

# Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI)

## Follow-up Work on Year Recommendations

### Inception Report

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## 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 In order to fulfil our mandate of assessing impact, we conducted follow-up work for the first time on the recommendations issued in all ICAI Year 1 reports.<sup>1</sup> We assessed the Department for International Development's (DFID's) response to ICAI's recommendations and verified progress made against set targets. Our 2013 Annual Report included an assessment of the impact of our recommendations, as well as learning about which recommendations had had the greatest outcomes. It also contained a detailed follow up of each report in the Annex.

1.3 This Inception Report sets out the assessment questions, methodology and work plan for the Year 2<sup>2</sup> follow-up review. It is intended, however, that the methodology and work plan be flexible enough to allow new questions and lines of inquiry to emerge for the different elements of the follow-up work. This Inception Report excludes the follow up review of two of the Year 2 Reports: DFID's Use of Contractors to Deliver Aid Programmes and DFID's Support for Civil Society Organisations through Programme Partnership Arrangements. Due to potential conflicts of interest, KPMG will not undertake these reviews. These will be carried out by Concerto and Agulhas respectively.

## 2. Further background

2.1 As part of the crucial cycle of accountability, follow-up work on ICAI recommendations and DFID's response to them is a part of ICAI's mandate and included in the Memorandum of Understanding between ICAI and DFID to 'Monitor progress on follow up of recommendations and report to the IDC, including at public evidence sessions'.<sup>3</sup> This is an opportunity, not always available to accountability bodies, for ICAI to follow up on the review and understand if, and where, recommendations have had an impact. The benefit of this has been welcomed by the International Development Committee (IDC) in their Annual Report on ICAI: 'We welcome the fact that ICAI has begun to follow up its Year 1 reports. We welcome the inclusion of an annex on follow-up within the Annual Report, which sets out clearly ICAI's assessment of the impact of its Year 1 reports'.<sup>4</sup>

2.2 For the purposes of this piece of work, we are continuing our approach from Year 1 by conducting smaller-scale investigations on DFID's responses to the recommendations from ICAI's 12 Year 2 reports. These may be used to inform a full future report to revisit a previous topic in a future ICAI work programme.

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<sup>1</sup> Reports published in ICAI's first year of operations, November 2011 to May 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Reports published in ICAI's second year of operations, July 2012 to May 2013.

<sup>3</sup> *Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for International Development and the Independent Commission for Aid Impact*, ICAI Founding Documents, May 2011, [http://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/May-MOU-DFID-ICAI-final\\_1.pdf](http://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/May-MOU-DFID-ICAI-final_1.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> *The Independent Commission for Aid Impact's Annual Report 2012-2013* – International Development Committee, October 2013, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmintdev/566/56605.htm#a5>.

### **3. Purpose of this review**

3.1 To follow up on ICAI recommendations issued in Year 2 reports and assess progress on actions DFID has taken in response to the recommendations and whether there are any identifiable impacts, as a result of those actions, for intended beneficiaries.

### **4. Methodology**

#### *Analytical approach*

4.1 Our follow-up work will follow a standardised assessment framework to review the impact of ICAI's recommendations and DFID's actions against them across Year 2 reports (see paragraph 4.5). We will continue the approach established in Year 1 and assess DFID's responses to ICAI's recommendations in order to establish progress made and whether the substance of the issues we raised is being addressed. In turn, we will seek to examine how these actions have led to DFID being more efficient and effective in its programmes and operations.

4.2 In order to achieve this we will conduct an initial analysis of the annual progress updates published by DFID on ICAI's recommendations and any supplementary briefing provided by DFID at the start of the review.<sup>5</sup> We will establish the accuracy of these progress reports for each Year 2 report. We will then comment on the methodologies, logical frameworks (logframes), policies and targets DFID has established to achieve the recommendations and whether they are working effectively to achieve these. We will seek to establish whether DFID's actions have resulted in impact on the effectiveness and value for money of their programmes and, if time has allowed, assess whether DFID's actions have affected its programmes' impact on intended beneficiaries.

4.3 Assessment of these actions will be done through evidence gathering including: stakeholder interviews with DFID management and programme managers; and (via video- or tele-conference) with in-country programme staff. We will also seek to triangulate views from stakeholders and DFID management with third party organisations, such as non-governmental organisations, academic institutions and interest groups or beneficiary representatives. As part of the accountability cycle between ICAI and DFID, Commissioners will meet with the Senior Civil Servants (SCS) responsible for implementing management actions which respond to ICAI's recommendations from Year 2 reports. This will offer an opportunity to probe specific issues coming out of the follow-up fieldwork findings and – if warranted – will support possible future in-depth follow-up work.

4.4 Our final analysis will be written into a short summary (see paragraph 8: Expected Outputs and Timeframe). The next ICAI Annual Report, to be published in June 2014, will include the aggregate findings from our follow-up work. We will seek to draw out areas of best practice and also areas where progress is lagging. Cross-cutting themes from ICAI's Year 2 recommendations and DFID's corresponding responses and actions will be analysed. We will seek to draw out common themes or differences in DFID's responses and progress on recommendations, in matters such as geography of the programmes, staff, programme delivery, theories of change and implementing partners. A round table meeting with all team leaders, the ICAI Secretariat and Commissioners in Spring 2014 will collate this information. Early identification of cross cutting themes will be supported by contact with reviewers throughout February and March 2014 to capture emerging themes throughout the field work stage.

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<sup>5</sup> Using DFID's most recent update, published in December 2013: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/What-we-do/How-UK-aid-is-spent/Evaluation/Progress-updates-on-implementing-ICAI-recommendations/>.

## Assessment Framework

4.5 The Assessment Framework for the review is set out in the table below. It is based on the standard ICAI guiding criteria and assessment framework, which cover four areas: objectives, delivery, impact and learning. This Assessment Framework will also be used to identify themes across all follow-up reviews to report on the impact of ICAI in our Annual Report.

1. Objectives: Do DFID's proposed actions address the recommendations and are they well designed?
1.1. Do these proposed actions coherently address all key component aspects of the recommendations?
1.2. Are actions realistic and holistic and do they take the context into account?
2. Delivery: Are actions being implemented effectively and are they resulting in better programme delivery?
2.1. Are actions being delivered to the deadlines set out in the management response?
2.2. Is there evidence of actions evolving due to changing circumstances or other factors in order to enhance the way in which recommendations are being addressed?
2.3. Have actions improved the delivery of the programme?
3. Impact: What difference have the actions made to the impact of the programme for intended beneficiaries, including women and girls?
3.1. Are actions addressing the issues raised by the report and recommendations?
3.2. Are actions leading to better outcomes for intended beneficiaries, including for women and girls?
4. Learning: What has been learnt or shared and what could have been done better?
4.1. What has been learnt as a result of implementing the actions and have these lessons been shared effectively across the department? Have there been improvements in policy and staff culture?
4.2. Could there have been more effective actions to address the recommendations?
4.3. Is there evidence that different recommendations could have addressed the issues raised by the report more effectively?

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 A Team Manager will lead the overall coordination of the work, initial planning and be the point of contact with the Secretariat. KPMG will oversee and support the review under the overall leadership of the ICAI Project Director.

5.2 It is proposed that the individual follow-up reviews be undertaken by a reviewer. This will be the team leader, or a nominated team member (if the team leader is no longer available), from the Year 2 ICAI review. On occasion where the reviewer has limited availability we have ensured additional KPMG resources to ensure all reviews can be led by an original team member. After initial contact by ICAI Secretariat and request for any additional briefing to the published progress report, the reviewer will then be responsible for the on-going relationship with the designated DFID point of contact and all other documentation requested for the follow-up review.

## **6. Partner liaison**

6.1 This review will require close liaison with DFID in the UK and in country offices. The majority of the work will be desk based and done through telephone and video conferencing where individuals are outside of London. In some instances we will make use of existing ICAI teams in the field to gather information from relevant individuals to inform this follow-up work.

6.2 It was agreed that the following officers would be the main points of liaison:

### 6.2.1 ICAI:

- Graham Ward, Chief Commissioner;
- Dr Alexandra Cran-McGreehin, Head of Secretariat; and
- Elspeth Robinson, Assistant Programme Manager.

### 6.2.2 DFID:

- Eilidh Simpson, Improving Aid Impact: ICAI Leader;
- Karen Kiernan, Improving Aid Impact: ICAI Policy Officer.

## **7. Expected outputs and time frame**

7.1 The main deliverables and a high-level outline of the content of those deliverables are outlined below:

- Two page briefing note for Commissioners for the SCS Meeting:
  - a. Summarise important findings (highlighted in the assessment framework) from the field work and the thrust of the evidence collected in the grid (see below);
  - b. Capture notable changes to context if this has had an impact on the recommendations or actions (no need for this section if not);
  - c. Focus on the areas to explore and probe during the meeting; and
  - d. Annex the Executive Summary of the ICAI report (limiting the requirement for a summary of findings in the brief).
- Follow-up grid:
  - a. Completed follow-up grid capturing DFID's response and actions to recommendations submitted to the Commissioners prior to the meeting with the relevant SCS; and
  - b. Revised follow up grid following the SCS meeting to reflect any revisions or additional information.
- Short summary report detailing follow-up findings for each Year 2 report. This should range from one page for a standard follow up review to two pages for a more complex review. This should include:
  - a. Report purpose and key findings;
  - b. Overall findings of the follow-up review;
  - c. Response to each recommendation (what was recommended, what DFID has done and whether this is having the desired impact); and
  - d. Opportunities for further action from DFID.

7.2 The timetable for this review will be broadly as outlined in the table below, with adjustments as necessary. Two reviews will run in parallel commencing 6<sup>th</sup> January.

Phase	Timetable
<b>Planning</b> Preliminary consultations Planning and methodology Finalising inception	05 December 2012 – 20 <sup>th</sup> December 2013
<b>London-based research</b> Interviews with DFID senior management and programme teams from Year 2 reports Interviews with other UK stakeholders Teleconferences with country based DFID staff and implementing partners Data gathering and analysis Review of policies, strategies and guidance related to Year 2 report recommendations	06 January 2013 – 24 <sup>th</sup> February
<b>Analysis and Write Up of Commissioner Briefing and Follow Up Grid</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> January – 3 <sup>rd</sup> March
<b>Commissioner Briefings and ICAI Board Meetings with DFID SCS Leads</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> February-17 <sup>th</sup> March
<b>Further Analysis and write-up and submit short summary reports</b> Further analysis and submission of first draft short summary reports on follow-up work on recommendations (one draft per Year 2 report)  Initial Comments on Short Summary Reports  Synthesis Meeting with Commissioners  Revised Comments on Short Summary Reports  Summary reports finalisation	17 <sup>th</sup> February – 24 <sup>th</sup> March  24 <sup>th</sup> February – 24 <sup>th</sup> March  w/c 31 <sup>st</sup> March  7 <sup>th</sup> April – 14 <sup>th</sup> April  21 <sup>st</sup> April
<b>ICAI Annual Report</b>	June 2014

## 8. Risks and mitigation

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

Risk	Level of risk	Specific Issues	Mitigation
Short time-frame for follow-up work, inadequate evidence to support robust findings.	Low	<p>DFID's response to ICAI Year 2 recommendations is incomplete or unpublished, creating delays whilst DFID prepares a response.</p> <p>Due to the short time-frame for the follow-up work, interviews, document requests and evidence analysis could be curtailed, leading to inadequate evidence to support robust findings on DFID's response to ICAI's Year 2 recommendations and verifiable action against their set targets.</p> <p>Teams are unable to verify impact of DFID's response to ICAI's recommendations due to limited time for any actions to have made an impact.</p>	<p>Secretariat will ensure DFID has published its responses to all Year 2 reviews within agreed timeframe.</p> <p>Teams will ensure they send out timely interview and document requests and will capture new policies and procedures but will also ensure a focus on recommendations that involved more wide-ranging action on DFID's part, in addition to new policies and procedures.</p> <p>Teams will utilise video and teleconference facilities to reach stakeholders outside the UK.</p>
Lack of evidence of impact and/or timeliness for impact and/or assessment of DFID's actions in response to ICAI's recommendations.	Low	Impact and data to support that impact may not be available due to the short time-frame for any actions based on ICAI recommendations.	The assessment teams will review and comment on impact where information allows.
Stakeholders for follow-up work are unreachable or are no longer involved in the specific report subject matter.	Low	For this follow-up work, we will aim to conduct interviews with the same stakeholders in the Year 2 reports. In some instances, stakeholders and interviewees for Year 2 reports may have moved on within DFID and/or implementing partners. Beneficiaries may also be harder to reach due to the primarily desk-based nature of this follow-up work.	The evaluation team will be guided by the stakeholder interviews teams conducted during the Year 2 reports and by project implementers in deciding what consultations are appropriate. In the event that key stakeholders cannot be accessed, every effort will be made to identify alternatives to receive informed and balanced feedback.

Risk	Level of risk	Specific Issues	Mitigation
Recommendation follow-up work published in the June ICAI Annual Report looks out of date.	Medium	The process of two follow-up reviews running in parallel means that first drafts of summary reports will be submitted for review to the ICAI Secretariat and Commissioners in February and therefore may look out of date by the time of publication in June.	<p>The Secretariat will request an additional briefing during the Introduction to SCS leads</p> <p>The team will ensure any further progress made by DFID since its last update is captured in the appropriate interviews.</p> <p>Fieldwork will continue after the SCS meeting to follow up on relevant and up to date points.</p>
Separation of Year 2 Follow Up reviews as KPMG conflicted out of the contract and process of managing two of the Year 2 reviews.	N/A	Due to a conflict of interest KPMG is unable to undertake the review or manage contract or process for reviews; DFID's Use of Contractors to Deliver Aid Programmes and DFID's Support for Civil Society Organisations through Programme Partnership Arrangements.	These will be carried out by Agulhas and Concerto respectively and management will be the full responsibility of the Secretariat

## 9. How this review will make a difference

9.1 This review will follow up on the ICAI recommendations issued in Year 2 reports and assess progress on actions DFID has taken in response to those recommendations. The review of documentation and interviews with relevant staff will provide an update on DFID's response to recommendations, progress against set targets and what difference, if any, this has made. This will enable ICAI and its stakeholders to understand the impact it is having and apply learning both to future ICAI reviews as well as across the wider sector.