

Threats to SAI independence – mitigation strategies

We set out below some threats to SAI independence and possible mitigation strategies. However, it is noted that not all the mitigation strategies will be available to all SAIs.

Risk	SAI mitigation strategy
Low funding levels meaning can't fulfil mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss low funding levels with the Legislature and Ministry of Finance in the context of the SAI's capacity building programme • Obtain an external opinion on the amount of funding required to fulfil the SAI's mandate • Make best use of current resources by prioritising resources into the most important areas
Poor quality audits leading to reputational risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have in a place a robust audit methods including audit manuals to provide guidance to audit staff and to promote consistency in audit work • Have in place robust quality control review arrangements • Have in place a staff professional development programme
Delaying nomination of a SAI head (pro-longed vacancy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging support of PAC • Engaging support of media and civil society
Low staffing levels meaning can't fulfil mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get external review of SAI to confirm number of staff required to fulfil mandate. This could be done by a donor organisation • Engage with the media and civil service organisations on issues caused by the shortage of staff
SAI accused of being biased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure audit work carried out in accordance with international auditing standards • Ensure SAI is viewed by the public and media as a credible institution. This requires the SAI to have exhibited high ethical standards, as well as being transparent and accountability in its previous actions

Risk

SAI mitigation strategy

<p>Political interference in audit selection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish list of proposed audits and work plans before the commencement of each year • Get PAC input into work plans and also inform the OPAC of the proposed work programme • Establish a strong and mutually respectful relationship with the legislature, including the Public Accounts Committee. For example, provide PAC with audit reports and brief PAC on them, obtain PAC input into the SAI work programme, brief committee in SAI Annual Plan, and provide advice and assistance to the PAC where the opportunity arises
<p>An external party frequently imposing new work tasks on SAI without allocation additional resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make explicit the trade-offs, costs and consequences of doing the unfunded work
<p>Trying to influence the results of a SAI's audits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging support of PAC • Referencing SAI role to founding and governing legislation/Constitution
<p>Politically engaged media that may attack SAI's to destroy its credibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAI having a history of acting openly, transparently and ethically • SAI producing robust and high quality audit reports
<p>Parliament seeking to introduce rules that introduce (or facilitate) political dependence of the SAI's top management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging support of PAC • Engaging support of media and civil society