

DFID Management Response to Impact Evaluation of DFID's Electoral Programmes in Pakistan

Section 1 - General response

1. The purpose of this evaluation was to better understand the effect of DFID elections programmes in Pakistan as well as understand lessons for similar future programmes. DFID undertook two elections programmes – the *Supporting Transparency, Accountability and Electoral Processes* and the *Supporting Electoral Reform* in Pakistan. These two programmes aimed to address both demand and supply side (respectively) of the electoral reform question.
2. The evaluation report highlighted the niche strategic importance of both programmes in the electoral process and recognised the difficult and politicised environment in which they were working. As a result, they were unable to demonstrate a significant effect on some other their set objectives. Reporting that both programmes struggled to achieve some of their outputs they none the less were viewed positively by stakeholders and may have had effects beyond the narrow confines of the targets set in the logframe such as on women's participation.
3. The evaluation served its primary purpose in articulating critical lessons learned for future elections programming with which we are in broad agreement. The lessons and analysis generated by the evaluation will prove very useful in both designing and delivering future electoral and related programmes in Pakistan and elsewhere.
4. Because both programmes were coming to an end, the evaluation was not requested to articulate specific recommendations to be implemented by either programme. Instead the evaluation examined both the extent to which the programme delivered its objectives but more importantly articulate lessons for future elections programming. The management response broadly follows the structure of the evaluation first addressing issues of voter turnout, then the programmes' effect on strengthened democracy. Finally the management response covers the key lessons articulated in the evaluation.

Section 2 - Voter Turnout.

Finding The evaluation reported that the **official voter turnout rates between 2008 and 2013 are not comparable** on account of questions over the veracity of the electoral rolls in the base year. While there were some positive change in voter turnout the scale of change was more modest than suggested by the official data.

Response *DFID agrees with this finding. The use of voter turnout as in indicator of progress at the outcome level and consequently the use of the 2008 elections data as a baseline against which to measure progress was ambitious. It did however reflect a high degree of aspiration for the programmes' contribution to strengthened democracy in Pakistan. DFID will ensure a more nuanced understanding of and reporting against high level indicators in future elections programmes, while not compromising on our level of ambition to promote democracy in Pakistan. At the same time, DFID recognises that there were major contributions by the programmes in improving the transparency and rigour of the electoral roll for example to reduce duplicates/ ghost voters, introducing photo ID which in turn helped to improve the confidence of voters in the process in 2013.*

Finding At the constituency level the evaluation flagged that the linkage between election management and voter participation is weaker than assumed in the Theory of Change with **voter registration more closely related to intention to vote for a particular candidate than a broader sense of civic responsibility**. And voting decisions are more closely related to group behaviour than to individual informed choice. The analysis of the

political context highlighted that **the role of election management bodies as being secondary and derivative, with the primary role being that of the agreement between the political elites and the state apparatus elites**. The main factor in the increase in voter participation between 2008 and 2013 was increased electoral competitiveness in some regions of the country with factional leaders mobilising voters to register themselves and vote. The evaluation in essence **recommends that a more in-depth political economy analysis be undertaken in order to better understand the drivers of change in voter turnout**

Finding The evaluation reported that the **SERP and STAEP made relatively minor but significant contributions to increased voter participation in the 2013 general elections**. STAEP outputs were regarded by the evaluation as too small in scale to have had any impact on outcomes.

Response *DFID agrees that understanding the political and social dynamics of an elections intervention is central to its success. DFID governance and social development advisers are expected to apply social and political economy analysis and understand formal and informal political institutions at national, provincial, district, community and household levels. DFID has published guidance on Political Economy Analysis, and offers a training course to its staff. DFID's Policy Division continues to develop and advance the use of new forms of social and Political Economy Analysis tools. Future elections and public sector reform programmes will undergo robust quality assurance to ensure that such analysis is conducted for high value, high risk, or highly innovative programmes.*

Finding The evaluation finds that while bottom-up approaches to elections reform have provided some value in increasing voter turnout, the evidence strongly suggests that **working with political and state elites is essential for success**.

Response *DFID agrees with this finding. DFID has made public commitments towards citizens' empowerment and public accountability. DFID has funded research that explores such themes: progress is made through forging coalitions for change, promoting leadership at multiple levels of society. We will increasingly look for opportunities that bring together both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' constituencies for change. Ideally, both top-down and bottom-up pressure should be encouraged and nurtured for successful elections interventions.*

Section Three - Democracy Strengthening¹

Finding **SERP was assessed by the evaluation as having made a 'minor but significant contribution'** to the broader goal of democracy strengthening through its assistance to the ECP in large part due to its role in promoting the acceptability of election results among political stakeholders. **STAEP's contribution to democracy strengthening was also assessed as 'minor but significant in the run up to the elections'**. It was one of many stakeholders promoting the expectation that elections be free and fair.

¹ The evaluation interpreted 'democracy strengthening' as measured using the 'free and fair elections' and 'political participation' scores in the IDEA framework for assessing democracy. During the intervention period the 'free and fair elections' score rose from 58 to 70 from 2011 to 2013 – while the 'political participation' score registered a smaller increase in the same period – from 55 to 58

Finding The evaluation effectively notes the apparent **poor understanding of the relationship between actions and outcomes where assumptions about cause and effects do not stand up to scrutiny.**

Response *Theories of change are extremely challenging to construct for any elections intervention and public reform programme in general, but can make stakeholders aware of the problems involved and lessen the chances of failure. DFID guidance encourages the use of theory of change (including non-intervention political drivers of change) approaches as the dominant analytical framework for developing new programmes and DFID Pakistan recognises the need to continually revisit and revise theories of change and with them the related logframes again which results are measured.*

Section Four - Lessons for Future Programming

Finding There is a need for **greater attention to drivers of political behaviour and changes at macro, meso and micro levels** which should be more explicitly brought into programme justification and design. The actual modalities of interaction between citizens and the electoral process at the grassroots should be a key part of that analysis and the theory of change.

Response *DFID Pakistan agrees with this finding and will ensure that political economy analysis better informs both the design and the on-going assessment and recalibration of programme delivery.*

Finding **Programme design needs to integrate data requirements** for populating the Theory of Change, targeting programme activities and monitoring progress.

Response DFID agrees that better integration of data from the outset (including the reliability of the baseline data against which the programme was ultimately assessed) and a better understanding of available data, what it said and how it could be used would have improved programme delivery, monitoring and analysis.

Finding **Election support programmes should create flexible ‘firefighting’ windows** to facilitate technical assistance as programme activities and for course correction in responses to political and other contingencies.

Response *DFID concurs that electoral programmes (and public sector reform programmes in general) need suitably flexible and agile modalities to respond to changing circumstance and to changing understanding of the environment.*

Finding **There needs to be reassessment of the idea than any single network of organisations, particularly one whose membership consists of diverse organization types, can deliver reliable election monitoring at the national level.**

Response *DFID concurs with the finding. The question of FAFEN’s role is currently being further explored as part of an EU evaluation of electoral support. However, DFID Pakistan recognises the importance of having a national network of organisations for increased local ownership, and also recognises its limits and the need for complementarity with international observer missions. It is hoped FAFEN would make a catalytic contribution beyond the elections and generate lessons to inform programme delivery. In fact since this evaluation, FAFEN continues to demonstrate that it remains a key stakeholder in the*

ongoing electoral reforms protests and debates in Pakistan. Its data and analysis is being used and quoted by many sources including political parties, and FAFEN is continuing to shape and inform the debate on the need for a comprehensive package of electoral reforms

Finding **Social exclusion needs to be explicitly incorporated into the design of future election support programmes** where the socially excluded are also more likely to be excluded from political participation, and political participation offers entry points for the socially excluded.

Response *DFID concurs that social exclusion needs to be at the heart of any electoral reform programme.*

Bill Kilby, Head Governance Group