Information Update to the International Development Committee on DFID Support to Parliamentary Strengthening

Background

1. DFID works with parliaments as one important mechanism in the development of open, inclusive and accountable democratic systems that serve the many and not the few; that allow citizens to hold power holders to account; and allow citizens to demand their rights and participate in decisions that affect their lives. DFID recognises that a comprehensive approach is more likely to be effective than working with parts of a political system in isolation.

2. DFID’s support to parliamentary strengthening is led by its network of governance advisers, and brings in specialist expertise from a range of implementing partners. Detailed analysis of the political system is undertaken before country offices design programmes, and choices about types of support and partners are context-driven. Parliamentary support may be the sole purpose of a programme, or a component in a larger programme. Entry points to work may be specific legislation, public financial management reforms, programmes to enhance citizen engagement and parliamentary transparency, or to improve parliaments’ gender equality.

3. On 7th March 2018 the Secretary of State launched the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality to increase women and girls’ meaningful and representative participation and leadership in power and decision-making structures up to national government and parliaments, in a clear strengthening of our policy focus on women’s political leadership.

4. Through DFID’s new £12 million programme supporting the scale up of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in developing countries, we are encouraging the OGP to deepen its growing global work stream on Open Parliaments.

1) How much money was spent by DFID on parliamentary strengthening activities during a) the period FY 14/15 to date; and b) FY 16/17 only? Which countries have been targeted and what is the rationale used in determining which countries to target?

DFID uses the OECD DAC’s purpose codes to analyse expenditure in any given sector. Work on parliamentary strengthening is covered by the purpose code on ‘Legislatures and Political Parties’, defined as:
• ‘Assistance to strengthen key functions of legislatures/parliaments including subnational assemblies and councils (representation; oversight; legislation), such as improving the capacity of legislative bodies, improving legislatures’ committees and administrative procedures; research and information management systems; providing training programmes for legislators and support personnel.
• Assistance to political parties and strengthening of party systems.

The table below summarises DFID expenditure against this code since 2014/15, as an overall increase in levels of expenditure. This trend demonstrates DFID’s commitment to work in this area.

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<td>£5 million</td>
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This commitment will continue over the coming years, as DFID is in discussion with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) to agree a new three-year grant to support work with parliaments and political parties in a number of DFID countries. The new grant will have a greater focus on particular themes such as the inclusion of women in politics. Once approved by Ministers, new DFID funding will be in addition to continued onward funding from the FCO. It will follow the £9m DFID programme with WFD from 2015/16 to 2017/18.

DFID has also been working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on a new two-year £4 million programme on Inclusive and Accountable Democracy, to be implemented by WFD, in partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK. It was announced by the Foreign Secretary at the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. It aims to build trust in democratic institutions and support the political engagement of minorities and vulnerable groups in 18 developing countries across the Commonwealth. DFID will sit on the Steering Committee.

DFID’s policy is for governance priorities to be decided at country level as part of the country planning process, where advisers have the best understanding of the context, and the vast majority of DFID’s support to parliamentary and political party assistance takes place through our country offices. In many countries, this results in a portfolio of programmes to support aspects of the political system, including parliaments, elections and civil society. The exact emphasis is determined by Ministers and reviewed regularly.
2) How many specialists does DFID employ directly to work on parliamentary strengthening? How many experts (and from how many organisations) form a greater pool of advice upon which DFID can draw?

DFID’s cadre of governance advisers currently has approximately 120 advisers working on a range of governance issues including political governance. This is unique amongst bilateral development agencies. Within country offices, governance advisers work across the political governance sector and may work on more than one programme. DFID does not collate information on how many technical experts work on the issue within our suppliers.

Centrally, DFID’s Governance Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department (GOSAC) includes 16 governance advisers whose technical competence includes work on political governance. Policy work on political governance, including parliamentary strengthening is led by the Transparency, Accountability and Politics team, which has three people dedicated to political governance work.

3) What proportion of current DFID programmes contain a parliamentary strengthening element?

DFID supported 37 programmes in FY 2014/5 that worked on parliamentary strengthening either in a stand-alone way or as a component of a larger programme. This figure was maintained in FY 2017/18.

DFID’s 2014 written evidence to the IDC noted that since 2010/11, DFID had worked directly with parliaments in three quarters of our bilateral country programmes (21 out of 28 countries). Some of these programmes remain operational. DFID continues to strengthen parliaments in a large number of its priority countries with direct bilateral programmes and support via the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in 19 of these contexts. Other centrally managed DFID programmes, and programmes managed by other government departments, such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, or funded via cross-government funds such as the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund extend to a broader range of countries.

4) Why was the How to Note so delayed?

The IDC report recommended that DFID update its technical guidance on parliamentary and political party strengthening. DFID agreed with the IDC Report’s recommendations and committed to “finalise and disseminate the Parties and Parliaments Draft How to Note for use by HMG and its implementers”. Now called the ‘Guide to Working with Parliaments and Political Parties for Sustainable Development’ (‘the Guide’), the document was drafted internally with the support of prominent experts in the field (Dr Thomas Carothers, Vice President of Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Greg Power, CEO, Global Partners Governance). The Guide is designed to support DFID staff to design and implement better
programmes, and to help other partners (donors and suppliers) learn from the latest evidence. It has extensive advice on how to design adaptive programmes, assess the political context, consider gender issues and monitor results.

The Guide was finalised by May 2016, however publication was delayed for a number of reasons. A change to internal guidance for online publications and approvals processes led to delays. Communications rules related to the EU membership referendum and the subsequent General Election postponed external publication. Additional proof-reading and Ministerial approval in late 2017 added further to the timeline. The Minister of State placed the Guide in the parliamentary libraries in January 2018.

It was presented in the House of Commons on 19th April at an event organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) UK during the week of the Commonwealth Summit, attended by a range of external partners, experts and some MPs from parliaments in Commonwealth countries. DFID advisers received the Guide informally during 2017 and it will continue to be shared with the governance and conflict advisory cadres as a key piece of governance guidance, with a further internal discussion planned for 2018.

5) The response to recommendation 9 stated that a broader study would be undertaken to identify lessons from a range of programmes (We recommend that DFID and the FCO jointly undertake a study of what they have funded and what has worked). What was the result of the study?

Since January 2016, DFID has supported a research partnership on democracy promotion between the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and the University of Birmingham’s International Development Department. The partnership enables applied research in this field, and has yielded a number of policy papers and academic articles on parliamentary and political party strengthening. Research findings are publicly available and have been disseminated at a range of academic conferences and other events.

In 2017, DFID commissioned three in-depth reviews of WFD’s work in political party strengthening, civic engagement and financial accountability, due for completion in May 2018.

In June 2018, DFID will draw on these reviews and other annual reporting to complete a full Project Completion Review of its three year programme of support to WFD.

6) When did the Westminster Community of Practice last meet?

The Westminster Community of Practice last met in October 2017. It was established in September 2015, and has met at least six times. It brought together the parliamentary strengthening community as suggested by IDC, built some new relationships, and shared insights on gender, human rights,
and other issues in relation to parliamentary support.

Since then, WFD has supported a Thinking and Working Politically Working Group as a means to bring together a wider range of organisations working on parliamentary strengthening. This enables discussions of broader questions of democracy support, governance, and links to UK priorities. The Working Group brings together UK and international actors which facilitates the sharing of knowledge and expertise. The Westminster organisations often attend.

Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department
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