



IPPF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE HUB

Learning Review

Review timeframe: **Jan 2018 – July 2020**

Feedback reviewed and report prepared by: **IPPF OLE unit**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to the Social Enterprise Acceleration Programme

The Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka (FPASL) has been operating IPPF's Social Enterprise Acceleration Programme (SEAP) since the end of 2017. Since this time, a dedicated Social Enterprise (SE) Hub based at FPASL has worked with other IPPF MAs and the Secretariat to strengthen the Federation's capacity to develop and deliver social enterprise interventions.

The Learning Review: Overview

The 'Learning Review' was carried out between August 2020 and September 2020. Staff from MAs, ROs, CO and the SE Hub who have been involved in the first two years of the SEAP were invited to participate in the review.

Through a survey approach, the learning review aimed to gather feedback and learning on the support provided by the SE Hub, the expectations of the SE Hub, the application of knowledge and changes implemented by MAs, as well as feedback on the approach, which is aligned with IPPF's MA-centric approach for programming. The findings of the review will inform potential adaptations to the activities, processes, and structure of the SE Hub.

Learning and Findings

Overall, respondents were very positive about the work undertaken by the SE Hub, the support received, and the SEAP programme in general. There was some important feedback that focused on areas for improvement, including a need to:

- strengthen support for the set-up of in-country enterprise ideas and ensure more funding for the start-up of activities
- strengthen the business plans produced as well as create more tailored support to MAs
- strengthen RO engagement and ownership of the process
- ensure trainings are not too long and are followed up by coaching and customized support
- be more open to varied models of social enterprise
- clarify duties and responsibilities entailed in the working relationship between the SE Hub and the ROs

Recommendations

Several critical recommendations were shared through the learning review. This will help to strengthen the work of the SEAP. These can be summarized as:

- expanding the role of the SE Hub as a connector between MAs
- list areas of expertise and experts within the Federation who are willing to support the SEAP
- clarify the strategy, roles and consultative approach between the ROs and the SE Hub
- enhance the visibility of the SE Hub as the Global SEAP Lead across the Federation
- enhance support to MAs with coaching and consultancy on the issues they face

1. Background to the Social Enterprise Acceleration Programme

Background to the Social Enterprise Acceleration Programme

In 2015, IPPF established the [Social Enterprise Acceleration Programme](#) (SEAP) with the long term aim of strengthening the capacity of its Member Associations (MA) to apply entrepreneurial best practices in the health sector while delivering social value and improving lives. At the end of 2017, IPPF appointed [The Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka \(FPASL\)](#) as the Social Enterprise (SE) Hub. This was done with a long-term view and belief that SEAP's potential and impact would be maximized if delivered in the context of a well-established MA with significant expertise and a successful track record in Social Enterprise.

The objectives of the SE Hub are:

- To accelerate the development of MAs towards diversifying their resource base, achieving financial sustainability, and maximizing social impact.
- To provide MAs with high quality technical advice to support the effective development and delivery of sustainable sexual and reproductive health interventions through social enterprise.
- To share key insights and best practices within the Federation and provide access to external networks of support and market opportunities.

Organizational experience in Social Enterprise:

FPASL has a track record of successfully implementing social enterprise activities and it has established itself as a market leader in the distribution and sale of contraceptives.

FPASL has functioned as the SE Hub since January 2018; it is located within FPASL's head office, with a dedicated two-member team who are supported by the organization's Social Marketing Unit, Communications department and Senior Management Team. The SE Hub was chosen for their strong income generation programme with over 90% of income generated locally. It has expertise in business and staff with strong experience in the corporate sector.

The SE Hub works closely with IPPF Central Office and the Regional Offices to ensure the successful implementation of the SEAP. The SE Hub is currently funded through designated funds.

2. The Learning review: Overview

Framework

The 'Learning Review' was carried out between August 2020 and September 2020 and aimed to gather feedback from the main stakeholders who have been involved in the first two years of the SEAP. Staff from MAs, ROs, CO and the SE Hub were invited to participate in the review.

The feedback was structured around three areas:

- Feedback on the SE Hub support and expectations of the SE Hub
- Application of knowledge and changes in the MAs
- Feedback on the MA-centric approach

Groups surveyed	Objective	Type of feedback
MAs and EDs and ROs	To understand the quality of the support provided by the SE Hub.	Feedback on the SE Hub support and expectations of the Hub
ROs, CO, FPASL staff in the SE Hub	To measure performance by investigating the changes that MAs have made to their provision of social enterprise activities.	Application of knowledge and changes in the MAs
ROs, CO, FPASL staff in the SE Hub	To garner feedback on the MA-centric approach and potentially to inform the Hub and other MAs on what it needs to do to be most effective when working with ROs.	Feedback on the MA-centric approach

Purpose

The findings of the review will inform any potential adaptations to the activities, processes and structure of the SE Hub. The main objective is to enhance the service level of the SE Hub in coming years. The following sub objectives are also covered:

1. Minimize the gap between MA expectations of the SE Hub and contracted activity
2. Identify better strategies to reach more MAs to provide capacity building
3. Expand the services offered by the SE Hub

Methodology

Surveys were designed for the different stakeholder groups and circulated among the focus groups. The survey for MAs was circulated among 25 MAs who received services from the SE Hub. Respondents from the MAs included both the MA Executive Directors (ED) as well as staff working directly on the MA's SE programme.

Category	MA	ED	RO	SE Hub	CO
Response	10	15	4	3	2

3. Learning and Findings

This section summaries the feedback on the SE Hub support, expectations of the Hub, application of the knowledge and changes in the MA.

A. Feedback on the SE Hub support and expectations

Member Association staff:

Eight of the ten MA respondents received support in the form of seed grants, and seven received technical support and assistance. Below summarizes the **status of their business ventures**:

Answer	%	Count
Other - Please explain	19.05%	4
Looking at funding options	19.05%	4
Generating new business ideas	14.29%	3
Yet to break-even	14.29%	3
Implemented and at start-up phase	9.52%	2
Research and feasibility analysis phase	4.76%	1
Business Planning phase	4.76%	1
Generating an income from the SE	4.76%	1
Looking to grow the business	4.76%	1
Inactive	4.76%	1
Total	100%	21

The MAs reported the following expectations from the SE Hub:

1. Receive technical assistance, build capacity, and increase staff knowledge to be able to manage a social enterprise business, as well as gain new ideas for diversifying income
2. Establish a social enterprise and improve resource mobilization by achieving a diverse funding base (x3)
3. Benefit from FPASL's expertise and share knowledge with other participating MAs

Overall, the MAs reported satisfaction that the expectations of the SE Hub were met, especially regarding the support provided. Feedback on the quality of the support was either excellent or good.

Where moderate satisfaction on the achievement of the overall SE Hub objectives was reported, this was linked to the implementation of the MA's own activities and the length of time it is taking to actually get the activities up and running.

Operationally, the MAs reported that their funding was disbursed on time, and seven of the ten MAs reported receiving feedback within a week of a request being made.

Member Association Executive Directors:

The MA EDs who responded reported the following expectations:

1. Receive Technical support and mentoring (x4)
2. Create new source of funding (x2)
3. Knowledge sharing and access to other MA experiences (x2)
4. Gain insight into income generation for sustainability (x4)
5. Build SE knowledge/skills (x3)
6. Receive seed funding for our activities (x1)

Fourteen out of the fifteen respondents were either extremely or moderately satisfied in the support they received. They cited satisfaction in:

- The learning hub set up and the resources developed to support social enterprise activities implementation

- The high level of technical support
However, they would have appreciated more support onsite.

Regional Offices:

The RO respondents reported overall positive feedback regarding a) the SE Hub keeping them informed and up to date with activities, b) responsiveness when contacted for support, and c) receipt of invitations for feedback. They identified the SE Hub as skilled and competent in the areas of sales commodity, and they reported that other MAs appreciate working with a leading MA.

There was feedback reported that it can be challenging for an MA with expertise in one area to understand the different contexts of other MAs, particularly those working with SE models in areas of training and specialized clinical services.

There were mixed responses from ROs regarding expectation and relevance of the activities, with some ROs very satisfied with the support and the activities, and two who were partly satisfied. The reasons stated for partial satisfaction were: 1) MAs in one region are too small to be able to set up social enterprise activities and b) there is a need to strengthen the business plans produced as well as create more tailored support to MAs.

RO respondents had mixed comments about their own responsiveness to the SE Hub's request for feedback. They highlighted that the mechanism of commenting on already developed tools / pieces of work did not feel very consultative and that this impacted on levels of RO engagement and ownership of the process.

The Business Plan tool was reported as a good tool for the MAs to work with and the Hub could support MAs with training and further guidance.

The internship programme was seen as too long, and participants were not able to apply everything they learned and lost momentum. It is recommended that shorter bursts of training are followed up by coaching and tailored support to apply the learning.

Social Enterprise Hub:

The SE Hub commented on ROs having very different types of expertise and support they can provide to MAs. They also commented on the need for ROs to be more open to other models of social enterprise other than medical or SRH related.

The SE Hub has a consulting role, and it is up to the MA to take on any advice. They do not have incentives or leverage to push MAs to prioritize SE and therefore rely on them to do so.

Overall:

There appears to be gaps in the understanding of the responsibilities and roles in the working arrangement between the SE Hub and ROs. The SE Hub has tried to establish a relationship with the ROs in which they expect feedback on pieces of work that they have carried out and also expect that the RO acts as their communication channel with MAs. Some ROs have acknowledged that they are not always responsive to requests from the SE Hub.

The SE Hub and all RO respondents agree that the main role of the SE Hub is to provide capacity building.

The SE Hub and three ROs see the role as providing innovation and learning.

Additionally, ARO respondents raised the issue that their MAs cover their operating costs, staff costs and supply costs through donor funding. Therefore, an increase in income from social enterprise activities coincided with an increase in donor funding which could be used to cover costs. When funding decreases so does the ability of the MAs to generate income, which goes against the principle of sustainability. For MAs to access market opportunities, the overall quality of the business plans and supporting evidence (market research and financial projections) in ARO must be strengthened.

Feedback from MAs and EDs also indicated a need for more funding to be able to start or set-up activities appropriately.

B. Application of knowledge and changes in the MAs

The MAs were also asked about **changes they have been able to make** due to taking part in activities or receiving advice from the SE Hub. They reported as follows:

Answer	%	Count
A change in the business approach	28.57%	4
Development of new systems/tools or internal processes	21.43%	3
Reallocation of role and responsibilities of staff / Additional staff to work on social enterprise activities	21.43%	3
Sale of new products/services to generate income	14.29%	2
Any other. Please provide examples	14.29%	2
Total	100%	14

Summary of factors supporting and limiting achievement of SE activities:

Factors supporting implementation	Barriers to achieving more
Institutional will to explore new avenues of social enterprise and making core funds available to implement changes is of critical importance.	COVID-19 and the restrictions that have been imposed have slowed down production activities.
The need to adapt to changing customer needs.	Not enough funding to purchase more equipment
Institutional will to generate more income.	Bureaucratic system of governance
Being able to remunerate staff involved in SE.	Limited duration of the project in respect to the decisions that need to be taken.
Provision of unrestricted funds from SE Hub gave the impetus to invest in SE.	
Exchanges with FPASL (SE Hub) have enabled mindset shift of the MA.	

Lessons learned:

MAs reported to have learned the following about building a SE venture:

- Implementing an SE model requires strong organizational commitment (time and resources).
- It is not necessary to invest in a solely health related venture as long as it can contribute to the MAs mission and vision
- There needs to be a minimum level of (organizational) structure to be able to launch activities.

The MA EDs reported that knowledge is shared mainly through meetings at Board and staff level or sharing of materials. They also commented on the need for more training and knowledge sharing between MAs as well as more tailored and specific mentoring from the Hub which could include consultation on specific issues and problems faced.

C. Feedback on the MA-centric approach

SE Hub:

- Whilst the Hub feel they have the expertise in business and social enterprise, they report on barriers that they have had to overcome to be accepted as the Global Lead on Social Enterprise. “In this regard, though competent in the expert area, FPASL had to find its own way through the operational dynamics and had to face some unexpected friction and criticism at various levels of the Federation.”
- As it was the first time an MA (and FPASL) was hosting a knowledge centre, time was needed to better understand how the Federation worked especially in terms of SE. The main challenge expressed by the Hub was the change in mind-set in having a leading MA and the need to get the ROs on board. As a recommendation from the Hub, the MA-centric approach will be best suited for hands-on knowledge. It is about front liners leading the way.
- The Hub fed-back that the processes of reporting and funds disbursement were satisfying with only a slight delay in disbursing funds once.

Regional Offices:

Regional Office staff were asked what recommendations they would give to an MA managing a global programme. They reported as follows:

- The MA can facilitate a process of strategic dialogue and participatory planning using the skills of people within the Secretariat and select MAs. They don't need to have all these skills or hire external consultants, but rather lead a cross functional team from within the Secretariat.
- Involve as many MAs as possible (not only the ones with experience in the related field), and develop a clear strategy to strengthen the other MAs and share experiences and lessons learned.
- Work closely with the unified secretariat
- Ensure funding support to continue and expand

When asked “what is the role of the Unified Secretariat in supporting MAs leading a global programme”, the responses were as follows:

- Provide the SE Hub with relevant information and knowledge about other MAs across the Federation with whom they do not regularly have contact.
- Connect the lead MA (SE Hub) with other MAs across the Federation to share expertise.
- Supporting a global programme requires a shared vision, a Theory of Change, a method for achieving the change, training tools and resources, set of targets and a set of indicators. A cross-section of the Secretariat is needed, to include skills in strategic planning, programme design, curriculum

development, training, communications/design and fundraising.

- ▶ Support for resource mobilisation.

Central Office:

The CO staff reported that there is full confidence in FPASL to lead the SE Hub. This is because of their strong experience in social marketing and what they have learned about working with the Federation.

In relation to the project management of the grant from CO to the Hub, CO reported a high quality of the reports, and timely submission.

Recommendations from CO respondents for MAs taking on a global lead role are:

- ▶ Be bold and modest but don't let modesty overtake your confidence.
- ▶ Strengthen communications with other regions and set up working groups with all key stakeholders.
- ▶ Recommendations for the Unified Secretariat when working with an MA in a global lead role are:
 - Treat the MA as an equal and give the MA the visibility and space it needs to achieve the programme objectives.
 - Protect it from politics.
 - Have a DLT sponsor and ensure that there is strong support from the central office.

4. Recommendations

Below are suggested recommendations that have been made by the people who have provided feedback as well as IPPF OLE staff who has reviewed the feedback. These will need to be consulted on and other recommendations can be added or removed if deemed irrelevant.

1. Responding to the need for exchange and knowledge sharing between MAs who are participating in the activities of the SE Hub, there is space for the SE Hub to expand its role of connector between MAs, leveraging experiences from across the Federation to share knowledge and expand opportunities for learning across the Federation.
2. List areas of expertise and experts within the Federation who are willing to support the SEAP. The SE Hub can facilitate a process of strategic dialogue and participatory planning using the skills of people within the Secretariat and select MAs, and lead a cross functional team to support the programme.
3. The ROs and SE Hub could benefit from a clarification exercise on what is the strategy and the roles that each entity plays and how they can/should contribute. The SE Hub could strengthen the consultative approach in the scoping and design phase of new activities. This will support increased engagement and ownership from all entities in the Federation.
4. For social enterprise activities it is important that there is strong institutional support so that the resources are provided for SE activities to be implemented.
5. Provide more visibility to the SE Hub so that it is known across the whole Federation that it is the Global Lead on Social Enterprise. This will support knowledge and experience sharing as anyone working on Social Enterprise will know they can contact the SE Hub for advice and mentorship and to share innovation, knowledge and experiences with. This will support the SE Hub's ability to be a connector between MAs.

6. Provide opportunities for customized learning. The SE Hub should look at enhanced ways to support the MAs with coaching and consultancy on the issues they face as they implement their activities.

Proposed Solutions/enhancements

The following solutions have been proposed by the SE Hub based on the findings of the review:

1. Implement a structured approach to develop the capacities of MAs with a social enterprise venture
2. Formulate an effective global SE strategy in collaboration with the ROs
3. Set KPIs for MAs linking SE as a performance measurement tool