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البنك الإسلامي للتنمية
Islamic Development Bank

**NATIONAL
ECOSYSTEMS
FOR SOUTH-SOUTH
AND TRIANGULAR
COOPERATION (SSTrC)**

**GUIDING PROCESS
FOR ENHANCING THE
POLITICAL WILL
FOR SSTrC**





This strategy development framework document was developed by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) based on its concept on National Ecosystems for South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The document was authored by Riad Ragueb, Ahmed Faruk Diken, Abdelhakim Yessouf, Abdul Majid Khan, Aminuddin Matt Ariff, Faquaruddin Mehmood, Moncef Soudani, and Sameh Hussein of the Reverse Linkage team of the Islamic Development Bank.



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2021



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INTRODUCTION

The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) is the only major multilateral development bank (MDB) with an entire membership and shareholder base from the Global South. IsDB is essentially a 'South-South' bank that is driven by the desire to address the challenges faced by humanity through collective effort.

The IsDB's strong belief in the principles of South-South Cooperation (SSC) is manifested in its support for economic and technical cooperation and trade among its member countries, which together constitute the scope of SSC. In addition, IsDB consistently collaborates with SSC partners in the public, private and third (civil society and non-governmental organizations) sectors. In fact, it has a long-standing history of promoting SSC as an effective means of exchanging knowledge and expertise.

Based on this experience, IsDB – in collaboration with its member countries and partners – prepared a publication entitled *“Developing National Ecosystems for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTrC) to Achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development”*, which was launched on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2019. The publication advocates the establishment of a complete national SSTrC ecosystem, rather than relying on a single institution.

To operationalize the framework of national SSTrC ecosystems for the benefit of member countries, IsDB formulated the *“Capacity Development Programme for Enhancing National Ecosystems for SSTrC in IsDB Member Countries”*, which was approved in December 2019. In August 2020, IsDB also developed a framework to assess the existence and efficiency of the different pillars of the SSTrC ecosystem.

To continue with these knowledge development efforts, this document describes a guiding process for enhancing the political will for SSTrC, which is one of the pillars of the abovementioned SSTrC ecosystem.

The guiding process presented in this document is meant to be implemented mainly by a national team – from a South country – in charge of making advocacy efforts to enhance the political will for SSTrC. Moreover, the guiding process will benefit international organizations concerned with development cooperation in general.

The document begins by presenting the rationale for developing the guiding process and giving an overview of it. Following that, the document describes the different parts of the process of enhancing the political will for SSTrC.



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Developing National Ecosystems for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTrC) to Achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

“The IsDB has a long-standing history of promoting South-South Cooperation as an effective means of exchange of knowledge and expertise.”



ACRONYMS

BAPA	Buenos Aires Plan of Action
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
MDBs	Multilateral Development Banks
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSC	South-South Cooperation
SSTrC	South-South and Triangular Cooperation
TrC	Triangular cooperation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	South-South Cooperation



1: THE RATIONALE

The broadly agreed principles of SSC were initially articulated in 1978 through the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA), which focused on technical cooperation among developing countries. These principles include respect for national sovereignty, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.

The framework of operational guidelines on UN support to SSTRC defines SSC to be “a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how, and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions. South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation”¹.

The UN’s working definition for triangular cooperation (TrC) is “Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country(ies) or multilateral organization(s), to implement development cooperation programmes and projects”.

Considering these comprehensive definitions, the importance of SSTRC for helping countries of the South achieve their developmental goals is growing. In fact, promoting SSTRC formed part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In view of the growing importance and scope of SSTRC, IsDB has been advocating, since 2019, the establishment of a complete national SSTRC ecosystem, rather than relying on a single institution. The national SSTRC ecosystem is defined as “a collection of interlinked pillars with reinforcing feedback loops between them, which coexist and complement each other without a specific hierarchical order, to maximize the contribution of SSTRC to national development. These pillars are political will, national SSTRC strategy, information bases, connected actors, SSTRC agency, financing mechanism and performance management”.

However, countries of the South are far from reaching the full potential of SSTRC. This is evidenced—among others— by the non-existence or weak capacity of national bodies for coordinating SSC, the small scale of SSC activities and their tendency to be short-term interventions, lack of visibility of SSTRC programmes

“Leaders with strong political will drive change, inspire an SSTRC vision, encourage all organizations involved to implement the vision and ensure that SSTRC is mainstreamed within the country’s national development plans.”

compared to other modes of development cooperation and shortage of SSTRC quantitative data.

One major area of improvement in many countries of the South is to enhance SSTRC-related political will. The belief of a country’s leadership in SSTRC affects the whole SSTRC ecosystem and provides motivation to each part of the ecosystem to advance. Leaders with strong political will drive change, inspire an SSTRC vision, encourage all organizations involved to implement the vision and ensure that SSTRC is mainstreamed within the country’s national development plans.

In essence, political will alludes to major decisions taken by the country’s leadership, the impact of which may last for relatively long periods and affect a large number of stakeholders. SSTRC-related decisions taken by the leadership of a country can potentially create changes in power dynamics, establish new responsibilities and lead to the allocation of resources to relevant stakeholders to support SSTRC actions.

Examples of such decisions are: establishing a new SSTRC coordination body, drafting SSTRC legislation, introducing a new SSTRC financing mechanism, mainstreaming SSTRC in national plans and policies, sponsoring an SSTRC programme, etc. The changes created by such decisions may encounter both support and resistance.

It was against this background that IsDB recognized the need to come up with a guiding process for enhancing the political will for SSTRC. The guiding process follows systematic stages and activities to develop a good understanding of the consequences of a major decision, assess the acceptance and resistance of the decision, develop evidence-based arguments and engage in objective discussion with supporters and opponents, ultimately leading to the point of decision making.

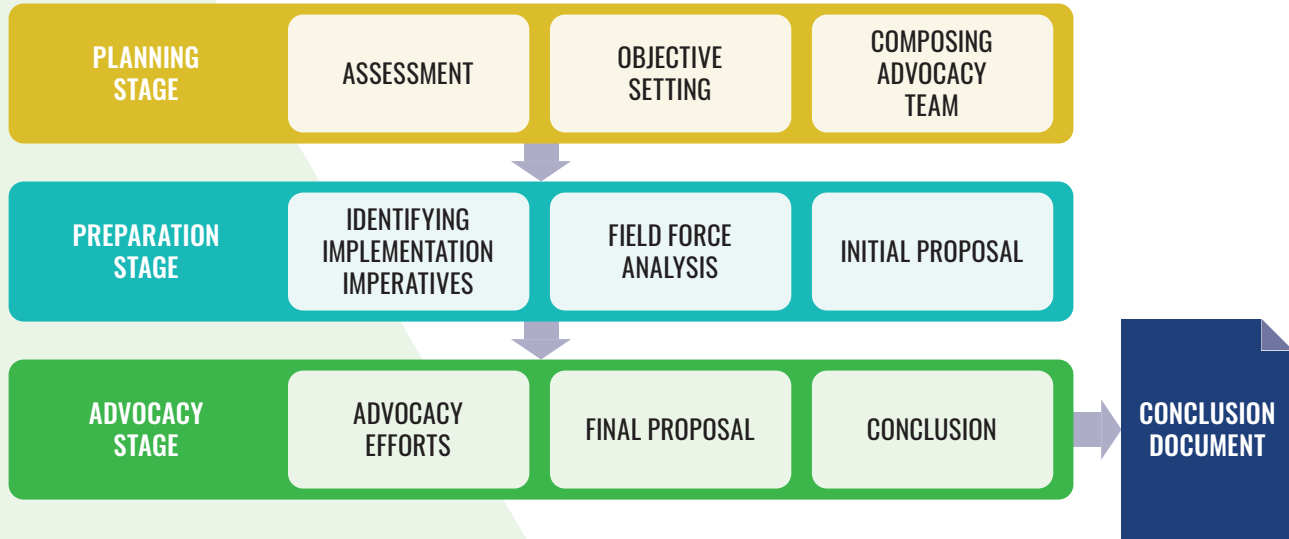
The guiding process will benefit the governments of countries of the South as well as international organizations concerned with development cooperation in general.

¹ The UNDP’s booklet on “Frequently Asked Questions for South–South Cooperation” http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/development_cooperationandfinance/frequently-asked-questions--south-south-cooperation.html



2: OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDING PROCESS FOR ENHANCING SSTRc POLITICAL WILL

FIGURE 1 THE GUIDING PROCESS FOR ENHANCING SSTRc POLITICAL WILL



OBJECTIVE OF THE GUIDING PROCESS

The guiding process for enhancing SSTRc political will aims to:

Facilitate making major SSTRc-related decisions that demonstrate the desire of leaders to help other countries and be helped by other countries for mutual benefit, as well as to contribute to addressing regional and global development challenges.

PREMISES OF THE GUIDING PROCESS

The guiding process presented in this document is based on the following premises:

- Political will is best manifested by leaders taking major decisions affecting a large number of stakeholders.
- Any major decision comes with perceived sizeable positive and/or negative changes at the national, organizational and individual levels. These changes could be related to power, responsibilities or resources.
- The perception of anticipated changes determines the position of each organization and individual, being supporter or restrainer.
- An efficient way to ease the resistance to change is to make explicit advocacy efforts at the level of the nation, organizations and other stakeholders who are expected to be impacted by that change.

“Political will is best manifested by leaders taking major decisions affecting a large number of stakeholders.”

- Bottom-up advocacy could help debate decisions before making them, fine-tune those decisions, reduce resistance by presenting convincing arguments, secure support for needed decisions that would facilitate their implementation and eventually increase confidence in the appropriateness of the decisions that are made.

Based on these premises, the guiding process approaches the issue of enhancing SSTRc political will as basically a problem of undertaking bottom-up advocacy efforts to reach the widest possible acceptance of a major SSTRc-related decision before proposing it to the country’s leadership.

SOURCE OF THE GUIDING PROCESS

The guiding process presented in this document borrows its elements from the “Strategic Negotiation Process”, which is widely applied in the field of business management, but with many adaptations. The Strategic Negotiation Process, along with its tools such as Force Field Analysis are described in several reference books².

² The Strategy Negotiation and its tools are covered in several books such as “Strategic Negotiation” by Prof. Gavin Kennedy; and “Negotiating at Work: Turn Small Wins into Big Gains” by Deborah M. Kolb.



WHO SHOULD USE THE GUIDING PROCESS

To ensure national ownership, the guiding process is meant to be implemented by a national team handling advocacy within a country from the Global South for enhancing its SSTRC political will. Therefore, the advocacy team is hereafter referred to as the “country team”. The country team may have representatives from the public, private and third sectors. A country may also decide to secure assistance from a specialized firm or institution in gathering and assessing information during the advocacy process.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDING PROCESS

The guiding process explains what should be done to facilitate making SSTRC-related decisions, in terms of stages and activities. However, based on the judgement and experience of the country team, it may decide how each activity should be undertaken. Specifically, the country team needs to decide on the following:

- The specific information gathering technique to be used in each activity; whether desk research, questionnaires, one-to-one interviews or workshops.
- The approach of debating a proposal with the stakeholders concerned.
- The duration of each activity.
- Developing specific templates/tools to facilitate the undertaking of selected activities.
- Adding a certain activity or deliverable that is thought to be essential in certain circumstances.

In all cases, while making advocacy or convincing efforts, it is important to distinguish between three different concepts: information, argument and proposal. Information is raw or treated data about subjects, including people, events, organizations, etc. In the context of advocacy, information is only useful when it is used to develop an argument, meaning a set of reasons intended to support or reject a certain point of view. The argument(s) are presented to convince a certain audience to accept a specific proposal.

In other words, an advocacy team should have clear answers to three different, yet interrelated, questions:

- What is our proposal?
- What arguments do we have in hand?
- Which information supports those arguments?

“In all cases, while making advocacy or convincing efforts, it is important to distinguish between three different concepts: information, argument and proposal.”

THE EXAMPLE OF ESTABLISHING A NEW NATIONAL BODY FOR SSTRC

For the sake of illustration, the whole document uses the example of a ministry of foreign affairs endeavouring to establish a new national body for SSTRC.

However, enhancing the political will for SSTRC may entail making decisions on several issues. The guiding process should be followed for negotiating each decision, rather than all the needed decisions at once. This is because the information, argument and proposal pertaining to each issue will most likely be different. This means that the country team should go through all the stages and activities of the guiding process for each needed decision individually.

STAGES OF THE GUIDING PROCESS

The guiding process is divided into three stages: (i) planning; (ii) preparation; and (iii) advocacy. Each stage is further divided into three activities, as illustrated in Figure-1. The information gathered and the findings reached during each stage/activity should guide the subsequent ones.

The three stages of the guiding process should result in producing what is generically named the “Conclusion Document”, which carries a decision made by the concerned country’s leadership for enhancing its SSTRC status.

Sections 2, 3 and 4 of this document elaborate on each stage and activity. It is worth noting that the guiding process will be subject to refinement after each time it is applied.



3: PLANNING STAGE

OVERVIEW

The planning stage begins with assessing the SSTRC ecosystem – including the SSTRC political will – in the concerned country. The assessment findings enable the country to determine the most needed decision(s) to enhance the SSTRC political will. Accordingly, getting one of these decisions made by the country's leadership should be the objective of the whole advocacy process. Depending on the nature of the needed decision, a country team should be constituted from individuals who have knowledge and experience in the points to be discussed.

ASSESSMENT

This activity assesses the current SSTRC ecosystem – including the SSTRC political will – in the concerned country. To that end, IsDB produced the "Assessment Framework for National Ecosystem for SSTRC", which suggests assessment criteria for each pillar of the SSTRC ecosystem.

The assessment framework suggests the following criteria to assess the SSTRC political will:

- **Engagement at the top level of state:** this criterion refers to the engagement of the top level of the country (head of state/government, etc.) in driving the SSTRC agenda and in furthering the country's experience and efforts in the development of SSTRC.
- **Articulation in the constitution:** this criterion refers to the incorporation of SSTRC in the constitution of the country. Such inclusion reflects that the country is institutionally committed to being active in SSTRC, both as a provider and as a recipient.
- **Establishment of the legal framework:** this criterion refers to the existence of a legal framework for SSTRC within the country. This can be accomplished through laws, decrees and regulations adopted by the country.
- **Inclusion of SSTRC in the national development plan:** this criterion checks whether the national development plan includes a substantive role for SSTRC. The plan may guide the work of public institutions and private firms to catalyse their SSTRC initiatives:
- **Inclusion of SSTRC in foreign policy:** this criterion refers to how political will is reflected in a country's foreign policy, which should have a substantive role for SSTRC in achieving the country's international goals.

“The assessment of the current SSTRC ecosystem – including political will for SSTRC – should result in the identification of a series of needed decisions to enhance that political will.”

The assessment of the current SSTRC ecosystem – including political will for SSTRC – should result in the identification of a series of needed decisions to enhance that political will, and in turn provide motivation for each part of the ecosystem to advance.

OBJECTIVE SETTING

This activity looks at the SSTRC-related decisions recommended by the previous assessment activity and selects the most needed one, applying the following criteria:

- The decision is essential for promoting SSTRC in the country.
- The decision is technically feasible, having minimal prerequisites.
- The decision is politically feasible, based on an overall/initial assessment of the acceptance and resistance it is expected to meet.
- The decision is expected to trigger many positive changes.

Getting the selected decision be taken by the country's leadership should become the ultimate objective of the advocacy process.

For example, the ministry of foreign affairs in a country of the South may recognize the need to establish a standalone entity to coordinate and supervise SSTRC interventions. In this case, the objective of the whole process would be to have the country's leadership make the decision of establishing that new entity.



COMPOSING THE ADVOCACY TEAM

The purpose of this activity is to constitute the country team who will carry out the activities suggested in the guiding process. The decision of constituting the country team is typically made by the entity that initiated the assessment of the national SSTRC ecosystem.

The need for a dedicated team stems from the fact that convincing organizations and people to support/accept an anticipated major decision is challenging and cannot be materialized without organized work.

As will be detailed in the forthcoming parts of this document, the country team is not only responsible for conducting face-to-face advocacy, but also for collecting massive preparatory information and assessing the position of many stakeholders with respect to an anticipated change in the country's SSTRC landscape. The success condition of the country team is getting a certain SSTRC-related decision made by the country's leadership.

The general guidelines for composing the country team are as follows:

- The team should have necessary and sufficient skills for the specific task at hand. If many people are involved, communication overhead will affect efficiency. On the other hand, if some knowledge is lacking, there is a risk that the team will not be able to develop a convincing argument.
- The team should have a documented structure and distribution of responsibilities.

“Convincing organizations and people to support/accept an anticipated major decision is challenging and cannot be materialized without organized work.”

- The team should be informed about the duration of its assignment, meaning the time within which the needed SSTRC-related decision is expected to be made.
- The team should receive adequate orientation from its management prior to starting its job.
- Necessary technical and financial resources should be allocated to the team.

For example, to undertake the negotiation around establishing a new national SSTRC body, the ministry of foreign affairs may compose a small team whose members are experienced in SSTRC and knowledgeable about the government procedures for budget allocation, executive management appointment and staff recruitment. If needed, the team may include a communication specialist to deal with the media during the advocacy process.



4: PREPARATION STAGE

OVERVIEW

During the preparation stage, the country team tries to answer the following question: if the needed SSTRC-related decision is made, what resources are required to implement it? Answering this basic question will enable the country team to identify the stakeholders with whom that decision should be discussed.

The country team also tries to collect information that can be presented as supportive and counterarguments with respect to the SSTRC-related decision.

The decision's implementation requirements and the collected information feed into an initial, yet fully costed, proposal.

IDENTIFYING IMPLEMENTATION IMPERATIVES

The implementation imperatives are basically the various resources and actions required to implement the anticipated SSTRC-decision, once it is made. During this activity, the country team tries to identify the following types of resources, wherever applicable:

- **People:** the required number and skill mix of staff plus their training needs.
- **Finance:** the required budget and how it will be sourced.
- **Physical:** the fixed and movable assets needed, such as buildings, office space and equipment.

In our example of the ministry of foreign affairs endeavour to establish a new SSTRC body, the implementation imperatives might be as follows:

PEOPLE

- Transfer (X) staff to the new SSTRC body.
- Recruit (Y) new staff.
- Organize training for the new staff on SSTRC and diplomacy.
- Offer a suitable payment package to retain the staff.

FINANCE

- Allocate \$(X) annually from the state budget.
- Secure \$(Y) annually from MDBs by way of grants.
- Secure \$(Z) annually from MDBs by way of loans (in case the country thinks of taking a loan to fund the new SSTRC body).

PHYSICAL

- Allocate a space in building (X) for the new SSTRC.
- Establish and equip a new building within one year.

The implementation imperatives are the practical consequences of the needed SSTRC-related decision. Every consequence should be perceived as a change that needs to be agreed upon with a certain stakeholder. These consequences/changes should be identified and quantified in order to take an informed decision. The ideal scenario would be to secure the acceptance of all stakeholders concerned prior to presenting the proposed decision to the country's leadership.

FIELD FORCE ANALYSIS

In any decision-making situation, there are driving forces towards changing the current situation to a desired one. There are also resisting forces towards maintaining the current situation. The net effect depends on the power of each side.

During this activity, the country team summarizes and assesses the driving and resisting forces, so that proper actions can be designed to increase the chance of taking the desired decision. For that purpose, the country team can use "Field Force Analysis" as a modelling and visualization tool.

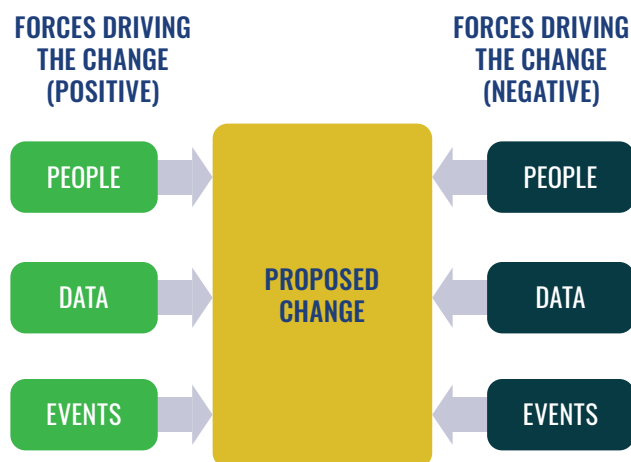
This tool recognizes the fact that the forces affecting the decision-making situation can be classified as 'People', 'Data' and 'Events'. To use this tool, the country team should go through the following analysis steps:

- Identify the people affecting the decision-making. For each one, identify his/her stance and relative power.
- Identify the data that might be used during the discussion. For each data set, identify if it is for or against the team's position, and the relative importance of each one.
- Identify events, historic or present, that can be referred to during the discussion.
- For the forces against the change, develop themes and collect more data to weaken or neutralize the strongest one.
- For the forces in favour of the change, develop themes and collect factual data to strengthen the weakest ones.

It should be noted that the Field Force Analysis usually generates a lot of information. It is up to the country team to use such information in the activity of "Initial Proposal" and/or "Advocacy Efforts".



FIGURE 2 CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATION OF FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS



By applying the above-mentioned analysis steps to the example of establishing a new SSTRC body, the driving (positive) and resistance (negative) forces could be illustrated as follows:

	Positive Forces	Negative Forces
PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People convinced with the importance and benefits of SSTRC. ● People enthusiastic to assume new responsibilities. ● Resource centres whose works will be showcased abroad. ● MDBs and UN Agencies who are willing to support SSTRC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People not aware of the principles of SSTRC. ● People thinking high about other modes of development cooperation. ● People who might lose power or resources as a result of the anticipated decision.
DATA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emergence of new SSTRC active donors. ● Reports about the soft power of countries of the South. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Debate about the transaction cost of SSTRC. ● Drop in grants offered by MDBs. ● Unaffordable pricing policies of loans (in case the country thinks of taking a loan to fund the new SSTRC body).
EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Success stories of SSTRC interventions. ● Other countries launching major SSTRC programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Success stories of other modes of development cooperation. ● Low or debatable success of some SSTRC programmes.

INITIAL PROPOSAL

At this stage, the country team articulates a complete proposal about making the desired SSTRC-related decision, using the information gathered during the previous activities, namely “Implementation Imperatives” and “Field Force Analysis”.

The proposal should be structured as follows:

- The summary of the assessment of the national SSTRC ecosystem, focusing on the pillar of political will.
- The proposed decision(s).
- The disadvantages of not taking the decision(s).
- The advantages of taking the decision(s).
- The implementation imperatives.

In fact, the initial proposal is equivalent to a feasibility study in commercial businesses. Coming up with the initial proposal will be useful in different directions as follows:

- The country team develops full command over the issue to be discussed.
- Raising the confidence of the management and the country’s leadership in the usefulness of the proposed decision plus the feasibility of its implementation.
- Coming up with creative ideas regarding implementation issues.
- Serving as a communication tool with the stakeholders.



5: ADVOCACY STAGE

OVERVIEW

The advocacy stage focuses on conducting individual or collective advocacy sessions with the stakeholders based on the initial proposal document. The main objective of the advocacy is to reduce the resistance and increase the acceptance of the anticipated or desired decision. The advocacy outcomes should lead to the production of the final proposal, to be submitted to the country's leadership for consideration.

ADVOCACY EFFORTS

At this stage, the country team holds face-to-face discussions with the stakeholders concerned, including the organizations that would provide resources for the implementation of the desired decision and the ones that would be impacted by that decision.

To do that, the country team should prepare a specific agenda, meaning the list of points that require discussion with each organization and stakeholder.

Additionally, the country team should develop a plan to convince the people concerned that is centred around the following:

- Gradually introducing the supportive arguments.
- Anticipating the counterarguments and preparing responses to them.
- Having a range of acceptable options with respect to the implementation imperatives or resources.
- Changing the contents of the proposal, if necessary.

The discussion can be done through a series of individual interviews, multilateral workshops or both. In all cases, the success factors of the discussion are a credible proposal document, skills of the negotiation team and a good selection of the negotiation timing. For example, it is not advisable to start the discussion while knowing that a major political change will take place shortly.

FINAL PROPOSAL

Following the advocacy efforts, the country team should produce the final proposal, which will be submitted to the country's leadership for consideration.

The final proposal should have the following elements:

- The results of the assessment of the national SSTRC ecosystem, while focusing on the pillar of political will.
- The proposed decision(s).
- The disadvantages of not taking the decision(s).
- The advantages of taking the decision(s).
- The implementation imperatives.
- The outcomes of discussions with stakeholders.

The differences between the initial and final proposal are: revising the implementation imperatives based on feedback from the stakeholders, presenting evidence that the issue at hand was discussed with the concerned organizations and reporting on the final position of those organizations with respect to the proposed decision.

CONCLUSION

In this final activity, the country team submits – through its organization – the final proposal document to the country's leadership to make the needed SSTRC-related decision.

The document submission, along with any verbal presentation, is typically followed by a decision.

It is important to produce a document for that decision (i.e. the Conclusion Document), which could be – among others – an article in the constitution, act, decree or instruction (new or revised). The resulting document should be published publicly and communicated individually to all organizations and stakeholders concerned.



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