Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI)

DFID's Approach to Empowerment and Accountability

Inception Report

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) is the independent body responsible for scrutinising UK aid. We focus on maximising the effectiveness of the UK aid budget for intended beneficiaries and on delivering value for money for UK taxpayers. We carry out independent reviews of aid programmes and of issues affecting the delivery of UK aid. We publish transparent, impartial and objective reports to provide evidence and clear recommendations to support UK Government decision-making and to strengthen the accountability of the aid programme. Our reports are written to be accessible to a general readership and we use a simple 'traffic light' system to report our judgement on each programme or topic we review.

1.2 We have decided to conduct an evaluation of the Department for International Development's (DFID's) empowerment and accountability programming in Africa. In recent years, the goal of empowering citizens to hold their states to account has become an important element of DFID's approach to improving government performance and service delivery in developing countries. Within DFID, empowerment and accountability refers both to a strand of governance programming and to a cross-cutting theme increasingly incorporated into programming in other sectors.

1.3 This Inception Report sets out the questions, methodology and work plan for the evaluation. It is, however, intended that the methodology and work plan be flexible enough to allow new questions and lines of inquiry to emerge over the course of the evaluation.

2. Background

2.1 The background to this review, including DFID's approach to empowerment and accountability, is as described in the Terms of Reference.[1]

3. Purpose of this review

3.1 To assess whether DFID's programming on empowerment and accountability is designed and delivered effectively and is likely to achieve meaningful results for its intended beneficiaries.

4. Relationship to other reviews

4.1 There is limited evidence available on the impact of empowerment and accountability programming, due both to the novelty of this type of programming and to the technical difficulties involved in assessing impact. Much of the current programming is based on theory, rather than solid evidence of what works.

4.2 To address the evidence gaps, DFID's Research and Evidence Division (RED) commissioned a 'preliminary mapping' of the evidence base, which was published in April 2011.[2] It reviewed existing studies to assess the impact of donor empowerment and accountability programming in four areas: service delivery; governance outcomes; political transformation; and confidence, capability and access to assets. It found the evidence to be fragmentary and incomplete. The academic literature also contains a number of other syntheses of impact evaluations in related areas.[3]

4.3 DFID now proposes to conduct a 'macro-evaluation' to collect and synthesise the evidence available across the empowerment and accountability portfolio in 28 countries. To this end, it commissioned an initial assessment in order to identify possible evaluation questions and determine whether evidence would be available to answer them. It found major gaps in the evidence and recommended a staged process, including identifying and describing relevant DFID projects, producing a synthesis of existing reviews and evaluations and finally developing an updated theory of change for this policy objective. This process is due to begin in June 2013 and will be completed in

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[1] *DFID's Approach to Empowerment and Accountability: Terms of Reference*, ICAI, April 2013, http://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/ICAI-EA-ToR-final-240413.pdf.
[2] *A Preliminary Mapping of the Evidence Base for Empowerment and Accountability*, DFID, April 2011.
[3] For example, *Blurring the Boundaries: Citizen Action across State and Societies*, Citizenship DRC, 2011, http://www.drc-citizenship.org/system/assets/1052734700/original/1052734700-cdrc.2011-blurring.pdf?1302515701.

2016. The first phase will produce a mapping of DFID programming on empowerment and accountability and will take four to six months.

4.4   In view of this work, our evaluation will not attempt to map DFID's empowerment and accountability portfolio. Instead, we will select some specific empowerment and accountability activities to examine in depth, with a view to assessing their results to date and the factors that determine their prospects for success.

4.5   The programmes that we will examine in detail have their own monitoring and evaluation systems and, in some cases, have already been subject to external reviews. To the extent possible, we will make use of the findings of existing reviews, in order to minimise duplication of effort and the burden on DFID and its partners. We will choose a review methodology that complements existing reviews, in particular by looking closely at a sample of individual activities and obtaining feedback from intended beneficiaries and other national stakeholders.

5.   Methodology

Analytical approach

5.1   Our evaluation will cover DFID programmes that promote empowerment and accountability by strengthening the capacity of citizens to hold their governments to account for their performance. This may include grants to civil society organisations (CSOs), support for formal accountability institutions such as parliaments or the inclusion of bottom-up accountability mechanisms into the design of service delivery programmes in sectors such as health, education or agriculture. We will not examine electoral assistance (which was the subject of a previous ICAI evaluation[4]) or economic empowerment initiatives such as cash transfer programmes (subject of a recent National Audit Office review[5]).

5.2   The main focus of our evaluation approach under each of the four ICAI guiding criteria (objectives, delivery, impact and learning) will be as follows.

> 5.2.1   Objectives: we will make an assessment as to whether the programme designs are coherent and realistic, given the political context in which they are being implemented. This will include assessing whether they have sound theories of change, taking into account the country context; and the latest international thinking and evidence in the empowerment and accountability area. We will also assess whether the programmes take into account the needs and preferences of their intended beneficiaries.

> 5.2.2   Delivery: the programmes we will review include grant-making instruments to CSOs. We will assess how effectively these instruments deliver the intended activities, taking into account criteria for partner selection, the level of support provided to grant partners and the adequacy of fiduciary controls. We will also assess whether alternative delivery channels are available for empowerment and accountability programming.

> 5.2.3   Impact: the programmes we will be reviewing are young, with only a year or two of implementation experience. They have complex results chains that will take time to deliver their impact. In most instances, they have not yet attempted to measure results at the impact level. Given this, we will focus on the early links in the results chains where results are most likely to be visible at this stage of implementation. In particular, we will assess whether the programmes:

> > • have increased the awareness of the intended beneficiaries of their rights and entitlements and of government performance;
> > • have increased the intended beneficiaries' sense of empowerment; and

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[4] *Evaluation of DFID's Electoral Support through UNDP*, ICAI, April 2012, http://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/UNDP-report-FINAL.pdf.
[5] *DFID: Transferring cash and assets to the poor*, National Audit Office, November 2011, http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/10121587.pdf.

- have helped to establish more effective channels through which citizens can provide feedback to government on its performance.

    To the extent possible, we will also assess whether there have been consequent improvements in government performance and development results or whether such improvements are likely to emerge as a result of the programmes.

    5.2.4   Learning: DFID is currently assembling an evidence base as to what works in empowerment and accountability programming, including through impact evaluations and research programmes. We will assess the extent to which our case-study programmes reflect learning from other evaluations and research programmes. We will also assess whether they are designed in such a way as to facilitate impact measurement and lesson learning and capture feedback from the intended beneficiaries.

5.3   We note that we are likely to face a number of methodological challenges in this review, owing to the youth of the programmes in question, the lack of baselines and the intrinsic difficulties of measuring changes in levels of empowerment and accountability in a rigorous way. Our methodology for this review will allow us to test whether the programmes are well designed, being effectively implemented and achieving the results expected at this stage of implementation. If the theories of change are unrealistic in the country context, that should already be apparent and observable. We may not, however, be able to determine whether localised results on empowerment and accountability are likely to translate into wider political changes, overall improvements in government performance or better development results. Our conclusions on impact will need to be appropriately qualified, based on the strength of the evidence that we collect.

Evaluation framework

5.4   The evaluation framework for this review is set out in the table below. It is based on the standard ICAI guiding criteria and evaluation framework, which cover four areas: objectives, delivery, impact and learning. The questions which are highlighted in bold are those from our Terms of Reference (ToR) on which we will focus in particular.

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
(1) Objectives: what is the programme trying to achieve?			
Does the programme have clear, relevant and realistic objectives that focus on the desired impact? (1.1) Is there a clear and convincing plan, with evidence and assumptions, to show how the programme will work? (1.2)	**Does DFID have sound strategies for promoting empowerment and accountability, with clear objectives and logical 'theories of change'?[6] (ToR 6.2.1)**	• Programmes are based on a clear problem analysis, specific to each country context • Programme designs are sound, with clear and logical linkages between inputs, activities, outputs and impact • Envisaged roles for civil society are credible • Resource allocation supports established priorities • Sound guidance provided to project partners • Individual activity designs are sound and realistic	• DFID guidance on empowerment and accountability programming • Design documents and theories of change for case study programmes • Political and other analysis for each country • Guidelines for grant applicants • Funding criteria • Design documents for individual activities • Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Feedback from national stakeholders and other donors, including government and parliament • Feedback from intended beneficiaries

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[6] A 'theory of change' is a conceptual model of how a planned intervention will produce the intended impact. Programme evaluations are often designed to test whether this theory of change has proved to be valid.

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
	Are DFID empowerment and accountability programmes based on sound technical guidance and international experience? (ToR 6.2.2)	• DFID has collected and accurately synthesised current thinking and evidence on empowerment and accountability programming and made this available to country teams • DFID guidance on empowerment and accountability programming reflects current international thinking and evidence • The designs of case-study programmes are based on DFID guidance • Theories and evidence that challenge DFID thinking on empowerment and accountability are adequately taken into account • Programme designs test a range of possible causal mechanisms for strengthening empowerment and accountability	• DFID research and evidence summaries and collections • DFID policies, strategies and guidance material • Consultations with external experts, including UK think tanks and development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) • Interviews with DFID senior management and policy teams in London • Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners
Does the programme complement the efforts of government and other aid providers and avoid duplication? (1.3)	Does the programme complement the efforts of government and other aid providers and avoid duplication?	• DFID has made sufficient efforts to engage other donors in the design, funding or implementation of its programmes • An agreed division of labour with other donors funding similar programmes • DFID works jointly with national accountability institutions, including parliaments • DFID consults and works appropriately with national governments • Appropriate linkages between the programmes and national or local development planning and budgeting processes	• Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Feedback from national stakeholders • Consultation with other donors • Design documents of empowerment and accountability programmes funded by other donors

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
Are the programme's objectives appropriate to the political, economic, social and environmental context? (1.4)	**Are empowerment and accountability programmes relevant to the country context, developed in consultation with the intended beneficiaries and based on sound political analysis? (ToR 6.2.3)**	• Sound analysis of the delivery context, including existing accountability mechanisms and political barriers to effective accountability • Quality stakeholder analysis • Sound analysis of lessons from past programmes with similar objectives • Programming choices adapted to the national political system and development planning and budgeting processes • Consultations with intended beneficiary groups, to inform design and continued improvement	• DFID guidance on empowerment and accountability programming • Design documents and theories of change for case study programmes • Political and other analysis for each country • Research and analysis commissioned by case study programmes • Records of design processes and beneficiary consultations • Programme design documents • Design of individual activities • Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Feedback from national stakeholders • Feedback from intended beneficiaries
(2) Delivery: is the delivery chain designed and managed so as to be fit for purpose?			
Is the choice of funding and delivery options appropriate? (2.1)	Is the choice of funding and delivery options appropriate?	• Adequacy of partner selection criteria • Partner capacity assessment processes • Quality and appropriateness of implementing partners • Grant-making procedures, reporting and fiduciary controls adapted to the capacities of individual partners	• DFID guidance on civil society grant making • Activity and partner selection criteria • Capacity assessment processes and criteria • Existing reviews • Interviews with implementing partners • Case studies of implementing partners

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
Does programme design and roll-out take into account the needs of the intended beneficiaries? (2.2)	**Are intended beneficiaries and national stakeholders effectively engaged? (ToR 6.3.2)**	• Stakeholder analysis informs programme design and delivery arrangements • Meaningful consultation with national stakeholders and intended beneficiaries during programme design and delivery • Involvement of national stakeholders and intended beneficiaries in programme governance arrangements and monitoring processes • Programme effectively supports new CSOs and social movements as well as established partners	• Stakeholder analysis • Programme design documents • Records of stakeholder consultations • Minutes of governance and management meetings • Partner selection criteria • Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Feedback from national stakeholders and intended beneficiaries
Is there good governance at all levels, with sound financial management and adequate steps being taken to avoid corruption? (2.3)	Is there good governance at all levels, with sound financial management and adequate steps being taken to avoid corruption?	• Sound governance structures and processes • Effective project cycle management • Effective challenge and accountability around activity design and resource allocation • Robust partner selection criteria and capacity assessment • Strong oversight of implementing partners, including reporting requirements • Specific anti-corruption measures	• Programme design documents • Minutes of governance and management meetings • Partner selection criteria • Grant-making rules and procedures • Fiduciary risk management policies and procedures • Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Interviews with grant partners • Review of grantee activity and financial reports
Are resources being leveraged so as to work best with others and maximise impact? (2.4)	Are resources being leveraged so as to work best with others and maximise impact?	• Co-financing of programmes by other donors • Financing by donors of similar programmes • Scaling up of pilot activities • Complementarity between the programmes and the efforts of government	• Project documentation • Documentation of similar projects • Interviews with DFID • Interviews with other donors • Interviews with government officials

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
Do managers ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery chain? (2.5)	Do managers ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery chain?	• Rigorous processes for selecting delivery partners • Consideration of the relative cost and cost-effectiveness of different delivery options • Sufficient oversight of delivery and cost-effectiveness • Grant partners provided adequate support on project cycle management and financial management • Use of consistent definition of costs, including administrative costs • Effective management and oversight of individual projects • Regular reporting on expenditure and results	• Programme design documents • Minutes of governance and management meetings • Partner selection criteria • Grant-making rules and procedures • Capacity-building strategies and approaches • Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Interviews with grant partners • Review of grantee activity and financial reports
Is there a clear view of costs throughout the delivery chain? (2.6)	Is there a clear view of costs throughout the delivery chain?	• Clear rules on which delivery partner costs the programmes will finance • Inclusion of value-for-money assessment in partner selection • Evidence of grant partners challenged on costs • Transparency of project budgets and financial reports • Appropriate use of unit-cost analysis • Appropriate use of cost-driver analysis • Reasonable overheads levied by implementing partners and grant partners	• Project selection criteria • Grantee activity and financial reports • Periodic reviews and assessments • Interviews with implementing partners • Interviews with grant partners

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
Are risks to the achievement of the objectives identified and managed effectively? (2.7)	**Are risks to the achievement of programme objectives identified and managed effectively? (ToR 6.3.4)**	• Adequacy of guidance on risk management • Risks adequately assessed and monitored on a regular basis • Active approaches to managing risk • Active measures taken to correct failing projects and ensure continuous improvement	• Risk assessments • Programme and project designs • Risk management tools • Interviews with DFID management and implementing partners
Is the programme delivering against its agreed objectives? (2.8)	**Are the programmes effectively delivering their agreed activities and outputs? (ToR 6.3.1)**	• Programmes able to identify sufficient credible partners and activities • Programmes spending according to agreed schedules • Capacity-building strategies implemented effectively • Grant partners able to deliver planned activities and outputs	• Programme activity and financial reports • Programme annual reviews • Grantee activity and financial reports • Interviews with DFID management and implementing partners • Interviews with grant partners • Interviews with government officials, parliamentarians and other informed observers
Are appropriate amendments to objectives made to take account of changing circumstances? (2.9)	**Are the programmes flexible and responsive to changes in circumstances? (ToR 6.3.3)**	• Appropriate balance between long- and short-term objectives • Speed with which funding can be mobilised or reallocated in response to changing situations • Funds set aside for responding to crises or opportunities • Evidence of individual activities being adapted to take into account changing circumstances	• Interviews with DFID management and implementing partners • Interviews with grant partners • Review of grantee activity reports

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
(3) Impact: what is the impact on intended beneficiaries?			

Is the programme delivering clear, significant and timely benefits for the intended beneficiaries? (3.1)	**Are the programmes delivering the results expected at this stage of their implementation, such as increased intended beneficiary awareness of their entitlements and government's obligations, a greater sense of empowerment and stronger channels for providing feedback to government on its performance? (based on ToR 6.4.1)**
	
	Are the programmes likely to deliver clear and significant benefits for the intended beneficiaries? (ToR 6.4.2)
		• Project outputs and outcomes delivered according to schedule
		• Evidence of increased awareness among intended beneficiaries of:
		  ○ their rights and entitlements
		  ○ government responsibilities, commitments and performance
		• Increased transparency and public understanding of the budget process and government spending patterns
		• More effective channels for citizens to provide feedback to government on its performance established and utilised
		• Government more likely to take account of citizen preferences in its planning, budgeting and other decision-making
		• Evidence of policy change, shifting resource allocation or institutional reform in response to citizen feedback
		• Evidence of improvements in the volume, quality or coverage of government services or development expenditure in response to citizen feedback
			• Activity reports from grant partners
			• Programme annual reports and independent reviews
			• Interviews with DFID programme management and implementing partners
			• Interviews with grant partners
			• Case studies of individual activities
			• Feedback from intended beneficiaries
			• Feedback from other national stakeholders
			• Media reports and other independent reviews or analysis

Is the programme working holistically alongside other programmes? (3.2)	Do the results of the programmes complement those of other agencies and donors?	• Appropriate links between programme activities and national planning and budgeting processes • Appropriate links between programme activities and parliaments • Appropriate links with other development programmes	• Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Feedback from other donors and agencies • Feedback from national stakeholders

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
Is there a long-term and sustainable impact from the programme? (3.3)	**Are the results likely to be sustainable? (ToR 6.4.3)**	• Adequate strategies for ensuring sustainability • Capacity-building strategies for grant partners • Establishment of durable links between communities, CSOs, the private sector and government • Continuing results from predecessor programmes	• Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Case studies of individual activities • Feedback from national stakeholders • Feedback from intended beneficiaries • Predecessor programme project completion reports and independent evaluations
Is there an appropriate exit strategy involving effective transfer of ownership of the programme? (3.4)	Not applicable, as empowerment and accountability programmes are not likely to be transferred to national authorities		
Is there transparency and accountability to intended beneficiaries, donors and UK taxpayers? (3.5)	Is there transparency and accountability to intended beneficiaries, donors and UK taxpayers?	• Policies on sharing of information with government and other stakeholders • Publication of spending data, activities and results	• Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Feedback from national stakeholders • Published material

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
(4) Learning: what works best and what needs improvement?			
Are there appropriate arrangements for monitoring inputs, processes, outputs, results and impact? (4.1)	**Are there appropriate arrangements for monitoring inputs, processes, outputs, results and impact? (ToR 6.5.2)**	• Activities designed with clearly specified intended results, to support evaluability and learning • Adequacy of baselines, programme and project reporting and real-time monitoring arrangements • Adequate indicator selection • Adequate use of independent impact evaluation • Are there arrangements for beneficiary feedback and contribution to analysis ?	• DFID guidance on results management for civil society grant-making • Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Programme design documents • Case study activities • Programme activity and financial reports • Grantee activity and financial reports • Monitoring and evaluation strategies and reports • Logical frameworks • Baseline analysis

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
Is there evidence of innovation and use of global best practice? (4.2)	**Are the programmes drawing on international experience and evidence as to what works? (ToR 6.5.1)**	• DFID commissions high quality, relevant research and analysis • DFID guidance informed by available evidence (both supporting and contrary) • DFID makes latest thinking and analysis available to country teams • Programme designs take into account international experience and evidence • Adequate processes for identifying lessons from successes and failures • Lessons disseminated internally and shared with partners	• Literature review • Interviews with DFID policy teams in the UK • Consultations with other UK-based experts • Outputs of DFID-funded research • DFID synthesis studies and evidence reviews • DFID guidance material • DFID online knowledge management resources • Interviews with DFID programme managers and implementing partners • Programme designs • Programme reporting
Is there anything currently not being done in respect of the programme that should be undertaken? (4.3)	**Is there anything currently not being done in respect of the programmes that should be undertaken?**	• Good practice or learning from peer organisations not taken up by DFID • Opportunities and entry points identified in country analytical work not taken forward in programmes • Views of national stakeholders or intended beneficiaries not taken into account	• Literature review • DFID synthesis studies and evidence reviews • DFID guidance material • Interviews with partner and peer organisations, including UK think tanks and development NGOs • Feedback from national stakeholders and intended beneficiaries

Relevant ICAI evaluation framework question	Evaluation question	Criteria for assessment	Sources of evidence
Have lessons about the objectives, design and delivery of the programme been learned and shared effectively? (4.4)	**Does DFID manage and share knowledge effectively in this area of programming? (ToR 6.5.3)**	- Effective knowledge management practices - Quality guidance material - Networking of DFID policy advisers, country teams and implementing partners - Learning networks with the academic community, UK development NGOs and other donors	- Interviews with DFID policy teams in the UK - DFID guidance material - DFID online knowledge management resources - Interviews with UK think tanks and development NGOs - Interviews with other donors

Case study selection

5.5   Our evaluation will focus on Africa, with Ghana and Malawi as the two case study countries. These have been selected based on a number of criteria, in particular the scale and relative maturity of their empowerment and accountability programmes. They also illustrate different country contexts. Ghana has a relatively established democratic system, with two peaceful changes of government through the electoral process. It has a strong civil society sector, which has received donor support for advocacy and accountability over many years. By comparison, Malawi's civil society sector is not as developed and its political environment is less conducive to citizen engagement and influence.[7]

5.6   Within these two countries, our review will include the following programmes:

    5.6.1   Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (STAR-Ghana):[8] this is a joint donor project supported by DFID, the United States, the European Union and Denmark. DFID is the lead donor, with a contribution of £12.5 million or 48% of the total for the period 2010-15.[9] STAR-Ghana provides grants primarily to CSOs to help particular groups of citizens improve their understanding of their rights and entitlements and to increase their influence over the actions of government, traditional authorities[10] and the private sector. It also provides some support to parliamentary committees. STAR-Ghana has supported more than 200 individual CSO projects;

    5.6.2   The Building Empowerment and Accountability in Malawi (BEAM)[11] programme: this is a £19.7 million portfolio programme supporting work with civil society and citizens on social accountability; and with government agencies on anti-corruption and public financial management reform. We will look in particular at the two components of BEAM that support social accountability:

- the Community Based Monitoring Programme (in its current second phase known as 'Kalondolondo'). Kalondolondo is a three-year, £2.5 million programme to support the use of scorecards (a methodology for scoring the quality of public services or development projects) to strengthen social accountability around local services, together with advocacy at the national level on policy issues; and

- the Tilitonse multi-donor civil society governance fund. This is a multi-donor fund supported by DFID, Norway and Ireland. DFID is providing £8 million, or 67%, of the £11.8 million in funding over its four-year life (2011-15).[12] Tilitonse funds local organisations and coalitions for the monitoring and influencing of government policies and programmes. It aims to increase citizen voice and promote inclusive, accountable and responsive governance. Tilitonse promotes the use of political economy analysis and broad-based coalitions to achieve its goals. It provided 11 grants to CSOs in 2011 and 26 in 2012. It promotes the use of community scorecards to increase community knowledge of government performance and support dialogue between communities and service providers. It also builds an evidence base on government performance and seeks to promote policy dialogue at the national level to address any shortcomings. Other components of the programme include other civic and voter education, budget monitoring and support for formal accountability institutions (Anti-Corruption Bureau and National Audit Office).

5.7   We may, in addition, look at other programmes in Ghana and Malawi that contain elements of empowerment and accountability. We will also examine predecessor programmes engaged in similar

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[7] In 2011, DFID chose to discontinue general budget support to Malawi due, among other things, to concerns over a deteriorating human rights record and problems around freedom of the press and democratic space. See *The Management of UK Budget Support Operations*, ICAI, May 2012, page 8, http://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/ICAI-Budget-Support-Final-Report-3.pdf.
[8] See: www.starghana.org/.
[9] The Danish Agency for International Development (DANIDA) contributes £6.5 million (25%), the European Commission contributes £3.8 million (15%) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) contributes £3.1 million (12%). *STAR-Ghana Annual Financial Report – Year 1*, Coffey International Development, May 2012, page 4.
[10] Under the Ghanaian constitution, traditional chiefs are recognised and play a role in local governance, while 'Houses of Chiefs' exercise some influence at national and regional levels.
[11] DFID project database: http://projects.dfid.gov.uk/project.aspx?Project=200469.
[12] Irish Aid is providing £1.48 million and the Royal Norwegian Embassy is providing £2.38 million.

activities. In Ghana, these will include (i) the Ghana Research and Advocacy Program (G-RAP), which ran from 2004 to 2010 with a total budget of £10.2 million and provided grants to 36 research and advocacy organisations; and (ii) the Civil Society Rights and Voice Initiative (RAVI), which provided £2,9 million in grants to 143 partners between 2005 and 2009, many of them local community-based organisations, to enhance voice, accountability and human rights. In Malawi, they include relevant components of Tikambirane, which in the period between 2003 and 2010 provided grants to selected CSOs for advocacy on gender and minority issues, the first phase of the Community Based Monitoring Programme and prior direct DFID funding to CSOs. For completed programmes, we will review design documents, project completion reports and any independent evaluations. Where possible, we will speak to the relevant stakeholders, including managers and grantees and determine whether the processes that they established are still operating.

5.8   For each of the programmes in our selection, we will assess whether the overall design and programme logic are sound and realistic and whether the grant-making mechanism is effective. Within each programme, we will take a sample of individual activities to examine in more detail. The sample will be decided prior to the visit in consultation with DFID. It will be purposive, rather than random, by reference to phase of implementation, materiality of expenditure, representativeness of programme portfolio, ability to illustrate particular elements of the programme theory, relevance to evaluation themes (e.g. the role of communication technology and social media) and feasibility of access to project sites and intended beneficiaries. The sample will include activities that have been rated both more and less successful under programme reporting.

Detailed methodology

5.9   The evaluation will be undertaken in two phases: advance preparation and field research. These will comprise the following elements:

Advance preparation

5.9.1   We will conduct a literature review to explore:

- the overarching theory of change behind empowerment and accountability programming, exploring the causal mechanisms required to get from donor programming through to improvements in government performance;

- the main critiques of this theory of change, in particular causal linkages that appear implausible based on evidence of how political systems in Africa function;

- the strength of evidence behind the dominant theory of change for empowerment and accountability programming, drawing on existing syntheses or summaries of impact evaluations;

- techniques and approaches to measuring the impact of empowerment and accountability programming, with a focus on common challenges and possible solutions; and

- the political economy of Ghana and Malawi, to inform our case studies, including reconstructing a baseline prior to the current empowerment and accountability programmes (if possible).

5.9.2   We will conduct interviews with DFID senior managers and policy teams on DFID's policies, commitments and targets on empowerment and accountability.

5.9.3   We will review DFID guidance material and evidence on empowerment and accountability, including the online resources made available to country teams.

5.9.4   We will consult with UK-based development think tanks and NGOs on their approaches to empowerment and accountability programming and measuring results; and their views on DFID's approach.

5.9.5   We will review DFID's contextual analysis of the two case study countries and documentation on the three main case study programmes.

5.9.6 Where external reviews have already been done of our case study programmes, we will extract the findings and adapt our case study methodology accordingly (i.e. by using lighter methods to verify existing findings, assessing whether recommendations have been responded to and focussing on issues that have not been sufficiently addressed in past reviews).

5.9.7 We will finalise the selection of activities for detailed review and prepare visit itineraries.

Field research in Ghana and Malawi

5.9.8 We will interview DFID staff, implementing partners and national counterparts and other informed observers (including parliamentarians and civil society representatives) on the programmes and the contexts in which they are being delivered.

5.9.9 We will consult with a range of independent observers (e.g. parliamentarians; journalists; academics; representatives of CSOs).

5.9.10 We will review programme governance and management arrangements, grant-making procedures, financial management and monitoring and evaluation. This will include interviews with implementing partners and reviewing programme documentation, including corporate strategies, policies and guidelines, programme strategies, financial and programme rules and procedures, financial and activity reports, monitoring and evaluation reports and corporate reporting. Where these matters have already been addressed in past reviews, we will seek to verify the findings and, if reliable, focus our investigations on whether any problems identified have been satisfactorily addressed.

5.9.11 We will carry out interviews with a sample of grant partners regarding their experiences with the application process, their activities, implementation arrangements, project and financial management capacities and their results to date.

5.9.12 We will visit a sample of sites where activities are being carried out, for consultations with local partners, intended beneficiaries and other stakeholders. We will visit 10-20 projects in Ghana and 5-10 projects in Malawi, during which we will consult with as many intended beneficiaries as possible, through focus groups and individual interviews.

5.9.13 We will collect analysis and data on national and sub-national development planning and budgeting processes and the opportunities for citizens to influence them.

5.10 The evaluation team will visit each case study country for a week. The team will be divided into two, to maximise our ability to access stakeholders and potential beneficiaries. A second week of field research will be carried out in Ghana (with two team members) and in Malawi (by the national consultant).

5.11 For each activity that we review in the field, we will consult with the following stakeholders:

- the intended beneficiaries (e.g. a local community or recipients of a particular service such as patients at a hospital) and a cross-section of communities to which they belong;

- the government agency or, in the case of STAR-Ghana, the traditional authority or private company that the project seeks to influence ('duty bearer'); and

- the local partners engaged to facilitate their interaction.

5.12 Through these consultations, we will assess:

- whether the intended beneficiaries have improved knowledge of their rights and entitlements and of the duty bearer's compliance with its commitments and obligations;

- whether the intended beneficiaries have an increased sense of empowerment;

- whether the intended beneficiaries have improved interaction with and influence over the duty bearer; and

- whether there has been any resulting improvement in performance by the duty bearer.

5.13 Consultations will take the form of key informant interviews and focus groups with semi-structured[13] dialogue.[14] Through these consultations, we will reconstruct what happened and why, for each intervention. In addition, to enable comparison of the results, each of the results areas listed in paragraph 5.12 will be scored using a scale to be developed by the team.[15]

5.14 As a practical necessity, the grant partners will be requested to facilitate focus groups with intended beneficiaries. To guard against the risk of bias in the selection of participants or of pre-prepared responses, the team will also conduct individual interviews with members of the target community chosen at random during the visit, to verify the responses.

6.   Roles and responsibilities

Team Leader (Agulhas)

He has over 15 years of experience in development consulting, including policy advice, research and analysis, programme design and evaluation. He has worked for a variety of clients on diverse issues including governance and civil society programming and aid effectiveness. He is an authority in international law and human rights and has written widely on post-conflict reconstruction, state-building and the restitution of property. He will have overall management responsibility for all stages of the process including the Malawi and Ghana case studies and will ensure delivery of the outputs.

Team Member 1 (Agulhas)

She is an experienced economist, policy analyst and evaluator who has worked on topics as varied as international trade, domestic accountability, pro-poor growth and international engagement in fragile states. She is a leading expert on governance and civil society programming, with a particular interest in anti-corruption and budget transparency. She has led major evaluations, including a recent evaluation of African Development Support for economic governance. She has worked with a range of donor partners to improve the delivery of aid, corporately and in specific contexts, particularly fragile states.

She will lead on reviewing the designs, theories of change and logframes of the case study programmes and assessing their linkages with development planning and budgeting processes.

Team Member 2 (KPMG)

He is a director from KPMG Tanzania. He has 15 years' experience in international development, with particular experience in design and programme management of large, complex multi-site governance, public sector reform and civil society strengthening initiatives, including responsibility for donor funds through imprest or trust account mechanisms. His expertise and experience includes the design, strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation of development assistance initiatives in Africa, including Tanzania, Kenya and Malawi.

Team Member 3 (CEGA)

He is an experienced senior researcher and doctoral student at the University of California, San Diego and is part of CEGA's network of researchers and experts. He is experienced in impact evaluation, including survey design, field experiment and ethnography. He has conducted field

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[13] Interviewers will ask a set of standard questions for each focus group, to facilitate comparison of responses. They will also ask open-ended questions and pursue issues arising during the discussion.
[14] The possibility of conducting surveys of intended beneficiaries was considered and rejected, for several reasons. First, each of the activities in our sample will be different, so a separate survey would be required for each one. It would be poor use of the team's limited time in-country to produce and test many survey instruments. Second, surveys would be less useful for obtaining qualitative feedback from intended beneficiaries than focus group and semi-structured interviews. Third, surveys are more time-consuming to implement and would therefore necessitate a smaller sample of activities for review.
[15] 'Scalar approaches' – that is, scoring changes against a scale, each step of which contains a description of a particular level of progress – are used to organise and compare qualitative data collected through methods such as interviews and focus groups. See *Using Scalar Approaches to Monitor Advocacy and Empowerment Work: Best Practice Paper*, INTRAC, December 2012.

research on voter behaviour, conflict issues, corruption and other development topics. He will carry out the literature review and conduct field research for the Ghana case study.

Team Member 4 (Independent)

She is a Ghanaian development consultant specialising in policy analysis and institutional reform, aid management and co-ordination, programme management, monitoring and evaluation and organisational development. She worked on the mid-term review of the Ghana Joint Assistance Strategy and was Lead Consultant for the review of the division of labour process among donors in Ghana, in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Joint Assistance Strategy.

She will support the Ghana case study, through research and analysis, identifying and facilitating access to key stakeholders, examining capacity-development strategies, field research and logistic support.

Team Member 5 (Independent)

He is an experienced Malawian consultant, NGO leader and community organiser. As Founder and Managing Director of his own consulting firm, he supports the capacity-building of organisations by facilitating process, organisational and institutional development and providing management and performance consulting services. He has over 16 years' experience in consulting work with a wide range of agencies, including donors, NGOs, government departments and the private sector.

He will support the Malawi case study through research and analysis, identifying and facilitating access to key stakeholders, examining capacity-development strategies, field research and logistic support.

Team Member 6 (CEGA)

He is Professor and former Department Chair of Political Science and Director of the International Studies Program at the University of California, San Diego. He studies the politics of democracy and development, especially topics concerning foreign aid, elections, political accountability, political institutions and the environment. He explores these issues in Africa, Central and South America, Asia and the United States and has published his work in several scholarly articles and chapters. He will act as a senior adviser on empowerment and accountability theory and practice, will quality assure the literature review and will provide comments on the draft evaluation report.

7. Management and reporting

7.1   A first draft report for review by the ICAI Secretariat and Commissioners will be prepared by w/c 8 July 2013 with time for subsequent revision and review prior to completion and sign off in w/c 30 September 2013.

8.   Expected outputs and time frame

8.1   The main deliverables will be:

- the main report, in the standard ICAI format; and
- additional data annexes, as required.

8.2   The timetable will be as follows:

Phase	Timetable
Planning Preliminary consultations Planning and methodology Finalising inception	15 February 2013 – 12 April 2013
London-based research Literature review Interviews with DFID staff in London Consultation with other UK stakeholders Review of policies, strategies and guidance Review of project documentation Sample selection and logistical planning	15 April 2013 – 10 May 2013
Field research Ghana case study – main team visit Ghana case study – additional field research Malawi case study – main team visit Malawi case study – additional field research	w/c 13 May 2013 w/c 20 May 2013 w/c 20 May 2013 w/c 27 May 2013
Analysis and write-up Roundtable with Commissioners Further analysis and first draft Report quality assurance and review by Secretariat and Commissioners Report to DFID for fact checking Report finalisation	21 June 2013 w/c 8 July 2013 w/c 15 July – w/c 2 September 2013 w/c 9 September 2013 w/c 30 September 2013

9. Risks and mitigation

9.1 The following sets out the key risks and mitigating actions for this evaluation.

Risk	Level of risk	Specific issues	Mitigation
ICAI review duplicates existing programme monitoring and evaluation arrangements, causing a burden to DFID staff and implementing partners	Low	Two of the case study programmes are funded by several donors. In such circumstances, donors often agree not to carry out unilateral programme reviews outside the regular monitoring and evaluation cycle. DFID has indicated that some of the project partners have been through similar reviews recently and may find the ICAI review burdensome, resulting in lower levels of co-operation.	The evaluation methodology has been designed so as to complement other reviews, in particular by adding new elements of field research. To the extent possible, we will take the findings of other reviews into account and avoid duplication. At our request, DFID has raised the ICAI evaluation with other donors and stressed its complementary nature.
ICAI review is unable to draw conclusions on impact, owing to the youth of the empowerment and accountability portfolio and the technical difficulties associated with impact assessment	Medium	DFID has conducted an 'evaluability assessment' of its empowerment and accountability portfolio, concluding that, for the time being, there is not enough information available for impact assessment. DFID has, therefore, expressed some scepticism as to whether an ICAI review will be able to draw robust conclusions on impact. It is therefore likely that the methodology for this review will be subject to close scrutiny, to assess whether it is robust enough to support our conclusions.	The review methodology has been designed to focus on the earlier links in the results chain, including speaking with a wide range of intended beneficiaries, to assess whether the programmes are delivering the results expected at this stage of implementation. We will also examine predecessor programmes, enabling us to assessing whether sustainable results have been achieved. Care will be taken in the drafting of the evaluation report to be explicit about the methodology and its limitations and to be clear about what kinds of conclusions can be drawn from the methodology.

Risk	Level of risk	Specific issues	Mitigation
Security and other risks associated with field work	Low	Both Ghana and Malawi represent relatively stable and secure environments for field work. There are, however, risks associated with any field work in Africa, including traffic accidents and illness.	The teams will benefit from the support of local consultants. They will hire experienced drivers with appropriate vehicles. The sample of activities for review in the field will be chosen so as to avoid excessive amounts of travel in remote areas.

10. How this ICAI review will make a difference

10.1 Empowerment and accountability is a new and expanding programme area for DFID. DFID has committed itself to spending an amount equivalent to 5% of its budget support in this area and to reaching 40 million beneficiaries. It is also an untested area with contested theoretical support and an unclear evidence base.

10.2 Given the experimental nature of this type of programming, our review will assess whether DFID is going about developing its portfolio in a strategic manner and building an evidence base on what works. We will assess whether the guidance provided to country offices is realistic and helpful. Through our field research, we will assess some of the conditions under which interventions in this area are likely to be more or less successful. The evaluation therefore provides us with an opportunity to guide the development of an important area of the aid programme.