

Capacity Building Committee: Good practice notes

What makes for a good short-term expert?

Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) want to learn from other SAIs: they feel that if they need external advisers they want those advisers to come from other SAIs. This note seeks to identify some of the key characteristics, attitudes and skills external advisers need to have if they are going to be successful in helping strengthen the capacity of partner SAIs and their staff. It aims to be useful for both SAI management and future short-term experts (STEs).

What do short-term experts do?

An STE spends blocks of time in a developing SAI helping:

- assessing needs;
- designing and delivering training courses;
- producing or updating manuals and guidance documents;
- supervising pilot audits or roll-outs of guidance notes; and
- coaching and mentoring managers and staff.

Key characteristics

- **Openness** – if you enjoy the experience of interacting with many different people and get a buzz out of this – it will show and people will respond equally to you.
- **Flexibility** – planning is essential but you need a willingness to adapt the plans when things do not go as expected.
- **Firmness** – in many countries ingrained habits of lateness or answering mobiles in classes can be very disruptive. Demand high standards from your students and they will respond.
- **Leadership** – sometimes you can arrive in a country and meetings have not been organised or rooms booked – you will need then to take the initiative and make things happen and happen quickly.

Key knowledge and skills

- **Understanding of the ISSAIs** – any training delivered in SAIs today must be related to the ISSAIs.
- **Considerable professional experiences** – built up over many cycles of doing audits.
- **Train the trainer skills** – knowledge of the ways adults learn and an ability to use a variety of ways of delivering information and skills.
- **Fluency in the language** – or just a few words will help – and an ability to work with interpreters.

Key attitudes

- **Curiosity** – learn as much as you can about the country and the context in which the SAI is situated.
- **Cultural sensitivity** – you are guests in another country and its SAIs – learn what is done and not done and be respectful.
- **Focus on sustainability** – what will make the results of your work last.
- **Humility** – if things are done differently, if there is resistance to change, try and find out why – and do not always assume that there is only one correct way to do things.

How do I get the knowledge and skills?

- **Talking** – find others in your organisation or in other SAIs who have worked in the country and SAI to find out what they know. Use the database managed by IDI on past projects to find contacts – www.saidevelopment.org/default.aspx
- **Read** – INTOSAI Capacity Building Guides available on www.intosaicbc.org; PEFA publications, World Bank country programme notes, OECD
- **Teach** – ask to put through a train the trainer course as part of your continuous professional development and deliver training to colleagues or new staff or visiting inward delegations.

Prepared for INCOSAI XXII Abu Dhabi 2016

