

EVALUATION REPORT TITLE: Independent evaluation of the Tilitonse Civil Society Governance Fund

RESPONSE TO EVALUATION REPORT (overarching narrative)

- 1.0 Generally, we are pleased with the findings of the impact evaluation of the Tilitonse Civil Society Governance Fund programme. The evaluation has made very useful recommendations both for short and long term implementation. The current Tilitonse programme only has 9 months to go before close down starts and all grants have already been awarded. We judge that there is a limit to which these recommendations can meaningfully be implemented in the current programme. However, what DFID is planning is to fully implement these recommendations in the new accountability programme as well as the Tilitonse Local Foundation which will carry-on the work being currently done under the Tilitonse programme when it finally closes down in September, 2017.
- 2.0 DFID is working with the current Tilitonse programme to reasonably implement recommendation 2a “Support partners to think and work politically – not doing PEA as a separate exercise, but through ongoing practical mentoring that deals with the political economy as a ‘live issue’” and 2b “Shift the monitoring (and learning) around governance results to better support adaptive programming”. The current programme has enhanced its mentorship approach by employing dedicated mentors to work across the range of implementers helping them to imbed PEA into their projects. The programme has also improved its M&E by shifting away from documenting pre-set results to capturing incrementally changes at outcome level and showcasing them through the GMIS and the Results Tracker. This will continue till the programme winds down in 2017.
- 3.0 DFID and its partners supporting the Tilitonse Local Foundation have already agreed to adopt a thematic approach to the grants as opposed to the open calls which dominated the current Tilitonse programme. Recommendation 1b “Increase ‘evaluability’ and impact by focusing evidence collection on *parts* of the programme, rather than pursue an ‘aggregation’ of the whole” observed that “the way the Tilitonse programme was configured did not lend itself to being easily evaluated – with Open Calls financing very diffuse interventions, and the several changes around the number and type of calls...”. Responding to this recommendation, the Local Foundation is being designed to focus on selected themes such as health, education, water/sanitation and agriculture which will be aligned with our investments in sector programming.
- 4.0 In its new accountability programme design, DFID is already responding well to these recommendations especially the “mutual problem solving” approach. Through its coalitions of change which will be the largest component of its new programme, DFID has made sure that there is a joined-up approach to solving issues where attention will be shifted to building and facilitating coalitions based on mutual interest and targeting interventions around tangible issues rather than diffuse and open calls across the whole governance spectrum and helping one party hold another party ‘to account’ for something it doesn’t want to do.

Recommendation	Accepted or Rejected	If 'Accepted', Action Plan for implementation, or if 'Rejected', reason for rejection.
<p>Recommendation 1a - Strategically cluster support, particularly around mutual problem solving:</p> <p>The strategic starting point should be about government and citizens working together in mutually beneficial ways to bring about better services – therefore grounded from the outset in <i>what is possible</i>, rather than <i>what is desirable</i> in an ideal world. The Tilitonse grant windows funded many different grantees to do many different things, dispersed widely by policy reform area, sector, level of government, size of intervention and so on. This design meant that at the end of Tilitonse, the overarching results are more a collection of examples than a coherent aggregation of different interventions designed to complement each other. For example, there are some community-level examples with potential (e.g. from the CBO round), but these are not linked to district or national processes. Impact is likely to be greater where there is traction for change, and where support is clustered around a particular issues or problems, addressing different parts of the policy-making / implementation cycle. In this way it will be possible to encourage 'vertical' and 'horizontal' linkages, enabling scale-up of effective approaches, and effective synergies between national-level advocacy and community-level priorities and experiences.</p>	Accept	<p>The Tilitonse programme already noted the need to cluster support around issues of mutual interest and hence the adoption of the thematic calls since 2013. Two thematic calls have so far been implemented in the programme building a coalition of actors around mining, local government and access to information. Going forward, DFID is working with other donors to ensure that the local foundation which will take over from the current Tilitonse programme focuses on particular issues of mutual interest and builds coalitions around them. So far, donors have already proposed that the Tilitonse foundation should focus on themes of health, education, water and sanitation, agriculture, gender and youth amongst others. This will be confirmed with the Tilitonse Foundation Board starting with their orientation in October 2016. Interventions will be tested around these issues. DFID's new accountability programme will also take this recommendation on board through a new component explicitly focused on issues-based programming and coalition of change.</p>
<p>Recommendation 1b - Increase 'evaluability' and impact by focusing evidence collection on <i>parts</i> of the programme, rather than pursue an 'aggregation' of the whole:</p> <p>This requires evidence gathering (research, evaluation, learning) to be better able to influence impact, with a more direct relevance for programme decision-makers to learn, adapt and scale-up. Realistically, most large multi-donor programmes such as Tilitonse are overly complex because of the multiple interests that shape programme design and implementation. The way the Tilitonse programme was configured did not lend itself to being easily evaluated – with Open Calls financing very diffuse interventions, several changes around the number and type of calls, the introduction of new calls late in the programme (e.g. CBOs) and so on. Therefore, rather than</p>	Accept	<p>This is linked to recommendation 1a above. DFID will work with Tilitonse local foundation to identify interventions which have the potential for scaling out and scaling up. Calls will be restricted to thematic issues and implemented in a systematic and predictable manner. Through the issue based component of the new accountability programme, DFID will also ensure that different interventions are tested and those with potential to succeed will be scaled up.</p>

<p>attempt to make the whole programme more ‘evaluable’, resources would be better focused on supporting a handful of ‘testable’ interventions in context. Evidence gathering could then be used to incrementally accumulate evidence of ‘what works and under what circumstances’ so that it is both useful for management within the programme lifespan, as well as for policy makers over a longer time horizon (i.e. not just every 3–5 years of a donor funding cycle, but rather over decades of development in Malawi).</p>		
<p>Recommendation 2a – Support partners to think and work politically – not doing PEA as a separate exercise, but through ongoing practical mentoring that deals with the political economy as a ‘live issue:</p> <p>While Tilitonse has been moving in this direction, it is important to build on this from the start of a programme’s implementation. This approach requires providing capacity support through mentoring delivered as ongoing accompaniment to civil society actors – creating space for partners to respond to opportunity and momentum, to look at the bigger picture and understand where they fit in. As such, there is a need to focus much more effort on strategic and political ‘ways of working’, with less focus on building CSOs and more on building the capability of citizens and civil society.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>The current programme has already moved in the direction being recommended in 2a. The Tilitonse Board approved a proposal to increase mentorship support to all Tilitonse partners especially CBOs. Increased investment has been made and there is an ongoing support through a number of mentors currently working with the grantees at various levels. The current programme has enhanced its mentorship approach by employing dedicated mentors to work across the range of implementers helping them to embed PEA into their projects. The new Tilitonse Capacity Action Plan approved by the Board in August, 2016 is an opportunity to focus more on strategic and political ways of working through building the capacity of citizens and CSOs. DFID will ensure that the remaining rapid response window creates space for partners to respond to emerging governance opportunities.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2b- Shift the monitoring (and learning) around governance results to better support adaptive programming:</p> <p>This requires flexibility in the M&E system so it is not reporting against pre-set objectives (e.g. fixed results frameworks, standard indicators), but instead is about the more incremental documenting of evidence – around governance outcomes, such as shifts in power relations. Given the intrinsic nature of governance change (contextualised, multiple causes, and political), monitoring approaches need to shift away from a ‘plan-</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>The programme has also moved towards this direction and improved its M&E by shifting away from documenting pre-set results to capturing incremental changes at outcome level and showcasing them through the GMIS and the Results Tracker. This will continue till</p>

<p>and-implement' culture to more flexible monitoring approaches that systematically capture change. The GMIS in its latter stages, and the Results Tracker, began to point to better ways of systematically capturing evidence over time, but there is still a need to better link this to decision making and the prioritisation of staff effort and support of interventions.</p>		<p>the programme winds down in 2017.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2c – Think carefully about the use of programme funds, including the potentially distorting effects¹¹⁸ of grants on sustainable processes of citizen engagement:</p> <p>Tilitonse is viewed by many grantees as primarily a funding agency, especially given that the learning approach and much of the capacity support do not seem to have had the impact that might have been expected – and as a consequence, grantees have generally continued to do what they have already done for some time. To change the way people operate, this may require taking the money off the table (not using money as the driver of activities), and instead using funds to catalyse citizen-government engagement that has the potential to take on a life of its own. It is likely to require more flexibility for the provision of non-financial support to civil society – such as facilitating others, mentoring support, lesson learning, and convening.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>DFID will implement this recommendation in its new accountability programme. The plan is to put less money up front and deal more with building coalitions around specific issues bringing both government and citizens to engage around issues of mutual interest.</p> <p>In addition, the new Tilitonse Foundation has an explicit founding objective to play a convening and lesson-learning role as a means of supporting civil society accountability initiatives beyond actual funding.</p>