

**Evaluation Report Title: Performance evaluation of DFID Nigeria State Level Programmes**

**Response to Evaluation Report (overarching narrative)**

**Evaluation summary**

This is the final evaluation of DFID Nigeria's suite of State Level Programmes (SLPs). The evaluation is the culmination of a wide range of in depth research and review work undertaken by the Independent Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (IMEP). The evaluation provides conclusions on the validity of the logic of the SLP model and the performance of the SLP programmes (both individually and as a suite).

This is a performance rather than an impact evaluation. The complexity of the environment in which the State Level Programmes worked and the wide range of interconnected outcomes means that it is not possible to examine the attribution outcomes or impact. However, by drawing on a wide range of sources, including trends in third party data across SLP and non-SLP states, the evaluation is able to provide a range of important conclusions on the performance of the SLP programmes both individually and as a suite.

The evaluation looks specifically at four out of five state level programmes: SPARC, SAVI, ESSPIN and PATHS2. These programmes have a focus on systems and capacity building at state level covering core governance, accountability and service delivery (in health and education). Together these four programmes represent an investment by DFID of approximately £400million since 2008. The fifth state level programme, GEMS, on economic growth and employment was not included in the evaluation due to differences of approach and implementation meaning that it was not as closely integrated with the rest of the suite as originally designed to be. The evaluation focuses on the five core states in which all four evaluated programmes operated; Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano and Lagos. Consideration is also given to evidence from other states of operation were relevant.

The final SLP evaluation takes an innovate approach to evaluating the high level performance of a broad suite of programmes. The evaluation approach is built around a core of in-depth and independent reviews conducted by IMEP between 2011 and 2016. The reviews are supported and supplemented by a range of other evidence including third party data analysis, political economy analysis and extensive qualitative research studies on wide ranging aspects of SLP performance. The final evaluation report is the synthesis of this extensive body of evidence.

In summary, the evaluation found that the SLPs had contributed across the five core states to improvements in capacity and systems and had provided successful demonstrations of approaches to improving service delivery. However, there was limited evidence that improved sector management processes and successful delivery of capacity development has translated into improved system performance or development results. The evaluation found that the types of improvements delivered by the SLPs may be necessary, but were not sufficient, to lead to improved system performance and service delivery.

Particular successes were noted around strengthened state processes, increased spending in health and education, and increased capacity of community and civil society organisations to function as agents of voice and accountability. Successes were also noted around alignment with development needs, flexibility of approach and some elements of programme integration across the suite.

The limitations found by the evaluation primarily relate the limited observed improvements in service delivery as a result of improved systems in health or education. The evaluation also notes that there is little evidence of an improved accountability environment in SLP states.

The reasons for limited outcome and impact delivery are suggested as being lack of sustained federal leadership (up to 2015), challenging fiscal and political contexts and a lack of focus on human resource issues and the critical role of local government in service

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provision.

The evaluation also notes that the processes for design, contracting and management of the SLPs have militated against their effective coordination and has reduced the impact that could have been achieved, that political economy analysis could have been used more effectively and that the timeframe for achievement of impact by the SLPs may have been unrealistic.

### **DFID response**

We welcome the evaluation report and thank the evaluation team for their work in producing it. This is an important attempt to evaluate the performance of an ambitious suite of programmes and the report provides a range of helpful lessons and conclusions on implementation and delivery of the SLP suite of programmes. We recognise the challenges of evaluating performance across a broad suite of programmes covering a wide range of governance and service delivery challenges and the limitations of such an approach in terms of attributing outcomes and impact.

Through IMEP's own reviews the SLPs were shown to be highly successful programmes consistently achieving some of the strongest annual review scores of any programmes in DFID Nigeria. There were significant successes in improving state level administration and the supported sectors (health and education). For example, improved planning and budgeting in the basic education sector led improved access to Federal Government UBE funds with £21.2m leveraged for school improvement from 2012-2016 and qualitative evidence of increasing school quality. We are glad that the evaluation has recognised these successes.

In relation to the point about limited observed changes in service delivery and improved development outcomes in health and education, we would note that the size and scale of the challenges in Nigeria are immense. The population of over 180 million people is growing at 2.7 per cent every year - adding 5 million people to the population. Nigerian states are often the size of whole African countries. ESSPIN's school improvement programme reached 6.5m children across 6 states; there are 4.6m children in state primary schools in England. The SLP programmes were also not designed, even with the support of IMEP, to provide fully attributable results. Small changes and slow but forward progress in the face of extremely challenging circumstances may represent significant success whilst not being readily measurable through the third party data analysis used in this evaluation.

We welcome the findings and lessons highlighting areas (such as human resources and local government) which will be important to consider in future programming. As the evaluation clearly points out, there are only a limited number of issues on which DFID programming can work at any one time or that can sensibly fall within the scope of any one programme, or even suite of programmes.

We acknowledge the findings about coordination at state level and use of political economy analysis. These are both areas where DFID Nigeria is already making progress with significant advances in recent years. Our regional team structure now supports a revised geographic footprint in Nigeria. We have a more focused approach in three partner states with three additional regional approaches alongside Federal level engagement. These are supported by dedicated regional coordinators and three regional offices. We continue to develop and enhance our approach to engagement and coordination of our programming at state level with noted improvements, for example in Kaduna, around programme coordination meetings and subsequent joint programming achievements.

We would also note positively that through the continued engagement with IMEP and the SLPs during the evaluation process that much of the content of this evaluation including the recommendations has already been factored into DFID Nigeria's think and approach for the future. Our new flagship governance programme Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn is designed with service delivery at the core of its work. Lessons from the shortcomings of the SLPs, including from early work on this evaluation, have been articulated in the programme to address and focus on the governance challenges of sectors such as healthcare, education and agriculture.

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Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If “Accepted”, Action plan for Implementation or if “Rejected”, Reason for Rejection
<p>1. DFID should strengthen the management of its engagement at state level by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. developing strategic frameworks for the main states in which DFID programmes operate, including results frameworks aligned so far as possible with state priorities, and theories of change at state level;</li> <li>b. investing in understanding the political context and state-specific obstacles to effective service delivery and development progress; and</li> <li>c. ensuring that its level of spending and type of engagement in states reflects the prospects for programmes succeeding.</li> </ul>	<p>Partially accept</p>	<p>a) This is something DFID Nigeria has already started doing with the “places” focus to our six monthly portfolio review. This does not go as far as detailed results frameworks for each place. However, it does set out common areas for intervention and broad success criteria for each place of engagement. We contend that to set out results frameworks in too great a detail would restrict the flexibility of response called for at point c below.</p> <p>Similarly, to create a comprehensive theory of change for a state would be an unworkably complex exercise. However, we accept that we should continue to develop tools and approaches (as we are doing) to better understand the impact of our combined efforts, the mechanisms by which our interventions are working and the context in which we operate.</p> <p>b) The “places” work also includes a work stream to build more effective and comprehensive political economy analysis into our portfolio processes. However, we accept that there is more we can do to embed and harmonise political analysis, thinking and approaches across all programmes and we are working towards this.</p> <p>c) There is a balance to be struck between flexibly backing successful reforms and the costs involved in building relationships and setting up programmes in states. We continually monitor all of our programmes using rigorous results frameworks. Programmes that are not achieving output targets will be reviewed against the potential of other likely areas of intervention.</p>
<p>2. DFID should engage in continuing dialogue and cooperation with Federal and State Governments to understand and build consensus on how to address institutional and organisational constraints to improved service delivery.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>This is the approach that we take throughout our programming. We accept that there is always more to do and understand and we continue build our links and capability in this area.</p> <p>With PERL, our new governance programme, in our partner states we are facilitating</p>

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		<p>relationships and engagements between government, citizens and various local constituencies to address issues such as poor budget releases to the sectors, ambiguous mandates and weak human resource systems. Over time, we aim to blur the line between accountability, core governance and service delivery. This will allow us to support citizens and government in solving common challenges like access to basic education, quality health care and the existence of positive regulatory environments for jobs and growth. Implementation of this collaborative approach has already started and we will continue to monitor results and flexibly adapt to the different contexts in which we are working.</p>
<p>3. DFID should continue to emphasise the importance of linkages between governance, accountability and service delivery for achieving development progress in Nigeria in its programmes, while paying increased attention to human resource management and to the role and capacity of local government.</p>	<p>Partially accept</p>	<p>New programmes on health and education programme will learn lessons from current and previous programming and will engage on human resource issues where judged to be appropriate and relevant to programme objectives.</p> <p>On Local Government Areas (LGAs), we recognise that working at that level is challenging given the number of LGAs in Nigeria (774), weak capacity and current fiscal arrangements between the LGAs, state and Federal governments. For LGAs to function effectively, Nigeria requires constitutional changes to strengthen the independence of LGAs and clarify LGAs' role in service delivery. That said, we are providing support to some selected LGAs in DFID partner states and working in collaboration with state government, non-state actors and our sector programmes in health and education to pilot service delivery improvement and accountability. Our current engagement in Kaduna on primary health care and the interventions of ESSPIN through SBMCs are reflections our collaborative work with LGAs. Donor interventions at the LGA level can only demonstrate good practices, but for sustainability the government of Nigeria will need to carry out the necessary changes.</p>
<p>4. DFID needs to ensure that critical design assumptions for its programmes are identified as early as possible, and that their validity is systematically tested throughout programme implementation, and that so far as possible a common conceptual framework across programmes is used for doing this.</p>	<p>Partially accept</p>	<p>This is a very broad recommendation. DFID Nigeria aspires to best practice in assessing all programmes, which includes an up-to-date theory of change and a strong monitoring and evidence strategy that sets out the approaches and methods for testing critical assumptions.</p> <p>There is a significant challenge to using a common conceptual framework for programmes which are working in different sectors and through different approaches. However, as with the response to recommendation 1 we have a well-established portfolio review process which has been strengthened and developed in recent years</p>

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		to document common goals and approaches in the places where we work.
<p>5. DFID should ensure that voice and accountability interventions are designed with a greater emphasis on how they may achieve broader impact, and with more emphasis on objective measures of the performance of accountability programmes, rather than exclusively relying on expert assessment.</p>	Partially accept	<p>We do not accept that programmes relied solely on expert assessment. Voice and accountability through ESSPIN work on SBMCs, for example, was assessed through a range of field work activities.</p> <p>DFID Nigeria has undertaken a range of exercises to strengthen beneficiary feedback and reporting approaches and continues to develop innovative approaches to measuring the contribution of programmes to outcome and impact level results. Our new governance programme PERL has a specific pillar dedicated to learning and understanding the impact of the programme.</p>
<p>6. DFID should conduct a separate evaluation of the GEMS Suite at or near the end of programme implementation.</p>	Partially accept	<p>DFID acknowledges the need for comprehensive and robust review of the GEMS suite of programmes and that lessons should be captured. However, we do not accept that an evaluation is required to achieve that. We intend to conduct final reviews of the GEMS programmes in the same in-depth and independent way in which IMEP reviewed all SLPs. This will include a final GEMS synthesis closure review. These reviews will build on previous IMEP work, including the comprehensive GEMS lesson learning report.</p>