Engagement practices between Supreme Audit Institutions and external actors: Mechanisms, risks and benefits

Effective Institutions Platform

Anti-Corruption Resource Centre www.u4.no
Brief summary

At a time when citizen-government relations are often characterised by mistrust or indifference, the use of institutionalised mechanisms is an increasingly important way to foster inclusion. Reliable information is a key ingredient in facilitating collaboration among the actors of a transparent and accountable system. Supreme audit institutions (SAIs) play a crucial role in producing credible information on government expenditure and public sector performance. Through their engagement with external actors in the “accountability ecosystem” – in particular parliaments, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media – they can favour inclusion in oversight and policy-making processes.

This study responds to SAIs’ expressed interest in multiplying the impact of their reports by deepening their interactions with external stakeholders and contributing to advancing citizens’ interests and well-being and wider society.

This report analyses a global survey of 30 SAIs about their engagement with external stakeholders including parliaments, CSOs and the media. It investigates four main aspects: 1) the benefits they expect from establishing, improving and sustaining their interactions with external stakeholders; 2) the interaction mechanisms they have in place; 3) the risks and constraints they have encountered; and 4) how they measure the impact of their engagement strategies.

According to the survey, levels of engagement vary significantly across different stakeholder groups. SAIs engage primarily with parliaments, followed by citizens/CSOs and the media. This suggests SAIs’ engagement with actors beyond their institutional obligations is weak and marked by low levels of trust.

SAIs in high income countries are not always at the forefront of interactions with external stakeholders. Non-OECD SAIs are more likely to engage in two-way, more participatory and interactive approaches than those in OECD countries.

The main purpose of this study is to outline current engagement practices; implementing greater engagement would require further research. However, this report suggests a checklist that could help SAIs to strengthen their engagement strategies.

The main recommendations are:

1. Develop a formal strategy for engagement with external actors.
2. Encourage the use of a broader range of communications tools, if appropriate.
3. Consider mechanisms and initiatives to increase citizen participation.
4. Design a strategy with legislators to increase parliaments’ interest in audit work and follow-up to audit recommendations.
5. Increase systematic use of multi-stakeholder peer-to-peer learning mechanisms.
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Set clear objectives and specify the intended sequence of steps that lead to the expected outcomes (the theory of change) of engagement practices
Adopt a strategy that guides efforts to engage with stakeholders
Design indicators of results and impact and set up evaluation and monitoring systems
Establish a unit and/or assign an officer responsible for managing engagement practices
Raise SAI staff awareness and capacity to engage with external stakeholders through regular training
Adopt a proactive communication strategy that relies on multiple communication channels and is tailored to multiple stakeholders
Consider multiple channels of engagement with citizens and civil society, and adopt mechanisms for institutionalised collaboration besides complaints and audit requests
Diversify channels of engagement with parliament and legislators
Engage the media as a critical ally for disseminating audit activities and products and strengthening the impact of audit recommendations
Encourage and leverage the use of digital tools and ICT to engage with stakeholders
Adopt a systematic approach to learning from peers about engagement practices
Donors should support activities oriented at increasing cooperation amongst accountability institutions, civil society and media

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<tr>
<td>ACIJ</td>
<td>Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia, Argentina (Civil Association for Equality and Justice)</td>
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<td>AFROSAI</td>
<td>African Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions</td>
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<td>AGN</td>
<td>Auditoria General de la Nación (National Audit Office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARABOSAI</td>
<td>Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions</td>
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<td>ASOSAI</td>
<td>Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions</td>
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<td>CAROSAI</td>
<td>Caribbean Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions</td>
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<td>COA</td>
<td>Commission of Audit</td>
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<td>CPA</td>
<td>citizen participatory audit</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>civil society organisation</td>
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<td>CGA</td>
<td>Controller and Auditor General</td>
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<td>Contraloría General de la República (General Controller Office)</td>
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<td>DCD</td>
<td>Development Cooperation Directorate</td>
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<td>EAP</td>
<td>East Asia Pacific</td>
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<td>ECA</td>
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<td>EIP</td>
<td>Effective Institutions Platform</td>
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<td>GAO</td>
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<td>GIFT</td>
<td>Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency</td>
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<td>GIZ</td>
<td>German Development Cooperation</td>
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<td>GPSA</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Social Accountability</td>
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<td>IBP</td>
<td>International Budget Partnership</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>information and communication technology</td>
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<td>International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions</td>
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<td>ISSAI</td>
<td>International Standard of Supreme Audit Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>monitoring and evaluation</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>memorandum of understanding</td>
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<td>NA</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development</td>
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<td>OGP</td>
<td>Open Government Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>OLACEFS</td>
<td>Organización Latinoamericana de Entidades de Fiscalización Superior (Latin American and Caribbean Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions)</td>
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<td>Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions</td>
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<td>PMF</td>
<td>Performance Measurement Framework</td>
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<td>PPBA</td>
<td>Public Participation in the Budget and Audit Process</td>
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<td>SAI</td>
<td>supreme audit institution</td>
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<td>TPA</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>UNDESA</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs</td>
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<td>WGVBS</td>
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