TRANSITION CYCLE WORKBOOK

From Stopping as Success: Locally Led
Transitions in Development (SAS+)

INTRODUCTION

Over eight years of researching and supporting responsible transitions from international to local leadership, the Stopping As Success (SAS+) program found that teams in transition processes would benefit from further support in tracking their transition process and engaging with transition resources in a considered, interactive, and tailored way. The aim of this resource is therefore to provide practitioners with a way to consider and responsibly implement both the whole and individual parts of a transition process. Rather than focusing on prescriptive to-do lists or activities, the aim of this resource is to first inspire thinking around key issues in transitions, and then to provide users with appropriate tools to carry out a transition successfully.

Ultimately, this resource aims to support more responsible transitions, which ensure the transfer of technical and procedural ownership from an international to local level. Examples of responsible transitions include an international organizational transformation to be locally led or a programmatic handover to a local entity.[1] Transition processes are non-linear and fluid depending on changes to the context, needs, and plan. Additionally, these processes often involve power dynamics - including who has access to resources and decision-making on the transition processes. Therefore, this resource aims to support teams to navigate these changes and power dynamics in a way that supports more sustainable, equitable, and lasting change.

Overview of transition 'life cycle'

Responsible transition processes, while increasingly more common, are not well-documented or widely researched. The SAS+ project has developed a framework that describes the typical life cycle of transition processes from international to local leadership across the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors:

    0. Preparation: A pre-transition phase, including strategy development, where a formal transition is not yet planned
    1. Decision: A decision to transition motivated by a set of external and/or internal triggers
    2. Process: A process for implementing the transition over a period of time
    3. Outcome: An outcome of the transition, resulting in increased local sustainability

Who is this resource for?

This resource is relevant for international and local organizations, entities, networks, and program teams that are planning or actively implementing a transition from an international to a local entity in the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors. This resource is relevant for transitions at the activity, project, or organizational level. This framework also provides useful guidance for organizations or teams developing a transition strategy (without a formal transition actively underway).

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[1] SAS+ recognizes that transition processes are, at times, donor-driven, including in USAID Transition Award processes. SAS+ has developed guidance specific to these award mechanisms, which can be found here.

Transition Process Life Cycle
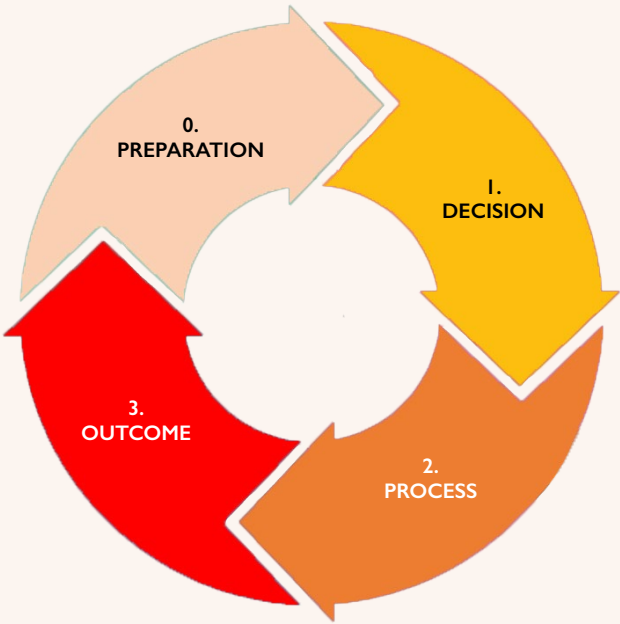
When to use this resource

Ideally, this resource is first used to inform the start of a relationship between partners. In this 'best case scenario,' for example, as an INGO is starting a new partnership with a CSO, discussing the long-term financial sustainability plan for during the partnership and expectations for after the transition will significantly help prepare you both for an eventual transition process.

However, if transition thinking did not inform the beginnings of a partnership, program, or activity, this resource is useful at any stage of a transition process. We encourage everyone to use this resource in the stage that they are in, without judgment, knowing that this resource will support a more responsible transition at any stage in the process.

How to use this resource

This resource provides practical examples, targeted questions, and reflection questions to allow practitioners to explore critical components of and take action to shape a responsible transition process. Importantly:

- You can start or stop your engagement at any point in the resource and at any stage.
- You do not have to use or engage with all sections of the resource – engage with the most relevant sections as and when needed.
- This resource is an ongoing source of reflection rather than an activity to complete. Returning to the workbook and reflecting on shifts in your responses can serve as an important form of knowledge management and ultimately facilitate organizational development over time.

Beginning in Part 2: Process, this resource has two main activities to help users engage with transition planning and maintenance: **Gap Identification Matrix and Reflection Questions.**

The goal of each gap identification matrix is to help practitioners identify how your current position maps to the needs, opportunities, and risks related to responsible transitions. Each matrix contains a list of outcomes that this resource has identified as reflective of healthy and mutually-beneficial transitions, according to the following themes: partnerships, communication, financial sustainability, and mutual capacity strengthening.

To use the matrix and questions:

1. Read through the list of factors and ask yourself whether you/your organization have done any of the listed outcomes. If so, add a check mark in the right-hand column.
2. Use the un-checked boxes to identify what activities or issues remain as gaps for you/your organization.[2]
3. If/when gaps are identified, engage with the reflection questions to develop your understanding of your unique position, needs, and next steps in the transition process. The questions are intentionally open-ended so that you can interpret and engage with them in the way that makes sense for you/your organization.
4. If conducting these exercises in collaboration with a partner(s), you can use these categories to compare gaps (including perceived gaps)[3] in your respective transition processes. Our hope here is that this will facilitate stronger communication and clarity throughout the transition planning and implementation.

If the topic or factors within the matrix are unfamiliar, or if you'd like to engage with more technical issues covered in the reflection questions, read and use the suggested resources listed at the beginning of each section.

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[2] While all of the issues listed in a matrix have been identified as core elements of a successful transition, this does not mean that all of them will be relevant to your specific situation. When reviewing the topics, do not worry if you feel certain topics are simply not relevant to your situation and feel free to skip these and jump around to relevant sections as needed.

[3] An important function of this resource is that it facilitates deeper conversations and reflections around transitions. One outcome of this process is that practitioners might find they have different, potentially contentious opinions or perceptions around elements of a transition. It is important to keep this in mind and create space for healthy and respectful discussions internally.
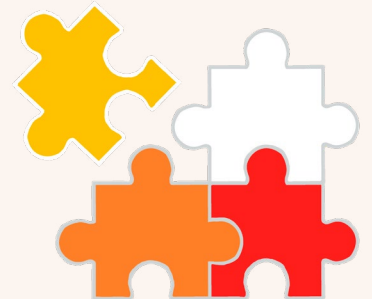
DEFINITIONS[4]

Locally led development: 'Locally led development' is an approach or process in which initiatives are owned and led by people in their own context.[5] Locally led development is characterized as local practitioners operating at various levels in their context: community, sub-national, and national.

Local or proximate actors: 'Local actors' recognizes the diversity of people working in their communities or at the sub-national or national level. It encompasses individuals, communities, networks, and practitioners working in organizations, private entities, and governments that set their own agendas, develop solutions, and lead to make those solutions a reality. 'Proximate actors'[6] acknowledges the problematic nature of the term 'local,' and describes actors who are most closely affected by the issues being discussed. Those closest to the work have the contextual knowledge and cultural competencies that international actors may not have.

Local or proximate organization: 'Local organization' is used to refer to CSOs or NGOs in the 'Global South' or 'Majority World' that work within the contexts they serve. This encompasses organizations that work at the community, sub-national, and national level. 'Proximate organization' is a preferred term to 'local organization' due to the problematization and lack of specificity of the word 'local.'

Responsible transition: 'Responsible transition' refers to a jointly led, planned, and gradual process of transfer of technical and procedural ownership from an international to local level, while maintaining some form of relationship. Responsible transitions can happen at an organizational, programmatic, or activity level. Responsible transitions focus on achieving a shared vision of transition that sets up proximate actors to sustain and grow their impact.
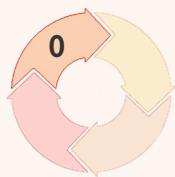
Transition thinking: 'Transition thinking' is relevant whether a direct transition is being planned or not. It is something anyone can do, regardless of role, in order to live into the values of proximate leadership. Transition thinking is the intent to be led by proximate actors, organizations, and communities, to prioritize strong relationships, make joint decisions that are rooted in a shared vision for success, work in a spirit of complementarity, and critically think about the end of a program/partnership before it starts.

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[4] View the full list of SAS+ definitions here.
[5] https://bond.org.uk/resources/becoming-locally-led-as-an-anti-racist-practice-a-guide/ and https://www.peacedirect.org/towards-locally-led-peacebuilding-defining-local/
[6] https://www.rwjf.org/en/insights/blog/2024/05/how-philanthropy-can-help-position-leaders-with-lived-experience-for-success.html

PART 0: PREPARATION

Pre-decision planning and preparation refers to when you or your organization have no planned transition, but recognize the value of advancing local ownership and leadership, and would like to explore how to apply this learning to a strategy process.

How to strategize and prepare for responsible transitions:

- **Design organizational strategies with transitions in mind,** especially strategies that span a long period of time (such as a 5 or 10 year strategy), which will give you more time to: 1) determine the level of interest, as well as the incentives, for transitioning; 2) co-design a transition plan that reflects the strengths, existing capacities and assets, and needs of the organization that would take a leading role and remain in the context after the transition is complete; and 3) implement a responsible transition.
- **Conduct a SWOT analysis** and reflect on the strengths and assets you could bring to a transition with an external partner, as well as the areas you could strengthen capacities through partnerships or through an internal transition to local leadership.
- **Articulate a process for transitioning** if there is an organizational interest, even without a specific geography, thematic area, or time frame in mind. This can be a useful exercise to involve staff across the organization to understand how they could contribute to the decision making process for a transition, as well as transition planning itself.
- **Consider testing out the transition planning process by transitioning a program** to local leadership. Capture learning on the process, skills and needs discovered during that process to ensure a responsible transition, and apply that learning when scaling up to a broader organizational transition.
- Encourage program and business development staff to work together to **write transitions into proposals,** or aspects of responsible transitions that fit the context of a particular proposal.
- **Dedicate funds to transition processes,** including specific funding allocated for co-creation to allow the time necessary for partners to engage in transition planning.
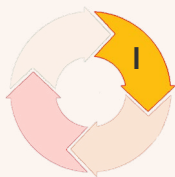
PART 1: DECISION

Responsible transitions are an opportunity for projects, organizations, and other entities to meaningfully and practically shift power across the development sector. These processes begin with the decision to transition - which either happens before a project is implemented or organization is developed or, more commonly, is motivated by political or financial reasons of an international entity. The focus of the Decision Phase is for partners to develop a strong transition vision and plan and identify resources for the transition. It's critical for this, and all subsequent phases, to be done collectively among partner organizations, with all stakeholders impacted by the transition - especially including local staff, partners, and community members - meaningfully involved.

In this section:

- Develop a shared transition vision and plan
  - How to develop a shared transition vision
  - How to develop a transition plan
- Resourcing a responsible transition

Develop a shared transition vision and plan

Transition Vision

Responsible transitions are, first and foremost, inclusive. Transparent processes that promote information-sharing and foster decision-making between partners are an important step in facilitating inclusivity in transitions. A foundational component to a responsible transition is a shared vision that is co-developed by all partners involved in the transition, as well as finding ways to establish mitigation measures and minimize risks.

Throughout the decision phase, it's useful to reflect on your and your team's motivations and the implications of what decisions you make regarding the transition:

- What is your motivation for transitioning? How does it impact your role, your team's mission, and your organization's legacy?
- What kind of transition is this (i.e. programmatic, organizational, etc.)?
- What is being transferred, handed over, or shifted in the process? What will be the outcome of this change process(es)?
- Are you creating something new? Or is the structure largely staying the same?
- Where might power imbalances show up? What can you anticipate and mitigate at this stage?

A shared vision may include:

- What is the **desired outcome** of the transition? (i.e. a new local entity or a decentralized network)[7]
- What is the **timeline** of the transition? (Including when everything will be complete - such as the expat team leaving or financial support to the local entity ending)
- Who are the **partners** involved in the transition?

Examples of shared vision statements

- "To responsibly transition [international organization] from international to local ownership and staffing in the West African region in 18-24 months, with current [international organization] staff continuing to collaborate in different capacities."
- "A successful transition in year 3 would mean that [local organization] is in the lead with all partners sharing responsibilities and making decisions mutually in order to implement the [USAID activity] in an efficient, collaborative, and sustainable way."

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How to develop a shared transition vision[8]

1. Discuss as a transitioning team:
   - Why are we deciding to transition?
   - What does a successful transition look like to us? What does it feel like for those involved? What is exciting about this transition?
   - Where do we anticipate challenges to ensuring a successful transition? What questions are we still holding?
   - What are the next steps?
2. Then, draft a **Transition Vision** based on the outline below, or another visioning template that you find is of more resonance to you and your team.
   - **Overview:** Articulate where the team is in the transition process to date.
   - **Vision for the transition:** Detail the team's vision for a successful transition, including the outcome of the transition, what this means for each partner's role, timing, etc.
   - **Areas of excitement and concern:**
     - Detail the excitement the team is feeling about this vision and the possibilities a transition could create for your work. This can become an important source of momentum and encouragement as you encounter uncertainty or challenges.

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[7] For various outcomes we've seen transitions take, see the SAS+ Transformation Futures Report.

[8] This visioning process may be done during the proposal design phase in order to have the transition process included in the program activities. In that case, partners may struggle to dedicate time to co-create this vision together. In that case, include the transition visioning and planning process in the design workshop, ensuring all partners are present.

- Capture areas the team is looking forward to and where they anticipate challenges. This will help the team make space for the parts of the transition they believe will lead to transformative change, while also envisioning some places they might get stuck or need additional support.
  - In the areas of concern, identify which areas you can cover independently and where you may need some additional support - especially on areas that deal with interpersonal and cultural challenges.
- **Outstanding questions:** Capture questions the team is still carrying related to this stage in the transition process. Identify which questions you need additional support to answer and plan for.
- **Next steps:** Identify what you will do next in light of the areas of concern and outstanding questions, including what support you'll pursue. Try to put a timeline as well as detail on roles (who will do what by when) on the next steps so you can keep yourselves accountable and moving ahead.

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Transition Plan

A transition plan serves as a key document for transitioning teams to document, plan for, and adapt activities to ensure a responsible transition. This plan identifies key steps the transitioning team will take throughout the transition process. It should include the purpose of the transition, background on the process/team to date, transition vision, as well as the key activities, roles, and resources needed to accomplish that vision in a specified manner of time. The SAS+ Transition Plan Template offers a starting point for teams developing a transition plan.

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How to develop a transition plan

1. Identify a lead person or small group who is able to and wants to own and lead the process to author the transition plan
2. Use the transition vision (articulated above), and ask yourself/your team:
   - What activities are necessary to ensure donor compliance? Organizational sustainability? Communication? Capacity strengthening?
   - What actions can you in your role take to achieve this goal? What actions can your organization take?[9]
   - Within all of the activities, which ones are priority? What needs to happen first? What can come later?
   - Which activities are easiest to complete? Which ones will be more challenging?
   - What are the roles necessary to ensure this is done successfully?
   - How much time will each activity take?
3. Once the activities are brainstormed/articulated by the full team, have the lead person/small group consolidate the activities and put them in the transition plan template
4. Present the transition plan to the full group for feedback and discussion
5. Refine the transition plan (though continue to view it as a "living document")
6. Agree on a process to reflect on and adapt the plan in frequent intervals (i.e. have pause and reflect sessions every 3 months to see where the team has met their goals, where things have changed, and what other activities need to be added to meet the goal)

Download the SAS+ Transition Plan Template

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[9] Strategic roles responsible for prioritizing and championing the transition are essential, including leadership of the local entity.

Transition processes, especially those not planned from the beginning, are often not resourced properly or sufficiently to ensure they are responsible. It has been estimated by SAS+ partners that it costs roughly 10% of an organization's operating budget to transition responsibly due to the intensive human and financial resources required to handover, transform, or end well.

Importantly, this section is about **resourcing the transition process** itself - not resourcing the outcome of the transition, such as a new organization or merged program (that comes in *Part 2: Securing Financial Sustainability*). Resourcing the transition process means funding the staff time as well as activities that are required to meet the transition vision and plan, including consultant costs, registration costs, board and stakeholder development, policy writing, fundraising, communications, materials, travel, and workshops.

Securing dedicated funding for transition processes is rare. Typically, transitions are initiated based on changes to donor priorities or the political context, leading to rushed and unintentional processes. However, SAS+ has seen instances when transitions are planned and resourced responsibly, leading to more sustainable and equitable outcomes. The three main ways SAS+ has seen transitions resourced are:

- **Dedicated grants:** SAS+ has seen partners secure a grant to support the transition process. In the case of Carter Center Liberia establishing Sawabenu, a local Liberian organization stemming from a closed Carter Center project, Sida provided a two-year award to develop, register, and ensure the sustainability of Sawabenu. These types of grants often come from existing relationships with a donor who has a vested interest in the ongoing programmatic work in a particular context.
- **INGO unrestricted funding:** When an INGO makes the choice to transition due to funding or political changes, it is best practice to ensure they provide funding for the transition process as well as what comes next for the local staff/entity. In the case of HelpAge International's 14 country office transitions, they managed a budget to support each country office's transition process. This budget included consultant costs for business modeling, organizational registration costs, software systems, etc. They also provided 3 years of funding after the transition process was official to support the local entity's sustainability with them gone.
- **Programmatic funding:** Programmatic budgets can be adjusted or developed to support a responsible transition. In the case of the Danish Refugee Council's programs funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), they received four-year funding to transition core program partners in Myanmar, Kenya, and Yemen. The learning from these transitions is being scaled up to an organization-wide transition strategy.

PART 2: PROCESS

This transition stage captures when a transition has been planned and is underway. Critical to this phase is the implementation and adaptation of the transition plan developed under Part 1, including actions taken to ensure equitable partnerships, communicate effectively, secure financial sustainability, and strengthen mutual capacities.

To navigate Part 2, it is important to have a representative group take ownership of ensuring the process is responsible, collaborative, and equitable. This Transition Working Group, for example, might be led by a Transition Lead - who has dedicated time to manage the transition process as part of their job(s). This group should have a process to include feedback from staff, local partners, and community members, and adapt the process as necessary. This might include quarterly reflection sessions to reflect on progress made, challenges so far, and lessons to incorporate going forward.

The sections below are organized to help teams understand their strengths and gaps as well as to take time to reflect on key aspects. Each matrix is an opportunity to check which aspects have been implemented to date. For any aspects that have not been done or thought of, it's an opportunity to incorporate those gaps into the transition plan as is relevant to your process. By leaning into a collaborative, responsible process that accounts for power dynamics, this section should help you consider critical factors to ensure a responsible process.

Ensuring equitable partnerships during a transition

This section should help you reflect on the quality of your partnership and work towards a respectful and mutually beneficial partnership. Partnership transitions should be grounded in trust, humility, mutual respect, equity, and solidarity. By engaging with this section, you should be able to identify areas of weakness and opportunities for strengthening your partnerships.

SAS+ definition of equitable partnerships
An equitable partnership consists of an agreement made between two or more entities, where power dynamics are addressed and mitigated to ensure a balanced, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationship. A partnership can be considered equitable when there is a fair share of contribution in the decision-making process, where local knowledge and cultural contexts are valued and support inclusive project planning and community engagement, and where all partners work towards sustainability for the entities involved and the communities they serve.

Resources to cultivate equitable partnerships:
- Practical Guidelines: Responsible Transitions and Partnerships
- Transforming Partnerships in International Cooperation

In this section:
- Ensuring equitable partnerships *during a transition*
- Encouraging effective communication *during a transition*
- Securing financial sustainability *during a transition*
- Strengthening mutual capacities *during a transition*

Navigation key

In this section, use this visual guide to find reflection questions relevant for specific actors:

CSOs / local practitioners

INGOs / international practitioners

Funders

So far, we have...

Identified and questioned attitudes and actions that might create a discomfort for our partner and a power imbalance between us	
Adopted collaborative and transparent processes for transition planning with our partner	
Avoided excessive emphasis on financial audits and upwards accountability of funding and results	
Recognized, agreed on, and integrated local definitions and indicators of success into our programs/projects	
Identified and reduced factors that increase competition for resources between local actors	
Developed partnership "exit interview" guides to conduct joint assessments of the quality of the partnership	
Discussed what forms of relationship continuity both partners want following the transition	

Universal reflection questions

- What work have we done to ensure we are respecting and being considerate of the needs and values of our partner?
- Do partner staff at all levels feel valued and respected in the partnership and transition process? How do we know this? Are we measuring this? If so, how, and who is able to see the measurements and the impact?
- Do partners feel sufficiently informed about the exit strategy, transition plans and timeframes, roles and responsibilities, and close out activities?
- Do partners feel sufficiently involved in the process? Have their voices and suggestions been heard? Have they had opportunities to provide feedback and raise issues important to them?
- What is going well in the transition process? How should important positive developments in the transition and organizational development be highlighted and celebrated?
- Are there any concerns about risks and unintended negative impacts from the transition process? How can these be reduced or prevented?
- Has the transition process so far provided opportunities for strengthening local leadership?
- How have local capacities, resources, and assets been recognized and engaged in the transition process?
- How are we ensuring the transition does not exacerbate the inequities in local power dynamics or increase competition between existing actors?
- What type of partnership would we like following the transition? Do we want to continue the partnership in some form? What aspects do we want to maintain? What aspects do we want to change or let go of?

Encouraging effective communication during a transition

This section will help you communicate your transition effectively. The key takeaways are to reflect on the best ways to share information with your staff, partners, communities, and donors; communicating your timelines, decision-making processes, and relationship management; and communicating externally to relevant audiences and stakeholders about future plans.

SAS+ definition of effective communication

Responsibly communicating transitions consists of exchanging information in a manner that integrates local staff in planning, gradually shifts decision-making power, uses inclusive language, maintains transparency, and invests in mutual capacity strengthening to ensure sustainable and culturally sensitive outcomes. Effective communication requires transparency, adaptability, and responsive feedback channels, ensuring that the messages resonate with the intended audience.

Resources to effectively communicate transitions:
- Issue Paper: Communicating Transitions
- Practical Guidelines for Communicating Responsible Transitions

Communication Matrix: Are you communicating your partnership transition effectively?

So far, we have...

Consulted all stakeholders to understand if transitioning is the right step for the entity	
Involved relevant staff members in making the decision on whether to transition	
Clearly communicated the decision to transition to all relevant staff members and partners	
Invested sufficient resources into and created an effective and adaptable communication strategy that is aligned with a comprehensive stakeholder map	
Ensured that relevant feedback mechanisms are in place for two-way communication	
Facilitated open communication channels and brought in external conflict resolution support when needed	
Communicated consistently and transparently at all organizational levels	
Listened to the stakeholders, during the transition and beyond, to build trust	
Coordinated internal and external communication, recognizing that both are important	
Understood and adapted to the changing context, remaining prepared to make a different decision	
Utilized tools and resources that are relevant to the context	

Reflection questions

Universal reflection questions

- What is our current communication approach/strategy? Are we happy with our communication? Why or why not?
- How honest have we been about the partnership transition so far? Who have we discussed it with? If we have not discussed it widely, why not?
- Have we created a safe space for people to ask questions about the transition? Do we trust each other? How can we strengthen trust and ensure people feel able to raise and discuss concerns?
- How are we planning to measure how well we are communicating the partnership transition? Have we identified feedback opportunities?
- Do we and our partner(s) both understand what is going on in the partnership transition? Have we shared goals, incentives, and plans for the transition with one another?
- Do we know how to communicate to the different relevant stakeholders and understand what level of information they need?
- How do we define terms such as 'local' and 'external'?

CSO reflection question

- Have we discussed the type of support we expect from our INGO partner?

INGO reflection question

- Have we discussed the type of support we can offer our local partner?

> [Join the conversation on ConnexUs](#) to ask questions and engage with the community around communicating transitions.

Securing financial sustainability during a transition

This section will help you identify how to support the financial sustainability of the proximate organization throughout and after the transition. The key takeaways of this section are to reflect on current financial status, identify ways to strengthen sustainability, and develop concrete sustainability plans alongside the transition plan.

SAS+ definition of financial sustainability

Financial sustainability refers to the ability of development actors to generate and manage financial resources in a manner that ensures long-term viability and effectiveness in achieving positive social impact. A development actor that is financially sustainable will be financially resilient to both external and internal shocks, and has a minimum threshold of organizational longevity, i.e. can maintain active operations longer than other similarly sized organizations in the same geographic context. An organization that is financially sustainable tends to have revenue streams from multiple non-interdependent sources including a significant degree of locally-sourced funding.

Resources to support financial sustainability during a transition:
- [Practical Guidelines for Financial Sustainability](#)
- [How To: Access Unrestricted Funding](#)
- [Facilitating Financial Sustainability Project](#)

So far, we have...

Created a strategic plan towards financial sustainability	
Understood the legal and governance requirements to support activities towards financial sustainability	
Identified appropriate avenues to access unrestricted funding	
Created a business plan in line with the local context	
Explored different models of asset transfer	
Discussed ways to strengthen capacity to support working towards financial sustainability	
Worked on facilitating/forging relationships with key players in the international development system	
Established access to key personnel (such as board members) who can bring relevant skills/experience to support the road to financial sustainability	

Reflection questions

Universal reflection questions

- Do we have a 'financial sustainability plan'? Have we created a strategic plan towards financial sustainability with relevant and dedicated expertise? If so, is it still relevant or suitable with regards to this transition? If not, what would an ideal sustainability plan look like? What types and quantities of resources would we include in a plan?
- What is the most appropriate funding model for our 5 – 10 year plan as an organization?
- How does our context impact our financial sustainability? Do we have a complete understanding of the legal and governance requirements of different financing models or opportunities?
- What are the biggest threats to our financial sustainability? How can we pre-empt and prevent harmful impacts to our sustainability?
- How do we ensure retention of skilled staff in our organization? If we face budget cuts, what type of support can we offer to staff? For instance, support in finding new job opportunities, potential funding for new initiatives, etc.?
- How have we developed connections with key stakeholders such as donor staff, key government stakeholders, etc. that could support our long-term sustainability?

CSO reflection questions

- Do we want to continue any financially strategic relationship with our funding/INGO partner following the transition? What would we want this to look like? What do we think is feasible?
- What forms of self-advocacy have we engaged in to support our sustainability? For instance, have we requested support for overheads or unrestricted funding? What type of advocacy should we consider?

INGO reflection questions

- How are we supporting the financial sustainability of our local partner? What could we do better? Can we provide dedicated staff or a consultant to execute a collaborative business planning process with local partners?
- Is our transition creating a new entity in a local context? If so, how might this impact local power dynamics between existing CSOs regarding competition for funding? How can we reduce any potential harms for local actors?

Join the conversation on ConnexUs to ask questions and engage with the community around financial sustainability.

Funder reflection questions

- Are we directly supporting our partners' financial sustainability? How? Could we be doing better?

Strengthening mutual capacities during a transition

This section will help you identify opportunities for mutual capacity strengthening and create concrete plans for implementation. By the end of this section, you should have a strong idea of how capacity strengthening can be carried out mutually between, for example, international and local entities, rather than a one-way process. This includes capacity strengthening activities that address power and build trust, such as an international entity having local staff assess the appropriateness of programmatic approaches and possible needs to adapt given the communities involved and the local context. Additionally, there may be needs for organizational support and technical capacities relevant for a transition, material support, or targeted support on leadership and governance that could be especially relevant for local staff transitioning into an independent entity. Mutual capacity strengthening is a process that encourages all partners to look beyond possible donor requirements for a transition, and explores how mutuality can support trust and relationship building while strengthening targeted capacities.

SAS+ definition of mutual capacity strengthening
SAS+ defines mutual capacity strengthening as a process where all entities in a transition engage as equal partners to explore and strengthen relevant skills, knowledge, experience, and network contacts.[10]

Resource to strengthen capacities during a transition:
- Mutual Capacity Strengthening Guidelines for Transitions to Local Ownership

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[10] This definition has been adapted from Fair, Green & Global Alliance's Mutual Capacity Development (2017).

Mutual Capacities Matrix: How well are you facilitating joint learning through your transition process?

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So far, we have...

Developed a shared context analysis, power analysis, and capacity assessment to jointly design capacity strengthening and learning activities	
Collaboratively identified and recognized the capacity of all partners	
Created a respectful and inclusive framing of mutual capacity strengthening processes and activities with language that resonates with all partners	
Outlined appropriate roles for mutual capacity strengthening with consideration of both the transition-specific and the long-term goals of all partners	
Highlighted the relevant support for and development of leadership based on what transition stakeholders say matters most (e.g. individual leadership skills, mindsets, and governance structures)	
Developed and dedicated resources for coaching and peer-to-peer learning	
Identified moments to reflect on the mutual capacity strengthening activities and progress throughout the project, ensuring all partners have access to and awareness of the findings of capacity assessments	

Reflection questions

Universal reflection questions

- Do we understand what mutual capacity strengthening is? How would we define this for ourselves?
- Are we currently engaging in any capacity strengthening activities with partners?
- How collaborative and transparent is our approach to capacity strengthening and learning? What about in the context of our transition?
- Does our approach reflect a diversity of needs and acknowledge the context and power dynamics surrounding a transition? Have we conducted a SWOT analysis for all entities?
- Have we conducted any 'resource mapping' exercises to identify strategic approaches to capacity strengthening?
- What processes do we have in place to identify mutual capacity needs and opportunities?
- Have we identified how mutual capacity strengthening fits into the larger transition plan?
- Can we be engaging in mutual capacity strengthening with our donor or funder?

INGO reflection question

- Are we investing in joint organizational system development, investing in support packages to develop resource mobilization and fundraising skills, or agreeing to donate/write off assets as donations to local entities?

PART 3: OUTCOME

Responsible transitions are not formulaic, and will have many different outcomes depending on context, transition type, timeline, and more. These results consist of both intermediate objectives – such as trust-building, improved donor relationships, and capacity strengthening activities – and long-term outcomes – such as a fully-independent, locally-led entity being created, as well as what may be accomplished post-transition.
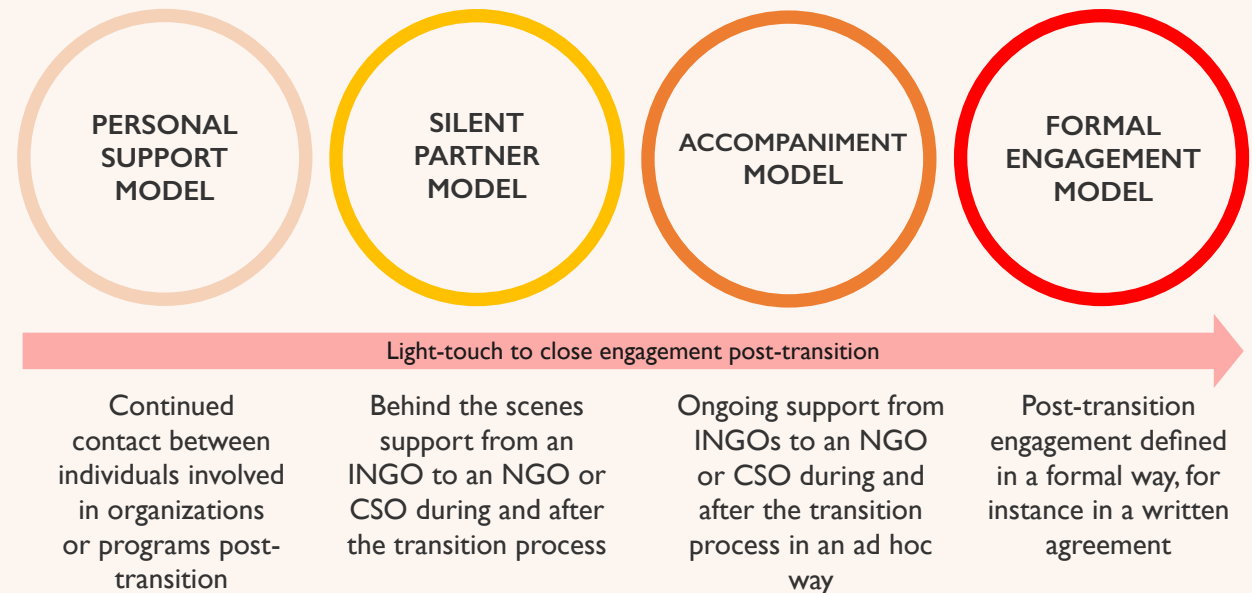
Supporting sustainability post-transition

In cases where a new entity is formed, sustainability after the transition process is typically focused on the local entity's sustainability as they are no longer reliant on, for example, the transitioning INGO's financial or human resources. This doesn't necessarily mean the relationship has to end entirely, but rather transforms with a responsible transition process intended to shift power. Therefore, this section helps you imagine a post-transition relationship which emphasizes local knowledge that is derived and tested in local contexts, underpinning sustainability of development outcomes.

Resources to support post-transition sustainability:
- Transformation Futures report: shows the *different pathways and outcomes* of a transition process
- Practical Guidelines for Financial Sustainability for Transitions to Local Ownership: helps ensure *financial sustainability* during and after the transition process
- Legitimacy and Power in INGO Transitions: helps navigate *power imbalances* in transition processes

Post-Transition Partnership Models

These are the most common outcomes of post-transition partnerships SAS+ has experienced with partners who have completed a responsible transition.

PERSONAL SUPPORT MODEL	SILENT PARTNER MODEL	ACCOMPANIMENT MODEL	FORMAL ENGAGEMENT MODEL
Continued contact between individuals involved in organizations or programs post-transition	Behind the scenes support from an INGO to an NGO or CSO during and after the transition process	Ongoing support from INGOs to an NGO or CSO during and after the transition process in an ad hoc way	Post-transition engagement defined in a formal way, for instance in a written agreement

Light-touch to close engagement post-transition

Local Entities Matrix

So far, we have...

Taken sufficient time to understand what we, as the local entity, are able to and want to accomplish post-transition	
Collaborated in determining how our mutual capacity strengthening activities should be structured to support our shared vision of the transition after it's over	
Agreed upon and identified the resources that are needed to make the relationship we jointly envisioned a reality	
Explored the needs and aspirations of the local entity that the INGO can support	
Explored the needs and aspirations of the INGO that the local entity can support	
Discussed the creation of structures to support periodic review of the post-transition relationship, including ways to continue to learn together, assess impact, and ensure sustainability	

Reflection questions

Universal reflection questions

- What does a post-transition relationship look like?
- What resources are needed to create and sustain a positive post-transition relationship?

CSO reflection questions

- How can we reduce competition at the local level and ensure we don't exacerbate local power dynamics? How can we build in transition thinking and planning from the start of our work to be led by the community?
- What structures do we have in place to learn throughout the process of creating our new entity and how do we adapt in order to be impactful? What support from our transition partner do we need to create these structures?
- What does success look like and how do we measure and communicate the necessary steps?
- What feedback mechanisms will be most effective in our operating context? How often do we collect feedback on programming to help it be relevant? What other data helps guide our actions and adaptations?

INGO reflection questions

- How do we remain flexible in order to support the local entities' needs post-transition?
- How can we work with the local entity in determining how to support their capacity gaps and lean into the strengths of the individuals forming a new entity or the new entity in formation?
- What indicators or other information will help us determine the point at which our presence is no longer needed?
- What type of capacity strengthening has our organization received throughout? How have we grown from this experience with our local partner? Where might we need to continue to grow to be a better partner in the future?
- Is there flexible funding to support the local entity post transition?
- How does this experience change or inform how we partner in the future?

Funder reflection questions

- How will we be flexible with providing resources to support the local entity post transition?
- Do we feel prepared and open to learning how we can better support local actors post-transition? Why or why not? In what ways?

CONCLUSION

While transitions to local leadership and ownership will require a tailored approach, this workbook brings attention to certain aspects and processes that are evidence-informed best practices. SAS+ has integrated learning alongside community-based, national, and international organizations, entities, and networks undergoing transition processes, as well as donors and funders of this work, to ensure our resources both ask and answer important questions to support responsible shifts in power toward locally led development. This workbook draws on SAS+'s most up-to-date resources and learning, and can serve as a reference guide to our other resources that allow you to further explore the preparation, visioning, and transition planning that go into the early stages of a transition process, as well as the ins-and-outs of carrying out a transition to support equitable partnerships, effective communication, financial sustainability, mutual capacity strengthening, and the achievement of intended outcomes of the transition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DISCLAIMER

ANNEX: RELEVANT RESOURCES

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