

Department for International Development

Is DFID Getting Real About Politics?

A stocktake of how DFID has adopted a
politically-informed approach (2010-2015)

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Executive Summary

1. Background

This internal stocktake assesses whether DFID is “getting real about politics” - how it is taking power and politics into account in all its operations. Country Poverty Reduction Diagnostics undertaken by DFID teams identify politics as the most frequent barrier to poverty reduction and growth. The UK 2015 Aid Strategy has committed DFID to spending 50% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in fragile states. This requires a “patient, long-term approach” to addressing barriers to peace and stability which are fundamentally political, rather than purely financial or technical.

The stocktake is based on three DFID offices case studies (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan and Malawi) as well as extensive internal and external consultations between June and December 2015. It provides illustrations of how DFID is evolving but does not systematically offer evidence of development impacts or non-country work, as this would have required a different methodology.

2. What does it mean to take politics into account?

Politically-informed approaches are based on a large body of evidence that confirms the importance of institutions and politics for sustainable development. External assistance needs to support locally-led change. Success depends on timing, context, political processes and local actors. Desirable outcomes are hard to achieve and difficult to predict.

Politically-informed approaches improve development effectiveness through:

- **The ‘what’: political goals**, using development assistance to shift how power is distributed in the economy and society. The two main elements are: aiming for long term transformation of institutions; and supporting locally-led change processes more likely to be sustainable and successful: locally-owned (i.e. with local salience) and locally-negotiated.
- **The ‘how’: politically-smart methods, with greater realism and feasibility.** The three main elements are: understanding power and politics in a specific context in order to identify opportunities and barriers for change; influencing and stakeholder management skills; and proactive risk management.

To influence DFID operations, a politically-informed approach needs to be iterative, not one-off. The explicit understanding of context, whether formal set-piece studies or more routine analysis, should inform policy and programme decisions, from high level strategic choices, to day-to-day implementation, for both international policy and country support. This is a dynamic process: as the context evolves and lessons are learned about what works, analyses and decisions are updated. These are the principles behind the ‘flexible and adaptive’ agenda.

3. How has DFID evolved?

DFID has a long history and is internationally recognised for its efforts to take power and politics into account in development assistance. New approaches, such as the Drivers of Change studies of the early 2000s, have helped its country teams gain a better understanding of the context in which they operate and think

through how to best support reforms. The 2009 Political Economy Analysis (PEA) guidance aimed to make the approach more operational, informing more effective and politically feasible development strategies, programmes and policy. DFID has been internationally influential, publicising the PEA methodology and studies and helping others work in this way, such as through the Governance Partnership Facility which contributed to the uptake of PEAs in the World Bank.

The internal enabling environment has become favourable following initial challenges associated with the significant scale up of UK development assistance to 0.7% of Gross National Income on ODA, with changes to DFID systems and a focus on results and accountability. Positive factors included a renewed senior interest, in particular from the Prime Minister in addressing the underlying causes of poverty; use of external evidence on how change happens; and adjustment to DFID systems following a comprehensive review. DFID's Smart Rules are clear that: "We strive to understand the local political, economic and operational environment within which we work [...] and ensure that our programmes and aid instruments suit and influence the political context".

4. What differences are politically-informed approaches making in DFID?

Policy and strategy

Some of DFID's international policy initiatives or frameworks clearly take politics into account. For example, DFID approached the negotiations that eventually led to the post 2015 Global Goals in a politically-aware manner – both in terms of process and content. The UK insisted on the importance of institutions which is captured across the Global Goals, and not just in the peace, justice and institutions goal. It is also working differently on tax evasion/avoidance and anti-corruption at the international level, to influence elite behaviour through non-aid political and diplomatic processes.

Some DFID country strategies evolved over the last five years to take power and politics more into account, especially after realising the limitations of a focus on short term results or over-optimistic assessments. A few offices, such as DFID Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) or Nigeria, are particularly committed to thinking and working politically in a systematic way and can offer lessons to others.

DFID's new diagnostic tools, such as Country Poverty Reduction Diagnostics (CPRDs) and Inclusive Growth Diagnostics (IGDs), have been particularly important innovations which influence country, regional or international strategies around a common understanding of political barriers. Since 2010 there have been at least 117 strategic studies, including 32 CPRDs, 30 IGDs, 20 Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) and 35 regional, national, or sub-national PEAs.

In spite of all these positive developments, the review could not find evidence that a politically-informed approach was systematically influencing DFID policy or country strategies. The significant push on understanding the political dimensions of economic development, championed at a senior level by the Chief Economist, does not seem replicated in other central policy areas. Better analysis does not appear to be always leading teams to propose different interventions, especially when working on political objectives, such as concrete, country-adapted ideas for influencing the distribution of power in society.

Programmes

Politically-smart approaches have made a difference in how DFID designs and manages programmes which has contributed to concrete results, such as: progress towards trade integration in East Africa; improving public sector management in Nigerian states, redirecting resources to service delivery; or influencing education reform in Pakistan. Analyses have been used to inform decisions on whether or not, and how, to engage in a sector or geographical area, or to reduce or end programmes. Designs that ignore political risks or overestimate political commitments can result in failures. For example, TradeMark Southern Africa and TradeMark East Africa adopted different approaches to the politics of regional economic integration in Africa. While TMSA did not sufficiently manage the political risks and was closed early, TMEA is on track to meet its ambitious targets, with a flexible approach and good engagement with a variety of stakeholders.

Some innovative sector programmes have adopted not only political methods but also political objectives. The stocktake found several programmes which operated politically, even if they were not labelled as such. For example, DFID Pakistan's £640m education portfolio includes a campaign targeted at politicians and parents to create demand and political will for quality education, as well as proactive risk management such as avoiding sensitive curriculum topics. This has contributed to better results. When technical approaches face difficulties, some programmes have evolved to take into account political and institutional factors. For example, in DRC, the primary health sector programme initially assumed that government would pick up health sector salaries when donor top-ups ended. When this turned out not to be the case, the programme assisted the transition, taking into account the incentives of health workers and unifying the system to pay public servants.

Locally-led change and risk-management

A politically-informed approach supports locally-led change and has encouraged DFID to focus on partners' incentives, adjusting as their interest waxes and wanes, including directly addressing the incentives of those that resist reform. For example, DFID responded to a Government of Malawi request to commission a forensic audit to uncover the scope of fraud in the 2013 'Cashgate' corruption scandal. Many had a great deal to lose from the detailed investigations. The UK had to develop a political strategy to manage the audit process, with DFID working closely with the High Commissioner, rather than treating it technically.

Some DFID programmes are more 'radically different' and have adopted highly flexible and adaptive approaches with the explicit aim of supporting local coalitions. This has led to demonstrable results. For example, the award-winning Pyoe Pin programme in Burma drew consistently on quality political analysis, facilitated participative development and has supported peace-building and fairer access to resources. A political approach to working with the Nepal Investment Board contributed to two project development agreements, bringing around US\$2.3 bn of long term foreign direct investments in Nepal (by contrast, 2013 foreign investment stock was US\$514 bn).

However, the extent to which DFID strategies and programmes are locally-led did not clearly come across in the case studies. There are a number of strategic and operational barriers that constrain DFID, including: balancing UK interests and accountability to the UK public with locally-led objectives; and staff time needed to manage and broaden DFID external relationships.

Given the case study approach, the review could not draw overall conclusions on how DFID is managing political risks. Risk management is an area where staff

have asked for more support and a new framework is being introduced. While DFID's fiduciary and reputational risk appetite has reduced (e.g. around corruption or human rights), this was often a consequence of UK domestic politics and managing DFID's reputation rather than demonstrating DFID was becoming savvier about political risks. This change in risk appetite has influenced aid modalities (such as moving away from budget support e.g. in Malawi) and sectors of intervention (such as the closure of some security and justice programmes e.g. in DRC).

Cross-government collaboration

Politically-informed approaches require cross-government collaboration which can improve analysis, strategy, programming and external engagement. The stocktake found that DFID teams value Foreign and Commonwealth Office research and other departments' capacities in the UK as well as day-to-day collaboration at post, in particular working with the Ambassador/High Commissioner on high level political dialogue. JACS have raised the collective, common understanding of context across government and built cross-government relationships and networks. A good JACS can help deliver a stronger National Security Council strategy, such as in the Western Balkans, Somalia or Nigeria, as well as a much better evidenced Conflict, Stability and Security Fund bid, such as in Pakistan. The 2015 UK Aid Strategy and increase in Official Development Assistance managed by other government departments create an opportunity for DFID to deepen a cross-government politically-informed approach.

The role of analysis

While good analysis of institutions, interests and incentives is an essential component of a politically-informed approach, it is not sufficient on its own. The consultations identified over 150 PEAs since 2009, which commissioning teams had usually found useful. Some teams use PEAs on an ongoing basis. For example, DFID DRC has established an evidence programme dedicated to producing PEAs on demand, as well as a panel of external experts to test or challenge ideas. It found that the process of ongoing analysis and decisions requires: timely, quality and relevant analysis; DFID staff able to demand, access and motivated to use the analysis; and programmes' ability and incentives to adapt in response.

PEAs are also not the only way of developing a good understanding of a sector and deciding how to address political barriers and opportunities. The review found that even good quality analysis is not always used down the line, for example because it was over-ridden by other priorities or because it leads to the realisation that proper staffing would be required once the challenges were more fully understood. Ongoing governance or conflict advice, annual reviews that look at changed contexts and incentives, Terms of Reference for programme implementers to include monitoring and political relationship management, excellent collaboration across government and the international community, or making the most of Staff Appointed In Country (SAIC) can all improve quality. This calls for a greater focus on 'everyday' political work.

5. How can DFID improve its approach?

DFID could become more effective by moving beyond an ad hoc uptake of politically-informed approaches and ensuring it systematically operates in this way across the organisation. DFID's decentralised nature has allowed a great deal of team-level creativity and experimentation and DFID teams are motivated to learn from one another. They know that their effectiveness depends on understanding their

contexts better, managing and diversifying their relationships, and adjusting their strategy and use of resources accordingly. They can be helped to do so.

DFID's approach can be improved at four levels:

- **a vision** to make political approaches more clearly everyone's business across the organisation, with senior level backing to offer consistent messages;
- **pushing the boundaries of DFID's policy agenda** with increased appetite for explicit objectives on influencing power and politics in international policy and country/regional work - and raised ambition to harness aid and non-aid drivers to drive change, for example where corruption or exclusion are rife;
- **continuous improvement to DFID's internal enabling environment**, especially (i) staff time, skills and incentives; (ii) internal central support ; and (iii) programme delivery systems; and
- **an externally facing agenda** to ensure that (i) all UK development work – including ODA spent by other government departments – and (ii) the international system as a whole tackle political barriers and operate in politically-informed ways.

Recommendation 1: DFID should now be striving to make politically-informed work the default mode of operation and more clearly everyone's business.

Ministers and senior managers expect DFID teams to have a solid understanding of their context, know their stakeholders and offer politically-informed choices. This agenda has often been seen as the responsibility of conflict and governance cadres but this review suggests it may not be as 'ghettoised' as is often perceived. The consultations confirmed an appetite on the part of generalists and all cadres to operate politically. Heads of Professions would be interested in updating their competency frameworks so all cadres take power and politics into account, rather than relying on cross-cutting advisers.

To tackle the most entrenched challenges or in fragile environments, this might mean more 'radically different' interventions – highly flexible or risk-taking. For the majority of sector programmes or policy initiatives, it might simply mean investing in regular analysis and better stakeholders and risk management, a more gradual change.

Recommendation 2: DFID should push the boundaries of its power and politics agenda.

By broadening how power and politics is understood, DFID could consider a potentially more radical policy and influencing agenda, with increased appetite for explicit objectives on influencing power and politics in international policy and country/regional work. DFID needs to consider less visible, long term and structural factors to influence the barriers to peace, poverty reduction and growth. DFID has not always included social dimensions such as gender and social exclusion in its approach to politics. It needs to go beyond national elites in how it understands power and politics; policy could better capture how to influence global factors. A refreshed stability policy framework for fragile states should cover how to tackle power and politics in difficult environments.

Recommendation 3: DFID should improve staff incentives and capacities, with a different use of programme funds and more internal central support.

Politically-informed work does not require large financial investments. It is about having people with the right skills, with time to develop relationships and influence internally and externally. However, there are ever-increasing demands on staff time and limits on administrative budgets. The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) role, centrally-managed programmes and the review of DFID's Operating Model all provide opportunities but potentially increased risks. The SRO training could be broadened to include political working. Staff Appointed in Country (SAIC) will need to take on a different role. This would build on the numerous examples of highly valued and influential SAIC in their offices, not only understanding of the political context but also managing stakeholder relationships.

In addition to protecting staff time, greater use of programme resources could provide DFID and its partners with access to ongoing information and advice. This can range from setting up an entire programme to provide advice to a country office (as in DFID DRC) to ensuring that programme implementers have the capacity to operate politically and advise DFID on changing context and opportunities.

Some targeted central support is needed if political awareness is to shape all of DFID's operations, such as through an internal community of practice sharing tools and examples of what works. The consultations showed an appetite for lighter tools that can be used in-house on a routine basis. More rigorous independent evidence on how to operate politically (e.g. how external actors can facilitate locally-led change, influence international policy processes and use non-aid levers) and ongoing learning by DFID itself would improve the collective knowledge base.

Recommendation 4: DFID should continue to improve its programme delivery system to enable politically-informed work at key decision points.

While the Smart Rules provide a more enabling set of incentives for DFID teams, the programme delivery cycle can be further improved to avoid one-off analysis and make sure key decision points consider the political context, barriers/opportunities and relationships. The review in particular identified: results framework, annual review, procurement and risk management.

Recommendation 5: DFID should draw on its experience to influence other UK government departments as part of the new Aid Strategy.

DFID has a role to play in influencing the larger share of ODA to be managed by other government departments. It needs to find ways to share lessons and provide advice. This would help other government departments' investments avoid some of the past mistakes of more technical, traditional aid projects, focusing on short term objectives or under-estimating the complexity of the context in which they operate.

Recommendation 6: DFID should regain its international thought leadership on politically-informed approaches to influence how development is undertaken globally.

Consultations with other donors and external partners showed there was a genuine desire to learn from DFID and see DFID take up a leading role once again, for example through the existing Thinking and Working Politically community of practice. DFID remains better resourced than many other bilateral donors. An externally-facing agenda would enable DFID to shape how development is understood and undertaken globally, and make its own greater efforts to work in this way more likely to succeed.

Abbreviations

BAR	Bilateral Aid Review
BDD	Better Delivery Department
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
CPRD	Country Poverty Reduction Diagnostic
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DoC	Drivers of Change
FCO	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GADN	Gender and Development Network
GOSAC	Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department
HoP	Head of Profession
IGD	Inclusive Growth Diagnostics
ICAI	UK Independent Commission for Aid Impact
JACS	Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability
NSC	UK National Security Council
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OGD	Other UK Government Departments
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
SRO	Senior Responsible Officer

1. Introduction

DFID is internationally recognised for its efforts to take power and politics into account in development assistance. New approaches, such as the Drivers of Change studies of the early 2000s, have helped its country teams gain a better understanding of the context in which they operate and think through how to best support reforms. The 2009 Political Economy Analysis guidance aimed to make the approach more operational, informing more effective and politically feasible development strategies, programmes and policy.

In 2015, DFID's Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department (GOSAC) and the Governance Head of Profession (HoP) initiated an internal stocktake to assess how DFID's political economy analyses were making a difference and recommend how they could be more transformational. The influence of DFID's political economy studies had not been assessed since 2005.

However, the most challenging part of the agenda is not just about making greater use of context analysis and using it to inform key decisions. It is about "working differently" and "getting real about politics" (Rocha Menocal 2014), thinking hard about the role of DFID and the UK Government, as external actors, in supporting change in partner countries or international policy processes, and having a more realistic handle on where and how to have influence. The stocktake's scope was therefore broadened to consider how DFID was taking power and politics into account at different levels; what operational difference this made; and how to improve the approach, focusing on enabling or constraining factors.

This report begins with what it means to take politics into account, separating the 'what' (political objectives) from the 'how' (political methods) (section 2). It reviews how DFID has evolved over time, especially its changing internal environment (section 3). It then offers a range of examples of how politically-informed work can make a difference at the level of strategies, programmes, locally-led change, proactive risk management and cross-government coherence, noting lessons on the use of political economy analyses (section 4). It concludes with how DFID could improve its approach, making politically-informed work the default mode of operation and more clearly 'everyone's business' (section 5).

The review provides illustrations of how DFID is evolving, and some of the benefits and challenges. It does not systematically offer evidence of development impacts as this would have required a different methodology. The review is based on extensive internal and external consultations during June-December 2015 (Annex A), as well as a review of internal documents and external publications (Annex B).

Most of the findings are based on DFID offices case studies of Malawi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Pakistan over the period 2010-2015. The latter two are available separately (Annex C). Only DFID DRC was known in advance to be highly committed to politically-informed work. However the case studies were not fully comparable (with Pakistan focusing on education, health and sub-national governance and Malawi on a corruption scandal). As a result, additional examples identified during the consultations were also used to inform findings. A new [internal teamsite](#) was developed, including a [repository of Political Economy Analyses](#) commissioned by DFID since 2009 which provides a quantitative source of data.

2. What does it mean to take politics into account?

Politically-informed approaches are based on a large body of evidence that confirms the importance of institutions and politics for sustainable development (North et al 2009; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012; Andrews 2013; and others summarised in Evans and Ferguson 2013). External assistance needs to support locally-led change. Success depends on timing, context, political processes and local actors. Desirable outcomes are hard to achieve and difficult to predict.

The UK 2015 Aid Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review are committing DFID to spending 50% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in fragile states and invest in tackling the causes of instability, insecurity and conflict. This requires a “patient, long-term approach” to addressing barriers to peace and stability which are fundamentally political, rather than purely financial or technical.

Politically-informed approaches are meant to improve development effectiveness and results by influencing the ‘what’ and ‘how’; both the goals of development assistance and the methods used (Carothers and de Gramont 2013).

- **What/goals:** More appropriate objectives, aiming for sustainable change or tackling the most important political barriers to poverty reduction, peace or growth.
- **How/methods:** Greater realism and feasibility; improved tactics in terms of navigating stakeholders’ interests, resistance and opportunities; as well as greater coherence when efforts are based on shared analyses and approaches.

Political goals include measures to shift how power is distributed in the economy and society, such as through greater access to economic opportunities or services. They are not limited to strengthening the formal political system or enhancing public participation. They are not about taking sides in party politics. Two elements are particularly important:

- A focus on **long-term institutional ‘rules of the game’ transformation**, not only immediate service delivery benefits, in order to be more sustainable. This can range from influencing the ‘political settlement’ (for example at key moments in peace processes when power and alliances can shift) to more targeted changes to specific norms or rules that shape incentives (for example campaigns against female genital mutilation or early/forced marriage).
- A focus on supporting **locally-led change processes**: locally-owned (on issues with local salience) and locally-negotiated (with local leadership and capacity) (Booth and Unsworth 2014). These are more likely to succeed, recognising that external actors, such as the UK, can only play supportive or enabling roles (DFID 2012).

Politically-smart methods include:

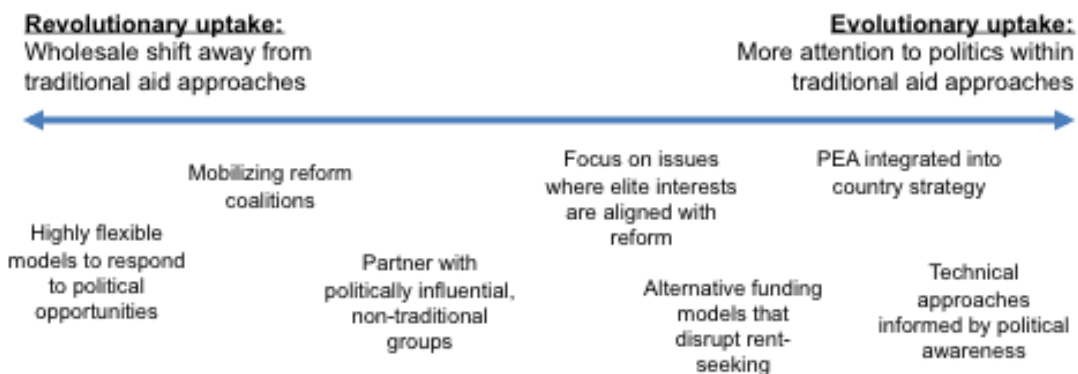
- **Understanding power and politics** of a given country/policy agenda.
- **Influencing and stakeholder** management skills.
- **Proactive risk management.**

Taking politics into account involves ‘applied’ political economy analysis, whether formal set-piece studies or more routine analysis. This includes:

- **An explicit understanding of the context.** There are various frameworks and tools available (DFID 2009), but they should cover some key elements (in particular longer term structural factors, institutions, incentives and individual interests). Political economy highlights the interplay between the economy and society, whereas political analysis may not focus as much on economic factors.
- **Policy/programme decisions take into account this context analysis,** local opportunities and long-term objectives. This can be applied to all aspects of DFID’s work, from analysis to inform high level strategic choices, to day-to-day implementation. They are relevant for both international policy and country support.
- **Updated analyses and decisions/approaches as the context evolves** and lessons are learned about what works. Instead of assuming that the context in which DFID operates can be understood on a one-off basis and will remain stable, the approach is dynamic. It recognises that the distribution of power evolves and that politics shift, creating new opportunities or barriers that DFID needs to take into account. These are the principles behind the ‘flexible and adaptive’ agenda.
- The understanding of power and politics includes not just a partner country or international policy agenda, but also the **UK’s domestic politics and organisational issues within DFID.** While this is a core UK ‘civil service skill’, this element had tended to be under-played in earlier approaches which focus on the politics associated with the national or international development challenge.

Politically-informed approaches range on a spectrum from traditional programmes to highly flexible and responsive interventions: from ‘evolutionary’ uptake, where there is gradually greater attention to politics within traditional interventions, to a more ‘radically different’ uptake with the aim of transforming aid, such as highly flexible and adaptive approaches or supporting coalitions (box 1).

Box 1: Thinking and Working Politically uptake spectrum



Source: Parks (2014)

3. How has DFID evolved?

This section reviews the evolution of DFID's politically-informed approaches, looking back at its long track record; initial challenges associated with DFID's scale up to 0.7% of Gross National Income on ODA; and a recently more enabling internal environment.

Looking back: a long track record

DFID has a long history of taking institutions and politics into account:

- In the 1990s, the focus was on **organisational change and institutional development expertise** rather than explicitly power and politics.
- Following the end of the Cold War, the UK developed a 'Good Government' agenda. The 1997 World Development Report brought the state back in.
- In the late 1990s, this expanded beyond state capacity to become 'Good Governance'. DFID started to develop frameworks to assess governance capacity more systematically to inform aid strategies.
- The 2000/2001 Human Rights and Governance Target Strategy Papers explicitly recognised that “**development was a political process**”. DFID began recruiting more political scientists as governance advisers and invested in new large-scale governance research programmes.
- The 2002 **Drivers of Change** (DoC) methodology and Strategic Conflict Assessments gave DFID country offices tools to systematically assess their contexts. There was wide uptake and they provided useful overviews. However, DoC studies were not always sufficiently operational (Thornton and Cox 2005).
- The 2005 **International Development White Paper focused on governance**, and called for more systematic quality of governance assessments.
- By 2007, **Country Governance Analyses** had become mandatory for all DFID country plans, providing a broad assessment of capacity, accountability and responsiveness to inform DFID strategic choices.
- The 2009 International Development White Paper committed DFID to greater use of **political economy analysis** (PEA) and to **state-building and peace-building objectives in fragile states**. A How to Note aimed to make PEA more operationally relevant, focusing on specific sectors or problems (DFID 2009).

Challenges associated with DFID scale up

The enabling environment initially became more difficult as DFID adjusted objectives and systems to implement its financial scale up. This was confirmed through both internal and external interviews, the case studies and external reviews.

In terms of DFID's overall policy objectives and strategy:

- The **2010 Bilateral Aid Review** (BAR) encouraged country offices to offer more measurable, short term, service delivery results. For example the focus was on the number of persons benefiting from improved health services, rather than paying attention to how health results would be achieved and the institutional changes needed to improve health systems. Some offices, such as DFID Burma, innovated in order to also keep track of longer term institutional objectives, but in the main these were not integrated at the level of overall results or became limited to governance and security pillar objectives.

- **Country Governance Analyses** were no longer compulsory. This meant that there was no incentive for a refreshed, cross-office understanding of the context to inform BAR strategic choices. The Bilateral and Multilateral Aid Reviews' timeframes did not allow enough time to analyse the context and quantitative targets discouraged cross-sector collaboration (ICAI 2015b). Only a few offices updated their Drivers of Change studies (e.g. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2011) or their Country Governance Analyses (e.g. India in 2011).
- The **State-Building and Peace-Building** framework (DFID 2010) rarely shaped the new country strategies or DFID decision-making despite the significant scale up in fragile states. Internal and external reviews show that BAR results offers and operational plans might refer to the framework, for example under their governance and security pillar, but it was rarely the dominant approach (ICAI 2015a; Wielders 2015).

In terms of programming and wider systems:

- **Value for Money** became an increased focus to ensure greater accountability to the UK public of the growing development budget as the UK moved towards allocating 0.7% of Gross National Income to ODA. The 2015 Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) impact review notes how Value for Money FM was mostly interpreted in a quantitative manner, without considering long term change. This encouraged a move away from "harder to measure" results, such as changes in institutional quality (ICAI 2015b).
- The new **Business Case** format initially no longer made context and other analyses compulsory for programmes, removing the requirement of detailed annexes which had accompanied the Programme Memorandum format (e.g. governance / institutional / political analysis) The lengthy and complex processes required to prepare Business Cases and scale up DFID funding made the organisation more inward-looking. Designs were not always participative nor sufficiently realistic about what changes could be achieved over the longer term (ICAI 2015b).
- The **large recruitment** to assist the scale up meant that new staff did not necessarily have the experience nor training in context analysis and institutional development which had been gained across the organisation since the early 2000s through the use of DoC (Heads of Profession consultation).

Current context: a much more favourable enabling environment

Overtime, the enabling environment for DFID became more favourable with a renewed senior interest in tackling political barriers; use of external evidence; and adjustment to DFID systems following the lessons from the scale up.

- The Prime Minister's interest in tackling in the **underlying causes of poverty** and not just its symptoms (as expressed in the Golden Thread metaphor and shaping his approach to the post 2015 sustainable development goals negotiations and UK G8 Presidency) encouraged an explicit focus on political and institutional barriers to change.
- Several **external sources of evidence also became more influential within DFID** (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012; Carothers and de Gramont 2013; Andrews 2013), including the findings of several large DFID-funded research programmes (Unsworth 2010; Putzel and Di John 2012; Booth 2012). They demonstrated the importance of understanding how change actually happens in iterative, unpredictable ways with no standard institutional model.

- The **Country Poverty Reduction Diagnostic (CPRD)**, developed by the Chief Economist's Office in collaboration with Policy Division, responded to this policy opening and DFID operational shifts. It explicitly examines how countries can establish their own mechanisms for “timely, self-financed and secure (low risk) exit from poverty” by taking into account the interplay of economic, political and social institutions. Interviewees noted how CPRDs had helped DFID “tell the bigger story” beyond individual programmes, and picked up the DoC function.
- **CPRDs were mandatory** for the 2013 Resource Allocation Round and were updated for the 2015 BAR and resource allocation. Even if, as some of the case studies show, CPRDs at times were undertaken quickly, were limited to a slide pack rather than a written report or did not challenge existing strategies, they reintroduced multi-disciplinary context analyses as a systematic input into DFID strategy and resource allocation.
- The 2014 **Inclusive Growth Diagnostics** developed to shape the scale up in economic development also require an explicit analysis of the political barriers to growth. They have helped DFID get a better understanding of the capture of the economy by political and economic elites.
- The **End to End Review** of DFID's programme management led to the introduction of the [DFID Smart Rules](#), which have started to reintroduce greater flexibility. Principles 5 and 6 in particular are explicit about the importance of taking context into account (see box 2). Better Delivery Department is championing flexible approaches and improving programme management tools.
- Incentives for **cross-government analysis and strategy** increased during the period, with the establishment in 2010 of the National Security Council, Building Stability Overseas Strategy, and Joint Assessment of Conflict and Stability (JACS), and more recently in 2015 a new UK Aid Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Box 2: DFID Smart Rules: embedding politically-based approach in programme delivery

Principle 4: Ambitious: We are ready to propose difficult, transformational programmes in high-risk environments and discuss the risks with ministers and colleagues.

Principle 5: Context-specific: We strive to understand the local political, economic and operational environment within which we work. We listen to the views and experiences of citizens and beneficiaries and ensure that our programmes and aid instruments suit and influence the political context.

Principle 6: Evidence-based: We learn from evidence, share lessons and change course as the context – or our understanding of the context – changes. We make an open and genuine commitment to identify mistakes, learn from them and share lessons.

In summary, DFID has a long track record of taking into account power and politics, developing analytical tools to inform strategies, policies and programmes. The changes to DFID systems introduced to accompany its scale up, with a focus on results and accountability, also made politically-informed approaches more challenging. However, teams continued to innovate during this period and the organisation responded by adjusting its systems, creating a more enabling environment. The next section reviews what was achieved over the last five years.

4. What differences are politically-informed approaches making?

This section examines whether and how DFID objectives, programmes and partnerships have changed as a result of taking power and politics explicitly into account. It is principally based on country examples provided from the case studies, interviews and examples shared with the review team. It looks at the influence on policy and country strategies (4.1); programming (4.2); local ownership (4.3); risk management (4.4); and cross-government coherence (4.5). It concludes with lessons on political economy analyses, the tool most associated with politically-informed work (4.6).

As seen in section 2, improvements in all these dimensions (with more appropriate political objectives and/or better use of politically-smart methods) are meant to contribute to more sustainable development impacts. This review assesses the influence of the approach on DFID choices but it cannot definitely trace the effects on development results as too many additional factors come into play and a different review methodology would have been required.

4.1 Shaping overall strategies

Some of DFID's international policy initiatives or frameworks clearly take politics into account. For example, DFID approached the negotiations that eventually led to the post 2015 Global Goals in a politically-aware manner – both in terms of process and content. DFID is also working differently on tax at the international level, for example through the G8 and G20, shaping the incentives of elites and multinationals to address tax evasion and avoidance (see box 3).

Box 3: Working politically at the international level

Post 2015 global goals negotiation process: The UK government realised before many others the importance of shaping the international policy framework that would replace the Millennium Development Goals.

- The British Prime Minister was involved right at the start of the process by co-chairing the UN High Level Panel. This gave the UK the opportunity to influence the terms of the debate.
- Early thinking involved not just the evidence about what mattered for poverty reduction and sustainable development, but managing the politics of identifying and agreeing new global priorities. This included considering a wide range of stakeholders interests in pushing for different priorities, getting behind coalitions that would make the case to alternative constituencies, and funding participative processes to get a range of voices heard.
- DFID did not work alone, but worked through a Cabinet Office process. Not only did this increase the capacity for negotiations through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) networks, but it brought on board other government departments in a universal framework that would also apply to the UK.
- In terms of the content, the UK insisted on the importance of institutions and other enabling factors, which are captured across the Global Goals, and not just in Goal 16 on peace, justice and institutions.

Changing international incentives on tax: DFID was able to push the boundaries on the tax agenda by making the most of an opening in political space, as the G20 finance track started to consider tax avoidance and evasion which was relevant for developing countries and as part of the UK G8 Presidency in 2013.

- Exposing individuals who are not paying tax, especially elites who are not declaring their assets. DFID is helping developing countries improve their tax laws and administrations so they can share information about tax payers across borders and thus tackle tax evasion.

- Making it harder for multinational enterprises to avoid paying tax where their economic activity occurs rather than in a low-tax jurisdiction. This is about making multinationals more accountable to the developing countries where they generate revenues, including through a OECD Base Erosion and Profit Shifting Programme.

However, the review could not find evidence that a politically-informed approach was systematically influencing DFID policy. The significant push on understanding the political dimensions of economic development, championed at a senior level by the Chief Economist and heads of departments, and supported by a Governance for Economic Development workstream with dedicated advisers (see box 4) does not seem replicated in other central policy areas. For example, while health programmes are more likely to consider health systems, they may not consider the wider political context or cross-government influence on health systems. This is not yet a systematic approach in education, and DFID's Research and Evidence Division is now investing in education systems research. DFID has not made significant headway on addressing political barriers associated with climate change, which is often considered a technical agenda (GOSAC 2015).

Box 4: Improving sector analysis: the example of Inclusive Growth Diagnostics (IGDs)

The Inclusive Growth Diagnostic tool explicitly requires an analysis of political economy barriers and opportunities. This was a significant innovation as DFID decided how to scale up its investment on economic development, with an ambitious spending target of £1.8bn for 2015/16, rising from 18% to 28% of the bilateral programme.

A synthesis of the first stage of the IGDs found that nearly all diagnostics highlighted the capture of the economy by economic and political elites. For example, large firms with opaque links to government could use regulation to stifle competition or non trade barriers to block imports. In fragile countries, very weak state capacity, authority and legitimacy as well as violence were barriers to transformational growth. However, the synthesis also shows that DFID is still learning to undertake such analysis, for example, how to understand a country's economic elites and their relationship to the state, or how to identify politically feasible interventions. DFID teams have not had to systematically examine political barriers and entry points in the past. They will need further support, including to translate this into action through strategies and programmes which directly address political constraints and opportunities.

Some DFID country strategies evolved over the last five years to take power and politics more into account, especially after realising the limitations of a focus on short term results or over-optimistic assessments. The DRC case study shows how the country strategy moved away from a dominant focus on service delivery results (consistent with the 2010 BAR process) as it examined the deeply entrenched barriers to poverty reduction and growth. The Burma office shifted its portfolio as the context moved from authoritarian rule towards democratisation.

A few offices, such as DRC or Nigeria, are particularly committed to thinking and working politically. They can provide good lessons and innovation for other offices. Changes have been driven by individuals, such as Heads of Offices or advisers committed to this agenda, making the most of DFID systems and the autonomy of country offices. In fragile contexts, the main operational driver was not the State-Building Peace-Building policy (ICAI 2015a).

Box 5: Country strategies evolving as political barriers become clear

DFID has adopted a more explicit politically-informed strategy in DRC. The 2010 Bilateral Aid Review offer and 2011 Country Operational Plan focused the portfolio on humanitarian and service delivery, deemed better able to deliver stronger results at the local level. In 2012, the strategy was refreshed to focus on a 'social contract' between citizens and the state, with a commitment to tackling the root causes of fragility and poverty and gaining a better understanding of political economy constraints. The reasons for this change in approach included Secretary of State concerns over DRC government commitment to reform and a new Head of Office with a track record of taking politics into account.

The DFID Burma office shifted its portfolio as the context moved from authoritarian rule towards democratisation. The military had unusually been a key driver of the reform process. The portfolio shift was from humanitarian and basic services interventions working outside government to long-term transformational objectives more aligned with the government. A balanced portfolio has been retained because of the uncertainty of the political transition and need for flexibility.

DFID's new diagnostic tools have been particularly important innovations which influence country, regional or international strategies. Since 2010 there have been at least 117 strategic studies, including 32 CPRDs (some later refreshed), 30 IGDs, 20 JACS and 35 regional, national, or sub-national PEAs. The stocktake identified changes in the content of country strategies resulting from these strategic processes. When inclusive, they have generally been beneficial: they provide a common language, raise new questions and can bring teams around a new, shared vision. Good analyses can become reference documents for the office (see box 6).

Box 6: How some CPRDs are influencing country strategies

In DFID Bangladesh, the 2015 CPRD and IGD processes have helped the office step back, ask new questions, and identify the 'other story'. A shared understanding of the politics and a historical perspective on Bangladesh's development has enabled a clearer realisation that non-government service delivery is likely to remain an integral part of service provision. The office is now reviewing its portfolio for the next Business Plan against a longer term institutional change story.

In DFID Malawi, the 2015 CPRD and IGD have drawn on existing analyses and helped the office become more explicit about the impact of political patronage. The office recognised that a high level of state-channelled aid had not worked well enough to encourage responsible administration, build robust system or encourage effective macro-economic management.

In DFID Ghana, an office wide and management team discussion around the 2013 CPRD process made the office realise it needed to be more realistic about risks. The office felt it had over-estimated its influence. The process led to moving away from budget support and large sector programmes.

In DFID DRC, the 2013 CPRD process does not seem to have had a major influence on the office. The process was not very participative and the country strategy had recently been updated. However, the 2015 process was more inclusive and generated a shared narrative. A longer document brought together all existing political economy and other relevant analyses. The BAR offer was directly influenced by the refreshed CPRD which confirmed the importance of governance constraints to progress in DRC – cutting across the portfolio.

Better analysis does not appear to be always leading teams to propose different interventions, especially when working on political objectives, such as influencing the distribution of power in society. The 2014 CPRD hub lessons noted that "we struggle to propose concrete, country adapted ideas for influencing the political settlement" which was seen as the most frequent barrier to poverty reduction and growth (CPRD 2014a). It is also not clear "if DFID country offices are actually working on the political settlement, or if they are doing the same sorts of

programming as before (e.g. elections, constitutional reform, accountability etc.) but calling it working on the political settlement” (Herbert and Marquette 2015). This finding is not surprising. First, the concept of political settlement has become a bit of a ‘black box’ with different interpretations (from elite deals to wider distribution of power in society). Second, the evidence points to the very limited external influence on domestic change processes, especially deep structural factors that shape how power is distributed and used.

Ongoing learning and innovation is required, to identify context-specific responses once analysis has been completed. This may require pushing the boundaries of what ‘radically different’ approaches might look like rather than a new list of recommended sectors. The Building Stability policy process and other central policy initiatives are good opportunities to push the boundaries of DFID thinking on power and politics. They will help to deliver the Aid Strategy and Strategic Security and Defence Review.

In summary, some of DFID’s international policy initiatives or frameworks clearly take politics into account. Some DFID country strategies evolved over the last five years, especially after realising the limitations of a focus on short term results or over-optimistic assessments. DFID’s new diagnostic tools, such as CPRDs and IGDs, have been particularly important innovations which influence country, regional or international strategies around a common understanding of political barriers. However, the review could not find evidence that a politically-informed approach was systematically influencing DFID policy or country strategies. Better analysis does not seem to be always leading teams to propose different interventions, especially when working on political objectives, such as influencing the distribution of power in society.

4.2 Influencing programmes

Influencing whether and how to engage

Sector-level political economy analyses or similar assessments have been used to inform decisions on whether or not, and how, to engage in a sector such as DFID Zimbabwe’s approach to artisanal mining (see box 7).

Box 7: Going for the formalisation of artisanal mining in Zimbabwe

There are approximately 500,000 artisanal and small scale miners in Zimbabwe, including 150,000 women and children. Health, safety and illegality concerns impact negatively on the miners themselves, local communities, the mining sector and the economy as a whole, as gold is smuggled out and tax revenue is lost.

DFID Zimbabwe adopted a phased approach to engage in the sector. It first commissioned a scoping study on the feasibility of supporting the sector. A political economy analysis helped understand key actors; economic and political interests around gold mining and trade; and identified opportunities for formalisation and policy reforms.

The scoping concluded there were enough opportunities to warrant investment and informed the two objectives for a pilot phase: formalising artisanal and small-scale gold mining, and integrating it within the gold and mining sector. The scoping study also helped decide where to focus the pilot (e.g. avoiding mining areas that were the most politicised) and with whom to engage (e.g. selecting non-partisan project partners).

Designs that ignore political risks or overestimate political commitments result in failures. This is the clear lesson from the contrast between two regional trade programmes in Africa (see box 8). Conversely, political and institutional analysis can also lead to a decision to reduce or end engagement. For example, in Rwanda, DFID ended its support to media, parliament and elections via a UNDP programme. It assessed that the underlying political dynamics would prevent such an approach to democratic institutions from succeeding.

Box 8: The perils of ignoring the politics of trade integration

The promotion of economic and trade integration in Africa must take into account the political economy of trade. In many cases, senior political and business leaders benefit from trade restrictions, such as non-tariff barriers, uncompetitive transport and logistics markets, and complex rules of origin. These powerful figures oppose improvements to trading systems that would benefit a great many people by reducing the price of goods.

TradeMark Southern Africa (TMSA) and TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) adopted different approaches to the politics of economic integration in Africa. While TMSA was closed early, TMEA is on track to meet its ambitious targets.

TMSA's Project Completion Report noted that it had "overestimated the political commitment of national governments to implement regional commitments" which was "the principal cause of its delivery failures". A much stronger political economy approach was needed during project design, to understand the drivers and blockages of regional integration. TMSA's management of the political risk of integration was also inadequate. The programme was criticised for being unable to act flexibly and take advantage of opportunities as they arose. It worked only through regional structures, which themselves have limited ability to effect change and overcome vested interests.

By contrast, TMEA adopted a flexible delivery approach to engage with a wide variety of stakeholders, including the regional authority, national governments, business membership and civil society organisations. TMEA's speed and flexibility have greatly contributed to its success. A strong national level presence throughout all countries in the economic community also helped to establish local networks and allows continuous monitoring of local political economy issues. A study helped identify opportunities during design (Booth et al 2007).

Political economy criteria have also been used to inform the targeting of geographical areas or levels of government administration or how to work with local officials and power holders in a selected geographical region. In very large countries, DFID often works in a number of priority states/provinces rather than nation-wide. The selection methodology can include a stakeholders assessment (e.g. reform-mindedness and willingness to collaborate with the UK), as well as the importance of balancing UK assistance across different ethnic or religious parts of the same country. Similarly, across all countries DFID teams need to decide on the balance of support between national/federal, provinces/states and/or local levels. Teams use institutional assessment of both formal roles (e.g. is service delivery a national or local responsibility) as well as informal interests (e.g. who actually holds power – the national government or a local 'big man'). DFID Nigeria has one of the longer track records of adopting a politically-informed approach including in its state-level work (see box 9).

Box 9: From analysis to state-level politically smart programmes in Nigeria

The [2003 Drivers of Change study in Nigeria](#) was a game changer for DFID engagement. It challenged assumptions about how pro-poor change could be achieved and supported. Democracy had not delivered the progress towards pro-poor change that was initially anticipated due to structural constraints. As a result, DFID Nigeria decided to put more

emphasis on selected issues where political economy analysis pointed to more feasible reforms. The Coalitions for Change programme was a pioneer, supporting coalitions of actors with the potential to bring about change. However, it struggled to keep analysis up to date in the fast changing political economy of Nigeria, and was not always able to detect drivers in a timely manner. In addition, the analysis did not always suggest how to work differently in sectors and or in different states, and, because it was done by external experts, it did not sufficiently engage front line staff and partners to influence practice.

DFID Nigeria has therefore moved from analysis to politically-smart action. Capacity for PEA is now built into most DFID Nigeria programmes. PEA is commonly used to identify appropriate interventions – at federal or state level. This approach emphasises the role of DFID programmes as facilitators that unlock the potential of partners to do their own PEA and making it part of the ‘DNA’ of how they do business. The [State Accountability and Voice Initiative](#) (SAVI) and [State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability](#) (SPARC) are programmes that facilitate locally-led, state drivers of change. They target specific sector and delivery issues to ensure interventions are locally grounded and suitable for the messy and unplanned nature of change. The [Facility for Oil Sector Transparency and Reform](#) (FOSTER) has led the way at federal level, seeking out and supporting pockets of effectiveness to improve the use of oil revenues.

DFID Nigeria has a portfolio of programmes that work together effectively and tackle different aspects of the political and institutional environment. This has delivered significant achievements, such as restricting government funds being lost, directing them back to service delivery. Nigerian states have improved revenue management, reduced ghost workers and improved management of finances. This has helped release an additional £149m to service delivery since 2009, helping to enrol additional 1.5m children in schools and ensure an additional 273,000 children receive their basic vaccinations.

Influencing political methods and political objectives

Some politically-informed sector programmes have adopted not only political methods (identifying political barriers and opportunities) but also political objectives (to influence how power is exercised) even if they were not labelled as such. The examples identified in this stocktake range from a risk management approach of mitigating political risks (political method) to directly tackling the politics of a sector in order to see better results (political goal). In Pakistan, DFID’s £640m education investment covers different aspects of this spectrum (see box 10).

Box 10: Scaling up education in Pakistan: influencing incentives and managing risks

In Pakistan, DFID scaled up its education portfolio over a five year period from 2007 through a strategic series of programmes, starting with five years of research and analysis and a high level Pakistani-UK co-chaired ‘Education Taskforce’ which declared an ‘education emergency’. Four provincial level programmes work with and through government systems to address province-specific challenges. The Transforming Education Programme was launched to address specific bottlenecks to change incentives identified through research, including on political will, insufficient public information, role of civil society, availability of data and evidence for innovation. Two challenge funds support empowerment and accountability, and innovation.

The portfolio thus includes a programme directly aiming to influence the perception of interests of key actors. The Transforming Education Programme is a nation-wide social and political campaign targeted at politicians and parents to create demand and political will for quality education. It directly addresses potential opposition, for example from teachers unions to make them participate in the campaign. It aims to create the enabling conditions for education reform, on which the sector budget support provincial programmes can build.

In terms of risk management, in order to gain government trust, the programmes use government data. Certain curriculum topics are ‘no go’ areas as they are too sensitive, such

as history or religion. The individual leading the media campaign is trusted by politicians and well connected to the non-governmental organisations sector as well.

When technical approaches face difficulties, some programmes have evolved to take into account political and institutional factors. The case studies of Malawi, DRC and Pakistan all show how improving health and education service delivery required teams to address institutional and political factors, such as creating demand for services or more sustainable payment of salaries of health workers. What appeared to be technical issues turned out to be political and required tackling vested interests (see box 11).

Box 11: From expecting to assisting change in DRC health sector

DFID DRC's primary healthcare programme is a good example of a shift from a delivery approach, paying top-ups to health staff and using implementers to deliver medicines to health centres, towards longer term sustainability based on a programme jointly developed with government rather than by-passing it. The Business Case had initially assumed that government would pick up the salaries no longer paid by donors but this assumption did not hold. The programme started to assist, rather than expect, this transition, investing in human resources and financial management reforms needed to make it happen, and there is now greater recognition this is a government responsibility. The programme takes into account the individual incentives faced by health workers which lead them to charge informal fees and is helping to increase their income legitimately through greater utilisation of health services and user fees. It is also working at an institutional level, unifying the system to pay public servants across the Ministries of Health, Finance and Public Service by joining up sector and government-wide reforms.

In summary, politically-smart approaches have made a difference in how DFID designs and manages programmes which has contributed to concrete results, such as progress towards trade integration in East Africa; improving public sector management in Nigerian states, redirecting resources to service delivery; or influencing education reform in Pakistan. Analyses have been used to inform decisions on whether or not, and how, to engage in a sector or geographical area. Designs that ignore political risks or overestimate political commitments can result in failures. Political and institutional analysis can also lead to a decision to reduce or end engagement. Some politically-informed sector programmes have adopted not only political methods (identifying political barriers and opportunities) but also political objectives (to influence how power is exercised), even if they are not labelled as such. When technical approaches face difficulties, some programmes have evolved to take into account political and institutional factors.

4.3 Supporting locally-led change

The standard way of supporting locally-led change is for DFID to partner with stakeholders championing reforms DFID also wants to support. This ensures that issues are locally-owned (they have local salience) and locally-negotiated (with local leadership and capacity being given priority in the search for solutions) (Booth and Unsworth 2014). However, a politically-informed approach encourages DFID teams to consult with a wider range of stakeholders. An assessment of interests and incentives can lead DFID teams or implementers to not necessarily work with the obvious counterparts but instead opt for other, less obvious ones (see box 12).

Box 12: Identifying reform champions – moving beyond the usual suspects

DFID Pakistan has been able to collaborate with the Chief Minister of Punjab who is personally committed to improved healthcare, leading to impressive results (such as more births at basic health units and more available medicine). However, areas in which he has less personal interest, such as long term systemic reforms, have received less attention and progress has been slower. This shows the risks of over-reliance on one change champion, and the need to broaden partnerships.

In **Nepal**, the DFID-funded Centre for Inclusive Growth focused on Nepal's huge untapped hydropower potential. It helped build up the newly created Investment Board of Nepal to broker and negotiate hydro deals. In Nepal's fractious political environment, the Board was politically well connected but also operated at arms-length to promote local ownership and agency. Chaired by the Prime Minister and with a number of Ministers as members, it is run by a high profile private sector professional who could rely on high quality Nepali staff funded by DFID. This enabled the Board to be insulated from excessive political interference and yet have the credibility and networks to negotiate key deals.

DFID Burma prepared for a likely political transition to an elected non-military government in 2015 by inviting back a former senior governance adviser who could provide a longer term perspective on change in the country. He advised the office to think not only of the 'what' but also the 'how' to operate during the transition, including:

- managing the short term hiatus after the election and the expectations of rapid change and progress
- understanding that national ownership does not mean uncritical support of the government, so to be ready to communicate difficult messages
- talking to a diverse group of Burmese people either directly or through DFID programmes or intermediaries, including local government officials, politicians or religious leaders or those monitoring labour rights such as the International Labour Organization

A politically-informed approach is not only about finding champions but working with them as their interest waxes and wanes and managing opposition. A number of case studies provide examples of changing approaches when partners' interests evolve (see box 13). Assessing local demand is an ongoing challenge, and it is too easy to assume government request equals local ownership. Locally-led approaches need to recognise the diverse interests of local partners, and work in different ways with both reformers and resisters to achieve change.

Box 13: Adjusting to changing stakeholders incentives

The **Transforming Education in Pakistan** programme has made the most of timing and influence on politicians' incentives. It was first launched ahead of national elections, and campaigned to make education an electoral issue, for example presenting children as candidates to 'vote for the children of Pakistan'. Having different parties in power in every province following the elections has resulted in a healthy competition between provinces to do better than each other on education (as well as other sectors).

By contrast, in **Eastern DRC**, as commitment to the peace process waned, DFID has reduced its level of ambition and cut the budget of its £80m programme as they were fewer opportunities to fund 'peace dividend' activities. Instead, it invested more at a political level and in building relationships with Congolese decision-makers and local influential actors.

The **Government of Malawi** asked the UK to commission a forensic audit to uncover the scope of fraud in the 2013 'Cashgate' corruption scandal. However, such a request did not mean that all government leaders and officials supported the audit; instead many had a great deal to lose from the detailed investigations. The UK had to develop a political strategy to manage the audit process, with DFID working closely with the High Commissioner, rather than treating it as a technical issue.

Some DFID programmes are more ‘radically different’ and have adopted highly flexible and adaptive approaches with the explicit aim of supporting local coalitions. They are a break from traditional programmes which work mostly on pre-determined issues with counterparts in government or in the private sector, and often separately on the ‘demand-side’ with civil society. These interventions have a political objective of supporting change processes, combined with politically-smart methods of coalition-building, facilitating local actors’ contestation and negotiation. In some difficult political contexts, or to tackle entrenched barriers, these approaches are considered better able to succeed than programmes that work just with one set of stakeholders, or pre-determined issues (Booth and Unsworth 2014). The better known DFID programmes include the Enabling State Programme in Nepal; a suite of programmes in Nigeria (see box 9); as well as award-winning Pyoe Pin in Burma. The latter’s coalition-building process in Rakhine State has supported peace-building, and fairer access to resources (see box 14).

Box 14: Pyoe Pin: coalitions delivering results in Burma

This [award-winning programme](#), funded by DFID, Sida and DANIDA and managed by the British Council, strengthens coalitions of civil society, private sector and others in Burma to influence social and political change and alleviate conflict. It embeds rigorous research and ongoing PEA throughout implementation in order to adapt to shifts in relationships and changes in the reform context.

In Rakhine State, Pyoe Pin’s research indicated that new regulations could help protect depleted fish stocks, improve livelihoods, bring communities together, and strengthen state-citizen relations. The programme facilitated the development of a Fisheries Law by bringing fisher communities, businesses, civil society, lawyers and government to work together for the first time. The Rakhine Fisheries Partnership guided the law drafting process which Pyoe Pin assisted by setting up workshops, research studies, conflict analyses and exposure visits. Both Buddhist Rakhine and Muslim communities were consulted on the draft law. This resulted in a dedicated community fisheries section in the law and provisions on conflict mitigation, working conditions and equitable access to livelihoods for women. In October 2014, the Rakhine State Parliament passed the new Freshwater Fisheries Law which has already improved the livelihoods of both communities.

The extent to which DFID strategies and programmes are locally-led did not clearly come across in the case studies. This is something which is difficult to assess without field work. ICAI has recommended that DFID “move from simple forms of consultation to more meaningful collaboration with intended beneficiaries” (ICAI, 2015b). One indicator is the degree to which political economy analyses (or similar joint assessment tools) are mostly used by DFID to learn about a country or its stakeholders, rather than as a shared tool to identify opportunities for change or reflect on DFID’s own role and influence (see box 15). A more “reflexive” approach to PEA would go beyond collecting information about partners to include self-assessment by the donor agency itself and creates “opportunities to lose as well as build trust, alliances, repeat business and influence” (Copestake and William 2012).

Box 15: Involving local partners to examine and overcome political constraints

Politically-informed approaches often start with analyses that can be considered so sensitive that they are kept internally and not shared. (On occasions, even DFID as a funder was not able to get access to studies it had funded through the World Bank Governance Partnership Facility). However, this undermines another objective of politically-smart approaches: to support locally-led change. Fisher and Marquette (2013) criticised PEAs for not sufficiently involving partner governments and risking to undermine local ownership. The risk is that donors decide in advance which sectors to work on, or which ‘low-hanging fruits’ to gather, rather than as a joint process towards locally-led change.

A number of programme implementers are now undertaking PEAs as part of better programme management, but this does not mean local capacity to identify opportunities and manage change processes is being strengthened. By contrast, DFID DRC is commissioning a PEA of the health sector together with government counterparts, in order to develop a joint approach. In Nepal, DFID funded the Investment Board's internal capacity for political economy analysis to inform a domestic influencing strategy. This analysis helped lay the ground work necessary to reach agreement on new deals. Overall, DFID support helped deliver two project development agreements in what should be around US\$2.3 bn of long term foreign direct investments in Nepal (by contrast, 2013 foreign investment stock was US\$514 bn).

The case studies show there are a number of dilemmas and areas for improvement for DFID to shift gear in how it gets behind locally-led change:

- **Finding the right balance between locally-led change and UK accountability is not always easy.** In order to make sure their initiatives were country-led, and not seen as UK-driven, some country teams were careful to keep a low profile. For example, many partners of the Nigeria oil transparency programme did not know it was funded by DFID. In Pakistan, the public campaign to change attitudes to education is not branded as UK Aid, though politicians are aware it is UK-funded. A low profile, however, can raise some ethical issues, to ensure the public in partner countries are (i) not misinformed about where funding for domestic campaigns come from, and (ii) coalitions for change that DFID supports are transparent and held to account (e.g. not just invest in the work of their own networks).
- **DFID aid instruments do not always support longer term, locally-led change.** The move towards contracting out to deliver DFID's growing budget has not always been well received by national partners. DFID-managed programmes were locally rooted and seen to build local capacity and give real opportunities for national staff. Contracting-out can also make it more difficult for DFID to manage sensitive political relationships, especially when DFID is not properly staffed or the division of labour between DFID and programme implementers is not clear. Implementers consulted for this review commented that output-based payments can create incentives for short term results to meet DFID expectations rather than institutional changes. Some other aid modalities, such as financial deepening trust funds, can have longer term benefits.
- **The consultation showed it could be difficult for offices to invest the time and effort to broaden DFID's relationships.** Yet, operating politically requires developing a good set of external partners, who can provide different perspectives, and also skills to nurture these relationships. By contrast, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) colleagues see this as an essential part of their role and are highly valued by DFID teams for their different networks and influencing skills. It can also be hard to hand over relationships to other colleagues, as they can become personal rather than institutional, especially for sensitive issues such as corruption.

Box 16: Improving access to knowledge

In DRC, DFID has to overcome the sheer size of the country (the largest in sub-Saharan Africa), the lack of historical links, a language barrier and also limited trust with government. Setting up an office in Eastern DRC enabled DFID to have better knowledge and also

contacts. A dedicated evidence programme is providing political and context analysis ‘on demand’ and a panel of experts that can challenge or validate the DFID team’s approach.

- **Flexible and adaptive programmes are fully equivalent to politically-informed programmes.** DFID teams often equate flexible and adaptive programming with thinking and working politically. However the risk is that this takes the politics out. The case studies identified programmes that were not designed as highly flexible and which were nonetheless able to be politically-informed and have been able to adjust as the context changed (for example Pakistan education portfolio or Malawi and DRC health programmes). Programmes can also be flexible for other reasons, without responding to political constraints or opportunities.

In summary, a politically-informed approach helps DFID focus on partners’ incentives, adjusting as their interest waxes and wanes, including directly addressing the incentives of those that resist reform. At the more radically different end of the spectrum, some DFID programmes have adopted highly flexible approaches with the explicit aim of supporting coalitions. This has led to demonstrable results (e.g. Nigeria results; Rakhine State fisheries law; Nepal hydro-deals), or moving away from more unpromising approaches. However, the extent to which DFID strategies and programmes are locally-owned and country-led did not clearly come across in the case studies. There are a number of strategic and operational barriers, including: balancing UK interests and accountability to the UK public with locally-led objectives; staff time needed to manage and broaden DFID external relationships; and the risk that politically-informed work is too narrowly equated with flexible and adaptive programming.

4.4 Risk management and risk appetite

A politically-informed approach pushes DFID towards becoming more aware of political risks, especially in fragile states which are recognised to be higher-risk environments. Instead of assuming that nothing can be done about the political/institutional environment or partners’ commitment to reform, the approach helps explore these barriers and turn them into a proactive strategy. This can include a portfolio approach, balancing different levels of risk across programmes in a country office or within components of a programme. Higher risks objectives can be explicitly aimed at influencing, rather than avoiding, vested interests and unfair power structures.

Given the case study approach, the review could not draw overall conclusions on how DFID is managing political risks but it did find illustrative examples of good proactive risk management.

Box 17: Proactive portfolio and risk management in DRC and Pakistan

DFD DRC has adopted an explicit portfolio approach to risk, with two large programmes (on private sector development and peace process) designed as highly flexible, with a large share of the budget un-earmarked to enable them to adjust to changing opportunities.

The DFID DRC £100m private sector development programme was designed to be flexible, with three components assigned different levels of risk and flexibility. Its design identified the main delivery risks as: shifting political will for reform and reform blocking behaviour by those with vested interests in the current system. Mitigating measures include collaboration with government to maximise political buy-in for reform, such as experimenting with a local business environment expert co-located in the Prime Minister’s Office. Some of the

challenges of high flexibility include risk of budget cuts as activities are not fully programmed, spending too much time looking for activities, and becoming non-strategic.

Risk management does not require highly flexible programmes with un-earmarked funds from the start. **DFID Pakistan** was able to adjust various components of its Sub-National Governance programme, shutting down underperforming ones and reinvesting in better performing ones. This required good monitoring and time to understand why a component was not delivering. For example, a component focusing on experimentation did not take sufficiently into account government ownership; various initiatives were started but not taken up. By contrast, a relatively small-scale investment in a Geographical Information System improved planning systems and almost trebled one district's tax revenue over just one quarter. Finally, funds initially allocated for conditional grants to improve service delivery were re-directed once this component was shown to have expanded too fast and led to schools being built to poor standards and in earthquake prone areas. This was politically-sensitive, as the provincial government had prioritised the conditional grant programme. Effective working relationships and strong communication were required to agree to end funding.

Risk can also be managed through how DFID engages in policy influencing, communicating subtly instead of explicitly defending certain values and condemning behaviours. For example, in the sensitive area of Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender rights, DFID has been careful not to take a public position at a country level to avoid backlash against activists, though Ministers have been highly committed to this agenda. Similarly in Pakistan, the public campaign to raise public interest in investing in education shows political and cultural sensitivity. Messaging on girls education is not direct but instead refers to the Pakistani Constitution's guarantee to every child of a right to education.

The case studies and consultation revealed that DFID's fiduciary and reputational risk appetite had changed over the period, which has influenced aid modalities and sectors of intervention. This was often a consequence of UK domestic politics and managing DFID's reputation in the face of a growing aid budget at a time of domestic austerity, rather than demonstrating DFID was becoming savvier about political risks in the countries where it operates.

- **The risk appetite concerning corruption has changed since 2010 with lower tolerance for fiduciary risks combined with greater willingness to be upfront about corruption** (e.g. with mandatory anti-corruption strategies, regional anti-corruption advisers, cross-government unit). In Malawi, the discovery of massive government fraud contributed to ending DFID's previous commitment to general and sector budget support, which had previously been seen as an effective way of supporting sustainable local capacity. In Malawi and other countries, DFID was asked to help investigate grand-scale corruption scandals. These investigations have sometimes been narrowly focused on compliance issues, rather than understanding the wider political incentives around corruption. By contrast, a number of programmes no longer address corruption solely as a technical issue (e.g. strengthening anti-corruption commissions), and instead directly target the incentives of corrupt elites, for example using UK government resources to seize and return the assets they have stolen. DFID could further deepen these politically-informed approaches to corruption as the UK prepares to host a high level summit.
- **DFID has become more risk averse with regards to human rights.** Contributing factors included the greater scrutiny of aid following the 0.7% scale up and a judicial review around a DFID-supported programme in Ethiopia. DFID has in place systems to assess human rights as part of its 'partnership principles', with mandatory human rights assessments and cross-government Overseas

Security and Justice Assessments which focus on mitigating risks. The DRC case study illustrates how DFID's lower tolerance of human rights violations by partners, even when they happen outside the direct scope of its security and justice programmes, led to the closure of interventions. A number of security and justice programmes in other countries were also closed for similar reasons.

Box 18: Partnership principles: changing aid modalities or ending programmes

In 2013, **Malawi's** Budget Director was shot and seriously injured. There were allegations of corruption across senior levels of government, and within a month the Auditor General had asked for the UK's help in conducting a forensic audit. At least £24m of Government of Malawi funds had been stolen over 6 months, with £14m worth of transactions identified as suspicious. The 'Cashgate' scandal was mainly conducted by laundering government money through commercial organisations. In response, the UK suspended all financial aid to Government, and programme funds were redirected from sector budget support to other mechanisms. In total, \$150m of international aid, 40% of Malawi's budget, was suspended.

In late 2013, the **Congolese government** adopted a heavy-handed approach to tackling gang violence in Kinshasa, leading to extra-judicial killings. Following the release of a UN human rights report a year later, the Secretary of State decided to suspend DFID's security sector accountability and police reform programme even though it had been successful in improving community security. The partnership principles encouraged dialogue but the Congolese Government preferred to maintain its approach rather than address UK concerns. It demonstrated its limited commitment to human rights in its security operations, leading to an eventual programme closure.

In summary, a politically-informed approach pushes DFID to become more aware of political risks, especially in fragile states. Given the case study approach, the review could not draw overall conclusions on how DFID is managing political risks but it did find good examples of proactive risk management. DFID's fiduciary and reputational risk appetite has changed over the period (e.g. around corruption or human rights). This has influenced aid modalities and sectors of intervention. This was often a consequence of UK domestic politics and managing DFID's reputation rather than demonstrating DFID was becoming savvier about political risks.

4.5 Improving coherence through cross-government collaboration

Politically-informed approaches require closer cross-government collaboration. First, UK government departments have different sources of information and networks which improve DFID's analysis of the context and management of stakeholders. Second, this collaboration ensures a better understanding of the UK political context by DFID, avoiding being politically naïve. Negotiating objectives across UK government departments is part and parcel of managing UK politics and can deliver greater results through joining up different departmental priorities, expertise and resources, rather than ignoring them.

"The FCO was rather amused by my question about whether they had a political economy analysis, saying it's their day job" (DFID Sudan adviser).

The interviews and case studies in particular confirmed the value of drawing on FCO research and also other departments capacities in the UK as well as day-to-day collaboration at post, where other government department (OGD) colleagues have different personal networks. Interviews with OGDs confirmed that DFID's contribution was seen as complementary, with a focus on long term issues and the capacity for more in depth research relying on external experts, which was

valued. They also noted that DFID's tendency to produce long documents over extended time-frames needed to be complemented by an ability to work quickly, for example producing short notes for Ambassadors / cross-government processes in a timely manner.

New incentives towards closer cross-government collaboration have usually improved joint analysis of the context. This review only looked at country-level collaboration. The Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) is a tri-departmental (FCO, DFID, Ministry of Defence) strategic conflict assessment tool used to identify interventions to prevent conflict and build stability, introduced in the 2011 Building Stability Overseas Strategy. 20 studies have been completed since 2012. They include a political analysis element, through their review of structural causes and drivers of conflict as well as actors and dynamics.

JACS have been effective at raising the collective, common understanding of context across government and at building cross-government relationships and networks. They produce a cross-departmentally commissioned and agreed document, and can bring together different departmental analytical expertise (Arthy et al 2014).

The multiplicity of analytical frameworks across departments was not found to be a barrier. JACS were seen as a higher level, cross-government strategic framework, which could inform without replacing department-specific processes. On a number of occasions, DFID-specific tools were combined with JACS: in Sudan, the JACS process was combined with a Country Governance Analysis and in South Sudan the JACS was designed to input into DFID's Country Poverty Reduction Diagnostics (Arthy et al 2014).

Countries which are high on the National Security Council (NSC) agenda are more likely to benefit from cross-government political analysis. Interest in commissioning JACS processes at the country level has increased since the advent of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) in 2015. This appears to be due to the recognition that a good JACS can help deliver a stronger NSC strategy, such as in the Western Balkans, Somalia or Nigeria, as well as a much better evidenced CSSF bid such as in Pakistan.

However, in some high priority countries, there may be neither the time nor the appetite for significant cross-government analysis, as the situation changes too rapidly and staff are stretched across many responsibilities.

New incentives towards closer cross-government collaboration have also led to shared strategies and closer programme delivery activities. Some country offices, such as in DRC, have joint business plans with other government departments, especially the FCO, and staff collaborate on day-to-day delivery. JACS can lead to DFID programmes that retain a cross-government interest, with FCO and OGDs getting involved in programme design and monitoring. Elections or conflict-management programmes systematically pool DFID and FCO skills and financial resources but this can also be the case in other sectors, such as the education programme in the Pakistan case study.

When countries are lower down UK government priorities, they may only have DFID as their champion, and DFID needs to be realistic about what can be achieved. DFID may not be able to influence cross-government decisions but can focus on the quality of its programmes. For example, in Eastern DRC, despite a good JACS developed at post and led by DFID, it has been hard to mobilise sustained political responses to

the conflict, in a region without historical links to Britain and not considered central to UK domestic interests.

All the case studies confirmed the value of a close DFID-FCO management of external relationships especially for the most sensitive issues and high level political dialogue, working together with the Ambassador/High Commissioner.

Box 19: Whole of government approaches in Pakistan and DRC

The significantly scaled up DFID programme in **Pakistan** (an average of £350 million a year after the 2010 BAR) is part of cross-government effort which has seen:

- significant investments to gain Government of Pakistan buy-in and focus on poverty reduction
- alignment of UK cross-mission leadership to ensure joint objectives which recognise departmental comparative advantages
- use of analytical tools such as JACS to gain a shared understanding across the UK mission of Pakistan's current political and conflict context

The cross-government collaboration around **Eastern DRC** illustrates the benefits and challenges of the approach. FCO and DFID worked jointly during 2012 on a JACS in Eastern DRC. The resulting cross-government strategy influenced both DFID's updated country strategy and the design of a large peace and security programme which includes a political engagement strategy as well as activities in support of the peace process. FCO sits on the programme board and helps monitor government commitment. Beyond Eastern DRC, DFID and the Embassy have developed a joint Business Plan and staff work together on delivering priorities, regardless of whether they are FCO or DFID. However, as DRC is not a NSC priority country, it had been more difficult to sustain senior level UK engagement, especially as the peace process encountered difficulties.

The 2015 Aid Strategy and an increase in ODA managed by OGDs create an opportunity for DFID to deepen a cross-government politically-informed approach. DFID is well placed to encourage OGDs to adopt the broader approach reviewed in this stocktake, which includes a fuller understanding of longer term factors and how to support locally-led change, for example avoiding projects that simply reproduce UK models which may not be best suited for the context.

In summary, politically-informed approaches require cross-government collaboration, which can improve analysis, strategy, programming and external engagement. For example, DFID teams value FCO research and other departments' capacities in the UK as well as day-to-day collaboration at post, in particular working with the Ambassador/High Commissioner for high level political dialogues. JACS have raised the collective, common understanding of context across government and built cross-government relationships and networks. A good JACS can help deliver a stronger NSC strategy, as well as a much better evidenced CSSF bid. The 2015 Aid Strategy and increase in ODA managed by OGDs create an opportunity for DFID to deepen a cross-government politically-informed approach.

4.6 Political analysis: necessary but not sufficient

Politically-informed approaches are based on good analysis of institutions, interests and incentives to shape key decisions. The 2009 Political Economy Analysis How To Note recommended the use of 'problem-oriented', sector specific analysis in order to better inform programming, moving away from the Drivers of Change studies' broader country level analysis.

There seems to have been a good interest in this problem-oriented methodology across DFID. During 2009-2015, over 440 DFID staff have taken part in 20 political economy courses (including 2 online pilots and several country-level courses). Courses also involved other government departments, programme implementers and other donor agencies staff. Early course participants were often those who already had an interest in the approach, and wanted support to operationalise it. The Governance HoP plans to commission an evaluation to assess course influence over the full period.

This review process has identified nearly 150 PEAs commissioned by DFID teams or programme implementers since 2009. Over two-thirds (114) were sector-specific with the remainder mostly general national, sub-national or regional. While PEAs are not systematically done for every sector programme, this number is still significant and shows a move away from country-level generic analysis towards more specific operational insights. The comparable number for the World Bank is over 310 problem-driven, sector PEAs for the same period out of 341 PEAs (Fritz 2015). (A significant proportion of these PEAs were funded as part of a \$100m Governance Partnership Facility Trust Fund of which DFID was the lead donor).

In terms of sectors, governance-related PEAs dominate (44 identified, on topics such as security and justice, civil society and accountability, government systems including sub-national levels or tax and public financial management). A wide range of programmes that contribute to growth and economic development have undertaken PEAs (34 identified, including on extractives, land, agriculture, industry, trade and regional economic integration) with only 3 PEAs on climate change. Social sector PEAs constitute the final category, at a roughly similar level (32, mostly health and education, including at state/province levels, but also social protection, nutrition and water and sanitation).

The consultations showed that teams which commissioned targeted PEAs had usually valued them, with few examples of unhelpful studies. There are good lessons about PEAs, which confirm the PEA How To Note guidance (see box 20). The process of ongoing analysis and decisions requires: timely, quality and relevant analysis; DFID staff able to demand, access and motivated to use the analysis; and programmes' ability and incentives to adapt in response.

However, while PEAs have been useful, they are not the only ways in which teams can develop a good understanding of a sector and decide how to address political barriers and opportunities. The case studies showed that other key moments in the programme cycle can improve quality, such ongoing governance or conflict sensitivity advice, annual reviews that look at changed contexts and incentives, Terms of Reference for programme implementers to include context monitoring and political relationships management, excellent collaboration across DFID / OGD teams or making the most of Staff Appointed In Country (SAIC).

Box 20: DFID DRC: political economy analysis 'on demand'

DFID DRC has established an Evidence Analysis Coordination programme dedicated to producing political economy analysis on demand, as well as a panel of external experts to test or challenge ideas.

Some benefits have included:

- PEA on election changed a programme design, helped to identify new partners and assisted donor dialogue

- PEA on public financial management identified support to the supreme audit institution rather than procurement as a good entry point, even if a past programme had not been successful, and political support for budget transparency
- reconsidering the approach to community driven development as a result of expert challenge

It found that analyses were most influential when they:

- were well timed with the programme cycle
- up to date and regularly updated
- responded to demand with strong involvement from the lead adviser
- combined learning on the wider context with a specific problem

Challenges included:

- getting non-governance advisers on board
- introducing gender in the methodology
- linking analysis to decision points
- long and detailed reports that are less practically oriented

There are of course many other factors beyond context or political economy analysis which will influence whether and how DFID decides to engage, so such analysis should only be considered as one element in a broader decision-making process.

One important constraint mentioned in several interviews was the realisation that proper staffing would be needed once the challenges of a sector are more fully understood. This demonstrates realism about what is required to make an intervention work. For example, in Baluchistan province in Pakistan, despite a PEA that showed there was potential to work on education, DFID decided not to start a programme due to the severe security and other challenges of working in the province against a higher return on education investment in other more populated parts of the country.

A number of examples showed how good analysis which had been previously undertaken was not used down the line, or was over-ridden by other priorities. For example, the investigation following the 2013 Cashgate scandal in Malawi came to a similar conclusion as a 2004 political economy study which had found that Malawi's budget process was like "a theatre" – formal rules were being undermined by informal practices, yet every stakeholder was acting as if formal decisions actually influenced the allocation of resources (Rakner et al 2014). General budget support continued to be the main aid modality until 2011, as the benefits were considered to outweigh the risks. After the Cashgate scandal, and a different UK fiduciary risk tolerance and approach to targeting aid, DFID ended all government financial aid.

In summary, while good analysis of institutions, interests and incentives is an essential component of a politically-informed approach, it is not sufficient. There seems to have been a good interest PEAs across DFID. During 2009-2015, over 440 DFID staff have taken part in 20 political economy courses. Nearly 150 PEAs were commissioned by DFID teams or programme implementers since 2009 (over two-thirds sector-specific), usually valued by the teams which commissioned them. However, PEAs are not the only ways in which teams can develop a good understanding of a sector and decide how to address political barriers and opportunities. And even good analysis is not always used down the line, or can be over-ridden by other priorities. Annual reviews, politically-sensitive programme implementers, excellent cross-government collaboration or making best use of Staff Appointed in Country can all improve quality. The next section reviews some of the main internal barriers, and identifies new opportunities to improve DFID's approach.

5. How can DFID improve its approach?

The consultations demonstrated a wide interest across DFID, with evidence that many teams aimed to operate differently across the organisation. They understood their effectiveness depended on understanding their contexts better, managing and diversifying their relationships, and adjusting their strategy and use of resources accordingly. DFID's decentralised nature has allowed a great deal of team-level creativity and experimentation. However the stocktake could not find evidence that a politically-informed approach was systematically adopted across key policy areas or country programmes, even though it would improve their feasibility, risk management and sustainability.

This section makes recommendations on how DFID could become more effective, by moving from ad hoc to more systematic uptake through:

- a **vision** to make this more clearly everyone's business across the organisation, with senior level backing to offer consistent messages (5.1);
- pushing the boundaries of DFID's **policy on power and politics** (5.2);
- continuous improvement to DFID's **internal enabling environment**, especially (i) staff time, skills and incentives; (ii) internal central support (5.3); (iii) delivery systems, as part of the flexible and adaptive programming (5.4); and
- an **externally facing agenda** to ensure that all UK development work – including ODA spent by other government departments – and the international community as a whole tackle political barriers and operate in politically-informed ways (5.5).

5.1 A vision for political awareness to shape all DFID operations

Recommendation 1: DFID should now be striving to make politically-informed work the default mode of operation and more clearly everyone's business.

Ministers and senior managers expect DFID teams to have a solid understanding of their context, know their stakeholders and offer politically-informed choices. Their roles are political – negotiating international deals, managing senior stakeholders, identifying opportunities, or deciding which risks to take. The UK Aid Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review are further scaling up ODA in fragile states and have made “global peace, security and governance” DFID's first strategic objective. This calls for more agile and politically-smart interventions. However, at a working level, teams are subject to competing incentives, and politically-informed approaches become one of many considerations alongside robust financial management or technical objectives.

This agenda has often been seen as the responsibility of conflict and governance cadres but this review suggests it may not be as ‘ghettoised’ as is often perceived. DFID has some of the largest governance and conflict professional cadres amongst development organisations, with 120 governance advisers and a further 50 accredited to the cadre. Interviews showed that conflict advisers are considered particularly skilled at understanding and managing political relations, and working across government, using aid and non-aid levers to support peace processes or prevent conflict escalation. Political analysis has been a mandatory competency for governance advisers for almost 10 years. Heads of Offices continue to request advisers not only to manage governance/conflict portfolios but to provide

advice across the office. However, DFID seems to be reaching the limit of what can be done if it considers this agenda as the sole responsibility of cross-cutting advisers.

In addition, this assessment underplays the role played by many others across DFID. The Chief Economist has been one of the most influential senior champions in recent years, and his country visit reports constantly challenge teams to be more radical (see quote). Social development advisers have political and social analysis as a core competency and have questioned the frequent absence of gender and social exclusion from PEAs.

“My hope these days is in more subversive political economy analysis: designing programmes and policies that properly play chess with the dark forces, who need international respectability but also some domestically acceptable rhetoric to continue playing their game”. *DFID Chief Economist, “Under the Cover of Darkness”, May 2014*

The consultations confirmed an appetite on the part of generalists and all cadres to operate politically. They identified colleagues across cadres and professions who had undertaken innovative work, often not labelled as such, and who wanted to be champions for this agenda. Heads of Professions would be interested in updating their competency frameworks so all cadres take power and politics into account, rather than relying on cross-cutting advisers. The emerging ‘policy profession’ includes an explicit requirement to understand UK politics and work with UK ministers which could be widened to understand a partner country or international context. The new ‘international’ competency could also be used to strengthen influencing skills. The FCO diplomatic academy can offer learning on skills for working internationally, including: negotiating, influencing, and networking. Heads of Offices and Departments have a great deal of discretion in how they use their staff. The case studies showed what can be achieved when teams are encouraged to work across professional boundaries and really seek to influence power and politics.

A clearer message from ministers and senior managers that they require teams to think and work politically to achieve UK objectives would help make politically-smart development more clearly everyone’s business in DFID. To tackle the most entrenched challenges or in fragile environments, this might mean more ‘radically different’ interventions – highly flexible or risk-taking. For the majority of sector programmes or policy initiatives, it might simply mean investing in regular analysis and better stakeholders and risk management – gradual change.

Senior backing would translate into (i) increased appetite for explicit objectives on influencing power and politics in international policy and country/regional work (see section 5.2); (ii) continued improvements to give staff the time, skills and systems to operate in this way (see section 5.3); and (iii) an externally facing agenda to ensure all UK development work – including ODA spent by other government departments – and the international system as a whole tackle political barriers and operate in politically-informed ways (see section 5.4).

5.2 Pushing the boundaries of the power and politics agenda

Recommendation 2: DFID should broaden its understanding of power and politics, beyond national elites, to capture gender and inclusion, global factors, and with a refreshed approach in fragile states.

The review found that in some sectors, a politically-informed approach is often reduced to stakeholder analysis, focusing only on people and personalities, and reacting to short term events. The value added of the approach is that it considers less visible, long term and structural factors. While it is important to know, for tactical reasons, who is who and what is their individual motivations, individuals are influenced by their social, economic and political environments, such as the communities in which they live. DFID needs to understand these factors too, especially in order to identify objectives and programmes that can aim to influence the long term barriers to peace, poverty reduction and growth.

DFID has not always included social dimensions such as gender and social exclusion in its approach to politics. Lessons from the first round of CPRD process noted how DFID “[struggled] to describe the nature and composition of the political settlement” and recommended to “go beyond elites (who they are and where they derive their power and resources) and unpack key social and political institutions down to the community/household level.” (CPRD hub 2014a).

A review of gender and political economy analyses by the Gender and Development Network (GADN) for this stocktake concluded that they are too often ‘gender-blind’; they tend not to take into account how men and women, and boys and girls, have different access to power and resources. This is because they often start by looking at who has access to power and their incentives: the political and economic elite, usually men in the capital city. Most tools do not look at how structures and institutions are experienced differently by women and men. If gender is not included in the analysis of politics from the start, then it is unlikely that it will be part of the solution and programmes could perpetuate unequal gender relations (GADN 2015).

Similarly, to deliver on the ‘leave no one behind’ agenda, DFID’s analysis of power and politics needs to integrate the structural factors that drive and perpetuate exclusion and discrimination. These are not additional considerations.

By broadening how power and politics is understood, DFID could consider a potentially more radical policy and influencing agenda, with increased appetite for explicit objectives on influencing power and politics in international policy and country/regional work:

- In terms of engagement between states and societies, this would take into account new societal trends such as the youth bulge, new technologies and social media, mass migration of vulnerable people, urbanisation, or violent extremism.
- In a global context where the role of international aid is changing, a refreshed power and politics agenda would also go beyond programmes to the UK’s policy influence and how to shape global incentives.
- This is particularly relevant for the UK’s work in fragile states, where the UK’s approach to building stability needs to take into account the evidence and examples in this paper and be more precise and realistic about the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the UK’s political contribution.

5.3 Improving staff incentives and capacities

Recommendation 3: DFID should improve staff incentives and capacities, with a different use of programme funds and more internal central support.

Using staff and programme resources differently

Politically-informed work does not require large financial investments. It is about having people with the right skills, with time to develop relationships and influence internally and externally. However, there are ever-increasing demands on staff time and limits on administrative budget. Innovative thinking is required.

The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) role provides opportunities but can also be a new constraint. It is empowering staff to invest more time in getting to know their programmes. Due diligence requires a better understanding of implementers and their partners. However, the case studies and interviews showed the risk that SROs are pushed into micro level, day-to-day internal programme management to 'keep the money safe', rather than engaging in dialogue on high-level strategic issues or finding the time to keep an eye on the wider context. The SRO training could be broadened to include political working.

Centrally-managed programmes or multilateral programmes that operate in multiple countries constitute a particular challenge for HQ based staff. Central teams rely more on implementers to maintain understanding of context and adjust strategies. Some central departments have identified this risk. Human Development Department is developing training and using a programme review process to embed context analysis but this is not systematic across Policy Division teams.

The review of DFID's Operating Model points to potentially increased risks. Remote working models under considerations, with Home Civil Service (HCS) staff based in the UK, could undermine staff ability to develop in-depth knowledge of their context and trusted external relationships. The ICAI Fragile States review had already pointed out the challenges associated with staff rotation, attracting senior staff with experience or hand-overs (ICAI 2015a).

As the operating model changes, Staff Appointed in Country will need to take on a different role. The case studies showed how they offer DFID teams not only understanding of the political context – both longer term structural factors and day-to-day political changes – but also manage stakeholder relationships. They use their personal networks to make introductions, communicate messages and provide advice on how to get things done. They can often be DFID's institutional memory, when HCS staff come and go.

Box 21: The importance of staff appointed in country

The case studies and interviews provided numerous examples of SAIC that were highly valued and influential in their offices. A diverse group of SAIC, representing a country's different social/regional interests, was particularly helpful, rather than a 'go to' locally appointed colleague who might offer a narrower perspective. Some offices employ SAIC policy advisers with the dedicated role of political analysis, keeping the office informed of what is happening, who are the key players and local / regional dynamics.

In some offices, SAIC do not feel properly utilised. They are not involved in some sensitive discussions, though they could have easily warned for example that a road was being constructed in the wrong district or provided information on patronage and corruption before a scandal erupted. They may put in unseen work to smooth over relationships, for example with an out of working hour phone call to senior government officials not properly consulted. Workloads meant that, instead of influencing counterparts externally, they could be 'chained to their desks' due to programme management and financial reporting.

Greater use of programme resources could provide DFID and its partners with access to ongoing information and advice. Teams committed to operating in politically-informed ways can design programmes that will benefit both partners as well as keep the UK well informed and networked. This can range from setting up an entire programme to provide advice to a country office (as in DFID DRC) to ensuring that programme implementers have the capacity to operate politically and advise DFID on changing context and opportunities. Technical assistance built into sector programmes can provide high quality, flexible advice when staff feel they need to spend more time on internal compliance.

Renewed internal central support

Some targeted central support would be needed, including to deliver some of the recommended improvements, if political awareness is to shape all of DFID's operations. The review's consultations have identified an internal 'community of practice', including the reviews internal 'advisory group' and 'cadre champions' for whom this agenda is already part of their day job or who have a personal or professional interest. GOSAC and HoPs could work together to facilitate this community of practice so DFID teams have access to new tools and examples of what works. The review's [teamsite](#) and [PEA repository](#) are a good starting point.

The consultations showed an appetite for lighter tools that can be used in-house. Not every office or programme will have the capacity to invest in systematic and comprehensive PEAs. More in-house, real-time analysis will make it easier to influence decision points. It should also improve the general knowledge and insights of DFID teams, so they apply the analysis to their day-to-day work. A range of examples and checklists can be made more easily available across DFID.

Box 22: Beyond set-piece PEAs: lighter, tailored approaches

The Developmental Leadership Program is testing 'everyday political analysis', a series of questions to understand incentives and interests, as well as opportunities for change, and which could be used in house by DFID individuals or teams. It has been developed in partnership with a DFID adviser who helped his office respond to an unexpected change in the Zambia health sector programme. It has generated interest across DFID.

The Effective States and Inclusive Development research programme suggests how to make political analysis useful by differentiating:

- agenda-setting analysis (*learning the game*): to deliver a shared language/understanding
- problem-solving analysis (*winning the game*): to improve implementation
- influencing analysis (*changing the game*): to develop a political strategy for change

A tool to structure verbal discussion of changing risks: Following a combined conflict and governance analysis in Sudan, DFID advisers developed a light tool to structure verbal discussion around contextual changes in order to track risks around key events (e.g. elections) and trends in the priority regions (Darfur, East). This was a deliberate move away from written analysis, which requires resources to be kept up to date and runs into constraints around sharing and classification.

Rapid assessment tool for food and nutrition policy: The World Bank South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative (supported by AusAid and DFID) has been promoting the use of political economy analysis. It has developed a rapid assessment tool, a closed key stakeholders survey, which can be used by decision makers or policy analysts, especially at the agenda-setting stage in a policy process and helps identify:

- degree of political commitment and priority of food and nutrition
- windows of opportunity (whether the timing is right)
- opponents and proponents of reform through a stakeholder institutional analysis

However, regardless of whether lighter or more in depth analyses are used, DFID needs to widen its sources of information and be more rigorous with informal analysis, especially in fragile states. A recent review of DFID’s work in fragile states flagged a number of concerns (see box 23). To prevent bias, and challenge prejudices, it is essential to rely on a wide range of credible information sources, rather than rely on a go-to person or anecdotal information. Triangulation of evidence can feel time-consuming and excessively academic. But politics is about power and contestation: those providing information to DFID are likely to gain more influence as a result. This can lead to strategies and programmes ignoring the deep barriers to change or opportunities for inclusion, and sustaining the status quo. Broadening contacts could include women’s rights organisations, for example, which are politically savvy, able to form alliances, and can be a good source of advice, complementing government counterparts or local academics (GADN 2015).

Box 23: The risks of limited information in fragile contexts

“DFID staff identified a wide range of analysis and evidence to make decisions. Perhaps the most commonly used is ad-hoc, on the ground, anecdotal, discursive information gathering. [...] Crucially DFID seems to have few systems (if any) for dealing effectively and rigorously (enough) with this largely informal political analysis. There was little real evidence of triangulation in any rigorous sense. [...] If DFID staff cannot actually tell what the consequences of their work are because they cannot physically get there, and are reliant on intermediaries, strong ‘do no harm’ frameworks need to be in place and much stronger triangulation systems as well.” (Herbert and Marquette 2015)

More rigorous independent evidence and ongoing learning by DFID itself would improve the collective knowledge base. Despite a growing interest over the last 10 years, the research field on politically-smart methods remains limited to a few Northern development organisations, think tanks, universities and consultancy firms. Independent research is difficult because it is hard to identify counter-factuals (e.g. comparing politically-informed and non-informed approaches addressing the same challenge and assessing their influence on results). Researchers do not have access to sensitive records on how decisions are made and implemented. In addition, the evidence that is used (e.g. Booth and Unsworth 2014, Fritz et al 2014) tends to be self-selected case studies that show desirable features.

DFID could invest in further evidence on how to operate politically both to inform its own operations and contribute to improving UK government and international community practice. Embedding evidence within programmes could also speed up learning (see box 24). In addition, there is a need to go beyond donor projects towards deeper evidence on how external actors can facilitate locally-led change, or on working politically on international policy processes and through non-aid levers.

Box 24: Embedding action research to facilitate learning

DFID is partnering with the Developmental Leadership Program to ensure international assistance to communities that host refugees in Lebanon and Jordan is politically-informed and adaptive. Action research will track how improved municipal services influence state legitimacy and social stability. This will provide evidence on whether the assumptions made in the design are holding or whether/how the programme should be adapted.

5.4 Improving DFID systems

“The best DFID staff are able to produce impact in spite of systems rather than because of them.” *Review external consultation meeting, 10th July 2015*

Recommendation 4: continue to improve DFID’s programme delivery system to enable politically-informed work at key decision points, in particular in terms of results framework, annual review, procurement and risk management.

While the Smart Rules provide a more enabling set of incentives for DFID teams, the programme delivery cycle can be further improved to avoid one-off analysis and make sure key decision points consider the political context, barriers/opportunities and relationships. This would provide greater consistency between programme strategy, monitoring and risk management (Pycroft 2015).

Box 25: Applied political economy analysis in routine programme monitoring

The project implementer of the DFID Zimbabwe Accountability and Artisanal Mining Programme (2014-2016) has integrated political context and stakeholders interests analysis as part of its routine programme monitoring, rather than as a separate set of one-off activities:

- monthly informants consultations to monitor local dynamics (e.g. how project is viewed by local authorities; opportunities and challenges faced by miners)
- regular site visits to complement interviews
- time set aside in monthly staff and partner meetings to review local context
- explicit reporting on political and economic dynamics in internal monthly reports and quarterly donor reports to complement other monitoring data

Interviews have identified the following entry points that can be influenced in the coming months:

- A number of the case studies identified remaining **challenges with logframes**. Flexible programmes, such as the oil sector transparency programme in Nigeria, have found it difficult to ensure that activities adjusted in line with changing opportunities map across specific outputs as set out in logframes. The Smart Rules provide for more flexibility in results monitoring. Interviews and case studies show that programme teams would appreciate more support, for example to experiment with other monitoring tools now that logframes are no longer mandatory (which was not something teams always knew about).
- **The way in which annual reviews** are undertaken could also be improved, so they not only focus on internal performance management and achievements of outputs (their accountability function), but better take into account the changing context for interventions and progress towards outcome/impact and transformational change (ongoing learning and adjustment function). As the DRC peace and stability programme shows, flexible programmes can be assessed as performing poorly, when the context becomes more difficult, even when DFID has made the best use of what is within its control. As noted by the former Head of DFID DRC (Pycroft 2015), annual reviews need to: (i) assess if the programme is still addressing the political and institutional constraints identified in the CPRD and Business Case; (ii) assess changes in the macro and meso operating environments (e.g. country level and sector specific); (iii) as well as the current function of assessing progress against programme objectives. In addition, annual reviews should track progress not just towards outputs but also towards outcome / longer term structural change. While DFID guidance covers these four elements, the consultations suggested that in practice this was not always understood.

- **Procurement changes could provide DFID programme implementers with improved incentives and systems** so that DFID's ambition to operate in politically-informed ways translates all the way into programme delivery. This could cover: including skills and track record in working politically when assessing bids; how does payment by results take into account the need to adjust to context or work on institutional reform; flexibility around contract amendments or extension to take into account political developments (e.g. Pyoe Pin was allowed to continue through the election period in Burma). DFID teams can also improve how they work with contractors and grantees such as by sharing analysis and information or manage stakeholders, with clarity on which senior relationships are managed by DFID staff or by contractors.
- **Risk management can be further improved as a central component of politically-informed work.** ICAI had found that "DFID staff often appear unsure of their ground when working on high-risk interventions, even when these are consistent with DFID's objectives" (ICAI 2015b). The finding was confirmed by the internal programme delivery review which found risk management was the main area of concern amongst staff (BDD 2015). DFID is introducing a new risk management framework in 2016 which will be rolled out with staff training. "Context" is one of the six risk categories that every programme will consider.

Box 26: Programme delivery: constraints from the point of view of an implementer

A programme implementer shared the following challenges of negotiating a new programme implementation modality with DFID while it was being asked to implement a politically-informed, flexible approach. DFID was requesting:

- Detailed budgets agreed in advance for the full implementation period, and the use of non-budget financial aid with government partners. While this increases predictability for the government partner, it prevents the flexibility also requested by the programme to adjust to changes in the political economy and external shocks. Implementation may also require different modalities, for example policy think pieces, grants, technical assistance.
- Payment by results which can create perverse incentives for project implementers to deliver 'safe' products (e.g. workshops, policy papers under their control). When the pathway from activities to outcome and impact is uncertain, a certain degree of risk has to be recognised from the start. The implementer felt the payment system should recognise that some interventions would not succeed.

5.5 An externally facing agenda

Recommendation 5: DFID should draw on its experience to influence other UK government departments as part of the new Aid Strategy.

DFID has a role to play in influencing the larger share of ODA which will be managed by other government departments. DFID needs to find ways to share lessons and provide advice so OGD investments do not repeat some of the past mistakes of more technical, traditional aid projects, focusing on short term objectives or under-estimating the complexity of the context in which they operate. This should be prioritised where OGD ODA or cross-government mechanisms are particularly relevant to DFID's strategic objectives, such as how to work politically to address conflict and fragility and build stability.

Recommendation 6: DFID should regain its international thought leadership on politically-informed approaches to influence how development is undertaken globally

Consultations with other donors and external partners showed there was a genuine desire to learn from DFID and see DFID take up a leading role once again on this agenda, for example through the existing Thinking and Working Politically community of practice. A number of interviewees commented that the Drivers of Change had been a clear DFID brand associated with thought leadership. DFID had helped publicise the methodology and made studies available, for example through the Governance, Social Development and Conflict Resource Centre. DFID remains better resourced than many bilateral donors. DFID was the lead donor in the multi-donor World Bank Governance Partnership Facility which contributed to the uptake of PEAs in the World Bank.

However, they felt DFID had become more internally-focused in recent years and it had been harder to learn from DFID's own experience. They would like to see the findings of this review. An externally-facing agenda would enable DFID to shape how development is understood and undertaken globally, and make its own greater efforts to work in this way more likely to succeed.

Annex A. Interviews and consultations

Project team

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 Tessa MacArthur, Team Leader, Empowerment and Accountability, GOSAC
 Jackie Peace, Team Leader, Results and Institutions, GOSAC
 Laure-Hélène Piron, Senior Governance Adviser, GOSAC (author synthesis report and DRC case study)
 Laura Savage, Education Adviser, Research and Evidence Division (author Pakistan Case Study with inputs from Claire Vallings and Naveed Aziz, DFID Pakistan)
 Katie Wiseman, Public Sector Governance Adviser, GOSAC
 Eleanor Johnston and Olivia Beecham, GOSAC (PEA Repository and Teamsite)

DFID staff

Jeremy Armon, Senior Governance Adviser, DFID Ethiopia (and previously Rwanda)
 Richard Butterworth, Senior Governance Adviser, Bangladesh (and formerly Burma and Nigeria)
 Mailan Chiche, Governance Adviser, DFID DRC
 Peter Evans, Governance, Conflict and Social Development Research Team Leader, Research and Evidence Division
 Anna French, Education Team Leader, Human Development Department
 Graham Gass, Extreme Poverty Team Leader, DFID Bangladesh (via email)
 Holger Grundel, Extractives Team Leader, Africa Regional Department
 Jonathan Hargreaves, Head of Department, GOSAC
 Mark Harvey, Head of Profession, Infrastructure (via email)
 Lucy Hayes, Senior Governance Adviser, DFID Malawi
 Paul Healey, Head of Profession, Social Development
 Will Hines, Policy Team Leader, Conflict, Security and Justice Group, Conflict Humanitarian and Security Department
 Renwick Irvine, Team Leader, Governance, Conflict and Humanitarian, DFID DRC
 Mandeep Kaur-Grewal, Team Leader, Natural Resources and Resilience, Climate and Environment Department (via email)
 Nick Lea, Deputy Chief Economist, Research and Evidence Division
 Phil Mason, Senior Anti-Corruption Adviser, GOSAC
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 David Rinnert, Evaluation Adviser, DFID Zimbabwe
 Jane Rintoul, Deputy Director, Regional Directorate
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 Patricia Seex, Head of Profession, Private Sector Development
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Rachel Turner, Director, East and Central Africa Division
Nicholas Waddell, Governance Adviser, Growth and Resilience Department, Economic Development Division
Claire Vallings, Transparent and Effective State Team Leader, DFID Pakistan
Paul Wafer, Chief of Staff, Africa Cabinet
Sam Waldock, Governance Adviser, DFID Rwanda
Kate Whyte, Governance Adviser, Good Governance Fund Unit (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova), DFID / FCO

Other government departments

Judith Kent, Senior Governance Adviser, Stabilisation Unit
Simon Arthy, Conflict Adviser (JACS lead), Stabilisation Unit
Mathew Preston, Head, Multilateral Research Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Melinda Simmons, Head, Conflict Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Other donors

Alan Whaites, OECD DAC Governance and Peace Team leader / GovNet secretariat (former DFID Governance Head of Profession)
Graham Teskey, AusAid/DFAT Principal Governance Specialist (former World Bank Governance and Anti-Corruption Secretariat and former head of DFID Governance and Social Development Department)
Saku Akmeemana, Senior Governance Specialist (and PEA community of practice lead), World Bank
Verena Fritz, Senior Public Sector Governance Specialist (and former PEA community of practice lead), World Bank
Mark Robinson, Global Director, Governance, World Resources Institute (former DFID Chief Professional Officer, Governance, Conflict and Social Development)

Think tanks, universities and implementers

David Booth, Overseas Development Institute
Taylor Brown, IDL group
Diana Cammack, USAID consultant / Overseas Development Institute researcher
Marcus Cox, Agulhas Development Consultants
Naheer Dasandi, Developmental Leadership Program / University College London
Alex Duncan, The Policy Practice
Jonathan Fisher, University of Birmingham
David Hudson, Developmental Leadership Program / University College London
Abigail Hunt, Womankind Worldwide
Harry Jones, GRM International
Stephen Jones, Oxford Policy Management
Heather Marquette, Developmental Leadership Program / University of Birmingham
Tam O'Neil, Overseas Development Institute
Alina Rocha Menocal, Developmental Leadership Program / University of Birmingham
Pablo Yanguas, Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Programme / University of Manchester
Leni Wild, Overseas Development Institute

Internal consultation events

First advisory group meetings (June 2015)
Heads of Profession meeting (August 2015)
Country Poverty Reduction Diagnostic Learning Event: Analysing the Political Settlement, Institutions & Citizens and Translating the Findings into Country Programming Decisions (August 2015)
Second advisory group meetings (September 2015)
Africa Governance Advisers meeting (October 2015)
Third advisory group meetings (December 2015)
Governance Cadre 'Return and Learn' series (summer/autumn 2015)
Governance Cadre 'Share and Learn' review presentation (January 2016)

External consultation events

General consultation with UK-based organisations (July 2015)
Gender and Development Network meeting (September 2015)
Thinking and Working Politically Community of Practice (Bangkok, June 2015)
Thinking and Working Politically Community of Practice (Paris, December 2015)

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