

**S22. To support the development of post graduation work with MICS:**

- Graduation and/or bilateral programme closure should be seen as a strategic process and managed accordingly by country and regional teams.
- A management lead/champion on MICS should be identified – for policy and practice in relation to MICS to promote discussion and exchange within DFID, with other donors and with MICS themselves to develop post graduate scenarios for support beyond bilateral programmes to catalyze the contribution of MICS to the achievement of the MDGs.
- The MIC Strategy (including time bound targets and a monitoring and evaluation framework) should be revised based on collective experience and learning. Supportive Good Practice Guidance should be produced and disseminated and formal links between responsible divisions and

departments established to ensure effective implementation.

**S23. To improve policy engagement through regional approaches:**

- DFID should commission research into trade (including policy frameworks, institutional processes, and organisational constraints) in specific regions to identify effective strategies for engagement as part of regional approaches and to inform the international policy debate around trade.
- Learning from the effective cross-Whitehall working in the *Western Balkans* and *Latin America* should be shared with DFID staff to inform regional practice and policy
- DFID should give clear guidance, based on learning and research, to ensure effective and measurable improvements are made that embed gender and social inclusion as part of regional approaches.

**DFID STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

DFID, the Department for International Development: leading the British Government's fight against world poverty. One in six people in the world today, around 1 billion people, live in poverty on less than one dollar a day. In an increasingly interdependent world, many problems – like conflict, crime, pollution and diseases such as HIV and AIDS – are caused or made worse by poverty.

DFID supports long-term programmes to help tackle the underlying causes of poverty. DFID also responds to emergencies, both natural and man-made.

DFID's work forms part of a global promise to:

- halve the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger
- ensure that all children receive primary education
- promote sexual equality and give women a stronger voice
- reduce child death rates
- improve the health of mothers
- combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- make sure the environment is protected
- build a global partnership for those working in development.

Together, these form the United Nations' eight 'Millennium Development Goals', with a 2015 deadline. Each of these Goals has its own, measurable, targets.

DFID works in partnership with governments, civil society, the private sector and others. It also works with multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, United Nations agencies and the European Commission.

DFID works directly in over 150 countries worldwide, with a budget of some £5.3 billion in 2006/07. Its headquarters are in London and East Kilbride, near Glasgow.

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**Synthesis of Regional Programme Evaluations 2007-2008**

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S1. This report is a synthesis of Regional Programme Evaluations (RPEs) undertaken in the Caribbean; Central Asia, South Caucasus and Moldova (CASC); and Western Balkans DFID regions, together with the Interim Evaluation of DFID's Regional Assistance Programme for Latin America. These four evaluations were completed in 2006-08 and cover regional planning periods between 2001 and 2007. Whilst only accounting for a small proportion of DFID's overall expenditure these regions cover a significant number of countries and key regional relationships.

S2. The synthesis concludes that taking a regional approach requires a regional perspective which is more than a set of regional objectives and includes a sense of regional identity, a common agenda, shared perceptions, and context. Such an approach is appropriate for DFID where there is a strong rationale for engaging with the region that moves beyond bilateral agendas but makes less sense where groups of country programmes are managed collectively to minimise the transaction costs and address the pressures of limited human resources.

S3. The evaluations found that it was appropriate to **develop a regional strategy**, a Regional Assistance Plan (RAP), in: *Latin America* where continued bilateral engagement is no longer cost effective or appropriate given the significant number of middle income countries and where policy engagement at the regional level can play a catalytic role; *Western Balkans* where there is a single agenda of support for EU accession which will fundamentally change the nature of regional relationships; and The *Caribbean* with its strong regional identity and historic UK engagement. It was less appropriate for *CASC* where there is no longer a strong regional identity that relates to DFID's presence and where the agendas are increasingly bilateral, or at best sub-regional in nature.

S4. It can be hard to strike a balance between strong country programmes and a regional agenda. Emphasis on country-led and project-based approaches can result in the synergies, lesson learning and complementarities of the region not being fully developed or realised. However there are benefits from the knowledge and credibility of country based experience that can inform regional approaches. Joint working on common areas of public policy with other UK government departments and of harmonisation and alignment with other development partners and governments at country level can support the transition to a regional approach.

S5. The evaluations point to the appropriate choice of regional strategic objectives set out in the RAPs. However, the complexity of engagement at the regional level demands more extensive institutional and political analysis which takes new partnerships and ways of working into account. Such analysis should also take a focused approach to addressing risk and identifying strategies for mitigation. While risks were identified in the RAPs, mitigation measures were not always practical and political risks should have been taken into account more effectively.

S6. The tendency to focus measurement at the activity level and on DFID inputs was not sufficient for effective monitoring of the RAPs. Weak identification of measurable outcomes at the strategic level led to a lack of analysis of overall results and limited reporting of progress against strategies. This was aggravated where there were large portfolios with many small projects (*Caribbean*) and reducing staff numbers (particularly *Latin America*). Though over complex, the results framework developed for *CASC* was implemented across the region and yielded lessons that can be applied elsewhere.

S7. Whilst budgets were limited and reducing in the four regions, they were adequate and sufficient to support the programmes. However, it was the quality of the human resources that proved to be the most critical requirement for delivering RAP objectives. DFID is well respected for the quality of its staff and it is this quality of engagement rather than the quantum of investment that makes the difference.

S8. The evaluations found that whilst small bilateral country programmes can be effectively delivered by in-country teams, the transition to a regional approach demands new ways of working, with a stronger sense of 'regional team' that combines the interaction of team members in London with those in the region.

S9. A limited range of aid instruments with a focus on small scale flexible interventions and strategic use of Technical Assistance inputs was relevant for delivering the focused objectives of the RAPs, especially where country programmes were anticipating closure. However, regional engagement requires even greater emphasis on partnership working and policy level engagement. More innovative flexible tools, specifically designed to support strategic change, would be beneficial.

S10. DFID policy has moved increasingly towards **engaging with multilateral organisations** to influence policy change and achieve impact. This is particularly significant when taking a regional approach. The evaluations found that policy influencing is most effective where it is based on in-depth understanding of the multilateral organisations, including their culture and organisational structure. Such institutional analysis was often absent and hence engagement was less effective.

S11. Influencing can be particularly effective where DFID adopts a team approach drawing on resources in London, in-country, within the multilateral organisations, and located at key regional bases. This was particularly well illustrated in relation to the EU accession process in the **Western Balkans** where effective London-Brussels engagement was complemented by in-country working. Coherence and planning are vital to the success of this 'joined up' approach to influencing.

S12. Secondment to the multilateral organisations can be an effective tool for achieving policy impact at the regional level. The evaluations noted that secondment is most successful where placements are at the 'right level' in the multilateral organisation, i.e. where policy dialogue was possible. The weak institutional analysis of the organisations meant that this was not always the case.

S13. The evaluations found that small programmes delivered with flexibility, good government engagement and a limited range of clear well targeted interventions provided a good basis for **working with Middle Income Countries (MICs)** and those moving towards MIC status. However the closure of the bilateral programme is often seen as the end point rather than the beginning of a transition to a regional approach. Significant additional investment is required to build the new relationships and to explain and promote the regional approach.

S14. Graduation and/or bilateral programme closure was found to be most effective where it was seen as a strategic process and managed accordingly, sharing the decision making with the government concerned through clear and open communication, well in advance of closure. Matching this approach with equally strong communication with other donors to build shared graduation plans and post graduation relationships, directly and through multilaterals, should take priority over project and office closures.

S15. Engagement around **policy impact at the regional level** is only just emerging. The evaluations point to the critical role that can be played by regional institutions as entry points for policy change. However, to be able to effectively represent the region, such institutions need buy in and support from governments within the region. Without this they will not be sustainable and will continue to rely on donor funding.

S16. DFID's corporate agenda is moving regional working into more complex areas of engagement, for example trade, which require different approaches and hard decisions about how and where to engage.

S17. Partnership approaches are already working well on conflict and security within the regions with the focus on country level, though regional approaches are emerging. Work on conflict and security has been coherent and consistent and has developed a broader agenda through strong cross-Whitehall working and good strategic engagement. The success of the approach lies in the strong commitment of all departments starting at the policy level in London.

S18. The evaluations found that the mainstreaming of corporate policies, including gender and social inclusion, at the regional level was not effectively addressed. DFID is well regarded for its gender and poverty analysis and its strength in this regard could be more effectively exploited to develop understandings which take account of regional aspects of gender roles and the impact of social exclusion.

## Recommendations

S19. **To improve the development, relevance and effectiveness of regional approaches:**

- Regional Plans should be developed with analysis and planning focused at the regional level and strategic objectives that apply across the region. Where a group of country programmes are being managed together to reduce transaction costs planning should be based on individual Country Plans even though resources are managed collectively.
- The development of regional approaches should be based on partnership agreements and shared analysis with other UK government departments and development partners, as well as with the individual governments and regional institutions concerned. The ideal for DFID to work towards is a single UK (business) plan with strong ownership from within the region.
- Regional Plans should have Results Frameworks that effectively track progress and provide feedback to improve implementation and Monitoring and

Evaluation Strategies that focus attention at objective level based on measurable indicators related to specific outcomes.

- All Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies should include a set of process indicators to track DFID partner engagement and policy dialogue (influencing interventions). Guidance and technical support should be available to all regional teams to develop appropriate monitoring tools and processes.

S20. **To develop skills to support regional programmes:**

- The planning and management of human and financial resources should be directly linked to the regional programme objectives - team skills, staffing, and structures should be based on these objectives rather than on traditional sector and management roles.
- These skills should include analytic, negotiating and relationship management skills, regional political and institutional analysis, team working and cross-Whitehall working. In addition, skills and knowledge for engagement/policy dialogue should be the focus for staff development for all managers, programme staff and advisers in regions, countries and centrally.

S21. **To improve engagement with and through multilateral partners:**

- A thorough institutional analysis of all key multilaterals should be developed, drawing on the experience of country and regional teams. The analysis should focus on culture, organisational systems and structures, ways of working, opportunities and entry points for collaboration and engagement.
- The EC is an important partner, particularly in regions where the UK is one of the few member states supporting development. A new strategy for engagement should be developed which draws on regional experience. Priority should be given to DFID and UK wide partnerships with the EC through joined up working at regional level and through links between London and Brussels.