



External Institutional Evaluation of the Forum of Federations

Evaluation Report (final)

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Acronyms

| | |
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| CAD | Canadian Dollars |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CHF | Swiss Francs |
| CRPH | Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw |
| EAO | Ethnic Armed Organizations |
| EU | European Union |
| GAC | Global Affairs Canada |
| IGR | Inter-governmental relations |
| NUG | National Unity Government |
| OAS | Organization of American States |
| RBM | Results-based management |
| SDC | Swiss Development Cooperation |
| SC | Strategic Council |
| ToRs | Terms of Reference |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| USP | Unique Selling Point |

Executive Summary

The Forum of Federations, together with Swiss Development Cooperation and Global Affairs Canada, tasked an expert team with an external institutional evaluation of the Forum's activities. The aims were to assess the positioning of the Forum among other actors, the relevance of the Forum's strategic orientation and activities, the effectiveness and efficiency of the Forum's implementation activities, with a view to providing recommendations for a follow-up Strategic Plan. This evaluation is based mainly on a review of relevant documentation and semi-structured interviews with a broad range of partners and stakeholders involved in the Forum's work.

The Forum of Federations was established in 1999 in Ottawa at the initiative of the Government of Canada. Currently, the Forum has signed agreements with Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Switzerland – Partner Governments that support Forum activities with financial resources and expertise. In its more than 20 years of existence, the Forum of Federations has kept its main focus on federalism and related forms of governance, as well as on producing and disseminating comparative knowledge. In the last decade, it has broadened its orientation from focusing on established federations to emerging federal states. It has also gained knowhow in supporting multilevel reform processes in fragile contexts and focused increasingly on the implementation of federalism in specific policy areas and sectors in addition to formal federal institutions and the constitutional set-up.

According to the current Strategic Plan 2018-2023, the Forum focuses on facilitating learning and delivery of innovative solutions in federal, decentralized and devolved countries, developing a global network of partnerships, increasing the reach and recognition of the Forum and contributing to effective governance and inclusive societies in transitioning States. The Strategic Plan provides a good conceptual orientation to the Forum's work. It has brought a shared view of the results to be expected – in terms of intermediate and immediate outcomes and outputs as well as indicators of success – and set the basis for a results measurement system. However, some strategic questions remain open: What is the vision of the Forum? Is the Forum “promoting” federalism? Or does it focus on increasing the understanding of federal and decentralized systems? Is the somewhat linear logic of intervention put forward in the Strategic Plan – from knowledge transfer to capacity change, behavior change and improved institutions – adequate to the complexity of the topic and the working reality of the Forum?

The evaluation identified a series of achievements and challenges in the Forum's **policy programs**. These are expected to facilitate knowledge exchange related to the management, reform and development of federal and decentralized systems, continuously building a comparative body of knowledge in governance and service delivery, environment as well as constitutional issues, diversity and inclusion. The comparative methodology and problem-oriented approaches are unique to the Forum, and are highly appreciated. The comparative approach is widely perceived as an added value for academic experts as well as governmental stakeholders and civil society in different country contexts. The Forum's global network of renowned and innovative experts as well as partner institutions is an important resource. The Forum is considered to have an important convening power due to its good reputation, its specific character as a quasi-intergovernmental institution and its bridging function between academic and governmental experts.

The Forum's knowledge products show a wealth of experience and knowhow regarding federal concepts and practices from the past 20 years. However, interviewees mentioned a certain lack of targeted messaging. Publications are often conceived by and for academia, without taking into account more practically or politically oriented audiences (e.g. political actors, journalists, government officials, civil society actors). The publications could profit from more practical conclusions that target specific governance actors. The production of easily accessible learning materials in the format of educational videos and animations has started to target civic education

actors of different kinds; this should raise awareness and make federal and decentralized governance more tangible and popular among a wider audience. The Forum has quickly developed capacities and new formats of virtual learning and sharing, particularly due to travel and contact restrictions in the COVID-19 crisis. The Forum's recently renewed website facilitates access for the interested public to its publications. The academic quality is generally perceived as good. Blogs and social media have an important role in the outreach work of the Forum, with a correspondingly strong growth in the Forum's online traffic in the last years. In contrast to these positive trends, several interlocutors expressed the view that the Forum and its products are not visible enough for political stakeholders and civil society beyond a narrow group of academic experts and specifically dedicated "federalists".

The **Development Assistance Programs (DAPs)** brought a new funding base for the Forum and helped to overcome the funding crisis of the Forum resulting from reduced core funding from the Canadian government. Since 2018, the Forum reports on DAPs in different countries and contexts (Ethiopia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Nepal, Cuba, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the MENA region). The evaluation selected two programs (Ethiopia, Myanmar) as examples to examine more closely the achievements and challenges with regard to implementing DAPs.

With regard to development cooperation, knowledge sharing, exchange of expertise and experience are necessary steps for building capacities and the commitment of different governmental and non-governmental stakeholders for effective governance reform. However, in particular in contexts characterized by political conflict and institutional fragility, knowledge sharing and individual learning does not necessarily translate into institutional learning and effective reform. As the Forum was already working in emerging or less established federations before engaging with DAPs, its focus had already widened to include joint learning of how to make federal and devolved governance systems work in practice, in the context at stake and in different policy areas. As a result, the Forum's methodology has thus broadened from knowledge sharing to addressing behavioral change, collective and institutional learning. It shifted to supporting processes of multilevel dialog and promoting critical and informed debate, building process-oriented capacities and skills for managing intergovernmental or inter-institutional relations and negotiating on power sharing and mediating political conflicts.

The Forum's headquarters and field office staff have a sound understanding for the contexts and political dynamics that the DAPs have been working in. This facilitated rapid adaptations to contextual changes and in crises. Experience from the two countries selected clearly shows that the debate on federalism is at the heart of many political conflicts around power sharing – on one side, federalism is perceived as part of the solution, on the other side, it may be considered part of the problem. The Forum's staff is conflict-sensitive in its work, continuously aspiring to analyze and manage triggers, drivers and risks of conflict and investing in connecting and de-escalating factors. However, the undoubted individual capacities, knowhow and experience in conflict-sensitive management are not systematized and documented for the Forum's work in general beyond the DAP operations.

Working within the DAP frameworks has added new challenges and topics to the Forum's agenda. First, the DAPs reflect both the Forum's and donors' goals, which may differ in the details and be complementary at best. While the Forum needs to be flexible, take opportunities and make compromises to obtain funding, it is strategically important to maintain the specific thematic focus ensuring the Forum's identity. To stay attractive and competitive as a relatively small implementer, it will be important to focus on a specific niche and offer specific expertise and experience on federal and devolved systems. Secondly, as the case of Myanmar has clearly shown, in crises, the donor government will have an important say on how the DAP will react to the changing situation and manage future risks. This might imply some reputational risks for the Forum, which might not agree with a donor's position in an internal conflict.

In terms of the **Forum's governance**, the Strategic Council incorporates representatives of Partner Governments. It has a purely advisory role. Expectations of Partner Governments and their

representatives towards the Forum's role and activities and their motivations to support the Forum vary from sharing knowhow and experience to accessing funding for federal reform. The involvement of governments as partners has brought a high level of credibility and legitimacy to the Forum and enhanced its reputation. This in turn increases access to government stakeholders as well as members of parliaments at national and subnational levels, leverages governmental expertise and experience, and facilitates event hosting and organization. It also opens doors for governmental funding. On the other hand, the close connection to governments also brings certain risks. Elections may bring new governments, resulting in a decrease of political, technical and financial support, or may translate into pressures on the Forum regarding how to shape its activities. The international relations and foreign policy interests of member governments could also affect perceptions of the Forum's impartiality with regard to activities in third countries.

The Board of Directors is the main governing body of the Forum. Its members are drawn from the countries of Partner Governments and elected by the members themselves. The Board plays an important strategic role in setting the thematic agenda and the management frame (budgets, programs) while the President and CEO of the Forum (together with three Vice Presidents) are responsible for the day-to-day management. 17 staff members work at headquarters in Ottawa, with country offices of different sizes in Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal and Tunisia. The most recent annual report mentions eight senior advisors as well as 14 interns, plus summer students and research grant recipients. Staff is considered highly competent and personally committed, reliable, responsive, flexible, gender-sensitive and agile. The low staff turn-over indicates high job satisfaction despite a considerable workload. The lean structures at headquarters allow for relatively simple and straight-forward working procedures based on informal exchange – with a certain risk that the acquired knowledge is not fully documented and institutionalized for further work.

The management approaches of DAPs were new for the Forum; its focus on creating and exchanging knowledge and expertise had to be re-framed in the context of supporting a change process. However, the Forum adapted its work processes successfully. The professional capacities of the responsible headquarter staff, the local staff and local partners are generally perceived as very good, and the quality of international experts' inputs is considered to be high. The Forum has established a local presence in all the countries where a significant DAP is implemented, with staffed field offices. Local partners (governmental and non-governmental) are involved in the program implementation at different levels. Quality assurance by the Forum is often time-consuming; financial and operational monitoring and frequent reporting to donors, mostly with their individual methodology and tools, also take considerable resources from field offices and headquarters. On the other hand, the experience gained from DAP management helped the Forum improve its general management approaches and procedures. However, project implementation suffers in some cases from delays, particularly due to COVID-19 as well as political conflicts.

The Forum lost a great part of its (core) funding after the first 10 years of its existence due to changes in the Canadian government. This led to a reduction of staff at headquarters and a strategic re-orientation of its activities. In the financial year ending in March 2021, the Forum's revenues were reported to be CAD 7.2 million, with a CAD 5 million contribution from Global Affairs Canada, CAD 350,000 from Swiss Development Cooperation, and CAD 180,000 from the German Ministry of the Interior. CAD 1.4 million comes from other donors. For the fiscal year 2020/21, major core contributors included only Canada, Switzerland, Germany and Ethiopia, for a total amount of CAD 1.25 million. Five sixths of the Forum's overall revenues of CAD 7.24 million now stems from DAPs, mainly financed by Canada.

Since 2018, the Forum has been collecting and analyzing data according to a log-frame and **Results-Based Management** (RBM) plan. The results reports are easily readable and accessible. They indicate that the Forum is performing well overall and remains on course to achieve the organizational

objectives established in its Strategic Plan. The RBM system itself also proved to be robust and adequate. The process for developing the RBM system, identifying indicators, relevant data sources and data-generating methods was lengthy and cumbersome and the current set of indicators focuses mainly on quantitative indicators at the level of outputs (in terms of number of products or completed activities). Other evaluation techniques such as “outcome harvesting”, “outcome mapping” or “most significant change” methodologies (which are also able to detect unexpected contributions to change) were able to be explored as complementary approaches.

Our evaluation concludes that, in the relatively small universe of organizations dealing with federalism or decentralization, the **Forum is unique** in how it generates, curates and shares knowledge on federalism. It **adds value** to the few academic institutions and networks that focus on federalism by its solution-oriented multidisciplinary approach to making decentralized systems work in practice, its focus on exchange and learning from each other, and by bringing practical experts together with academia. The Forum also plays a specific role in supporting governance reforms. Compared to other organizations, it adds value in this area owing to its special ability to mobilize adequate expert knowhow on federalism and multilevel governance as well as comparable experience from other countries, and by providing credible input to ongoing reform processes and interacting with counterparts on a peer basis.

The Forum’s strategic orientation and practice is highly **relevant**, as its focus on federalism and decentralization knowhow contributes to a convincing concept of democratic and inclusive governance based on informed political decision-making, multiple power centers, cooperation among stakeholders, pluralism, gender equality and citizen involvement. Its thematic priorities are perceived as highly relevant for policy makers as well as civil society globally.

The overall results reports have shown that the Forum has made **effective progress** with regard to all these goals, including integrating gender equality in all its activities. However, the current selection of indicators might not be fully adequate for showing the Forum’s contributions to change, be it in terms of delivering innovative solutions or contributing to effective governance in transitioning States. The limited availability of core funds has forced the Forum to become a **lean and cost-efficient institution**. The governance system is well established. Planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes are in place.

Recommendations to the Forum:

- Consider sharpening the Forum’s strategic vision on its role(s) and priorities. There are different strategic options for the Forum’s future development: How far does the Forum aspire to be a networking platform, think-tank, supporter of reforms, or project implementer?
- Consider which partners contribute to/are necessary for the Forum’s success as an organization – who must be on board? What can the Forum do to be attractive/relevant for them? Develop a partner strategy on whom to involve and how;
- Continue to strengthen the USP: The Forum is the institution dealing with federalism (plus related governance issues) and supporting governance reform processes with substance expertise;
- Continue to invest in knowledge management and communication in the framework of policy programs;
- Continue to engage with developing or transitioning countries in the form of technical support;
- Develop a fund-raising strategy that allows for coverage of the core expenses of the Forum regarding policy programs.

Recommendations to donors:

- Continue, or increase, the core funding of the Forum to allow the Forum to keep and further develop its USP;
- (Continue to) provide funding for capitalizing on experience and further development of the Forum as a knowledge and knowhow hub, particularly relevant for governance and sector reform processes in developing, fragile and conflict-affected countries.

Recommendations to Partner Governments:

- Reflect with the Forum regarding who, from an institutional perspective, should be involved in the Strategic Council, the Board and in its activities;
- Support the Forum in strategic reflections, attracting and lobbying for new Partner Governments;
- Consider chaperoning emerging federations who are interested in becoming Partner Governments.

A. Evaluation tasks, methodology and program

According to the Terms of Reference (ToRs), the Forum of Federations, together with Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC), tasked us with an external institutional evaluation of the Forum's activities, focusing on the current Strategic Plan (2018-2023). Five main areas of inquiry were identified:

- Mapping and positioning of the Forum among other actors;
- Relevance of the Forum's strategic orientation, activities and focus;
- Effectiveness of the Forum's implementation activities;
- Efficiency of internal management processes;
- Recommendations for a follow-up Strategic Plan.

These areas of inquiry are closely interconnected, and the ToRs identified a series of questions that would guide the evaluation process in detail (see ToRs in [Annex 1](#)).

Based on a first reading of the main documents, we drafted an inception report further designing the evaluation process. After discussion with the Forum's Secretariat, SDC and GAC, we revised the draft and used it as a basis for the evaluation process. Data were collected using a variety of methodologies, including a desk review of relevant documents (from the Forum and other sources), as well as semi-structured individual and collective interviews. Erika Schläppi and/or Nicole Töpferwien conducted 43 interviews in total, with selected representatives of different groups of stakeholders such as the members of the Strategic Council, the Board, the staff at the Forum's headquarters and field offices, donors, the Forum's expert advisors and partners, and external experts and resource persons. Interviews and conversations with the Forum's management and staff in Ottawa and with the representative of GAC were conducted in person during Erika Schläppi's visit in October 2021. The other conversations with interlocutors outside Ottawa were held virtually during November and December 2021, for reasons of cost and time efficiency as well as ongoing COVID-19 regulations (see list of interlocutors in [Annex 2](#)).

As planned in the evaluation design, the collected information was triangulated and cross-checked, analyzed, then synthesized into evaluation findings and conclusions, focusing on strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges for the future. First findings were presented at a virtual meeting of the evaluators with the Forum's management and representatives of SDC and GAC on December 17, 2021. This first draft report was submitted for feedback to the Forum's management, SDC and GAC and was revised and finalized accordingly.

B. The evaluation's findings

1. 20 years of the Forum's history in a nutshell: continuity and new trends

The Forum of Federations was established in 1999 in Ottawa, on the initiative of the Government of Canada, following an international conference on federalism held in Quebec. As we heard from several interlocutors, a primary goal of the Forum's founders was to engage explicitly in favor of the integration of the French-speaking part of Canada in a federal setting. The Forum quickly became an international platform for knowledge generation and exchange among federations. Until 2010, the Forum, together with the host countries, organized four consecutive international conferences in Switzerland, Belgium, India and Ethiopia with high-level participation by politicians and academic researchers. A number of countries have joined the Forum as members (Partner Governments) and

partly as funding partners. Currently, the Forum has signed agreements with ten governments that support Forum activities with financial resources and expertise. They are (at least formally) represented on the Forum's Strategic Council (see below, Section 2.5 on the Forum's governance). According to the Annual Report 2020/2021, these countries include Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Switzerland.

However, the Partner Governments' engagement has varied over the years. Several interlocutors mentioned that the various governments' levels of engagement often depended on the personal commitment of individual ministers or senior government staff – with considerable risk in the case of government changes or staff rotation. One indicator for the institutional engagement of Partner Governments is the (core) funding commitment of governments. For the fiscal year 2020/21 major core contributors included only Canada, Switzerland, Germany and Ethiopia, for a total amount of CAD 1.25 million. The dramatic cut of (core) funding by Canada in 2010 with the change of government showed the limited stability of governmental funding arrangements and deeply shook the Forum's financial foundations. The Forum's development is reactive to this volatility of (financial) support at least in part. The Forum had to look for different funding opportunities; it successfully adapted its structures, reduced its staff and managed to survive with a shift from core to project funding by donors. Currently, five sixths of the Forum's overall revenues of CAD 7.24 million stems from DAPs, mainly financed by Canada.

In its more than 20 years of existence, the Forum of Federations has kept its main focus on federalism and related forms of governance, as well as on producing and disseminating comparative knowledge. A long and impressive list of publications shows the productivity of the Forum and its experts since 2000 and the specificity of its comparative approach. Through its intergovernmental character, the Forum has profited from its specific convening power and legitimacy for bringing together academic experts and "practitioners" from governments. It has "supported governments and citizens worldwide through capacity building and providing expertise and practical education" (see Annual Report 2020/21, p.10). However, it has broadened its thematic orientation in the last decade. The following trends can be observed:

- Change of focus from established federations to **emerging federal States**, or States that are considering federalism or decentralization reforms, particularly in the context of political conflicts (such as Nepal, Philippines, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Myanmar). While the knowhow gained in established federations is still relevant, the Forum has had to adapt its approach and methodology to the specific challenges of countries in often fragile and conflict-affected contexts and with limited availability of financial and human resources. In addition, the Forum has gained knowhow in **supporting reform processes** in fragile contexts both for identifying reform options as well as implementing reforms – instead of just sharing knowhow on how relatively stable institutions address specific problems and issues;
- Change of focus from federal institutions and the formal constitutional set-up to the impact and implementation of **federalism in specific policy areas and sectors**, involving a clear distribution of power, responsibilities and (human and financial) resources as well as sound inter-governmental relations and cooperation among the various levels of authorities;
- Change from focusing on federalism as an established standard to supporting **multilevel reforms that are adequate to the country context**, with the purpose of realizing pluralist, responsive and inclusive governance. Particularly in the context of recent DAPs (in Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen), the Forum has used a broader variety of entry points and focused on different topics and reform priorities of donor and/or recipient governments, such as gender equality and democratic leadership, electoral processes, or intergovernmental relations.

The Forum has adapted its methods to these new foci by supporting (local) research, building awareness and training governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, networking or promoting technical advice from international and national experts, and facilitating stakeholder dialogue.

2. The Forum's current strategic orientation

Overview of the Strategic Plan 2018-2023

The Forum adopted its current Strategic Plan in 2018. The Plan was elaborated by the Secretariat, with the help of external experts, and endorsed by the Board of Directors. It responds to the demand of donors, SDC in particular, to establish a meaningful system for measuring results.

The Strategic Plan starts with a **definition of the organization**. The Forum is “concerned with the contribution that federalism and multilevel governance can make to the consolidation of democracy”, including in countries or regions in post-conflict situations. The Forum “supports governments around the world to help develop governance solutions in multilevel systems”; its capacity-building work “covers many aspects of multilevel governance and reaches a wide range of stakeholders, facilitating the development, transfer and sharing of knowledge at all levels of society”.

The Forum's identity statement

«The Forum is an international organization that develops and shares comparative expertise on the practice of federal and decentralized governance through a global network.»

The Strategic Plan does not mention an **explicit vision** that would guide the Forum's work. However, it does elaborate on the “potential of federalism and multilevel governance” that can be seen as the Forum's vision. “By allowing varying degrees of self-determination within a larger national whole, multilevel systems provide stakeholders with a sense of agency and control over the governance of their own lives while maintaining the advantages of shared government for general and common purposes.” This “vision” is based on the assumption that multilevel systems can establish mechanisms and processes that recognize and accommodate minority rights, enable greater coordination for equitable service delivery and economic prosperity, and facilitate more inclusive societies in which linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic differences are recognized and valued within a single state.

The Forum's mission

«The mission of the Forum is to strengthen inclusive and responsive governance, including pluralism and gender equality, in federal, decentralized and transitioning countries.»

The Strategic Plan also elaborates on the **core competencies** of the Forum, which include:

- A practical, problem-solving approach, combining hands-on experience and high-level expertise, to promote intergovernmental learning and building capacity of civil society and citizens to operate in multilevel systems;
- A comparative approach and methodology drawing on its global network of multilevel governance experts, research organizations, and local partners;
- Learning from each other, bridging the worlds of academic research and real-world practice.

Two areas of activity (below) are distinguished that are expected to be mutually reinforcing, produce synergies and be linked by feedback loops.

Policy programs are built around thematic research projects resulting in the development of comparative knowledge addressing both structural as well as operational questions. They typically focus on priority issues for the Forum's Partner Governments, and are funded either through core funding or through third parties. Three broad thematic areas are mentioned:

- **Governance and service delivery**, addressing policy issues such as education, health care, fiscal relations and revenue sharing, local government, decentralization, multilevel politics of trade;
- **Environment**, including climate change, natural resource management, and water management;
- **Constitutional issues, diversity and inclusion**, addressing issues related to multilevel governance structures and participation, such as constitutional interpretation and reform, gender equality, territorial cleavage, indigenous policies, youth, minority rights and language.

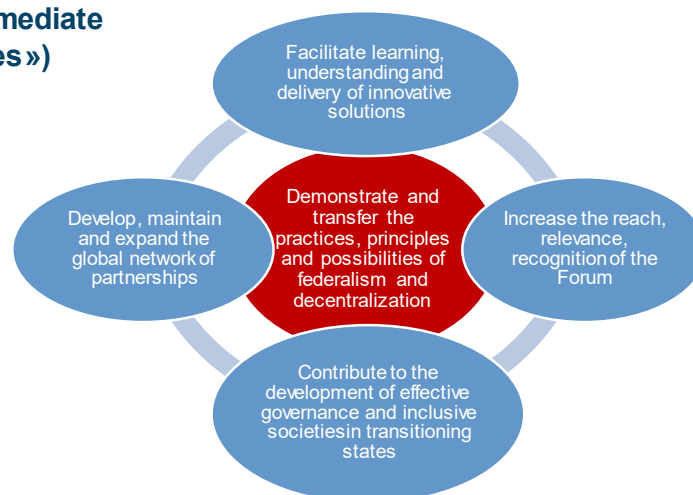
Policy program activities range from the organization and delivery of workshops, conferences, and presentations to the development and production of publications, learning tools and knowledge products. Through its policy programs, the Forum develops its network of multilevel governance experts and acts as a hub for knowledge generation and exchange between researchers and governance practitioners globally.

Development Assistance Programs (DAPs) are expected to focus on building capacity in multilevel governance among stakeholders. The Forum’s listed key competences and expertise for development assistance include:

- Developing and implementing multilevel governance structures and arrangements, constitutional interpretation, sector-specific multilevel governance, systems of intergovernmental relations;
- Developing intellectual capital on multilevel governance, women’s participation and leadership in multilevel governance, inclusive policy development;
- Increasing stakeholders’ understanding and awareness of multilevel governance structures and processes, as well as building their capacity to participate.

The Strategic Plan then lists **four strategic goals** that are underpinned by a “cross-cutting and supporting goal” to demonstrate and transfer the practices, principles and possibilities of federalism and decentralization”.

Four strategic goals (or: «immediate outcomes»)



The four goals are complemented by “strategic objectives”, which are then mirrored in a “**logic model**” in section 9 of the Strategic Plan (see Annex 3 of this report): The expected impact corresponds to the current mission statement of the Forum.

Two **intermediate outcomes** are expected in the five-year period 2018-2023:

- Increased knowledge, open attitudes, enhanced level of understanding and appreciation for federal and decentralized governance;
- Values, practices, principles and possibilities of federalism and decentralization demonstrated, transferred, and applied.

The very last section of the Strategic Plan is dedicated to the Forum's **pathway to change** (or: Theory of Change). It states that government effectiveness is inhibited by limited knowledge and understanding of principles and advantages of federal and decentralized governance, as well as by a lack of curation of academic knowledge for application in policy. Thus, the pathway of change is focused on **knowledge transfer** and is presented in a relatively simple and straightforward way: (1) Knowledge transfer to governance stakeholders on federalism and decentralization leads to (2) capacity improvement. Then, stakeholders with improved capacities (3) apply their knowledge and change their behavior which leads to (4) improved multilevel institutions, processes and practices and, finally, to (5) sustainable solutions to governance challenges.

The *pathway to change* is underpinned by the Forum's global network assembling knowledge, expertise and intellectual capital. The *pathway to change* is expected to deliver results at the levels of knowledge, attitudes and skills, behavior change and improved well-being of society.

The *pathway to change* is associated with a list of **assumptions**. These relate to the ultimate impact and include general issues such as an existing demand for better governance, the willingness and absorptive capacity of beneficiaries, and a minimum support by partner countries to maintain the global network. For behavior change, assumptions include the ability and willingness of beneficiaries to require adequate knowledge, influence policy and apply the knowledge. A commitment to inclusive federal/decentralized governance is also assumed, as well as the ability of the Forum to access high-level practitioners and deliver solutions as a preferred partner. In terms of capacity change, the list mentions assumptions regarding: the availability and accessibility of an interested audience; adequate resources for adequate knowledge products including donor commitment; acceptance by the hosting governments and among beneficiaries of devolution and decentralization; as well as openness to gender and environmental considerations.

Strengths and weaknesses, open questions

The Strategic Plan certainly provides a good conceptual orientation to the Forum's work. The joint elaboration process has brought more clarity within the team about thematic priorities, goals and objectives. The staff and Board of Directors unanimously report that the process of elaboration consumed considerable time and resources but was very helpful and a great learning opportunity for the Forum. The Strategic Plan has brought a shared view of the results to be expected, in terms of intermediate and immediate outcomes and outputs as well as indicators of success and set the basis for a results measurement system, which is considered by staff and outsiders as very helpful for identifying and sharing results. However, analytical reading of the text raises conceptual questions.

What is the vision of the Forum? The Strategic Plan has no explicit vision statement. Surprisingly, the Forum's mission statement refers to promoting inclusive governance (in federal and decentralized countries). It could have been expected that the Forum of Federations would have put its commitment to federal or decentralized systems at the center of its own mission, while better governance could be a logical part of the Forum's vision more generally.

Is the Forum "promoting" federalism? Intermediate outcome 2 of the logic model (Annex 3) refers to the demonstration, transfer and application of the values, principles, practices of federalism and decentralization. In our view this is a clear commitment to promote federalism and decentralization. In practice, the Forum's representatives stress that they do not preach federalism, rather focus on

increasing the understanding of federal and decentralized systems, thus enabling stakeholders to take informed decisions on governance in their specific country context. In our view, this approach is not clear in the Strategic Plan. In addition, the perceptions of external partners and experts differ. Some emphasized the neutral role of the Forum and its contribution to clarifying concepts and misconceptions, while others considered that the Forum had the mission to promote federalism.

Is the formulation of the *Theory of Change* adequate? From a systematic point of view, the Strategic Plan gives the impression that the *Theory of Change* is an appendix – not the very basis of the Forum’s approach, objectives and priorities, which are presented first without reference to the section on the *pathway to change*. The idea behind the *Theory of Change* – to reflect how and why change is expected to happen, how the activities are expected to lead to the desired results¹ – is unclear.

The *pathway to change* as it is now drafted suggests a relatively linear and general logic behind the Forum’s interventions. It focuses on knowledge transfer and assumes a willingness and commitment for change at the level of governments, officials and civil society: from knowledge transfer to capacity change to behavioral change and improved institutions. How does the Forum see the knowledge transfer and capacity development leading to individual action? What kind of knowledge is needed for changing behavior? How does individual learning lead to institutional reform? How does a reformed institutional framework lead to sustainable good governance? What are the systemic incentives, preconditions, obstacles to building the capacity of the various stakeholders and their willingness to make that change happen?

The Forum is broader and more sophisticated than this pathway to change suggests in its working methods and approaches (or its “Theory of Action”). Knowledge transfer to individual actors or groups is used not as an isolated product but as an important entry point for developing capacities and changing behavior. The knowledge transfer activities and products are targeted to the needs of actors in their context and help build the actors’ understanding of structures and processes, so that they can contribute to systemic reform in their countries. In addition, the Forum addresses structural change processes directly by convening high-level discussions with powerholders of different kinds, investing in contacts and networks, or by its focus on supporting cooperation and dialog among national stakeholders, with the political sensitivity that is needed. This goes far beyond “knowledge transfer” and contributes directly to building and strengthening commitment and political will for good government and institutional reforms. These issues are also addressed in part in the form of assumptions, or elsewhere in the document in sections on “implementation” or “priorities”. Looking at these aspects as “assumptions” means that they are beyond the Forum’s influence. However, they are at the core of the Forum’s way of working.

For the sake of better (internal and external) communication, the Theory of Change could be spelled out in more detail in the next Strategic Plan to make it better reflect the complexity of governance reform processes and the variety of roles that the Forum’s target groups and partners can play in these processes. On this basis, further reflection about the Forum’s own logic of intervention (“Theory of Action”) could help make the strategic plan a practical tool for guiding context-specific decisions and adjusting the Forum’s contributions to rapidly changing circumstances and realities.

3. The Forum’s policy programs: Achievements and challenges

According to the Forum, policy programs are expected to facilitate the knowledge exchange on public policy issues related to the management, reform and development of federal and decentralized systems, building continuously on a comparative body of knowledge in the three thematic areas

¹ See, for example, John Mayne, Useful Theory of Change Models, The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation Vol. 30 No. 2 (2015). See also SDC Briefing Note, State of the art on use of Theory of Change in the development sector, August 2018.

mentioned in the Strategic Plan. The policy programs are mainly funded through the core budget but may also be financed by targeted contributions (for example, the program on climate change and federal governance is funded by the Government of Québec).

According to the thematic priorities set in the Strategic Plan and specified in the Yearly Plans of Operations, the Forum, together with key experts from its network: identifies the topical issues at stake; formulates research objectives and questions, concepts and approaches; designs the methods of knowledge production, curation, exchange and dissemination; and convenes the local or topical experts to be involved in the work. The topics are selected in response to relevance as perceived by the Secretariat and its experts and follow the needs expressed by the Partner Governments in the Board of Directors. The Forum staff and/or mandated experts accompany the working processes closely, facilitating the production and exchange of knowledge among the various researchers and practitioners involved, and ensure the quality of the research.

Many interlocutors appreciated the **comparative methodology** and **problem-oriented** approaches that are unique to the Forum and distinguish it from more academic and nationally oriented institutions researching federalism. Several interlocutors identified the Forum as a unique knowledge hub with no direct competitor in their field of expertise and knowhow. The comparative approach (using case studies from different countries) helps contextualize the topics and issues in a way widely perceived as adding value for academic experts as well as governmental stakeholders and civil society in different country contexts.

According to the Annual Reports, the Forum has been part of reflection processes, exchange and learning events organized, since 2018 mostly together with other institutions, in a **variety of frameworks and formats**, e.g.

- Commissioning of topical studies from experts and editing knowledge products;
- Dissemination seminars or launching events on knowledge products and research findings from the Forum's policy programs;
- Study visits for delegations from Pakistan and Brazil on intergovernmental relations in Canada;
- Study program for second (federal) chamber officials from several countries, on the role of the German "Bundesrat" (federal council);
- Contributing to learning events, conferences, panel discussions, workshops, organized by or co-organized with academic institutions or other international organizations (International IDEA, Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung, OAS) on specific topics of common interest;
- Workshops or seminars co-organized with Partner Governments on specific issues of interest, in Germany, India, Switzerland, Brazil, Canada; e.g. the national conference on "The role of the Swiss Senate – historical artefact or institution of the future?" in 2019 in Bern; round table on "Federalism and Public Security" in 2019 in Berlin; roundtable on "Climate Change and Federal Governance" in 2019, in Montreal; contributions to panel discussions on federalism-related topics during the Geneva Peace Week in 2019 and 2021;
- Hosting webinars on various topical issues.

The Forum's global **network of individual experts and partner institutions** is an important resource for identifying suitable topic and context-specific experts to involve in policy programs and in the creation of knowledge through exchange or desk research. Several interlocutors mentioned that the Forum works with very knowledgeable experts who are renowned in their fields but also takes care of innovation and diversity, inviting younger experts, women and representatives of excluded groups to take part in the creation of knowledge. Some partner experts stress that the Forum can provide important opportunities for researchers in terms of establishing working relations with specialists from other countries and/or governmental stakeholders beyond the academic ecosystem. While it will be particularly interesting for younger researchers and for academic experts from non-western countries to get access to renowned publishers and peer-reviewed journals through the Forum, other experts and institutions may have their own channels for publishing their work and might not see a particular interest in collaborating with the Forum. For them, one main interest might be to pursue pertinent topics with new perspectives in a collaborative way, as well as contributing through the Forum to reform processes in specific contexts (including through DAPs). The Forum is thus considered to have an important convening power due to its good reputation, its specific character as a quasi-intergovernmental institution and its bridging function between academic and governmental

experts. The Forum's network is also a good mechanism for disseminating the knowledge that has been created.

The partnering experts contribute to the Forum's programs in different ways: through research work or by sharing their expertise in events or trainings convened and facilitated by the Forum. Usually they publish their research results in their own name while the Forum is credited as an editor. This raises questions about the role of the Forum: Is it just a network of experts or does it aspire to be a knowledge hub itself? What expertise is exclusively the Forum's? What makes it worthwhile to seek expertise through the Forum instead of engaging a specific expert directly? Does the Forum profit systematically from its own staff's experience and expertise, taking into account that the staff in Ottawa and the field offices have acquired broad knowledge as well as experience in reform processes related to federal and/or decentralized governance? In the current set-up, the Forum's Secretariat tends to see its role mainly in setting the research agenda, facilitating exchange, providing opportunities and creating an enabling environment – and less in creating thematic knowledge itself. If the specific thematic expertise in the Secretariat is relatively general, the process expertise, knowhow and experience (on how to create, curate and share expertise and experience on federal and decentralized governance and how to support reforms) is very important – and clearly distinguishes the Forum from academic institutions.

The knowledge products are curated, edited and disseminated by the Forum in a diversity of printed formats (books, forum reports, occasional papers) as well as virtual or multimedia formats (ForumFedCast, YouTube videos, the Forum's website, social media). In our interviews, interlocutors almost unanimously agree that the Forum's outputs from policy programs are impressive in quantity as well as – in a majority of cases – in quality. They show a **wealth of knowledge and knowhow** on federal concepts and practices from 20 years, combining academic research with more problem-oriented analysis. A growing number of learning materials have been created over the last years.

According to the Annual Reports, the Forum has edited a **variety of books, reports and "occasional papers"** since 2018:

- The Forum of Federations Handbook of Federal Countries 2020 (diverse authors and editors)
- Natural Resources in Federal and Devolved Countries, by George Anderson
- Gender Equality and Federalism, by Christine Forster
- Devolution and Federalism in Collapsed States: Constitutional Process and Design by George Anderson and Sujit Choudhry
- Intergovernmental Councils and the Coordination of Public Policy Making, by Johanna Schnabel
- Oil Rents and Politics of Equalization in Canadian Federalism, by Nikola Brassard-Dion
- German Federalism, from Decentralization to Re-Centralization?: the case of the Autonomy of the Federal States (Länder) in Matters of Culture, by Hellmut Wollmann
- The COVID-19 Crisis and Canadian Federalism, by André Lecours et al.
- Femmes cheffes et membres de cabinets en Tunisie, by Lotfi Tarchouna
- The Relative Performance of Federal and Non-federal Countries during the Pandemic, by David Cameron
- Public Security in Federal Polities, by Christian Leuprecht, Mario Kölling and Todd Hataley
- Apex-level Intergovernmental Relations in Federal Systems: Comparative Perspectives and Lessons for the Indian Context, by Rupak Chattopadhyay and Liam Whittington
- A special Occasional Paper Series on Territorial cleavages, with contributions about Iraq, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Scotland, Ukraine, Yemen
- Conflicts over Mineral Rents in Petrofederations, by René Trejbič
- Bending the Constitution: The New Regulation of Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations in Germany, by Wolfgang Renzsch
- Migrant Integration in Cities: Learning from Others, by F. Leslie Seidle
- Federal Democracy and the Challenges of Political Polarization, by Arthur Benz
- The Rise of Megacities and Multi-Level Governance, by Enid Slack
- The Nexus Between State Fragility and Federalism, by Michael Youash
- Federalism and Education: Ongoing Challenges and Policy Strategies in Ten Countries, edited by Kenneth Wong et al.
- Territorial Cleavages and the Bolivian Constitutional Transition, by Gustavo Bonifaz Moreno et al.
- When the Total is Less Than the Sum of the Parts: The Lessons of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by Marie-Joëlle Zahar
- The 2002-04 Annan Plan in Cyprus: An Attempted UN-Mediated Constitutional Transition, by Neophytos Loizides et al.
- Emergence and Transformation of Territorially Based Cleavages and Constitutional Responses in Ethiopia, by Assefa Fiseha

- States Reorganization and Accommodation of Ethno-Territorial Cleavages in India, by Harihar Bhattacharyya

Compared to the rather constitutionalist approaches in the early years of the Forum, the publications increasingly address topics related to the implementation of federalism or decentralized systems and approaches in specific contexts (e.g. fragility, situations of territorial cleavages, metropolitan areas), in specific public policy areas (gender equality, climate change, the fiscal system, justice, security systems, media) or service delivery sectors (education, health care). Structural issues of multilevel systems (the role of the second chamber in federal systems, electoral systems, intergovernmental relations) have also been addressed in a variety of ways and contexts in recent years. This broadens the range of expert profiles required for the creation of relevant knowledge – and often makes it difficult for the Forum to identify adequate expertise and experience. However, this is also an opportunity to contribute to making federalism and decentralization a multidisciplinary endeavor, beyond the narrow ecosystem of specialized constitutionalists and political scientists.

In our interviews, it was widely appreciated that the Forum lives up to its ambition to stay relevant by updating old standards (e.g. the Forum of Federations Handbook of Federal Countries of 2008, revised in 2020; the Forum’s Handbook on Local Government in Federal Countries of 2006, revised version to be expected in 2022).

A **lack of targeted messaging** was mentioned in many interviews. Interlocutors concluded that the publications are conceived as by and for academia, without taking into account more practically or politically oriented audiences (e.g. political actors, journalists, government officials, civil society actors). It is understandable that the Forum’s publications do not aim at preconizing a model of federalism or decentralization but focus on reflection on different experiences. Nevertheless, the publications could profit, in the views of many, from more practical conclusions that target certain governance actors. This could help improve reflection by policy makers and thinkers. In particular, the policy programs that compare different country experiences could profit from stronger and more policy-oriented synthesis that can help specialists from other country contexts learn from the experiences.

The production of easily accessible learning materials in the format of educational videos and animations has started to target civic education actors of different kinds – a good move with regard to raising awareness and making the concept of federal and decentralized governance more tangible and popular among a wider audience. In general, the Forum has quickly developed capacities and new formats of **virtual learning** and sharing, particularly due to travel and contact restrictions in the COVID-19 crisis. These new experiences will be helpful as digitalization increases.

“COVID-19 and federalism” is a good example of the Forum’s ability to combine different methods and work with a variety of partners to address a topical issue from a federalist or multilevel governance perspective. In the early months of the pandemic, the Forum commissioned snapshot analytical papers from 23 countries, focusing on the challenges for intergovernmental relations in the early phase of the pandemic. The papers were published in April and May 2020 and broke download records for the Forum’s online publications. Together with the Organization of American States and the University of Kent, the Forum published a “Practical guide to subnational government response to COVID-19” in November 2020. The Forum finally developed, together with several experts, a comparative volume on “Federalism and the Response to COVID-19”, analyzing the pandemic’s impact on federal governance, how federal systems responded to the crisis and how this response differed from unitary countries. The book, co-edited by the Forum, was released in November 2021 and launched by a virtual panel discussion hosted by the Forum. In addition, the Forum hosted, co-hosted and participated in a series of webinars related to the pandemic and federalism.

The recently **renewed website** of the Forum provides easier access for the interested public to the publications that the Forum has (co-)edited in the context of its policy programs. The publications are accessible (mostly for free) over the website’s virtual library and search engine. However, the accessibility is hampered by a confusing categorization of the publications for outsiders (how do “Forum reports” differ from “books”, for example?). The academic quality is generally perceived as good, though variable for some observers. The website also provides information about the policy programs more generally. However, this information is often undated or outdated (referring to

programs closed many years ago), which may be frustrating for website users looking for up-to date information.

The new website is part of a new effort of the Forum in **external communication and dissemination of knowledge products**, mainly serving as a deposit and tool for accessing publications and audio-visuals. With a view to “increase the reach and recognition of the Forum and its activities” (Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan), blogs and social media accounts have taken an important role in the outreach work of the Forum, with a tremendous growth in the Forum’s online traffic in the last years. For example, the number of followers on Twitter has grown in one year from 4,000 and 19,000, which can be explained by the Forum’s new strategy of targeting promotion to governance practitioners and researchers, increasing the volume of tweets, knowledge products and other content featured in posts. A large growth in the number of university students engaging with Forum content on Twitter has been noted this year, too. The Facebook audience – primarily members of civil society – continues to grow as well (to 288,000 in 2021) following the Forum’s efforts to use the platform for informing the audience about knowledge products and events on a variety of topics and for promoting webinars, videos, blogs and podcasts. In contrast to these positive trends, several interlocutors expressed the view that the Forum and its products are not visible enough for political stakeholders and civil society beyond a narrow group of academic experts and dedicated “federalists”.

4. The Forum’s Development Assistance Programs

The Forum’s activities in developing or transitioning countries since 2018

By expanding its focus to emerging federal or devolved governance systems (instead of established federations and formal constitutional set-ups) the Forum had already started to look at reform processes in a broader perspective, in a variety of different contexts. While adequate constitutional and institutional frameworks are important, the ways in which the governance systems – structures, processes and actors – are evolving is a long term, complex process of change and depends on a variety of context factors.

With the funding crisis due to reduced core funding from the Canadian government, the Development Assistance Programs (DAPs) brought a new funding base for the Forum. In the views of many observers, the Forum managed to survive as it was able to take this opportunity, which was especially offered by the Canadian development assistance.

Since 2018 the Forum reports on DAPs in different countries and contexts. Most of the programs are multi-year and multi-stakeholder programs, with a considerable amount to be spent on various activities.

Ethiopia: As one of the Forum’s Partner Governments, Ethiopia has hosted a variety of Forum events including the 5th International Conference on Federalism. The Forum established an important network including high-level government officials, parliamentarians (particularly of the second chamber), sub-national governments, senior administrative staff, politicians, and academic experts. Since 2018 the Forum has implemented a variety of programs under the heading of development assistance, funded by different donors, but mainly by GAC:

- **“Strengthening Federal Governance and Pluralism in Ethiopia”**, funded by GAC (CAD 5.7 million, 2017-2022), with the goal of strengthening the federal system and making it more responsive to men and women. The program’s objectives are to enhance the (gender-sensitive) management of inter-governmental relations, improve inter-governmental fiscal relations, and increase the citizen’s understanding and awareness of the constitution. Achievements include the successful support of the reform of the revenue-sharing arrangements and formula, through expert studies and technical support for the House of Federations work;

- **“Destiny Ethiopia”**, funded by the Netherlands, Ireland and Denmark, 2019-2021, with the objective of supporting nation-building through dialog, by forming a network of leaders with capacity and intent to work together towards systemic change, and facilitating a dialog within the society, based on the methodology of Transformational Scenario Planning. A new project for national dialog is in preparation, together with a consortium of eight local organizations (including political parties, civil society organizations and government agencies), building on the experience of “Destiny Ethiopia” and the SFGPE project;
- **“European Response to Electoral Cycle Support in Ethiopia”** (EURECS Ethiopia), funded by Germany and the EU, 2019-2022, with the objective of strengthening the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia NEBE. Activities include support for management capacity of NEBE, its leadership and credibility, with a view to bolstering an inclusive and responsive electoral process;
- **“Prevention of Electoral Violence” (PEV)**, funded by the EU, 2019-2021, with the objective of preventing, mitigating and managing conflicts along the electoral cycle by assisting non-State actors in addressing the root causes of political violence and conflict. Activities included supporting stakeholders in developing capacities and skills to identify root causes and responses to electoral conflict and violence, and supporting the establishment of CSO platforms of exchange, early-warning networks and mediators.

Myanmar: The Forum has been active in Myanmar since 2011. The “Strengthening Federalism and Inclusive Governance in Myanmar” program, funded by GAC (2019-2025, CAD 6.7 million in total) aims at supporting more inclusive and gender-sensitive federal policies and power-sharing options for a proposed federal state, and enhanced participation of women as decision-makers at all levels of government in designing a proposed federal state. Despite the military coup d’état in February 2021, the project continues with the same strategic orientation, although working through different channels and with adapted modalities and activities.

The Philippines: In 2019, the Forum conducted several capacity-building sessions on decentralized fiscal governance, with the aim of supporting efforts for informed governance options in the Philippines. The new **“Supporting Decentralized & Inclusive Governance”**, funded by GAC, 2021-2022 (CAD 100,000), aims to support the coordination of practices and productive relations between national, sub-national government and administration as well as civil society, in a decentralized set-up, based on the example of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Nepal: **“Support for Managing Fiscal Federalism in Nepal”**, funded by the UK, implemented together with The Asia Foundation Nepal, 2020-2021. The program is supporting the devolution of power to provincial and local governments as foreseen in the 2015 Constitution. The objectives were capacity building, training and mentoring of key government officials, enhancing knowledge and skills through case studies and comparative federal experience, with a view to strengthening intergovernmental relations and federal fiscal practices. Activities focused on supporting the first provincial training institute, the Gandaki Province Training Academy, in developing training tools, modules and manuals tailored to the Nepali system but based on international expertise. The Forum prepared specific knowledge products. In addition to this program, the Forum provides expertise and shares experience from Australia, Canada and South Africa on fiscal federalism, funded by a small Knowledge Exchange Program by the World Bank.

Cuba: A short-term program in 2019 funded by Canada with a focus on building the capacities of key governance stakeholders to take informed decisions through training sessions on theoretical and practical principles of fiscal and administrative decentralization. New project ideas are currently being discussed with GAC.

Somalia: **“Political Accommodation and Pluralism in Somalia”**, funded by the Netherlands, 2016-21, in total EUR 6.75 million, in collaboration with Conflict Dynamics International and a local CSO. The

goal was that the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states reach consensus on and begin to implement practical and politically accommodating distribution of powers and intergovernmental relations (IGR). Activities included a combination of research, training, technical advice and dialog on a range of federal governance issues, with a focus on the distribution of powers and IGR.

Sri Lanka: “Strengthening the Election-Monitoring Process”, funded by GAC, 2020-21: The objective was to strengthen the electoral process, improve the understanding of electoral processes, inform citizens, enhance CSO’s capacities to advocate for free and fair elections, and increase public trust in election credibility. It provided guidance on safeguards and rules that protect elections and their governance outcomes against negative influences that are not evidence or rule-based. It was implemented in collaboration with a CSO specialising in monitoring electoral violence and consisted of bringing together international expertise to provide inputs and comparative experience.

The MENA region: “Empowering Women for Leadership Roles”, in Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia, funded by GAC under its gender equality and good governance program, 2016-2023 (CAD 16 million in total), with the overall objective of advancing inclusiveness in governance. The program works with a broad range of local partners in the targeted countries and aims to increase the participation of women in social, cultural and political power structures and decision-making as well as enhance the ability of women and men to shape governmental and non-governmental policies and activities that affect women’s inclusion. The program does not exclusively target established leaders at national, regional and local level, but specifically addresses younger women and girls to build their confidence and interest in public participation. It works with strategies of knowledge sharing and building networks and relationships to enhance leadership skills.

Achievements and challenges

Evaluating the results of individual DAPs is beyond the scope of this evaluation. Our task is to assess whether the Forum’s implementation is relevant and effective, in the perspective of the Forum as an institution. Two countries were selected as examples to look more closely at the DAPs the Forum is currently implementing. However, the methodology and time frame were not intended for and did not allow us to go beyond a general assessment.

In the universe of development cooperation, interventions in recipient countries are perceived as contributions to longer-term development or governance-reform processes that need to be supported with technical and/or financial assistance. The development interventions are framed by long-term overall goals, more concrete and shorter-term objectives, expectations towards results, and (mostly) longer-term approaches. Increasingly, donor support depends on a convincing intervention logic (theory of change, pathway to change) for a program or project: What kind of change do we expect in the context at stake? What are the factors favoring or hindering that change? How do our interventions affect these change factors? What are the results of our interventions, intended or unintended? In this perspective, knowledge sharing, exchange of expertise and experience are not isolated events in themselves, but steps for building capacities and the commitment of different governmental and non-governmental stakeholders for effective governance reform, often in contexts characterized by political conflict and institutional fragility.

The Forum’s traditional focus on individual capacity building through exchange and the sharing of expertise may be an important contribution to this change. However, the Forum’s practice shows its awareness that successful reforms will not depend on individual knowledge and knowhow only. Supportive knowledge transfer and capacity building needs to be tailored to the country context and take into account the concrete obstacles and incentives for governance reform. As the Forum was already working in emerging or less established federations before engaging with DAPs, its focus had already become broader: from prioritizing debate and sharing knowledge on well-established constitutional and institutional structures to a broader systemic perspective on joint learning of how

to make federal and devolved governance systems work in practice, in the context at stake and in different policy areas.

Sharing generic technical and topical knowhow and practical experience on federal systems, on how a comparable country has managed to make decentralized structures work or solved a specific problem is only the first step towards enabling decision-makers to take informed decisions on governance reform and negotiating for adequate governance solutions in challenging contexts. Accordingly, the Forum's methodology seems to have broadened to address behavioral change, plus collective and institutional learning by shifting to:

- Supporting **processes of multilevel dialog** and promoting critical and informed debate (Ethiopia);
- **Building process-oriented capacities and skills** for managing intergovernmental or inter-institutional relations (various projects);
- **Negotiating on power sharing** and mediating political conflicts (e.g. Ethiopia, Webinar on Intergovernmental Cooperation in Multilevel Systems for Brazilian practitioners in July 2021).

However, some interlocutors (staff and partners) also expressed a degree of unease with such process methodologies that they consider as important, but beyond the core competence of the Forum.

The example of "Strengthening Federal Governance & Pluralism in Ethiopia": Key achievements and challenges

In the logic of the three expected outcomes, the project progress reports as well as our interlocutors refer to a series of achievements that the Forum and its partners significantly contributed to, including:

- The finalization and approval of a new **Inter-Governmental Relations (IGR) law** that the Forum and its partners helped elaborate, joint IGR framework agreements among some regional states, draft IGR guidelines and a draft handbook for operationalizing the new structures, the conduct of high-level IGR training and federal governance leadership training programs;
- Review of joint revenues completed and recommendations for **new revenue-sharing formula** presented, discussed and adopted by key stakeholders, draft law on Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations (IGFR) elaborated, discussed and finally adopted, training programs on IGFR developed and delivered, two studies on reviewing the current grant sharing formula and the effectiveness of equalization transfers, development and operationalization of a computerized data management system to monitor and oversee IGFR;
- Studies on constitutional rights affecting women and girls, training program on **gender-sensitive** constitutional adjudication, training workshops and youth leadership dialogue programs.

The reports and interviews identified some **key challenges**:

- The **COVID-19** situation had a general impact on many activities as well as on the program management, by making direct personal contacts and dialog more difficult and time-consuming and slowing down the pace of the program. The Forum took a series of decisions to adapt its activities to a more virtual mode, hired new high-level staff in Addis while keeping the main responsibility for the program at headquarters. However, building trust with new partners and a wider audience has become more challenging in a virtual world;
- The political turmoil and crisis resulting in **armed conflicts** (where issues of autonomy and federalism are at the center) made the interventions even more complex and time-consuming, with the risk of seriously challenging the logic of intervention – and the security of staff and partners. In a situation of armed conflict between the central government and regional government, the close partnership with the central government (even a member government of the Forum) may question the impartiality as one of the key features of the Forum's identity. At the same time, the direct access to and acceptance by the government officials and the House of Federation (the second chamber of the national parliament) is a key strength of the Forum and a potential for the future for playing a key role in developing the federal approach further and contributing to a peaceful solution;
- With the shift of the Forum to **new issues such as gender equality and political dialog**, the traditional partners of the Forum had to be complemented by new local partners that were not easy to identify. The quality of partnerships with traditional partners (who stem from times when the Forum focused on constitutional and structural issues of debate) will depend on how much they can follow the new and innovative approaches of the Forum.

According to our interviews with donors and other resource persons familiar with the Forum's work, the Forum's headquarters and field office staff have shown a **sound understanding for the contexts and political dynamics** that the DAPs have been working in. This helped it adapt quickly to contextual changes and in crises. For example, in the Myanmar program, the Forum was able to manage the quickly emerging risks for the personal security of the staff, the program and the Forum's reputation, and managed to adapt the management set-up to the completely changed scenario in due time.

Working on federalism and decentralization reforms inevitably means dealing with conflicting interests. The country contexts of Myanmar and Ethiopia in particular show that a debate on federalism is at the heart of many political conflicts around power sharing: on one side, federalism is part of the solution, on the other side, it may be part of the problem. In the case of Ethiopia, which is a Partner Government of the Forum and a recipient of its support at the same time, the Forum is close and credible to the government, with the attendant risk of lesser credibility to other stakeholders in an escalating conflict. Not taking sides or not being perceived as taking sides is difficult. Our interlocutors were unanimous that the Forum's staff is highly conflict-sensitive in its work, continuously aspiring to analyze and manage triggers, drivers and risks of conflict and investing in connecting and de-escalating factors. However, the undoubted individual capacities, knowhow and experience in conflict-sensitive management are not systematized and documented for the Forum's general work beyond the DAP operations documents.

The example of "Strengthening Federalism and Inclusive Governance in Myanmar": Key achievements and challenges

Starting in 2019, the project's implementation addressed a broad range of stakeholders (civil society organizations, women's rights groups, political parties, media, academia, parliamentarians as well as Ethnic Armed Organizations [EAOs]), with a view to (1) building national ownership of men and women, (2) promoting knowledge, and (3) building institutional capacity to develop and implement gender-sensitive federal policies in areas such as power sharing and constitutional reform, fiscal arrangements, education and health. This was based on the Theory of Change that a gender-sensitive federal political system will help respond to the long-standing aspirations of ethnic minorities, de-escalate ethnic conflicts and empower women.

The project's activities were impacted in an early phase by the COVID-19 crisis. The pre-election period resulting in the elections of November 2020 also affected the pace – with the expectation that the strengthening of democratic forces in the election could open doors for project implementation in 2021.

The military coup of February 2021 radically changed the political landscape and put the program and the Forum's staff and partners in Myanmar at serious risk. The Forum paused all activities and was able to (temporarily) relocate its field office to Thailand for personal safety reasons, leaving limited capacities in Yangon, adding high-level capacities in terms of a new Country representative to connect more intensively and directly with stakeholder groups such as the National Unity Government NUG, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and the EAOs. A thorough reflection on the strategic orientation and Theory of Change of the program has found that they were still valid but some changes in the expected outputs were needed, especially at the levels of activities and delivery channels. The project will strictly not work with or support the ruling State Administrative Council dominated by the military forces, or its affiliates. Neither will it support any form of violence.

On the other hand, new opportunities may arise for promoting federalism in the medium and long term. The coup had mobilized civil society movements and population groups that see now more clearly the need for federalization. The presence and leadership of women in the civil disobedience movements and in the CRPH and NUG also offer new possibilities for promoting gender equality as well as pluralism in a federalized system. Despite the repressive environment, virtual training, exchange and networking activities have resumed in Myanmar and Thailand in the last months, with many precautions to keep staff and partners safe and developing staff capacities and approaches to adapt to the new working realities.

The Forum staff emphasizes that the old intervention principles and approaches remain valid for the DAPs: focusing on building expertise at different levels of key stakeholders, keeping impartial, avoiding politicization, refraining from promoting ready-made federal models or solutions, and responding to the demand of donors and/or local stakeholders. However, working in the DAP frameworks has brought new challenges and topics to the center of the Forum's agenda.

First, the **DAPs reflect the Forum's as well as the donors' own goals**, which may differ in detail and be complementary at best. The Forum has successfully integrated some donor priorities in its own strategies and interventions. For example, the focus on gender equality and inclusive governance in several DAPs (and in the Forum's Strategic Plan) mirrors the trend of development cooperation in recent years, particularly Canada's new feminist international assistance policy. Another example is the topic of election support that has generated strategic discussion within and around the Forum, with no clear answer in our interviews: How narrowly should the Forum focus on federalism and

multilevel governance? Are some broader governance topics such as election support, participation, and diversity beyond the scope of the Forum? While it is understandable, tactically, that the Forum needs to be flexible, take opportunities and make compromises to get funding, our interlocutors agreed that it is strategically important to keep the specific thematic focus ensuring the Forum's identity and the comparative advantage of high expertise and experience on federalism and multilevel governance.

As an implementer of DAPs, the Forum competes with a specific type of organization: international or local consultancy firms or civil society organizations specialized in supporting governance reforms, mostly with specific knowhow on certain topics. To stay attractive and competitive as a relatively small implementer, it will be important to keep this niche and offer specific expertise and experience on federal and devolved systems. Nevertheless, this allows for a broad variety of topics that the Forum's DAPs can address – as long as these topics are treated in a multilevel governance perspective of federal and devolved systems.

Second, as the case of Myanmar has clearly shown, in crises, the donor government will have an important say on how the DAP will react to the change of situation and manage future risks. While the Forum was able to come to an agreement with GAC on how to continue the program, GAC's foreign policy clearly sets the frame by excluding any further work with military rulers for the time being. In this case, the trade-off was acceptable but might narrow the possibilities of the Forum to support constructive solutions in the longer term. In the future, the influence of donors may imply some reputational risks for the Forum, which might not agree with a donor's position in an internal conflict.

The management approaches of donors (focusing on multi-year objectives and “project implementation plans”, including a clear logic of intervention, requiring monitoring of and reporting on results at different levels) were new for the Forum since it used to be core-funded by its program based on planned activities that donors considered as valuable. The Forum's focus on creating and exchanging knowledge and expertise had to be **re-framed in the context of supporting a process of change**. The extensive experience of the Forum in analyzing and comparing federal systems and working with a variety of stakeholders in different contexts was a good basis for this kind of development work. In general, the Forum successfully adapted its working procedures in countries where there were external development funding opportunities, to the management by development programs and projects. New experienced staff were hired to build the Forum's professional capacities for designing, planning, implementing and managing development programs. Some of the programs implemented by the Forum were initiated by the Forum itself and submitted to donors, others were based on project ideas by donors – but in all cases, the Forum and its local partners had an important role in conceiving the program approaches and activities.

The **professional capacities** of the responsible headquarters staff, the local staff and the local partners are generally perceived as very good, and the quality of international experts' inputs are considered to be high. This does not come without much effort and some difficulty. The Forum invests in preparing the international experts to be involved: In most cases, they are carefully introduced to the context, the objectives of their input and the challenges to be met. The Forum has established a local presence with staffed field offices in all the countries where a significant project is implemented. Local presence is seen by many as a pre-condition for successful program implementation, however, the management of several local antennas and the steering of DAPs is a heavy burden for a small head office in Ottawa. Local partners (governmental and non-governmental) are involved in the program implementation at different levels. They may have their own political agendas, which might not always be transparent and compatible. It is sometimes difficult for the Forum to keep track of the local partners' impact, ensure impartiality, and manage risks for the Forum and the programs at stake. Quality assurance by the Forum is time consuming, and financial and

operational monitoring and frequent reporting to donors, mostly with their individual methodology and tools, take considerable resources from field offices and headquarters.

5. The Forum's governance and management

The Partner Governments in the Strategic Council

The Forum of Federation is a not-for-profit organization under the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. According to the Strategic Plan, the Forum considers itself as a “membership-based international organization”, with 10 national governments that have signed a partnership agreement. These countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Switzerland) are formally represented in the Forum's Strategic Council. The Strategic Council “is an advisory body to the Forum of Federations, where each Partner Government provides its perspective through its representative(s)” (Section 1g of the General By-Law of the FoF)..

Under the title of “Strategic Council” (section 5), the General By-Law states:

“The Forum will discuss its By-laws with the Strategic Council as well as its annual budget and expenditures. The Strategic Council may review and provide advice to the Forum on its overall strategy, and in particular, on its strategic plan, program of work, sources of revenue, new appointment of the Board of Directors, and the appointment of the Chair of the Board. The Strategic Council will meet annually. Each Partner Government may name several representatives to its delegation.”

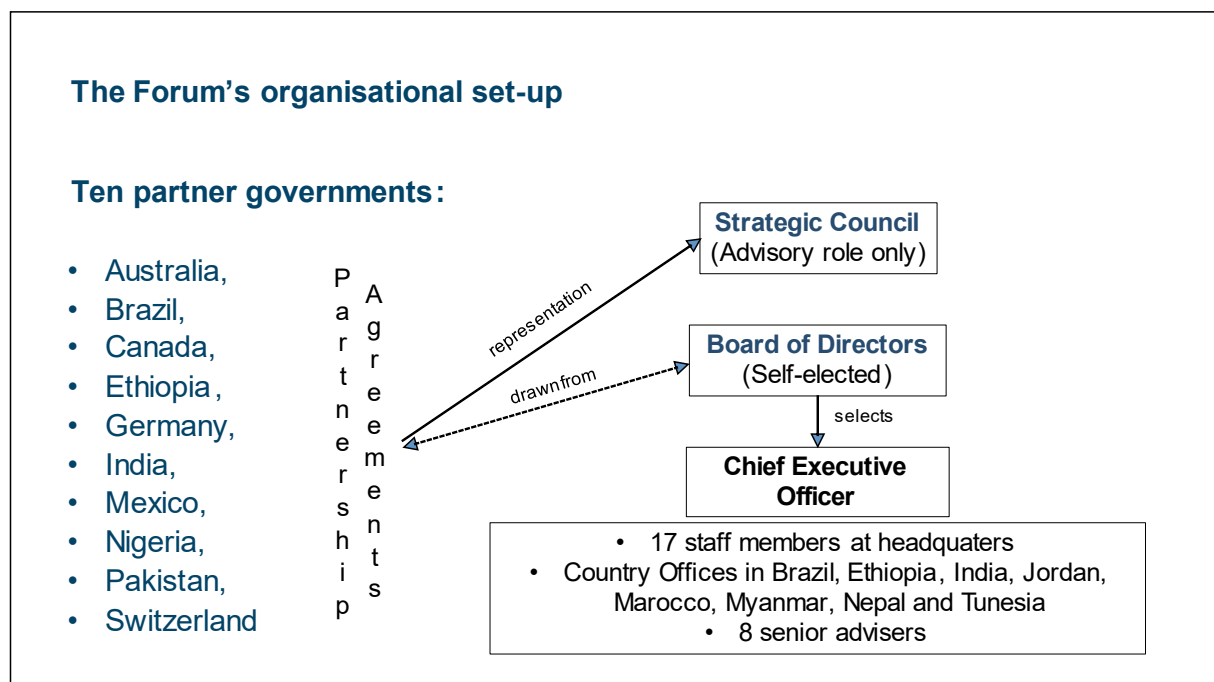
The Strategic Council has met in the first years mostly in the context of the International Conferences on Federalism that were organized in different partner countries. Strategic Council meetings were organized less frequently in recent years and the interest of high-level governmental decision-makers in participating seems to have decreased. At present, visible engagement including financial support and active contributions to the Strategic Council and the Board come from the representatives of Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Ethiopia and (to some extent) Brazil. Some interlocutors mentioned that the engagement of Partner Governments often depends more on personal preference and interests than on institutional commitments. The engagement of countries such as Pakistan, India or Australia for the Forum seems currently less tangible, despite the efforts of the Forum. In addition, a number of established states with federal structures (such as Belgium, Austria, Spain, or the USA) as well as emerging federal states (Nepal) are not partners.

Expectations of Partner Governments and their representatives towards the Forum's role and activities and their motivations for supporting the Forum are diverse. Some representatives of Partner Governments emphasize the role of the Forum in analyzing federal experience from other countries and providing insights that are useful for the governments' own reform processes and decision-making on federal or multilevel structures and processes (Germany, Canada, Brazil, Switzerland). Other government representatives stress the role of the Forum in providing technical support to countries that are heading to or implementing governance-reform processes and lack the necessary expertise (Switzerland, Canada). Last but not least, Partner Governments expect that the Forum is a platform for accessing financial sources for governance reforms, or for building closer relationship with like-minded and comparable federal states (Brazil). The diversity of interests is mirrored in the diversity of public institutions that are represented in the Strategic Council: High-level officials from concerned national ministries, (former) members of the second chamber of the parliament, (former) representatives of federal States, officials from the funding development agencies, or representatives of the embassies.

The involvement of governments as partners has brought a high level of credibility and legitimacy for addressing topics of federalism with governmental officials. This has helped the Forum's reputation and helped access government stakeholders as well as members of parliaments at national as well as

subnational levels, mobilize governmental expertise and experience, and host and organize events to an extent that would not have been possible as a purely academic institution or non-governmental organization. It also opened doors for governmental funding. Close relations with partner governments are needed to solidify their support, and relations need careful nurturing: To keep them on board, increase their motivation and deepen their engagement, it will be important also in the future to regularly, meaningfully and proactively involve the Strategic Council members, asking them for their perspectives on strategic orientation, regularly informing and reporting on the Forum’s activities, sharing challenges and opportunities, potentials and risks. The input of the Strategic Council should also be regularly part of the agenda of the Board of Directors for their consideration in decision-making.

The close connection to national governments comes with its own challenges and risks. Firstly, the government’s support of the Forum often represents a political commitment that might not continue with a new government. As was the case with Canada, Brazil or also India, elections may bring new governments that are not as committed as their predecessors were to the concept of federalism or have different political priorities, which will result in a decrease of political, technical and financial support or translate into pressures on the Forum on how to shape its activities. Secondly, the engagement of certain (central) governments might hamper the Forum’s access to sub-national governments who might have other interests in the debate about federalism or multilevel governance – and affect the Forum’s aspiration to impartiality in the eyes of civil society stakeholders involved in political debates around federalism and decentralization. Thirdly, the international relations and foreign policy interests of member governments could also affect the perception of the Forum’s impartiality in activities in third countries. It is clear that the Forum must be perceived as an independent actor, and partner governments should not be seen as putting political pressure on the Forum’s decisions.



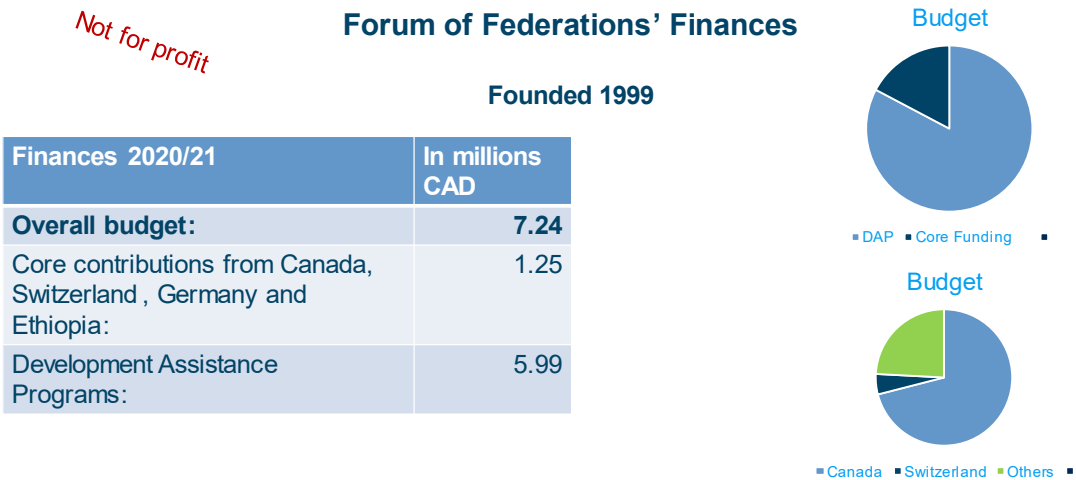
Furthermore, donors have an (informal) impact on the management of the Forum as they require reporting and can impose conditions for funding. A systematic inclusion of the Strategic Council in strategic decision-making, taking to account the concerns and wishes of partner governments limits the need to “play the donor card”.

The Management of the Forum

According to the General By-law, the affairs of the Forum are managed by the Board (Section 6). Its main powers are: Administering the affairs of the forum (Section 30), fund-raising (Section 31), and appointing agents and employees – a power that may be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (Section 32 of the General By-law). Board members are drawn from the countries of Partner Governments and elected by the members themselves, up to 15 directors in total, “to meet guidelines for additional representation” (section 9 of the General By-law). A nominating committee of the Board has the task to “recruit and secure strong balanced leadership for the Forum from among the countries of Partner Governments” (section 19).

Under the chairmanship of Georg Milbradt, former Chief Minister of Saxony, Germany, the Board is currently composed of three Canadians and one representative each of Switzerland, Nigeria, Brazil, Australia, Pakistan and Ethiopia. The Board appoints a Chief Executive Officer supervising the operations and administration of the Forum and informing the Board about the affairs of the Forum (section 34). Today, the Board plays an important strategic role in setting the thematic agenda and the management frame (budgets, programs) while the “President and CEO” of the Forum (together with three Vice-Presidents) are responsible for the day-to-day management. The Board meets regularly in plenary sessions and in specialized committees that are fulfilling special tasks such as nominating members, monitoring and evaluating programs, and financial oversight.

The mode of selection (from partner governments) and election (self-election) provide for a certain proximity to partner governments while still ensuring independence of the Forum. Due to changes in the Canadian government who had provided the main share of (core) funding in the first 10 years of the Forum’s existence, the Forum lost a great part of its external funding. As mentioned before, the possibility to implement DAPs secured the financial survival of the Forum. However, it also implied a reduction of staff at headquarters and a strategic re-orientation of its activities. In the financial year ending in March 2021, the Forum’s revenues were indicated as CAD 7.2 million, with a CAD 5 million contribution from Global Affairs Canada, CAD 350,000 from Swiss Development Cooperation, and CAD 180,000 from the German Ministry of the Interior. CAD 1.4 million came from other donors. Only CAD 1.25 million was booked as a core contribution for the Forum’s overall work program (including the grants from Switzerland and Germany) while the rest (CAD 6 million, 82%) is earmarked for specific projects, mainly for DAPs.



Recent Development Assistance Programs in Cuba, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mena Region, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tunisia , and Yemen

While the core funding part seems to be small for an organization aspiring to be a thematic leader, our interviews emphasized that the Forum is regularly able to mobilize in-kind contributions by its

partner organizations and experts when organizing events or producing knowledge. The Forum also provides important learning experience for masters students and interns from the University of Ottawa. While internships require a considerable time dedication by Forum staff in terms of guidance and mentoring, the interns substantially contribute to research work and the editing of knowledge products at relatively low cost for the Forum.

The most recent annual report counts 17 staff members at headquarters in Ottawa, and country offices of different sizes in Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Jordan, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal and Tunisia. Eight senior advisors plus 14 interns and summer students and research grant recipients are also mentioned. Our interlocutors emphasize the high professional quality and personal commitment of the Forum's staff, at headquarters as well as in the country offices. The Forum is considered a highly competent, reliable, flexible, gender-sensitive and agile partner who is quick in taking decisions. Staff members at headquarters appreciate the informal working atmosphere and the team-oriented and inspiring spirit. The low staff turn-over indicates a high satisfaction of staff members despite a considerable workload.

The lean structures at headquarters allow for relatively simple and straight-forward working procedures based on informal exchange – with a certain risk that the acquired knowledge is not fully documented and institutionalized for further work and remains with the persons involved. The country office staff interviewed appreciate the accessibility of headquarters' staff and their professional commitment and responsiveness to their needs.

In recent years, the Forum has invested in professional communication. The annual reports and results reports are presented in an accessible format, the social media channels are actively managed, with a strong impact on the Forum's public presence. The website, as a key instrument for making the Forum's work accessible, has recently been revised to take account of the needs of virtual users.

The management of DAPs is relatively resource intensive, for country offices as well as for headquarters. On the other hand, according to the staff itself, the experience gained from managing the DAPs helped the Forum improve its general management approaches and procedures. The representatives of donors interviewed mention that the management capacities are good and responsive to the obligations related to the programs and needs of donors, although project implementation suffers from delays in some cases, particularly due to COVID-19 and political conflicts. Key management decisions are taken by the responsible vice presidents and directors in Ottawa, while regional and country directors are tasked with more operational responsibilities. Financial management of projects is also rather centralized in Ottawa to assure the quality of financial reporting and the integrity of management. External members of the Forum's expert network are subcontracted to deliver trainings and technical support. While these international experts are often experienced and knowledgeable, project management investment is needed for building their understanding of the challenging contexts, the role of the Forum and the expert tasks to deliver, as well as integrating them into the project reporting and monitoring processes. In most cases, the external experts are not involved in more strategic reflections.

Our interlocutors are convinced that the Forum's local presence, which is established long before the project starts, coupled with the necessary context and network of reliable local partners as well as international experts are vital for solid results. Several interlocutors mentioned, however, that the country office staff are not always adequately integrated into the headquarters' decisions, and the Forum could better use the immense knowhow and experience of country offices, local partners and experts when implementing projects in challenging contexts. Some country office staff would appreciate learning more from the experience of other country offices dealing with the same topics and operational challenges.

Together with headquarters, the country offices are also key in managing conflict and security risks and react to new risks and opportunities in an agile manner. While the Forum's approaches are perceived in the context of DAPs as conflict sensitive, adaptive and responsive to the context, the Forum does not have any explicit conflict sensitivity and staff security policies – leaving it to the experience of staff whether and how to react in situations of crisis and conflict. However, the headquarters is currently in the process of preparing security and risk management policies and a procedure manual to be followed by field office staff.

The new Results-Based Management system

At the request of SDC, a results-based management (RBM) system was developed in the last years, with the aim of enabling the Forum to assess the results of its activities across the institution, identify potential weaknesses and demonstrate the value of its work. The RBM system was also expected to aid the design of future programs, improve program delivery and steer the organization more effectively towards its objectives. The system should facilitate the improvement of working processes, assure quality and lastly maximize the impact of the Forum's work. Since 2018, the Forum has been collecting and analyzing data according to the designed RBM plan. Of course, DAPs have their own, separate RBM systems requiring the collecting of different data sets and responding to the specific needs of programs and donors.

Following the adoption of the Strategic Plan in 2018, a RBM manual was developed with a view to embedding the RBM principles into the Forum's programming. A range of internal data collection processes and instruments was developed to facilitate the collection of results across the Forum's activities. Performance indicators and targets were developed, referring to intermediate and immediate outcomes as well as outputs set by the Strategic Plan. Sources of information and data collection methods were identified. A series of new documents, templates, tools, internal protocols and guidance material were developed, tested and refined in the first year, including an "Annual Stakeholder Survey" as the main instrument to assess mainly qualitative aspects. Staff was trained and base-line data collected. A RBM officer was appointed in all country offices to ensure the collection of data.

Performance indicators used for measuring the Forum's progress, according to the Results Report 2020/21

- Forum stakeholders demonstrating behavioral change, gender equality and decision-making in line with federal/decentralized governance (for intermediate outcome 10)
- Percentage of targets met relating to policy changes supporting federal idea and decentralization included in Forum project plans (for intermediate outcome 20)

Immediate outcome 100 "Learning and solutions"

- Development, updating and dissemination of knowledge products (for immediate outcome 100)
- Number of learning activities implemented (for immediate outcome 100)
- Percentage of participants demonstrating increased knowledge (for immediate outcome 100)
- Number of new and updated knowledge products (for output 110)
- Quality and utility of knowledge products (for output 110)
- Number of participants in learning activities (for output 120)
- Number of positive responses to learning activities (for output 120)

Immediate outcome 200 "Global network"

- The number of new partner organizations engaged in Forum activities (for immediate outcome 200 and output 210)
- Partner organizations' perceptions of their participation (for immediate outcome 200)
- Formal agreement of partner countries to work with the Forum and contribute (for output 220)

Immediate outcome 300 "Reach and Recognition"

- Number of Forum products disseminated to wider audiences (for immediate outcome 300 and output 310)
- Number of visitors accessing the Forum's website and social media content (for immediate outcome 300)
- Number of requests for Forum support or meaningful contribution (for immediate outcome 300 and output 310)

Immediate outcome 400 "Governance transition support"

- Number of individuals with leadership potential trained by the Forum (for immediate outcome 400 and output 420)
- Number of expert deployments in development assistance countries (for immediate outcome 400)
- Number of activities implemented in response to requests (for output 410)
- Percentage of female participants in Forum's activities (for output 420)

Following a baseline set in the financial year 2018/19, the two following years showed good results in terms of the identified indicators and targets. Specific annual results reports summarize the data in an accessible way. Last year's report has added an explanatory and analytical text per indicator, explaining the numbers, targets and challenges encountered. The results reports are easily readable and accessible. They indicate that the Forum is performing well overall and remains on course to achieve the organizational objectives established in its Strategic Plan. Despite the operational difficulties due to COVID-19, the Forum was able to reach its targets in the majority of identified outcomes and output areas.

Some results 2020-21 (from the Results Report 2020/21)



12,677,596 visitors accessed the Forum's website and social media content

In 2020-21 Forum developed/updated:
5 books
35 papers
14 audiovisual products

89% of stakeholders in Annual Stakeholder Survey indicated that the Forum knowledge products they came into contact with were Extremely Useful (28%) or Very Useful (61%)

The RBM system itself also proved to be robust and adequate, delivering complete sets of data, although some adjustments were needed, particularly due to the expanded digital delivery approaches. On one hand, many stakeholders are able to access digital products that are not reachable in an analog way. On the other hand, information on the active engagement of stakeholders due to their access to digital products and on-line learning events is much more difficult to access.

Some results 2020-21 (from the Results Report 2020/21)



94% of partner organizations in Annual Stakeholder Survey indicated they were Very Satisfied (49%) or Satisfied (45%) with their "Involvement in the development or implementation of Forum programs/activities"

50 requests for Forum support/invitations to contribute to meaningful activity

22 activities implemented in response to 50 requests (44% of total requests)

The staff interviewed at headquarters were unanimous that the process for developing the RBM system, identifying indicators, relevant data sources and data-generation methods was lengthy and cumbersome and there are still challenges to overcome, for example the lack of capacity to collect the necessary data as well as success stories. Another challenge that was mentioned is the current set of indicators. While it is relatively easy to find quantitative indicators at the level of outputs (in terms of number of products or completed activities) it is much more difficult to identify adequate qualitative indicators on outcomes such as individual behavioral change, institutional learning, the quality of governance reforms – and even more so on measuring the Forum’s contribution to such change processes. In the separately published Annual Reports, the Forum uses a story-telling approach focusing on individual quotes of beneficiaries to show and publicly communicate the Forum’s qualitative impact. Other evaluation techniques such as “outcome harvesting”, “outcome mapping” or “most significant change” methodologies (which are also able to detect unexpected contributions to change) could be explored as complementary approaches.²

In general, the internal discussions on how to measure progress and how to identify and analyze internally, show and communicate results externally are perceived as very healthy for the Forum. The results reports are currently used for planning but there is some room for improvement, according to our interviews, regarding the systematic analysis of the results, which would allow for more meaningful conclusions.

C. Conclusions in relation to the evaluation questions

1. Mapping and positioning

With its long history of engagement in federalism and its current activities, the Forum has a very good reputation among experts, national and subnational government stakeholders, and local partners.

Currently, the Forum includes elements of

- A networking platform, bringing together experts and officials from mature, emerging and potential federations;
- A think-tank, developing knowledge and knowhow on a number of topics related to federalism and multilevel governance;
- A supporter for reforms, putting its expertise at the disposal of organizations mandated to implement DAPs;
- A project implementer directly mandated to implement DAP programs.

In the relatively small universe of organizations dealing with federalism or decentralization, the Forum is unique in the way it **generates, curates and shares knowledge**. It adds value to the few academic institutions and networks that focus on federalism in different ways:

- The Forum applies a solution-oriented multidisciplinary approach to making federal or decentralized systems work in practice in a variety of policy areas (such as security, education, health, water management, climate change);
- The Forum emphasizes the need for exchange and learning from each other, by identifying and comparing problems and solutions, knowhow and experience from different country contexts and backgrounds. The diversity of experts engaged with the Forum further contributes to credible comparisons and nuanced views;

² For general information on evaluation methodologies see, for example, <https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/approaches>; more detailed information on *Outcome Mapping* https://www.betterevaluation.org/plan/approach/outcome_mapping; on *Outcome Harvesting* <https://www.outcomemapping.ca/nuggets/outcome-harvesting>; Overseas Development Institute ODI’s Guide on *Most Significant Change* methodology, <https://odi.org/en/publications/strategy-development-most-significant-change-msc/>;

- The Forum's network brings academic experts together with governmental (national and subnational) stakeholders as well as civil society and non-governmental stakeholders, with the goal of finding practical solutions.

The Forum also plays a specific role in **supporting governance reforms** through support to DAP implementers as well as its own donor-funded DAP projects, at least as far as the Forum focuses on its core competences on topics of federal and multilevel governance. Compared to other organizations that are specialized in supporting governance reform processes (e.g. International IDEA, UNDP, the German foundations), it adds value in this area in different ways:

- The Forum has a special ability to mobilize, through its extensive global network, adequate expert knowhow on federalism and multilevel governance as well as comparable experience from other countries. However, as these experts often do not work exclusively for the Forum, their contributions are not always clearly perceived as Forum contributions;
- With its intergovernmental set-up and long experience, government stakeholders – predominately perceive the Forum as a competent, impartial and legitimate partner to support federal and decentralization reform. Its credibility also allows it to raise potential risks and downsides of federalism and to work towards a balanced understanding of the pros and cons of different forms of state organization;
- By focusing on concepts and the practice and the use of academic and practitioner experts, it can provide credible input to ongoing reforms processes and interact with counterparts on a peer basis.

There are several organizations that work in related fields. Depending on the tasks and the role it assumes, the Forum is in competition with academic institutions working on federalism issues from legal or political science perspectives, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations, such as International IDEA or the European Center for Peace, political party foundations like the Hans-Seidel Stiftung, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung or Konrad Adenauer Stiftung but also UNDP or DPPA of the United Nations. All these institutions can be competitors for donor funding but can also be partners for knowledge products or development work.

The Forum particularly distinguishes itself from other institutions through being a combination of networking platform, think tank, supporter of and implementer of reforms. Many academic institutions that focus on federalism lack the practical insights and experience. Other institutions supporting reforms or implementing development projects tend to focus on process issues including project management or on a broader spectrum of topics and might not have in-depth expertise on federalism and related themes.

The combination can make the Forum unique and provide it much credibility. At the same time, the Forum faces the risk that academic institutions appreciate it for the network and practice orientation but do not recognize it as fully academic. Other institutions that focus on supporting reform processes might appreciate the in-depth knowledge on federalism but question the process expertise.

Still, combining different roles has the potential for providing substantial benefit and forms part of the Forum's USP. It could also be key for creating or strengthening strategic partnerships. For example, the Forum's knowhow in supporting federalism reforms can complement the work of more academic institutions, whereas the Forum's in-depth knowledge on non-centralized forms of government combined with process sensitivity can be a clear added value for institutions like UNDP.

Furthermore, some organizations have a clear focus on advocacy and promote a certain form of governance while others perceive themselves as (essentially) neutral (which does not exclude that they follow certain values). International IDEA, for example, has the clear goal of promoting

democracy. UNDP, on the other hand, mainly aims at pushing development, though of course it also follows other underlying values that are part of its development concept. The Forum's positioning in this respect – as above is not always very clear.

The Forum's positioning could be strengthened by:

- More clearly prioritizing and defining its roles as networker, thought leader, supporter and/or implementer, as well as distinguishing the respective needs, approaches and methodologies that come with these roles;
- Defining the contributions and approaches in different contexts (e.g. mature, new or emerging and potential federations);
- Being outspoken on its mission and values, e.g. of aiming at critical reflection and informed decision-making instead of promotion of federalism per se, by reflecting on the stance of related values like democracy and pluralism and implications for the Forum's work;
- Further clarifying the boundaries of its work, e.g. the extent of the Forum's willingness to stray from its core themes to access DAP funds.

2. Relevance

The Forum's strategic orientation and practice is relevant for various reasons:

- Its focus on creating, sharing and disseminating knowhow on federalism and decentralization contributes to a **convincing concept of democratic and inclusive governance** based on informed political decision-making, multiple power centers, cooperation among stakeholders, pluralism, gender equality and citizen involvement;
- The Forum's logic model's intermediate outcomes focus on the development of **enhanced understanding** as well as contributing to **the transfer and application of practices, principles and possibilities** of federalism and decentralization. Both elements are highly relevant for facilitating change;
- The **thematic priorities** are perceived as highly relevant for policy makers and civil society globally: Creating, curating and sharing knowhow on how federal and decentralized systems can best be organized in practice and implemented in specific policy fields;
- The **geographic focus** of the Forum's country-specific action mainly follows opportunity, i.e. the interests of Partner Governments, the focus of partner experts, or funding by interested donors.

The Forum's relevance could be enhanced through:

- **More governments** with a commitment to federalism and decentralization being motivated to join as members and using the Forum's knowhow for improving their own governance;
- Systematic deepening of cooperation with Partner Governments as well as their **subnational governments or second chambers of national parliaments**, or other structures of intergovernmental coordination and cooperation;
- Focused strengthening of partnerships and network relations, **including governmental and non-governmental, global and local experts and stakeholders**. Less can be more, the quality of the partnerships is potentially more important than the number (as mentioned in one of the indicators of success);
- The Forum promoting its role as supporter, with a view to offering practical and comparative knowledge on federalism and decentralization to other organizations designing and implementing DAPs on governance or in other sectors (e.g. education, health, security, public finance);
- Improved **targeting** of the knowledge products, responding to the information needs of different stakeholders (such as politicians, administration, journalists, NGOs, academia);

- Further increasing focus on the creation and sharing of **process knowledge** related to governance reforms, particularly in **situations of fragility, crisis and conflict**: How to make change processes happen? How to influence political dialogue and political negotiations for governance reforms? How to address conflicts of interests and de-escalate conflicts? How to use ideas of federalism and multilevel-governance in peace-building processes? How to promote the implementation of multilevel governance?

The *pathway to change* stated in the Strategic Plan is a good start. However, reflecting on the Forum's logic of intervention and «Theory of Action» and explaining these in a refined Theory of Change could help ensure the future relevance of the Forum.

3. Effectiveness

The policy programs can be expected to contribute primarily to facilitating learning, understanding and delivery of innovative solutions in federal, decentralized and devolved countries (Goal 1), to develop, maintain and expand the global network of partnerships (Goal 2) and to increase the reach and recognition of the Forum and its activities (Goal 3). The DAPs can be expected to contribute primarily to effective governance and inclusive societies in transitioning States (Goal 4). The overall results reports have shown that the Forum has made effective progress with regard to all these goals, including integrating gender equality in all its activities. However, the current selection of indicators might not be fully adequate for showing the Forum's contributions to change, be it in terms of delivering innovative solutions (Goal 1) or contributing to effective governance in transitioning States (Goal 4). The findings from this evaluation have shown effective contributions to these goals.

There is room for improvement in a variety of areas:

- Recent activities are proof of the Forum's attempt to make knowledge products accessible to different target audiences. A clear concept of **targeting different knowledge products** and of curating them accordingly could further improve knowledge transfer and with it the impact of knowledge products;
- On the one hand, the DAPs clearly profit from the thematic reputation, expertise and knowhow of the Forum's policy work and its expert network, making them more effective at influencing multilevel governance. On the other hand, the effectiveness of policy programs could be further raised through **systematic capitalization of the lessons learnt** from DAP country contexts (e.g. on processes of change such as administrative transition, or dialogue processes, on working in fragile, politically sensitive and conflictual contexts, on addressing gender equality issues, or managing diverse risks).
- Effectiveness could also be improved by investing more in **internal knowledge management**. The **deployed experts' as well as the local staff's experience** could be more systematically harvested, to make policy programs and other DAPs more effective. Systematic exchange processes between Ottawa and country offices do exist, but focus mainly on management issues, less on knowledge sharing.
- **More targeted communication** around the knowledge products and more targeted messaging could enhance the effectiveness of the efforts and is a key factor for making the Forum and its activities better known among the interested audience – and for making it even more attractive as a knowledge hub. The website has now become an effective tool for communicating the Forum's results and making knowledge accessible, and there is an impressive increase in social media attention. However, the Forum is not yet very visible among potential Partner Governments, academic and governmental experts and stakeholders.

4. Efficiency

It has already been said that this evaluation cannot draw conclusions on efficiency beyond general impressions. These include the following points.

The limited availability of core funds has forced the Forum to become a lean and cost-efficient institution. The governance system is well established. Planning, implementing, monitoring and reporting processes are in place. The Forum has a very lean structure but seems to be adequately staffed for efficient working processes at headquarters as well as in country offices. Context analysis, gender sensitivity, conflict sensitive management and risk management systems are informal but work well, in close cooperation with (and influenced by) donors.

The ad hoc subcontracting of experts for providing support in DAPs is a cost-efficient way of mobilizing tailor-made expertise and experience – with a price to be paid for specific efforts on coordination and internal communication. Nowadays, information exchange and knowledge management processes are mainly based on personal relations within the small team in Ottawa and some key experts, not systematically including the field offices and other deployed experts.

Financial management procedures seem to be professional and adequate.

A specific challenge is the burden of specific reporting procedures and accountability lines for donor-funded projects. Efficient management can profit from common standards of reporting for the Forum's activities as well as for DAPs and efforts for joint data collection processes.

D. Recommendations

1. Recommendations to the Forum

1.1. Sharpen the Forum's strategic vision on its role(s) and priorities.

There are different strategic options for the Forum's future development: How far does the Forum aspire to be a networking platform, a think-tank, a supporter for reforms, or a project implementer?

Different priorities for institutional development should be set accordingly:

- For **networking**: Develop partnerships and networks: Explore further how to make the Forum attractive for and provide added value to different partners (experts, stakeholders of (constitutional) reforms in established and emerging federations, developing and conflict-affected countries, Partner Governments and potential future Partner Governments, donors, as well as the broader public);
- As a **think-tank**: Develop broader in-house expertise on «multilevel» and local governance as well as expertise in supporting reform processes, drawing on external experts' and (local) staff's knowledge, capitalize on knowhow across country contexts, variety of expertise and experience in order to allow for thought leadership;
- As a **supporter**: Explore ways to support other (international and national) stakeholders in developing and conflict contexts, with specialized expertise on relevant topics and processes. Strengthen contacts e.g. with UNDP, DPPA, International IDEA, Hans Seidel Foundation, bilateral donors. Continue to invest in process sensitivity in order to provide the support in a process-aware way;
- As **implementer**: Continue to invest in process and project management expertise and experience, local context knowhow in countries where there are opportunities for development assistance or peace-building projects.

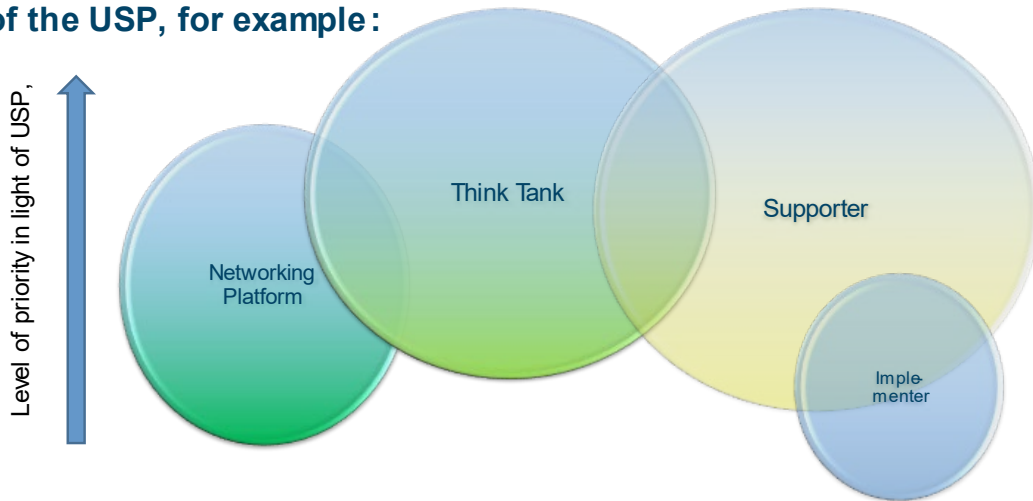
The strategic decision on the future positioning of the Forum will also be key for prioritizing our recommendations presented below. Prioritization is necessary due to the limitation of human and financial resources – and must take into account future funding perspectives. The Forum can look

back at twenty years of adapting to the evolving context, in particular to the evolving funding situation. In the best-case scenario, the next ten years will be a phase of consolidation. While networking and supporting activities may not necessitate a huge amount of additional resources, funds will be needed, in particular for strengthening in-house expertise. Funds could be provided through increased core funding and/or through project funding by including capitalization of experience as a project outcome in existing projects or by applying for or initiating projects that focus on capitalizing experiences.

As an evaluation and assessment team, based on our external perspective, we currently see the strongest longer-term potential for the Forum as a think tank and supporter of reforms in the field of federalism (and clearly defined related governance topics). The link to academia and Partner Governments as well as federal institutions further adds credibility and therefore should also be maintained. If the Forum agrees with this assessment, it should prioritize consolidating and promoting in-house knowhow on federalism and supporting federalism reform processes as well as building strategic partnerships with bigger implementing organizations.

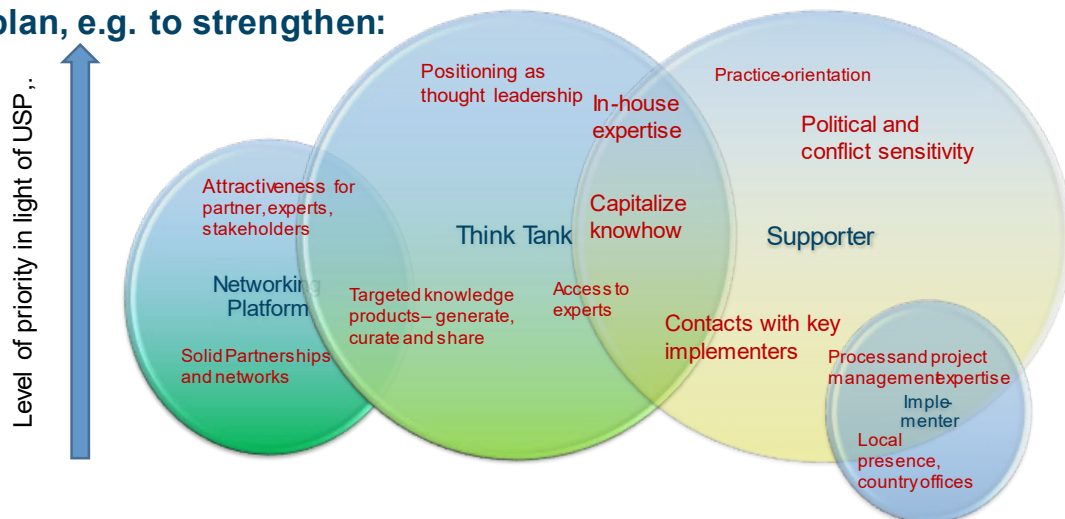
USP: The Forum is *the* institution dealing with federalism (plus related governance issues) and supporting government reform processes with substance expertise

Clarification and prioritization of positioning/roles of FoF, in light of the USP, for example:



USP: The Forum is *the* institution dealing with federalism (plus related governance issues) and supporting government reform processes with substance expertise

... with consequences on where to focus on in the next strategic plan, e.g. to strengthen:



1.2. The Forum will have to cater to the different interests of partners: Which partners contribute to/are necessary for the Forum's success as an organization? What can the Forum do to be attractive/relevant for them? **Develop a partner strategy on whom to involve and how.**

- **Partner Governments** are guarantors of political buy-in, an important funding source and a source of expertise. Reflect on desirable institutional links with Partner Governments and address the governmental institutions (including subnational government, or parliamentary chambers) that should be on board – how to engage them, remain relevant/of use to them? Involve the Strategic Council members regularly and pro-actively in strategic reflections, motivate them to lobby for support by additional Partner Governments and government institutions;
- **Academic experts and practitioners** that are committed to and interested in the Forum's work are important partners. How can the Forum's activities be organized to keep them on board and make collaboration with the Forum interesting? How can it be ensured that experts' work is perceived as the Forum's work or at least contributes to the Forum's reputation?
- The **Forum's staff** will continue to be key for the Forum's success. Which competences are needed? How to build and demonstrate their expertise?
- How to convince **partner organizations** that it is better to ask for support by the Forum and cooperate with its network than to engage experts directly?

To a limited extent, the implementation of this recommendation will imply additional funds.

1.3. Continue to strengthen the USP: The Forum as *the* institution dealing with federalism (plus related governance issues) and supporting governance reform processes with substantial expertise.

- Clarify and sharpen the position on federalism and related concepts (e.g. federalism with a systemic perspective, acknowledging the pros and cons in order to allow for critical reflection and informed decision-making) as well as on what is not being pursued (e.g. federalism as a one-size-fits-all solution);
- Reflect on how to balance the focus on the core themes (which is part of the USP and of the Forum's identity) with demands for a broader set of themes because of funding opportunities;
- Reflect on the difference in needs and interests of (1) mature federations, (2) new emerging federations and (3) potential federations as well as how these needs/interests can be addressed;
- Reflect on the variety of approaches/methodologies used to support reform processes, in respect to institutional set-up as well as transversely in sector policies, depending on the governance debate in the respective context, capitalize on this experience;
- Reflect further on the implicit Vision, Mission and Theory of Change, put it down on paper as a basis for defining strategic goals/outcomes, outputs, and measuring results;
- Reflect on how to ensure that the Forum is visible, that it conveys a clear picture of its vision, mission and approach, and that it can show its expertise.

To a limited extent, additional funds will be needed for clarifying positioning.

1.4. Continue to invest in knowledge management and communication, in the framework of policy programs.

- Continue to focus on institutional and sector-specific themes of federalism and related topics (with relevance for established, emerging and new federations and countries aspiring to meaningful decentralization), consider defining the limits for broadening the topics;
- Continue to invest in more systematic knowledge generation and management: capitalize on comparative experience including how to support reform processes in transitioning countries,

in fragile and conflict-affected settings, on creating specific knowledge, sharing with specific target groups, curating, synthesizing learning from different contexts;

- Continue bringing together academics and practitioners from mature, emerging and potential federations, with different perspectives, allowing for learning from each other at peer level;
- Involve own country office staff (and experts) in learning, in generating knowledge and knowhow, encourage exchange among them;
- Continue to curate content specifically for different audiences, be clearer in labelling products for specific target audiences, make access more user-friendly;
- Invest further in a differentiated communication strategy, more clearly defined channels of communication, clearly targeted messages in line with the Forum's strategic plan, at different levels. Recognize the communication strategy as an incremental part of the Forum's overall strategy;
- Think about specific funding sources of policy programs or of integrating aspects of knowledge management in DAPs.

Certain aspects can be implemented without additional funding, e.g. more clarity and clearer communication on target audience, others require additional funding, in particular human resources.

1.5. Continue to engage with developing or transitioning countries, in the form of technical support.

- Consider establishing criteria or a process to reflect on what DAPs to apply for, to define what role the Forum wants to and can play in order to make best use of its strengths (implementer or supporter?);
- Continue to reflect on the relations with government institutions and other stakeholders, particularly in conflict-affected and polarized situations, as part of the process-project design. Consider the impact – positive and negative – on relations with partner governments;
- Invest in harvesting experience from supporting processes of reform (not only dispatching experts);
- Invest in reflection on the Forum's role in conflict settings, in the development of process-oriented methodologies, conflict sensitivity, management approaches when confronted with fragile and even violent contexts.

Funding, mainly through project funding, is required.

1.6 Develop a fund-raising strategy to cover the core expenses of the Forum regarding policy programs.

2. What donors can do

- 2.1 Continue or increase the core funding to allow the Forum to keep and further develop its USP.
- 2.2 (Continue to) provide funding for capitalizing on experience and further developing the Forum as a knowledge and knowhow hub, particularly relevant for governance and sector reform processes in developing, fragile and conflict-affected countries.

3. What Partner Governments can do:

- 3.1 Reflect with the Forum on who from an institutional perspective should be involved in the Strategic Council, the board and in its activities.
- 3.2 Support the Forum in strategic reflections, attracting and lobbying for new Partner Governments.
- 3.3 Consider chaperoning emerging federations who are interested in becoming Partner Governments.

Annex 1: Terms of reference

External Institutional Evaluation of the Forum of Federations

Terms of Reference for consultants

June 2021

1) Introduction

The Forum of Federations was established in 1999 at the initiative of the Government of Canada following an International Conference on Federalism held in Quebec. It is registered as a non-profit organization and is based in Ottawa. The Forum counts 10 partner countries which are also part of the Forum's governance bodies. Partner countries are Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Switzerland. Core-funding in 2020 was provided by Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Germany and Switzerland. The Forum currently re-negotiates partnership agreements with its other partner countries.

Over the years, the Forum expanded its scope of work from producing comparative knowledge on established and emerging federations to include nation states in post-conflict situations adopting federal forms of governance and those involved in processes of devolution and decentralization.

In the period 2010-2014 the Forum transitioned from a largely core-funded organization to an organization funded primarily by projects. The organization grew and expanded its activities with the provision of technical assistance to ODA recipient countries. In 2019, technical assistance represented about 80% of its budget.

In 2018, the Forum adopted a new Strategic Plan for the period 2018-2023 as part of a process of refining the definition of its work, its mission and its institutional objectives.¹ To steer its work along the Strategic Plan it also adopted a Performance Management Framework.

The planned institutional evaluation intends to assess the overall performance of the Forum within 2-3 years after the adoption of its new Strategic Plan 2018-2023 and the introduction of the Performance Management Framework. It is expected to provide an overall aggregate view of the Forum's function and achievements while keeping in mind that the organisation's work is multifaceted and geographically dispersed.

2) The Forum of Federations

a. Mission and governance structure of the Forum

The mission of the Forum is to strengthen inclusive and responsive governance, including pluralism and gender equality, in federal, decentralized, and transitioning countries. Please refer to the Strategic Plan 2018-23 for the overall aims for the work of the organization for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2023 (attached).

The governing body of the Forum is the Board of Directors, composed of representatives from the Forum partner countries. The Forum's advisory body is the Strategic Council, composed of representatives of its partner governments. The Strategic Council provides advice on programs and strategic orientation of the organization.

b. Human resources and organizational structure

The Forum has 53 staff, of which 14 are at headquarters in Ottawa, and 39 in the field offices. The Forum has 9 field offices in the following countries: Australia, Brazil, Ethiopia, Germany, Jordan, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, and Tunisia. Please find attached the Forum's Organogram.

c. Geographic coverage

The Forum's projects cover all six continents. The Forum's Policy Programs involve primarily its partner countries but also other non-partner federal and decentralized countries. The Forum runs major Development Assistance Programs in Myanmar, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, Ethiopia and Somalia.

3) Goals

The purposes of the evaluation are to:

- Assess the relevance of the Forum of Federations' Strategic Plan 2018-2023 in the perspective of global trends in multi-level governance and assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Forum against its goals;
-
- produce a mapping of organisations active in the field of multi-level governance support and position the Forum in that landscape.
 -
 - Generate recommendations based on the assessment and lessons learned from the current strategic period to inform the Forum stakeholders on future strategic orientation and monitoring of the Forum.

4) Scope and evaluation areas

The evaluation addresses the Forum in its entirety (Policy Programs and Development Assistance Programs) and focuses on the period of the current strategic plan (2018-2023). It will cover five main areas of enquiry:

- 1) A mapping and **positioning** of the Forum among other actors active in the same field.
- 2) An evaluation of the **relevance** of the Forum's areas of activity and geographical focus, including the theory of change and Logic Model as well as the crosscutting topics in the perspective of the goals set in the strategic plan.
- 3) An evaluation of the **effectiveness** of the Forum in implementing its strategic plan against the goals it sets.
- 4) An assessment of the **efficiency** of Forum internal management processes, including the results orientation.
- 5) Provide **recommendations** for a follow-up strategic plan.

5) Evaluation approach and questions

The consultants will apply a combination of methods including desk reviews, interviews with selected Forum staff, Board members and partner country representatives (Strategic Council Members), as well as interviews/focus group discussions with the Forum's community of practice including key regional and country stakeholders and beneficiaries of Development Assistance Programs. The consultants will also select a sample of 1-2 Development Assistance Programs for a more in-depth evaluation (see question 3 below). In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic the in-depth analysis of a sample of the Forum's Development Assistance Programs will be organised remotely. The Forum will facilitate contacts with different stakeholders for online/phone interviews.

- 1) A mapping and **positioning** of the Forum among other actors active in the field of multi-level governance support.
 - What is the visibility of the Forum in its field of work?
 - Are the Forum's networks and partnerships conducive and sufficient to achieve its goals?
 - What is the specific niche and added value of the Forum?

- 2) An evaluation of the **relevance** of the Forum's areas of activity and geographical focus, including the theory of change/ Logic Model as well as the crosscutting topics in the perspective of global trends in multi-level governance and the goals set in the strategic plan.
 - What is the relevance of the thematic focus and Logic Model against global trends in multi-level governance and the goals of the strategic plan?
 - What is the relevance of its geographic focus?
 - What is the relevance of the two pillars approach of Policy Programs and Development Assistance Programs?

- 3) An evaluation of the **effectiveness** of the Forum in implementing its strategic plan against the goals it sets.
 - What is its effectiveness at output and immediate outcome levels based on Key Performance Indicators and Logic Model?
 - Assess a sample of Policy Programs and Development Assistance Programs (DAP)
 - How is the interaction/mutual influence of Policy Programs and DAP?

- 4) An assessment of the **efficiency** of Forum internal management processes, including the results orientation.
 - How efficiently are functions of planning, monitoring and reporting implemented?
 - How efficient is the Forum in terms of information exchange and knowledge management systems?
 - How efficient are control mechanisms and risk management systems in place?

- 5) Provide **recommendations** for a follow-up strategic plan.

6) Evaluation process

| Activity | Date | Responsible |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| ToR discussed and adapted by Strategic Council | November 2020 | Strategic Council Members |
| ToR finalized and approved by Executive Director and Board of Directors | January 2021 | FoF CEO and Board of Directors |
| Recruitment of consultants | June 2021 | SDC, GAC |
| Preparatory work | September 2021 | Consultants |
| Inception report | October 2021 | Consultants |
| Draft evaluation report | Mid-November 2021 | Consultants |

| | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Comments to the draft report | End of December 2021 | Strategic Council Members, CEO, Board of Directors |
| Submission of final report | End of January 2022 | Consultants |
| Management response | March 2022 | FoF CEO |

7) Deliverables

- An inception report after the desk review/preparatory work including methodology, information collection strategy, sampling and outline of the report.
- A Power point Presentation used as support to a debriefing meeting at the end of the information collection and eventual field visits.
- Evaluation draft report (softcopy, max 25 pages excluding annexes) including an executive summary (max. 3 pages) and recommendations in English shall be submitted to FoF CEO, Board of Advisors and Strategic Council members for comments.
- Evaluation final report (softcopy, max 25 pages excluding annexes) including an executive summary (3 pages) and recommendations.

8) Required qualifications of the consultants

The evaluation team will consist of a lead consultant and an associate consultant.

Required qualification for the lead consultant are:

- Skills and proven experience in designing and managing strategic reviews/evaluations of organisations with an international outreach and a multitude of stakeholders.
- Experience with programme cycle management, results-based management and theories of change.
- Verifiable expertise (through education and work experience) in federal or multi-level governance in different country contexts, including in post-conflict settings.
- Experience with topics of gender equality and peace-building.
- Excellent English language writing and oral skills.

Required qualification for the associate consultant are:

- Skills and proven experience in participating in strategic reviews/evaluations of organisations with an international outreach and a multitude of stakeholders.
- Experience with programme cycle management, results-based management and theories of change.
- Excellent English language writing and oral skills.

9) Content of the offer

The recruitment of consultants will occur by invitation procedure (a minimum of three evaluators/evaluation firms will be contacted).

Interested Lead evaluators will submit a technical and financial offer as well as the CVs of lead consultant and associated consultant in the team and references.

The technical offer will include (max. 5 pages):

- an introduction with motivation for the assignment,
- a list of completed reviews/evaluations, preferably of a similar topics or scope
- a description of the understanding of the assignment
- a description of the proposed methodology, timeline and number of days required

The financial offer will include a proposed budget in USD along the provided budgettemplate.

10) Duration and responsibilities

The consultants will dedicate a maximum of 20 days each to this assignment.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) will select the consultants and seek non-objection by the CEO of the Forum, Mr Rupak Chattopadhyay, before finalizing the recruitment. The costs related to the hiring and the payment of the evaluation assignment performed by the consultants will be paid by the SDC.

The offer of the team of consultants shall be submitted to the SDC, melina.papageorgiou@eda.admin.ch, and to GAC, Shehryar.Sarwar@international.gc.ca by the **29.06.2021**.

The main contact persons at the Forum to refer to (for accessing needed documents and organizing interviews and visits) are Felix Knuepling, Vice President, Programs, and Diana Chebenova, Senior Director, Programs and Partnerships.

11) Annexes:

- Forum of Federation Strategic Plan 2018-2023
- Budget template for financial offer

Annex 2: List of interviewees

Representatives of Partner Governments/donors

Shehryar Sarwar, GAC Ottawa (SC)
Melina Papageorgiou, Ursula Keller, Hanspeter Wyss, SDC Bern (SC)
Bernd Kuster, Germany (Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (SC)
Dr. Josee Bergeron (Government of Quebec, Secretariat for Canadian Relations)
Dr. Surya Dhungel, Nepal

Members of the board of directors

Georg Milbradt, Chairman of the Board of the Forum of Federations
Hans Altherr, Member of the Board of Directors
Ana Carolina Lorena, Forum Fellow, Brazil

FoF management and staff

Rupak Chattopadhyay, President and CEO
Charles Cloutier, Vice President, COO
Sheela Embounou, Vice President
Felix Knüpling, Vice President, Programs
Diana Chebenova, Senior Director
John Light, Senior Director
Shawn Houlihan, Senior Director Africa
Liam Whittington, Program Manager
Philip Gonzalez, FoF Senior Director Asia and Australia (Australian Office)
Leila Haououi-Khouni, Regional Director, MENA, Tunis
Laurenne Garneau, FoF International Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Advisor

Resource persons specifically for DAP Myanmar (names might be added after discussion with FoF staff)

Win Min, FoF Country Representative Myanmar
Charlène Laurence, GAC Senior Analyst, Ottawa,
Kim Inksater
Ko Aung Ko Ko, Mosaic Myanmar (partner institution of FoF)

Resource persons specifically for DAP Ethiopia

Shawn Houlihan, FoF Senior Director Africa, Addis Ababa
Dassa Bulcha, FoF Senior Program Director, Ethiopia Country Office]
John Summerbell, GAC Deputy Director Ethiopia program, Ottawa,
Gelawdios Terefe, GAC Senior Project Officer (at mission in Addis),
Mustefa Nasser, House of Federation, Addis Ababa

Selected FoF Senior Advisors, Fellows

Sujit Choudhry
Rekha Saxena
Andre Lecours
Neophytos Loizides
Thomas Pfisterer

Partner institutions:

International Association of Centers for Federal Studies, Prof. Francesco Palermo
Institut für Föderalismus IFF, Fribourg, Switzerland, Prof. Evamaria Belser
Center for Federal and Governance Studies, Addis Ababa University, Prof. Zemelak Ayele
Gimenez Abad Foundation, Zaragoza, Spain, Dr. Mario Kölling

Selected experts

Nico Steytler
Christine Forster
Enid Slack
Jason Gluck, UNDP
Marcus Brand, International IDEA
Sean Müller
Clive Grace

Annex 3: The Forum's Logic Model (from the Strategic Plan 2018-2023)

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| ULTIMATE OUTCOME (IMPACT) | Inclusive and responsive governance, including pluralism and gender equality, strengthened in federal and decentralized countries | | | |
| INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES | 10 Increased knowledge, open attitudes and enhanced levels of understanding and appreciation for federal and decentralized governance | | 20 Practices, principles and possibilities of federalism and decentralization demonstrated, transferred and applied | |
| IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES | 100 Learning, Understanding, and Delivering Innovative Solutions in Federal, Decentralized, and Devolved Countries Facilitated | 200 Global Network of Partnerships Developed, Maintained, and Expanded | 300 Reach and Recognition of the Forum and its Activities Increased | 400 Effective Governance and Gender and Minority Inclusive Societies Developed in Transitioning States |
| OUTPUTS | 110 Expanded network of organizational intellectual capital through the development of a number of knowledge products relevant to our partners and network; Expanded knowledge capital on cross-cutting thematic issues (gender, environment, leadership) | 210 Expanded range of strategic and program partnerships utilized in Forum activity | 310 Increased audience, interest and participation in Forum activities | 410 Become the preferred partner to deliver solutions in emergent multilevel systems |
| | 120 Forum's position as the leading platform for knowledge sharing on established and emerging issues of multilevel governance enriched | 220 Enhanced organizational value to partner countries | | 420 Direct participation by beneficiaries (particularly women) in key processes in transitioning states increased (e.g. constitutions, laws, peace processes, key policy development) |
| ACTIVITIES | Learning events, joint events and network activities Production, curation and dissemination of knowledge products Cross-cutting activities | Communication feedback loops Mobilization of governance experts New partnerships | New distribution methods New communication tools and social media Outreach plans New projects | Capacity development Dialogue processes convening key stakeholders Public education and awareness raising on federal and decentralized governance Gender sensitization New local partnerships and initiatives |