



Independent  
Commission  
for Aid Impact

## Evaluation of DFID's work on electoral support through UNDP

### Terms of Reference

#### 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 a review of the management of UK electoral assistance. In carrying out this review, we have agreed to co-ordinate with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a major actor in the delivery of electoral assistance internationally and the implementing partner for most of the UK's electoral assistance. This will be a collaborative process, rather than a joint evaluation, with the two organisations sharing their research but drawing fully independent conclusions and each publishing its own report. Working collaboratively will reduce the burden on partners while broadening the reach of both evaluations.

1.3 These Terms of Reference outline the purpose and nature of the review and identify the main themes that it will investigate. A detailed methodology will be developed during an inception phase.

#### 2. Background

2.1 The UK is strongly committed to supporting democracy internationally. The vast majority of countries are formally committed to respecting democratic principles, through international conventions, their membership of regional bodies and under their own constitutions. Many are engaged in a lengthy process of establishing the norms and institutions required to put those principles into effect. One of the goals of UK development assistance is to support this process of democratic consolidation.

2.2 Electoral support is one of various options available for supporting democracy internationally. Although the electoral system is only one of many institutions required to make a functioning democracy, elections are a necessary part of the democratic process. Free and fair elections call for a complex set of rules and organisational capacities, to enable genuine political competition, manage the different processes involved and ensure that voters are able to participate effectively.

2.3 In the past, most UK electoral assistance was directed to supporting specific elections. Together with other donors, the UK would help its partner countries meet the costs of a particular electoral process (e.g. voter registration) on the polling day

itself. Electoral assistance would then cease until needed for a subsequent election. Experience showed that this pattern of event-driven electoral assistance largely failed to build sustainable capacity within national electoral systems.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, a consensus has emerged internationally on the need for an ‘electoral cycle approach’ – that is, for sustained support throughout the entire electoral cycle, focussing on the development of robust systems and sustainable capacity. In December 2010, the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) adopted the electoral cycle approach in a joint guidance note on electoral assistance.<sup>2</sup>

2.4 The UK usually chooses to provide electoral assistance with other donors through a common or basket fund, most of which are managed by UNDP. In a few instances, basket funds are managed by other bilateral donors or by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The UK also provides a range of smaller-scale electoral assistance through other channels, such as support to local NGOs for election observation or voter education campaigns.

2.5 Over the period 2004-09, DFID provided election-related support in 25 countries at a total estimated cost of £121 million. This was one part of DFID’s wider support to political systems (including parliaments, political parties and accountability) which totalled approximately £234 million over the same period or 8% of the governance portfolio. In the current Spending Review period (2011-15), DFID will support elections in at least 13 countries.<sup>3</sup>

### **3. Purpose of the Evaluation**

3.1 To assess whether DFID’s funding for electoral support through UNDP is being managed so as to be effective and deliver value for money.

### **4. Relationship to other evaluations and studies**

4.1 In 2008-09, DFID and FCO commissioned a series of case studies on UK electoral support, covering Bangladesh, Malawi, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Nepal and Pakistan. These were not evaluations and did not explore the technical design or impact of the assistance. Rather, they focussed on the wider political context and the strategic significance of the donor support. The lessons from these case studies were summarised in a paper<sup>4</sup> by Roger Wilson (former Head of Governance in DFID) and led to the production of a

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<sup>1</sup> *Draft Principles of Electoral Assistance*, OECD Development Assistance Committee, March 2010 (updated June 2010), <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/17/45881241.pdf>; *Joint Workshop on Effective Electoral Assistance: Participants’ Manual*, European Commission, UNDP and International IDEA, June 2009, [www.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_download&gid=201&Itemid=2](http://www.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=201&Itemid=2).

<sup>2</sup> *How To Note on Electoral Assistance*, DFID and FCO, December 2010, [www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/elections/how-to-on-elect-asst-summ.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/elections/how-to-on-elect-asst-summ.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Information in this paragraph provided to ICAI by DFID.

<sup>4</sup> Roger Wilson & Bhavna Sharma, *Review of UK Electoral Assistance in the context of lessons emerging from best practice in international experience*, commissioned by the Politics and State Team, DFID Policy Division, and the Human Rights, Democracy and Governance Group, FCO, December 2008 (unpublished).

DFID guidance note on *Electoral Assistance and Politics*.<sup>5</sup> This work provides a useful body of analysis to draw on for this evaluation but was significantly different in its purpose and approach.

4.2 In general, there is a lack of in-depth, cross-country or thematic analysis of international electoral support.

## 5. The UNDP evaluation

5.1 To maximise the benefits of co-operation with UNDP, the evaluation will make use of an analytical approach and a methodology that as far as possible complement those used in the UNDP evaluation, while meeting our own requirements.

5.2 We understand that the objectives of UNDP's evaluation are to:

- assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of UNDP's electoral support;
- highlight what works, why and how; and
- assess UNDP's strategic positioning, comparative advantage and added value as a provider of electoral assistance.

5.3 We understand that the UNDP evaluation will make use of a set of evaluation criteria including relevance and strategic positioning, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency. It will examine UNDP's performance across a range of areas for electoral assistance, including electoral system reform, strengthening electoral administration, building sustainable electoral processes and mobilisation and co-ordination of resources.

5.4 UNDP will undertake both a portfolio review of UNDP's electoral support since the 1990s and several country case studies. It will carry out in-country case studies of Bolivia, Chad, Guinea/Conakry, Guyana, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Mexico and Mozambique. It will also carry out a desk-based case study of Afghanistan.

5.5 We understand that UNDP's case studies have been chosen to cover a range of country contexts, including immediate post-conflict, conflict/transition and development, as well as different types of electoral assistance (i.e. event-based or electoral cycle approach).

5.6 UNDP anticipates completing fieldwork in January 2012 and publishing a report in the spring.

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<sup>5</sup> *Electoral Assistance and Politics: Lessons for International Support*, DFID, 2010, [www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/elect-asst-pol-less-int-supp.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/elect-asst-pol-less-int-supp.pdf).

## **6. Analytical approach**

6.1 Our evaluation will focus on UNDP's management of UK electoral support, including:

- whether the choice of delivery options and partners is delivering effective assistance and good value for money;
- whether DFID is providing effective management and oversight of UNDP's electoral assistance; and
- whether UK electoral support is anchored in a credible political engagement strategy and a broader strategy of support for political system development.

6.2 The main focus will be on the effectiveness and value for money of UNDP's management of UK electoral assistance as the major delivery partner. We will examine this through a number of different methods, including case studies, a review of existing evaluations and a survey of DFID governance advisers.

6.3 In co-operating with the UNDP evaluation team, we will share evaluation approaches and findings, engage in a dialogue to develop approaches and learn lessons from each others' work.

## **7. Indicative evaluation framework**

7.1 This review will use as its basis the standard ICAI guiding criteria and evaluation framework, which are focussed on four areas: objectives, delivery, impact and learning. The questions outlined below comprise those questions in our standard evaluation framework which are of particular interest in this review, as well as other pertinent questions we want to investigate. The full, finalised list of questions that we will consider in this review will be set out in the inception report.

### **7.2 Objectives**

7.2.1 Does the electoral assistance have clear, relevant and realistic objectives?

7.2.2 Is it anchored in a credible overall strategy for political development?

7.2.3 Does it contribute to reducing the level of risk associated with the delivery of the UK operational plan for the country in question?

### **7.3 Delivery**

7.3.1 Have the risks to a free and fair election been identified and adequately managed?

7.3.2 Is the choice of funding modality and delivery partner appropriate? Are other government and donor resources leveraged effectively?

7.3.3 Does the design of the assistance provide for holistic coverage of the entire electoral cycle?

7.3.4 Is the design technically adequate across all elements of the electoral cycle approach?

7.3.5 Are government, civil society, other national stakeholders and voters sufficiently involved in the design, governance, implementation and monitoring of the assistance?

7.3.6 Are there adequate arrangements for political dialogue with the partner government around the elections?

7.3.7 Does the assistance help protect the independence and integrity of the electoral management body?

7.3.8 How effective is the financial management of the assistance? Are adequate steps being taken to avoid corruption and mismanagement?

7.3.9 Is the assistance delivering value for money through economic inputs, efficient delivery of outputs and high quality results?

## **7.4 Impact**

7.4.1 Is the programme producing its intended objectives, including improved electoral systems, strengthened electoral management capacity and enhanced participation by citizens?

7.4.2 Is there any evidence of wider impact on the consolidation of democracy?

7.4.3 Is the programme building sustainable national capacity and financing for electoral management? Is there an appropriate exit strategy for external support?

7.4.4 Have there been any unintended impacts, positive or negative?

7.4.5 Is there transparency and accountability of spending, activities and results to the intended beneficiaries, UK taxpayers and other stakeholders?

## **7.5 Learning**

7.5.1 Are appropriate arrangements in place for monitoring inputs, processes, outputs and results?

7.5.2 Has the programme been designed so as to facilitate impact measurement and are appropriate impact assessment processes in place?

7.5.3 Have lessons been learnt about the design and delivery of the programme, and have these been used to strengthen the programme and generate wider learning?

## **8. Methodology**

8.1 The methodology may include the following elements:

- a mapping of UK electoral assistance according to country, spending and delivery method/partner, conducted through analysis of information on DFID systems and interviews with DFID staff in London;
- a review of available documentation on UK electoral assistance, including individual project reviews and the case studies commissioned by DFID and FCO in 2008;
- a written survey or structured interview by telephone of DFID governance advisers responsible for electoral assistance, to solicit their views on the strengths and weaknesses of different delivery options and partners;
- four country case studies (two involving country visits) where UK electoral assistance is provided through a UNDP-managed basket fund and electoral support is also delivered through other channels;

- review of data and analysis from the UNDP evaluation, including gaining the UNDP's view of the UK as a partner; and
- enquiries into UNDP management systems, any processes of reform and how DFID is contributing to them. This will include interviews with DFID's United Nations and Commonwealth Department in London and with the management of UNDP in New York (carried out by staff from KPMG New York).

8.2 The case studies will be of electoral assistance projects that are current or have finished within the past three years. This is to make sure that the projects examined are representative of DFID's current approach to electoral assistance and that first-hand information is still available within the DFID country team.

8.3 For the case studies to cover UNDP-managed assistance, this limits the field to the following examples:

Tanzania	2007-10	£3.36 million (60% for elections)
Malawi	2007-09	£5.4 million
Zambia	2009-14	£1.58 million (75% for elections)
Sierra Leone	2005-10	£10.4 million
Sudan	2007-12	£9.55 million (legislative and electoral)
Afghanistan	2009-11	£5.6 million
Bangladesh	2007-11	£10.95 million (electoral registration)
Burundi	2009-11	£750,000
Nigeria	2008-14	£11.5 million

Of these, Bangladesh and Afghanistan overlap with the UNDP case studies.

8.4 Full case studies involving country visits will be conducted in Malawi and Burundi.

8.4.1 DFID has been supporting electoral processes in Malawi since at least 2000. The DFID support to Malawi's 2009 presidential and parliamentary elections began three years prior to the elections in 2007. Support to the electoral process was managed through a contribution to a UNDP-administered basket fund. Following the 2009 elections, DFID in collaboration with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provided support to civic and voter education activities targeted towards the 2010 local government elections. Malawi has faced allegations of electoral fraud. The 2009 elections were peaceful and well-managed but with elements judged as below international standards, particularly abuse of incumbency. Since the election, governance in Malawi has deteriorated markedly, with suppression of demonstrations, intimidation of civil society organisations and new laws empowering the government to restrict political opposition. This led to DFID suspending budget support to Malawi in July 2011. The difficult political environment makes for an interesting case study as to how effectively UNDP and DFID are able to defend the independence of the electoral body.

8.4.2 DFID has supported elections in Burundi at least since 2004. For the last elections, held in 2010, UNDP managed a US\$46 million basket fund. DFID contributed £1 million to it. Presidential and parliamentary elections of July 2010 were accompanied by violence and unrest. This followed allegations of widespread fraud in the May 2010 local elections. All six opposition candidates dropped out of the presidential elections in June, leaving incumbent President Pierre Nkurunziza as the sole candidate. Only two major opposition parties participated in the legislative elections in July. The ruling party won over 80% of parliament seats.

8.4.3 As part of its Bilateral Aid Review in 2010-11,<sup>6</sup> DFID decided that its bilateral aid programme to Burundi offered poor value for money compared with other, larger country programmes. DFID said that a large scale-up would have been required to show a significant impact and therefore demonstrate better value for money. DFID believed that achieving this in the short term would have been difficult given capacity constraints in-country. For this and other reasons, DFID decided to close down the bilateral programme and to allocate these resources to larger existing programmes, where it was felt that better value for money and effectiveness could be achieved. DFID maintained some financial support through other channels, in particular a specific regional programme focussing on economic integration. The International Development Committee recently carried out an inquiry into this decision, concluding that the bilateral aid programme should be reinstated.<sup>7</sup>

8.4.4 The Burundi case study will consider the contribution of DFID to elections support in the context of the impact to date and the influence of the UK on the nature and achievements of UNDP support.

8.5 We will conduct desk-based case studies of Bangladesh and Afghanistan. These will involve following the progress of the UNDP case studies, giving us better insight into their methodology. As well as reviewing UNDP's field research, we will conduct a documentary review, interviews with DFID staff in London and telephone interviews with country programme staff.

## **9. Timing and Deliverables**

9.1 The review will be overseen by Commissioners and implemented by a small team from ICAI's consortium. The review will take place during the final quarter of 2011, emerging findings will be shared with UNDP in the first quarter of 2012 and a final report will be available thereafter.

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<sup>6</sup> *Bilateral Aid Review: technical report*, DFID, March 2011, [www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/MAR/FINAL\\_BAR%20TECHNICAL%20REPORT.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/MAR/FINAL_BAR%20TECHNICAL%20REPORT.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> *The Closure of DFID's Bilateral Aid Programme in Burundi*, International Development Committee, October 2011, HC 1134, [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmintdev/1134/113402.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmintdev/1134/113402.htm).