Effective Institutions Platform

Building trust and mutuality in peer-to-peer learning

Background

As part of its efforts to support peer-to-peer (P2P) approaches to facilitate institutional reform, the Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) organised a series of learning events to reflect on the key attributes of effective P2P partnerships and the role of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) in tracking and supporting this process.

An initial stocktaking of experiences among EIP Advisory Group members, captured in the report *Lessons Harvesting: Learning from P2P Engagements* (Ørnemark, 2020), identified three features of effective P2P approaches: (i) the importance of building *trust and mutuality*, (ii) the function of *learning through interconnected systems* and (iii) the need to *adapt P2P approaches for the diffusion of local learning*. Each topic was the subject of a learning event, the outcome of which is a series of learning notes that can be used as a reference tool by EIP members and partners to guide and enhance their approach to P2P partnerships.

1. Introduction

This learning note seeks to explore the importance of trust and mutual learning in peer-to-peer (P2P) engagements and the role of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) in tracking these qualities. The importance of trust in peer learning was highlighted in the background paper for this learning note, *Lessons Harvesting: Learning from P2P Engagements – Discussion Paper for a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework* (Ørnemark, 2020). The paper gathers lessons on how P2P partnerships contribute to strengthened institutional capabilities and organisational effectiveness, and how to track and learn from such processes. It explores how learning-oriented monitoring can be used to address power imbalances in the partnership, encourage two-way flows of information and create a sense of joint purpose between participating institutions.

The topic of trust and mutuality was further discussed at an EIP Learning Event[1] which brought together a range of development practitioners, donors, civil servants and researchers around the following guiding questions:

- How can partners build trust and ensure mutuality in different kinds of P2P partnerships?[2]
- How can peers ensure effective communication between themselves when agreeing on the goals and objectives of the partnership and when undertaking a joint analysis of the problem(s) that P2P learning is intending to help solve?
- How can MEL approaches be used to track progress in building trust and mutuality between partners?

[1] This open event was held online on 9 December 2020 including both EIP members and non-members with around 33 registered participants.
[2] See the *Lessons Harvesting* report (Ørnemark, 2020) for a typology of P2P partnerships.

This learning note examines what trust and mutuality mean and why these qualities matter in the context of P2P partnerships. It provides guidance to assist readers in identifying issues, actions and approaches that could be taken to build partnerships of trust and mutual learning. This note draws on the lessons and insights generated by the EIP learning series, as well as relevant literature and experiences.

2. What are trust and mutuality and why are they important in P2P learning?

Trust can take different forms and is broadly understood as an "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something" (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Trust in co-operative relationships that go beyond individuals to the institutional level has been found to enable more innovative co-operation over time. It creates a shared sense of both risk and purpose, rather than placing all the risk on one partner (typically the benefitting/implementing institution) (Alexius and Vähämäki, 2020). Trust and mutuality are also characteristics and indicators of partnership health. They may influence effective collaboration as well as actual learning outcomes.

Trust and trust building between development co-operation partners is often complex and highly context-dependent (Alexius and Vähämäki, 2020; Keijzer et al., 2018). There is also a difference between *social trust* between individuals in a system or institution and *interorganisational trust* between institutions for collective action, each of which are important attributes for P2P learning (see Box 1). In peer-based learning, social trust between individuals is essential. Impacts are invariably more significant if such social trust leads to enhanced interorganisational understanding and arrangements. *Reciprocal trust,* which is closely associated with the notion of mutuality, is also an important attribute of P2P arrangements and can be achieved by high-quality dialogue and clear agreements on the expectations, roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the relationship.

Box 1. The concept of institutional and interorganisational trust in development literature

Individual trust – generally refers to trust between individuals or peers, reinforced by repeat interaction, fostered over time by perceived reliability of and control over the relationship by all involved (see also Box 2).
Institutional trust – this refers to trust in generalised systems, including for example, social trust, trust in certain public institutions, or trust in public professionals or management systems.
Interorganisational trust – refers to trust in the relationship between two organisations which can facilitate interorganisational partnerships. In development co-operation there is typically a high degree of reliance on interorganisational trust as it is essential for collective action and the production of global public goods. The individuals who are responsible for creating the relationship and nurturing the trust development process between institutions play a critical role and have been coined "boundary spanners" in the literature, essentially expanding one organisational boundary by including and having a mutual relationship with another organisation (Alexius and Vähämäki, 2020; Keijzer et al., 2018).

Mutuality, or "the quality and state of being mutual" (Merriam-Webster, 2021) refers to actions that benefit both or all partners engaged in a relationship through their shared interests and goals. In that sense, there is a two-way flow of information and a sense of equality between partners, which is not present in partnerships that are contractual in nature or where "hard sanctions" are used for non-compliance. Mutuality is a central concept in P2P learning and aims to ensure that both (or all) participating institutions benefit from mutual exchange and learning without imposing prescriptive formulas or solutions upon one another. The concept features strongly in the aid effectiveness agenda as "mutual accountability", defined as "a process by which two or multiple partners agree to be held responsible for the commitments that they have voluntarily made to each other" (OECD, n.d.).

3. Key insights: How to build trust and mutuality in P2P partnerships

Lesson 1: Mutual learning often reinforces trust between partners.

There are several examples of how trust between not just individuals, but also institutions, develops more easily when there is a sense of mutuality (learning goes both ways). This can be hard to detect, particularly when the P2P partnership was initially designed between a "learning recipient" and a "knowledge resource institution". Nonetheless, capturing such mutual learning is a way to further build trust between partners.

Government Partnerships International (GPI)[3] which seeks to document bidirectional and unanticipated learning within UK government agencies, noted that in the case of their partnership with the Government of Rwanda, what started out as a largely unidirectional partnership became more mutual in its learning over time.

> *"I went to Rwanda to review their civil registration system. In the UK, we were also spending large amounts of money to build a new system to deal with civil registration. After I went to Rwanda and looked at what they were building, for much less cost, I came back with a different perspective on how to develop the UK system."* GPI (2020)

Trust and mutuality may be linked with one reinforcing the other, although the *Lessons Harvesting* report (Ørnemark, 2020) also underscored that there can be trust without mutuality and vice versa. In other words, one-way communication and transfer of knowledge may at times supersede a sense of mutual understanding and accountability; and this, in turn, may influence the effectiveness of the P2P engagement.

Key questions for P2P practitioners to explore:

- Is mutual (two-way) learning happening in your institutional partnership, and if so, how?
- How can mutual learning best be identified, enabled and assessed in a P2P partnership?

[3] GPI is part of the UK Government's Stabilisation Unit that works across several UK Government agencies.

Lesson 2: Fostering a sense of equality between partners can enhance P2P outcomes.

A sense of equality between partners, where each peer partner is equally free to accept, adapt, or disregard any advice given by another peer is often understood to be at the core of well-functioning P2P arrangements. This can be contrasted with more extractive learning exercises, or one in which the delivery of technical assistance (TA) may come as a contingency or conditionality of donor funding.

Identifying the measures that are being taken to "level the playing field" between different actors and tracking how this sense of equality is put into practice can be a good indication of the health of the P2P relationship and its effectiveness. It can also help to address power asymmetries, particularly when P2P arrangements involve peer institutions in donor countries, and those in recipient countries of development co-operation. Given that issues of trust and mutuality can be sensitive to discuss in a P2P partnership, an external facilitator can play an important role in levelling the playing field and enabling a more free and frank exchange between peers.

Key questions for P2P practitioners to explore:

- What, if any, measures have been taken to create a sense of equality in your P2P arrangement?
- How, and using what tools, can a sense of equality between peers be tracked and assessed?
- What (if any) is the role of the facilitator in creating a sense of equality between peers and how might a facilitator achieve this?

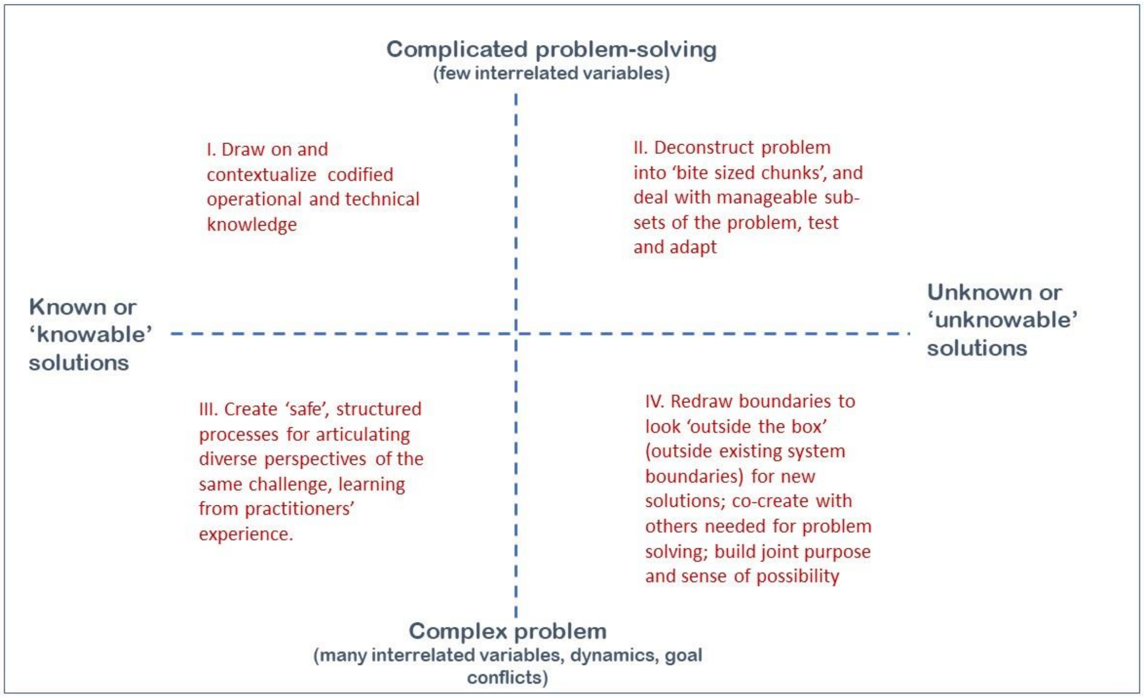
Lesson 3: Collaborative problem solving between peers can help build trust.

Trust can also be built through a process of collaborative problem solving between peers. This was the case for the Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI)[4] which facilitated a peer learning exchange between African ministries of finance, budget and planning. Although the capability and commitment to drive these reforms already existed, this collaboration helped to create the momentum and structure needed to tap into existing capabilities, increase acceptance of the reform effort, give teams the authority to move forward, and to report on progress and compare experiences along the way. This is a clear departure from a more traditional way of framing capacity development as the transfer of skills (for example via TA) from those who have the knowledge to those who "need" it.

The Cynefin Framework (Figure 1)[5] offers one way to understand different types of problems and strategies towards potential solutions.

[4] CABRI is an intergovernmental organisation that provides a platform for peer learning between African Ministries of Finance, Budgeting and Planning.
[5] The Cynefin framework is a tool developed by Dave Snowden in 1999 as an aid to decision making.

Figure 1: The Cynefin Framework for problem solving



Source: C. Ørnemark (2019), EIP MEL Inception Report

Key questions for P2P practitioners to explore:

- What are the necessary ingredients for building trust through collaborative problem solving? Who decides how the problem is framed and/or how boundaries are redrawn?
- How can P2P learning assist to identify and solve different types of problems?
- How can this collaborative process create effective and sustainable results in institutional development over time?

Lesson 4: Monitoring, evaluation and learning in problem solving partnerships is challenging and requires flexibility.

Trust and mutuality are important enablers of effective P2P learning, fulfilling different functions in different types of partnership arrangements. Yet, these are difficult qualities to capture in MEL practices. This is in part because output and activity-based monitoring tend to dominate reporting (number of workshops held, number of visits conducted etc.) making it hard to identify or understand the capabilities that the partnership has actually enabled.[6] Mutual problem solving through trustful P2P partnerships can help to trigger these capabilities, and well-designed MEL approaches can help guide the process.

[6] Institutional capabilities are ultimately endogenous organisational characteristics that cannot be easily learned or imposed by an external actor.

An important first step in determining appropriate MEL approaches for a P2P arrangement, is to try to understand the nature of the problem at hand. For instance, a problem with large boundaries (e.g. health sector reform in a country) will likely have both complicated and complex subsets of problems involved, calling for different learning modalities to match different parts of the problem. What may seem like a straightforward problem with knowable solutions may in fact have many more contested and political elements. MEL approaches therefore need to be flexible enough to pick up on some of these underlying causes to the problem so as to identify the learning support partners most need or want.

Key questions for P2P practitioners to explore:

- What type of MEL tools are best suited to identifying, following and addressing complex, complicated and chaotic types of problems[7]?
- How can flexibility be enabled through MEL arrangements?

Lesson 5: Trust and mutuality should be monitored using indicators adapted to the type of problem and partnership.

The extent to which partners can make use of and institutionalise new learning from P2P engagements is at the core of applying a "capabilities framework" (Baser et al., 2008) for MEL in P2P learning (Ørnemark, 2020). Rather than documenting in detail what was done, by whom and when, this framing focuses on how peers were *enabled* to do or act differently in the process, with reference to P2P (and other) insights.

P2P learning as an enabling framework means looking at the conditions under which P2P approaches are most useful, and any limitations that they might bring. In addition to the capability to produce results (which is usually monitored and tracked), emphasising capability development also means looking at the capability to commit and engage, the capability to relate to context and attract others, the capability to balance diversity and coherence, and the capability to adapt and self-renew as an organisational unit or system of actors. Taking trust and mutuality as essential attributes of P2P approaches and thus capabilities development, the table below offers some suggestions as to what to monitor at the individual, institutional and sector levels.

Capability to commit to and engage in the P2P learning effort	What to monitor
Individual level	-Level of confidence (and narrative examples) that peer partners have valuable information to share -Degree of operating space for testing and adapting new insights in day-to-day work -Time and cost dedicated to the P2P learning effort (including cost of time inputs) -Level of perceived usefulness and examples of actual use from peer-based learning exchanges

[7] Also referred to as "wicked problems" that are complex, have no single cause, no single effect and have no given alternative solution. See Williams and van't Hof's "Wicked Solutions: A Systems Approach to Complex Problems" (2016).

	-A collection of examples/change stories of how the P2P process was enabling/or disabling in relation to its longer-term learning objectives -Perceived level of understanding of the joint purpose/shared goals of the engagement
Institutional level	-Degree to which the leadership/supervisors are open to learning from the P2P process with a structured process for feedback -Degree to which new insights are adapted, tested and incorporated in policies, strategies and operations inside the organisation -Degree of institutionalisation of new insights and collaborations as enablers for desired change
System/sector level	-Ability to share learning and influence the discourse or operating models of the system/sector
Capability to relate to context and attract others	**What to monitor**
Individual level	-Ability to adapt insights to fit organisational objectives -Degree to which new insights are communicated to relevant stakeholders (internal/external)
Institutional level	-Degree of perceived institutional legitimacy of peer (through examples/senior leadership approval etc.) -Level of trust in peer institutions as being relevant for gaining new insights (keeping and building a track record of internal organisational changes) -Degree of perceived mutuality (bidirectional exchange and equality) between partnering institutions -Level of openness to challenge existing organisational culture or assumptions based on P2P insights -Degree of permeability of socio-cultural identities, insights and understanding
System/sector level	-Degree to which trustful (perceived and exemplified) relations help leverage further support from others

Development actors have experimented with actor-based frameworks to identify behavioural changes, rather than the inputs and outputs of a particular learning process. Among the approaches developed over the last couple of decades to monitor changed behaviour are “Outcome Mapping” and “Outcome Harvesting”, which have been adapted depending on the type of problem and partnership in question.

A common characteristic among these approaches is that while the main learning objectives are often fixed, the process of getting there tends to be more open, and strategies are regularly tested and assessed by participating peers. What indicators to pick, and how to collect the data, will depend both on how the problem is defined and the type of P2P partnership envisaged.[8] The table below reflects on how trust and mutuality fits into these different P2P modalities, with suggestions on how each can be monitored.

Table 2. Trust and mutuality in different types of P2P engagements

	Peer-based knowledge platforms (knowledge hubs, online platforms, etc.) with or without face-to-face elements	**Peer engagement on a particular topic or problem among a specific group of practitioners**	**Careful matching between institutions, often one-on-one, with a facilitating intermediary**
Trust	Group composition is more fluid and emergent, often relying on individuals volunteering information and putting in the necessary time to react to others. Yet**, creating a sense of community** is important for trust-building. Trust can also emerge from careful facilitation to "listen in" to the community and what people want to focus on. Level of trust can be gauged from level of engagement, type of engagement, level of use of platform and use of new knowledge from the platform in own institution. Trust cannot be assumed but needs to be actively facilitated and validated through surveys and key informant interviews.	Smaller and more carefully selected groups of homogenous peers (e.g. individual practitioners) means that **careful selection of the group** composition will be essential for creating a sense of trust among peers. Trust will be essential for peers to talk about experiences -- good and bad -- in their "home" institutions so that they can engage in collaborative problem solving with partners. Assessing a degree of trust could include key decision makers in their "home" institutions to make sure trust in the learning process is shared internally.	With carefully selected and **matched institutions** that fill specific functions in the P2P engagement, establishing a sense of trust and openness will be important in the inception phase. This can be established by each organisation conducting similar organisational self-assessments where expectations for the partnership, as well as each partner's strengths and limitations are defined in advance and monitored over time. Repeated self-assessments can help detect areas where trust is weaker and where more facilitation is needed.

[8] The *Lessons Harvesting* report (Ørnemark, 2020) distinguishes between three different types of P2P engagements: (i) peer-based knowledge platforms (knowledge hubs, online platforms etc.) with face-to-face elements, (ii) peer engagement on a particular topic or problem among a specific group of practitioners, and (iii) careful matching between institutions, often one-on-one, with a facilitating intermediary.

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Mutuality	Level of mutuality in learning is critical for knowledge hubs, particularly since they often rely on **individuals engaging and voluntarily sharing** their knowledge. When commissioned cases are used, the trust and level of transparency in case selection is important, in ensuring relevance and usefulness to platform partners. Since knowledge platforms generally attract a larger, and more diverse group of practitioners, mutuality can also be gauged by the number and diversity of members sharing information, and the type of information they share (pushing their own best practice or asking advice from others etc.).	This type of collaborative problem-solving requires a high degree of mutuality, i.e. all participants are by default embarking on a **joint learning journey** around clearly-defined/similar problems. They commit to holding each other mutually accountable by reporting back on progress and learning from each other. The level of mutuality in the sharing is therefore the backbone of this approach and should be monitored through regular check-ins and feedback surveys among participants.	The nature of the P2P engagement between carefully matched institutions will determine the level of mutuality in learning (bidirectional or unidirectional). However, examples show that even in largely unidirectional P2P approaches, learning within the knowledge provider on the "soft skills" of engaging with another institution needs to be monitored (e.g. cultural safety, working in complex change processes, communications, learning-oriented monitoring and evaluating, capacity etc.). Sharing lessons from both sides of the partnership can help build trust and attract other peers from each respective institution (making **the relationship more institutionalised** than personalised).

Key questions for P2P practitioners to explore:

- What does it take to build trust at the different levels of an organisation – i.e. at the individual, institutional and systemic levels?
- How can MEL effectively monitor the development of the "softer enablers" of learning, such as trust and mutuality, at these different levels of an organisation?
- How can MEL track lessons around what is involved in developing trust in P2P partnerships:
  - from how it is set up (emergent, facilitated or imposed)
  - who funds it and how (short or long-term, at what level – to complement an existing initiative or as a stand-alone)
  - what type of P2P arrangement it is (knowledge platform/peer engagement on a particular topic or problem, or purposeful matching)
  - the level of transparency and open communication between partners (on a number of dimensions, via regular self-assessments) and
  - how to overcome inherent power asymmetries (particularly when partnering across different countries and contexts).

Lesson 6: Trust emerges in different ways in different kinds of partnerships.

Getting from individual to interorganisational trust is not always easy as it can be difficult to build trustful relationships at an institutional level (e.g. between the senior management or other decision-making structures in the two partnering institutions) despite the initial formation of trust between peers at an individual level. Nonetheless, unless institutional trust also emerges, the best of ideas between peers may struggle to influence different layers of organisational decision making.

GPI observed that so-called "scientific partnerships" often enable trust to emerge quickly, although mutuality is sometimes lacking. These are peer partnerships between two specialised government agencies in two countries that pair their technical experts through a process of exchange.

One explanation for the rapid formation of trust between peers under these conditions could be that they, despite being from different agencies and country contexts, come from similar professional (and often educational) backgrounds and thus are well placed to quickly agree on the nature and scope of the problem to be solved. That said the learning objectives in these types of partnerships are often framed as technical in nature, are rarely contested among multiple stakeholder groups, and the mutuality in learning (two-way learning and a sense of shared purpose) is often lower, as these partnerships primarily serve to transfer technical knowledge.

Key questions for P2P practitioners to explore:

- How can the shape and type of a P2P partnership affect the way that peers commit to trust building?
- How can trust best be built into non-technical partnerships where the learning objective may be contested or interpreted differently at different levels of operation?

Lesson 7: Affective learning can assist to shape attitudes and internalise new behaviours.

Affective learning refers to the emotional aspects of engaging in P2P learning and focuses on the feelings, values, appreciation, motivation and attitudes of peers.[9] Elements of affective learning in a peer partnership can include an emerging sense of solidarity between peers and the function of trust building over time (Ørnemark, 2020: 20). Many partners[10] have noted that it is easier to accept new knowledge – some of which may challenge existing mindsets and assumptions – when there is an emotional bond and emerging sense of solidarity between partners. Known in the education literature as "affective learning", this type of learning complements cognitive learning as it nurtures an ability to relate to and internalise new information. In P2P engagements, this emotional side of learning is highlighted as a precondition for trust and mutuality between partners. A risk is nevertheless that 'comfortable' partnerships (with strong emotional bonds between peers) also form 'echo chambers'[11]. Echo chambers risk creating an environment in which peers fail to create broader institutional change as conflicting views are not adequately represented or raised.

The Local Governance Initiative and Network (LOGIN), a regional network based in India**,** has illustrated how P2P learning can effectively combine cognitive and affective (emotional) learning through relationship and trust building among peers. This effect is further reinforced when partnerships are supported over a long period, accompanied by several iterations of learning and in which partners invest in seeking to understand each other's local operating context from the start[12]. LOGIN played a key role as a facilitator as it invested in monitoring and reporting upfront, focusing on value creation by the P2P partnership, allowing partners to regularly assess the effectiveness of their exchanges and to adjust their engagements accordingly.

Given that P2P learning largely depends on positive reinforcement, validation and a sense of support among peers, examples showed that affective learning can serve to shape attitudes and internalise new behaviours. In terms of the cognitive aspects of learning, it also appeared that learning within one's own context (rather than relying on things taught during off-site training courses) make recall and retrieval of new information easier. This insight is also supported in the wider literature (Miller, 2015).

According to LOGIN Asia, affective learning – tapping into common values, principles and aspirations among peers – occurs through direct engagement between partners, which in itself can affect how the learning problem is formulated. For example, when the Kerala Institute of Local Administration connected

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[9] Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia (1973) created a taxonomy around affective learning as a complement to cognitive learning.

[10] Drawing on EIP members' experiences, synthesised in the EIP Lessons Harvesting report, https://www.effectiveinstitutions.org/media/EIP_Lessons_Harvesting_Final_Version.pdf.

[11] An echo chamber is an environment in which a person encounters only beliefs or opinions that coincide with their own, so that their existing views are reinforced and alternative ideas are not considered.

[12] A featured example comes from the P2P partnership between The Hunger Project, India, and the Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW). For more details see the EIP Lessons Harvesting Report: https://www.effectiveinstitutions.org/media/EIP_Lessons_Harvesting_Final_Version.pdf

at a more emotional level with the Municipality of Ulaanbataar, Mongolia (by visiting them in person in Mongolia, among other things), the municipality realised that they needed to broaden their initially narrow demand for technical capacity. LOGIN's assessment is that the emotional connection formed between these two institutions enabled officials from the Mongolian municipality to accept previously suggested TA.

Key questions for P2P practitioners to explore:

- How can P2P partners be set up so that increased understanding, respect and an emotional bond among partners pave the way for affective learning in the peer partnership? What is the role of the facilitator in ensuring affective learning is present from the outset?
- How can MEL tools help reinforce such affective learning, for example by recording quick "wins" or changes in attitudes or behaviours from joint efforts (even if the significance of early results may need to be further validated later on)?
- How does affective learning complement cognitive learning in defining the problem at hand?
- What are some of the innovative means by which peers can learn about each other's operating context and what type of information would help partners related to each other across different contexts?[13]

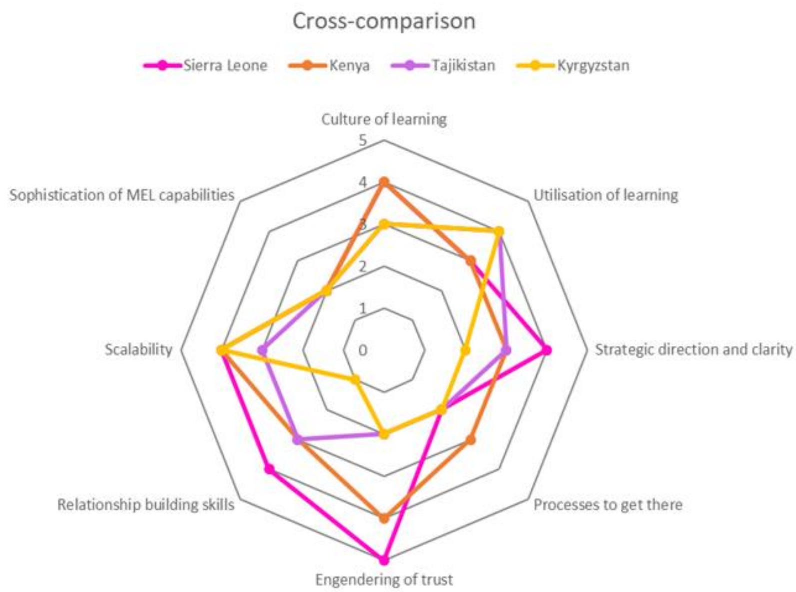
Lesson 8: Using monitoring, evaluation and learning to track partnership health is important.

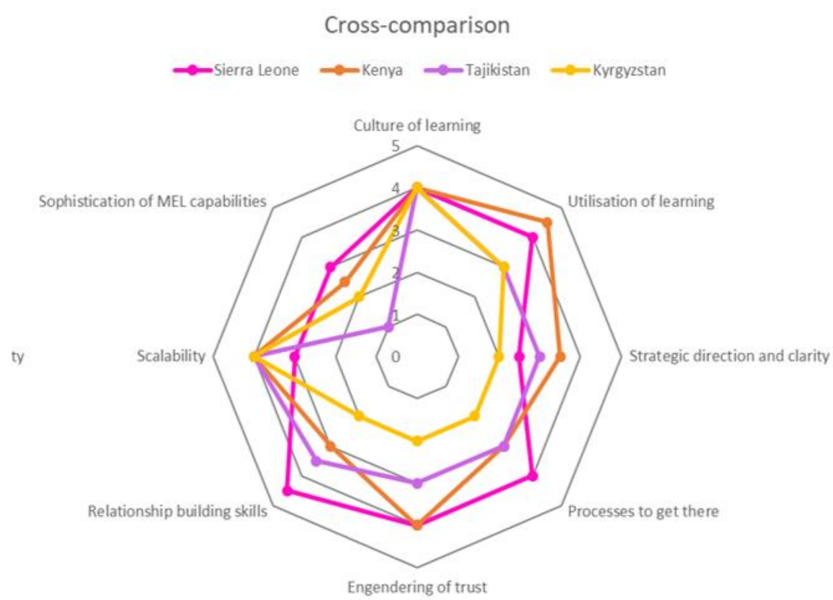
A healthy peer partnership based on trust, a clearly formulated vision and shared principles is a prerequisite for effective collaboration. However, sometimes, even when there is a high degree of trust between peers, results do not automatically follow. When such gaps occur, this could serve as the basis for facilitated dialogue between partners.

GPI uses MEL both to track the health of the peer partnership as well as what the partnership produces in terms of agreed results. They then consider whether there is a correlation over time. A Partnership Capability Assessment (PCA) tool has been developed to assess how two peer partners view the partnership that they are in, using a mixed method approach and a scoring system based on a questionnaire. This is plotted onto spider diagrams (see Figure 2) so that partnership profiles can be compared across countries and regions. While this may seem highly technical, it provides a common basis for discussion among partners and can help to highlight perceived problem areas early on. A discussion of results helps to further unpack their profile in-country (as compared to other programme countries). This may be a less threatening way to bring up potentially sensitive topics and can serve to iron out any miscommunication between partners early on.

[13] This is particularly important in the wake of the COVID pandemic, and also going forward, with increased opportunities for connecting more frequently via digital means.

Figure 2: Partner profiles based on self-assessment of key skills





Source: GPI

Some tensions may have their origins in unspoken power imbalances. Surfacing these (and being aware of how to manage them) is easier if made explicit. This may be particularly important in peer engagements that are inspired by the "twinning" model, pairing one institution as a knowledge provider and one as a recipient of support and advice.

Key questions for P2P practitioners to explore:

- How, and with what tools, can MEL be used to track both the health of the partnership and what it produces?
- How can MEL be used to promote dialogue, reveal areas of conflict and resolve misunderstandings between peers?

Lesson 9: Building trust takes time; long-term investments are needed.

The need to apply a long-term perspective to partnership management is consistently emphasised by P2P practitioners for trust to emerge and two-directional learning and a sense of mutuality to develop. However, supporting trustful P2P engagements at an institutional level typically takes time, with resource implications that go beyond the ambitions of knowledge sharing or "quick fix" problem solving between institutions. Long-term institutional engagement has long been seen as a prerequisite for the emergence of trust (e.g. see World Development Report, 2011), and for learning outcomes to be both relevant and enabling for participating institutions.

The partnership between Nottingham Trent University (UK), and Makerere University, School of Public Health (Uganda), involved sharing co-learning experiences in support of the healthcare system in Uganda. The collaboration started informally with a visit of academics from the United Kingdom to Uganda more than ten years earlier, due to a shared interest in environmental health links. An initial start-up grant eventually led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions. While recognising from the outset that the contexts differed immensely in terms of public and environmental health, the UK and Ugandan partners found common ground and a shared interest in how to work with local communities, recognising the central role this plays in delivering good public health and primary health care. As highlighted in a paper summarising their experiences and achievements to date "…the MoU enabled us to formalize, in our respective institutions, our relationship which was important to develop our long-term collaboration. The MoU sets out ''the principles that guide the partnership which include aims and vision, involvement of strategic partners, commitment to sustainability, and roles of partners" (Musoke et al., 2016). Even so, as pointed out by the Ugandan counterpart at the EIP Learning Event[14], trust does not come automatically or swiftly, despite the identification of a shared area of interest. Trust must be actively worked on, and the principals of mutuality and reciprocal learning openly articulated and monitored by both parties as collaboration and trust emerge over time.

Key questions for P2P practitioners to explore:

- How can P2P partners build support for long-term programme engagement?
- What are the building blocks needed to sustain a long-term P2P partnership?

[14] This intervention happened during the EIP learning event on Building trust and mutuality, which was held virtually on 9 December 2020.

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