proceedings of the event and share presentations made.
- DAWN will follow-up with the commitments to strategic actions made by each of the States and retain links with NGF and OGP to track and support progress.
- DAWN supported by ARC/ECP may need to seek to ensure that in particular the establishment of a Citizens Engagement office does not become politicised.
- DAWN will consider creating a community of practice for the Commissioners of Finance on FSP to allow for follow-up on initiatives agreed at NGF
- DAWN will distribute the final Learning Alliance event report with a covering letter offering to facilitate further learning to the States.
- Further advocacy and learning does not always have to be done through such a large event but can be advanced by leveraging on existing platforms such as the quarterly reflection with PERL partners and through informal means.
- The possibility of an e-forum was discussed with NGF based on the Q&A system they are currently piloting.
- PERL should plan similar events in other PERL places with similar NGF and OGP co-facilitation and PERL cost sharing.

Annexes

Annex 1 - AGENDA for CREATING LEARNING ALLIANCES EVENT

Meeting of Honourable Commissioners of Finance and Economic Planning and Budget and other Relevant Stakeholders in South West Nigeria on Fiscal Sustainability Plan (FSP) and Open Government partnerships (OGP)

2 nd November 201		
TIME	ACTIVITY	Person Responsible
8.30 – 9.00am	Registration	All
9.00 – 9.15am	Welcome and Introductions	DAWN
9.30 – 10.00am	Opening Remarks/Goodwill messages	Host State and Other Development Partners
10.00 – 10.10am	Workshop Objectives	Yetunde Adegoke
10.10 – 10:40am	Overview of the FSP process to date	Olanrewaju Ajobasile
10.40 – 11.00am	Open Government Partnership: A critical contribution to State achievement of the Fiscal Sustainability Plan	Stanley Achonu
11.00– 11.15am	Focus on Ogun State: Successes and challenges of Implementing the components of the Fiscal Sustainability Plan, (including success Ease of Doing Business, IGR and interest in OGP process)	Ogun State Commissioner of Finance
11.15 – 11.30am	Focus on Oyo State: Successes and challenges of Implementing the components of the Fiscal Sustainability Plan	Special Adviser, Economic Planning and Budget to Oyo State Governor
	TEA-BREAK	
11:30 – 11.50am	Focus on Lagos State: Successes and challenges of Implementing the Fiscal Sustainability Plan (including impact of the passage and implementation of financial autonomy bill on the work of members of State Houses of Assembly in Lagos State + Lagos State Citizens Gate)	Lagos State Commissioner of Finance 2. Majority Leader or Chair Appropriation Committee, Lagos State House of
		Assembly
11:5012:10pm	Comments, Questions & Answer	Facilitator
12:10 – 12:30pm		
12.301.15pm	State specific Group Task – 6 State teams (Topic 1)	2No. Co-facilitators + PERL staff
	(2 Commissioners MEPB & MoF + 1 Dir Budget + 1 BMO + 1 or 2 CSO / Media)	
	What are the lessons learnt from FSP implementation to date?	
	What complementary reforms (in addition to the FSP) are required to improve fiscal performance?	
	Is there an appetite / opportunity for co-creation (Government with Civil Society) of objectives and targets for fiscal transparency? What are the barriers?	

2nd November 2017 - Ibadan Oyo State

2 nd November 2017		
1:15 – 1.45pm	Inclusive Budget for Development (Q&A – 10 mins)	Fr. John Patrick Ngoyi / Dr. Uzochukwu Amakon
1.45 – 2.15pm	State specific Group Task (Topic 2) – Composition as above Strategy for engaging Y2018 Budget Process How do you intend to engage the Y2018 budget process? What opportunities/challenges are there for improving budget engagement?	All (2No. Co-facilitators + PERL staff)
2.15 – 3.00pm	Lunch Break	All
3.00 - 4 .30pm	Topics 1 & 2 plenary feedback presentations 10 mins per group + 5 mins (Q&A)	Groups 1-6 + 2 Co- facilitators+ PERL staff
4.30 – 5.00pm	Discussions on Next Steps / Resolutions	2No. Co - facilitators
5.00pm	CLOSING	All

Annex 2 - ATTENDANCE LIST for CREATING LEARNING ALLIANCES EVENT

Meeting of Honourable Commissioners of Finance and Economic Planning and Budget and other Relevant Stakeholders in South West Nigeria on Fiscal Sustainability Plan (FSP) and Open Government partnerships (OGP)

1 Eze Remigius Coalition of Ekiti Civil Society 08035426155 remypaul2003@yahoo.com Organizations Secretary 2 08055718863 Bamgbose Jide Senior Programme Officer jidebam69@yahoo.com Justice, Development and Peace Commission Ibadan 3 Alo Martins Upline Resources Foundation 08068495196 urfoundation2000@yahoo.co.uk Program Manager 4 Tiamiyu W.A OYSPC 08028281319 twadewale@gmail.com **Deputy Director** Micro Economic Planning Department 5 Uzochukwu PERL Technical Adviser on 08037123219 uamakom@gmail.com Amakom **Budget Engagement** University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus bolanuga2002@yahoo.co.uk 6 Bola Nuga LACSOP/Steering Committee 08055370272 Monitoring and Evaluation Officer 7 Ministry of Economic Planning 08033682030 akintemitemitope@yahoo.com Akintemi Temitope & Budget Ondo Senior Planning Officer awostecom4n@yahoo.com 8 Aworere Stephen MEP&B/Rep of Hon Com. 08035307218 Rotimi 9 Moruf Popoola OGUNCCIMA 08035779636 bmpopson@gmail.com The Coordinator of NACIMA Ogun Charter 09083411461 10 Ajogbasilee Nigeria Governors Forum oajogbasile@nggovernorsforum.org Olanrewaju Project Manager for Help Desk Program 11 Agunloye Oyebola Project Officer 08137773206 oyebola@yourbudgit.com BudgIT Nigeria 12 Seun Akinsanya MEPB/Director Planning 08023025228 ecoplanlasg@yahoo.com 13 Popoola A.T. Ministry of Finance Ibadan 08068131675 adetayotaiwo75@gmail.com Director of Budget 14 Adenrele Adesina HC Budget and Planning 08136646064 hcbp.ogunstate@gmail.com

2nd November 2017 - Ibadan Oyo State

Creating Learning Alliances – Update Note

S/	NAME	ORGANIZATION/	TELEPHONE	EMAIL
N		DESIGNATION	NUMBER	
15	A.A. Bello	Director of Finance and Admin	0803389254	<u>olaabelo@yahoo.com</u>
		Ministry of Finance		
		Osun-State		
16	Suleyman Adio	Wema Bank Head of Agric and Export Desk	08077787333	suleyman.adio@wemabank.com
17	John Patrick Ngozi	JDPC/ljebu Ode	08033492235	jpngoyi2004@yahoo.co.uk
		Executive Director		
18	Michael Oguntimilehin	State Bureau of Statistics Rep. Hon Commissioner for Budget and Planning	07069004353	jideoguntimehin@yahoo.com ekitistat@yahoo.com
19	Gareth Williams	PERL/LEAP		garethwilliams@thepolicypractice.com
20	Bankole Olusola A	Ogun State House of Assembly Abeokuta,	07066618983	akanbibankole(63)@gmail.com
		Chairman, House Committee on Appropriation		
21	Tope Edward Fagbamigbe	Legal Practitioner; Fresh 105. 9 FM	08075579265	tope1055@gmail.com
22	Ebofin Michael	Network of NGOs Osun State Secretary	08060012425	michoebofin@gmail.com
23	Segun Olorunsogo	Ministry of Economic Planning Budget and Development Osun	08033847006	segunsogo2003@yahoo.com
24	Fadesayo B.	Permanent Secretary Ministry of Economic Planning	08034236742	adeniyibami1@gmail.com
	Adeniyi	Budget and Development Deputy Director Budget		deleadeniiy@yahoo.com
25	Olawale Azeez	Ministry of Economic Planning Budget and Development Senior Budget Officer	08068039926	saheedolawaley98@gmail.com
26	John Akuse	LEAP Abuja	08033529647	jonykus@yahoo.com
27	Owoseni Adeyemi	Ministry of Finance Ado Ekiti Permanent Secretary	08035247520	ma0202@yahoo.com
28	Adeleke Adefolaju	Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning. Ado-Ekiti	08032606580	adefolajuadeleke10@gmail.com
		Director of Budget		
29	Yusuf Ibrahim	The Nation. Assistant Director	08056016681	ibrahimayusuf@gmail.com
30	Dr. Isiaka Kolawole	Oyo State	08033115889	drkolawole.olayinka@yahoo.com
		Special Adviser to The Executive Governor Budget and Economic Planning		
31	Akano Babatunde	Oyo State	08023322237	akanob@yahoo.com
		Planning Commission		
		Senior Special Assistant		
32	Hon. Bolanle Agbaje	OYHA Member Representing Ibadan North 1 State Constituency	08023404209	

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			TELEDUANE	
S/ N	NAME	ORGANIZATION/	TELEPHONE NUMBER	EMAIL
	-	DESIGNATION	NUMBER	
33	Chief Kola Akosile	ODUACCIMA	08033158123	akkola2000@yahoo.com
		First Deputy President		
34	Oguntuase Ayodele	Secretary, EkitiCCIMA (ODUACCIMA)	08137884284	oguntuase.ayodele@yahoo.com
35	Adewale Oshinowo	Ogun State Commissioner for Finance		
36	Ogunsanwo	Ogun, Finance	08033468436	skitomuyen@yahoo.com
	Muyiwa	Personal Assistant to the Hon. Commissioner of Finance		
37	Akanbi Gbemisola	Ogun Finance	08166594742	gbemxyleo@yahoo.com
		Public Relations Officer/information Officer		
38	Arinola Adetayo	Ogun, Account General's Office	08030509377	adetayo0903@yahoo.com
		Director in Charge of Debt Management Department		
39	Olayiwola Dosunmu	Ogun, Account General's Office	08153492540	moadosunmu@yahoo.com
		Permanent Secretary		
40	Tobechukwu Nneli	ISGPP	08037659921	tnneli@isgpp.com.ng
		Research and Program Manager		
41	Ezeobi Geraldine	ISGPP	08063114868	gezeobi@isgpp.com.ng
		Research and Project Officer		
42	Ishola Adebayo	Online Hub Nigeria	08094082449	ishola@onlinehubng.com
43	Ajibola Jadesola	Inspiration FM	08034425635	jadesole@yahoo.co.uk
44	Sanusi Razaq O	ODUACCIMA	08038353781	sanusirazaqolajide@gmail.com
45	Hon. Jeje S.A	Ekiti State House of Assembly	08035028898	jasgol2002@yahoo.co.uk
46	Olaitain Olumide	J.DPC ljebu Ode	08038261236	olufola2003@gmail.com
		Governance Officer		
47	Hameed Oyegbade	Daily Trust	08032546950	oyegbadehammeed@gmail.com
48	Olalekan R. Afolabi	Osun State House of Assembly	08033041938	olaafolabii@yahoo.com
		Deputy Chairman, Appropriation Committee		

-



 40 Mississippi Street Maitama Abuja, FCT Nigeria

➡ info@leap-perInigeria.net

Swww.perlnigeria.net