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The Challenges of Political Programming: International Assistance to Parties and Parliaments

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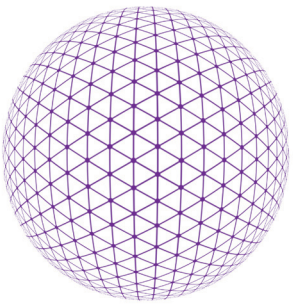

International IDEA resources on Political Participation

This discussion paper has been prepared as part of International IDEA's project on Effective Party Assistance and its specific focus on the relationship between political party and parliamentary support.

The paper was commissioned to identify the factors likely to prevent or promote greater integration, coordination and impact between the two fields and to make recommendations on how support can best be integrated at the strategic and practical levels.

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Executive summary

Donor efforts to support democracy and good governance have, in the past few years, been shaped by two dominant trends in international assistance to developing countries. The first is the aid effectiveness agenda, following declarations in Paris and Accra, which aims for greater impact and results-oriented programming. The second is the increasing use of political economy analysis to better understand the factors that determine the quality and outcomes of the political decision-making process. In the desire for greater impact, donor strategies for working with parliaments and political parties have increasingly recognized the need to engage at a deeper level with the politics of the countries in which they work in order to achieve results. This has involved greater co-ordination between donors at the strategic level and prompted suggestions that the support provided to parliaments and parties needs to be better aligned to achieve political change.

This paper examines the ways in which different donor agencies and implementing organizations are addressing the challenges of this type of programming. For the purposes of the paper we use the term 'political programming' to describe the recent attempts by donor agencies to apply more political forms of analysis (such as 'drivers of change') in the design, delivery and implementation of projects to achieve 'political' outcomes; that is, where donors and implementers are seeking to engage with political incentives and structures to achieve change, rather than solely relying on technical support. It draws on interviews with staff from agencies and implementing partners as well as a number of independent consultants working on the design, delivery and evaluation of party and parliamentary projects. It also includes an analysis of strategy papers and planning documents from a variety of organizations and an in-depth examination of political programmes with parties and parliaments in four countries.

It suggests that while there is a degree of consensus at the strategic level, donors are struggling to translate their strategic insights into project design on the ground. In addition, it argues that the dynamics of the aid effectiveness agenda are pulling in a different direction to the logic of political economy analysis. Ultimately, the way 'managing for results' is now interpreted by donors may, in fact, be undermining both the quality and the impact of political programmes in the long term.

The paper contains four chapters. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of international strategies for parliamentary and party assistance. Highlighting the weaknesses of 'traditional' interventions to support parliaments and parties, it examines the increasing emphasis from donors on more political forms of programming in both spheres of activity. At the strategic level, the emerging priorities are characterized by a desire to understand the incentives that shape parliamentary and party activity, and tackle the underlying causes of weakness in both. Yet, such programmes face four sets of challenges: i) translating strategy into project design and implementation; ii) continuing fears of political interference; iii) the problem of establishing politically realistic objectives for programmes; and iv) integrating support to different parts of the political system, not least parties and parliaments. In short, the adoption of common principles for international assistance to parties and parliaments still leaves a number of practical difficulties, and there has been relatively little assessment of how these are being handled.

Chapter 2 looks specifically at recent developments in the design and delivery of projects. In particular it looks at the tensions and difficulties that donors are facing in moving from the strategic to the specific. The evidence indicates that although programmes are increasingly being informed by a sophisticated political analysis, many of the projects themselves are falling back on traditional methods. In particular there

seems to be a tendency to shy away from engaging with political realities on the ground. In short, despite the rhetoric of aid effectiveness, there is a continuing lack of clarity and coherence around much of the work in this field.

Chapter 3 examines four case studies designed to understand these dynamics and difficulties in more detail. Each of the four case studies is based on a detailed analysis of project documents and interviews with stakeholders and staff. It should be made clear that the projects were not chosen as a representative sample of parliamentary and party support programmes, but rather the opposite. The projects differ from the vast majority of programmes in that they all have overtly political objectives and to one extent or another have sought to integrate support to parliaments and political parties. They provide test cases in which donors have recognized and sought to manage the challenges that come with political intervention, and thus illustrate some of the innate difficulties in this area of programming.

The first two case studies examine the deepening democracy programmes in Tanzania and Uganda, respectively. Both were multi-donor programmes, the premise for which was the interdependence of the different institutions of democracy and the need for a set of activities which engaged with the political drivers of change. Yet they provide very different experiences and insights of the difficulties in translating political analysis into the planning, management and delivery of projects. Ultimately, the deepening democracy programme in Tanzania was undone by a nervousness about the implications of encouraging political reform, which affected the way in which activities were designed and was compounded by a complex and ambiguous management structure. It provides a useful contrast with the similar programme in Uganda, which was based on a stated intention to alter the balance of power. That clarity from the outset meant stakeholders understood the nature of the programme—even if they did not support it—and that political tensions could be addressed directly.

The other two case studies are the work of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) in Ghana and the work of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in Macedonia. The Ghana case study provides an example of a project explicitly designed to strengthen political parties but which sought also to influence other aspects of the political system, not least the parliament. The Macedonia case is an example of a project that sought to strengthen parliament by working through and with the political parties. Both projects were based on a detailed understanding of the political dynamics in those countries and engaged directly with them in order to foster institutional, cultural and behavioural change. However, both relied on local partners as the drivers of political change, and highlight the delicate balance between local ownership and external pressure. They reveal some of the potential problems such programming can face, not least dependency on local stakeholder buy-in and the need to combine incentives with ownership.

The final chapter seeks to draw together the main lessons for political programming for party and parliamentary support and argues that the most successful projects are those which first allow for significant flexibility in project implementation; and, second, establish realistic political objectives. In the first place, political programming—not least support to parties and parliaments, the focus of this research—has to be based on an analysis of the interdependence of the political institutions in a particular country. In this context, numerous interviewees commented that the best projects were those that diverged from the original planning documents. A rigid programme design ignores the fact that politics is never static and that political programmes need to respond to this reality, so that the planning process itself should evolve over time. Although the objectives should remain constant, the activities and interventions should be continually adapted. In too many programmes it is the other way around.

Second, political programming is still, to a large extent, based on a 'hit and hope' strategy. It relies on specific activities and interventions, which means that there is, at best, a tenuous link between some of the techniques used and the hoped-for outcomes. Political change is not linear, but messy, haphazard and unpredictable. Yet there is almost no evidence of a strategy for managing these activities towards particular outcomes. Contrast this with the business world, where there is a whole sub-industry built around 'change management'. Most businesses have a broadly hierarchical structure that looks relatively straightforward compared with the complexities and competing interests that exist within a parliament or a political party. Yet, no change management strategy would seek to deal with one part of the organization as if it were independent from other parts of the business. In the same way, political programmes need a strategy which is not just based on an integrated analysis, but has an integrated strategy to achieve change.

The paper concludes by arguing that greater effectiveness and integration in party and parliamentary support depends on donors changing their role. It means altering the way in which projects are delivered, with a better translation of political analysis into project design, and greater flexibility in the way they are implemented. However, the 'aid effectiveness' agenda, in particular its emphasis on 'results', appears to be pulling programmes away from this approach. This is generally being interpreted by donor agencies as the need for a 'return on investment' with tangible signs of change, but this risks distorting the way in which such projects are delivered. It has been described by Thomas Carothers as a 'projectization' of such work, which places greater emphasis on fitting work into the structure of bureaucratic forms required by donors. As a senior figure from a donor agency put it, it means that governments are 'more interested in doing things the right way, than in doing the right things'. The emphasis on 'results' runs the risk of reducing the effectiveness of such political programmes, as the desire for quantitative data means that projects end up with the wrong indicators, which in turn means that they end up doing the wrong things.

Donors should be moving in the opposite direction if they are serious about achieving meaningful political change. Projects should be driven by outcomes rather than process. In addition, the logic of programmes must reflect the fact that political change is an internally driven exercise. In such circumstances, the role of the donor agency or institute becomes less about 'implementation' than about being a consultant or facilitator to the process, providing advice and guidance. It also means that a more effective approach to parties and parliaments requires flexibility so that programmes evolve and adapt to changing political circumstances. It means that project implementers need to be astute enough to identify the synergies between party and parliamentary support, and able to integrate them around the desire for specific political outcomes. A flexible and genuinely outcome-oriented form of programming would mean that donors take greater responsibility for the results of their interventions, but ultimately exercise less control over the way they are implemented. At present, such developments seem highly unlikely.

List of Abbreviations

CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Tanzania)
CRC	Constitutional Review Committee
DP	Democratic Party (Uganda)
DCSP	Democracy Consolidation Strategy Paper (Ghana)
DDP	Deepening Democracy Programme (Uganda)
DDTP	Deepening Democracy in Tanzania Programme
Demo Finland	Political Parties of Finland for Democracy
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DUI	Democratic Union for Integration (Macedonia)
EAF	Expert Advisory Fund (DDP)
EU	European Union
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change (Uganda)
GPPP	Ghana Political Parties Programme
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs (Ghana)
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IRI	International Republican Institute
IT	Information Technology
JAP	Joint Action Plan (Ghana)
NDC	National Democratic Congress (Ghana)
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NEX	National Execution
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NPP	New Patriotic Party (Ghana)
NRM	National Resistance Movement (Uganda)
OC	Oversight Committee (DDTP)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PCO (DDTP)	Programme Coordination Office
PDG	Partners for Democracy and Governance (Uganda)
PDP	Party for Democratic Prosperity (Macedonia)
PMU	Project Management Unit (DDP)
RF	Research Fund (DDP)
RPP	Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (Tanzania)
SADEV	Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TCD	Tanzania Centre for Democracy
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VMRO-DPMNE	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

International strategies for parliamentary and party assistance

In the past two decades, democracy assistance has become a significant feature in the work of all the international aid agencies, particularly since what has become known as the 'third wave' of democratization which took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[1] However, in key respects democracy assistance remains an ambiguous and amorphous area of international activity. It has been used as a way of addressing a number of different foreign policy and donor agency priorities, including security, geopolitical diplomacy, humanitarian aid and socio-economic development. It should also be seen as a constituent part of a wider international 'good governance' agenda, which aims to improve mechanisms of accountability, representation and transparency—but has an equal concern for state capacity and public service delivery. In addition, since the attacks on the United States in September 2001, a greater emphasis has been placed on the need to tackle fragile states as part of an international counterterrorism policy, so that democracy support work has increasingly focused on building 'capable and effective states'.

Within this broad approach, democracy assistance has tended to focus on three main areas of work: support to electoral processes; institutional development; and strengthening civil society. Electoral assistance has been the most prominent and, it appears, the best funded area of donor activity, reflecting the traditional importance attached to elections as a sign of a functioning democracy.[2] Institution-building has encompassed a range of activities to establish the constitutional and judicial framework of a country. Support to political parties and parliaments has tended to fall within this area, but both account for only a small proportion of activity.[3] Instead, donors have traditionally shown a greater predilection for working with civil society organizations, as this is regarded as less politically sensitive and more cost-effective, and plays to their concerns for building social capital in emerging democracies.

However, the impact of such assistance, especially in its early stages, is highly questionable. Thomas Carothers in particular has highlighted a range of deficiencies that continue to hamper democracy assistance efforts.[4] Common criticisms include: the tendency of donors to use standard models for assistance, which take little account of local context or political dynamics; the attempt by donors to impose these ideas rather than build local commitment and support; and the adoption of idealized models often based on US/West European ideas of democracy.

In addition, democracy assistance has been undermined by a lack of coordination and integration in three main ways. First, donor agencies themselves have, at times, duplicated and sometimes conflicted with the work of others in a particular country. Second, democracy support can conflict with a donor government's diplomatic and security objectives in a particular country. Diplomacy depends on maintaining good relations with the executive of the developing country, which may not be too keen on strengthening either civil society or the institutions of democracy. Third, although an effective democracy relies on the interaction of its many different component parts working together, democracy assistance has tended to treat each area of work in isolation, with little or no integration of programmes designed to support elections, institutions and civil society. Most markedly for the purpose of this paper, despite the obvious overlap between support to parliaments and support to political parties, they exist as almost entirely separate disciplines.

The approach to democracy assistance, however, has changed markedly in tone since the mid-2000s, reflecting two significant developments in the field of international aid. The first is the emphasis now placed on 'aid effectiveness' and the second is the greater interest in forms of 'political economy' analysis as a way of understanding how governance works in practice.

On the first front, in 2005 the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness established the principles which now govern almost all donor activity. These are, briefly:

- Ownership: Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies, and coordinate development actions;
- Alignment: Donors base their overall support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures;
- Harmonization: Donors' actions are more harmonized, transparent and collectively effective;
- Managing for results: Managing resources and improving decision-making for results;
- Mutual accountability: Donors and partners are accountable for development results.

The thrust behind the Paris principles was a desire for greater impact from donor interventions, by taking greater account of country context and working directly with partners in those countries to achieve common objectives. These principles were reinforced in 2008 by a subsequent High-Level Forum, which published the Accra Agenda for Action. The Accra document further emphasized the principle that all donor activity should seek to strengthen domestic institutions and forms of accountability. In other words, rather than working solely with the executive arm of government in a developing country, or creating new systems for the delivery and disbursement of aid, donors should use and enhance existing institutions and processes. Accra thus envisaged a specific role for parliaments as partners in the process of development and had potential implications for support to political parties as agents of change.

The second development, the increasing use of political economy techniques to analyse and understand governance, has been led by a number of donor agencies, most notably the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Each has developed its own analytical framework, but all work from similar guiding principles. For example, Sida's *Power Analysis,* 'involves gaining a deeper understanding of the political, social, cultural and economic issues at play in a country; the power relationships between actors at the societal level and the incentives of these actors to affect or impede change'.[5] In the same vein, DFID has invested significantly in its *Drivers of Change Analysis,* and subsequent tools such as its *Country Governance Analysis,* which draws on many of the same techniques, to help 'understand how incentives, institutions and ideas shape political action and development outcomes in the countries where we work'.[6] In short, political economy analysis is seen as a way to better understand the factors that determine both the quality and the outcomes of the political decision-making process.

The implication of both the aid effectiveness agenda and the use of political economy analysis for support projects, as is recognized by many donors, is that donors need to engage with the process of political change. This means designing and delivering projects which seek to address the deeper causes of political instability, poor governance and lack of democracy. By definition, this takes agencies into more political territory—as DFID's 2009 White Paper, *Building Our Common Future,* notes:

> [T]he UK will increasingly put politics at the heart of its action. We need to understand who holds power in society so we can forge new alliances for peace and prosperity. … In the future, understanding political dynamics will shape more of our programmes. This will change the decisions we make about how we spend our aid budget, what we want to focus on and who we want to work with.[7]

DFID is not alone in this analysis. In 2009, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs published its Democracy and Human Rights strategy, which stated, 'It is now recognized that democratization is about processes of political change. Democratization affects how power is distributed, used, contested and controlled'.[8] Similar sentiments are reflected in the publications of many of the international donor agencies. Nonetheless, it is not clear that this shift in rhetoric has been matched by a shift in donor practice. In fact, the desire for a deeper level of engagement and a more political approach to democracy support presents four distinct sets of problems:

1. Translating strategy into in-country activity.

   Although there is growing consensus about the principles that should underpin democracy support and the need for greater political engagement, this would mean a fundamental change in the way that donor-funded projects are designed and delivered. Our research suggests that there is, as yet, little evidence of such a change.

2. The challenge of 'political' intervention.

   Donor agencies have had a long-standing aversion to 'political interference', that is, being accused of meddling in the domestic politics of another sovereign nation. Greater democracy ultimately means some redistribution of power, however, with those in government being most likely to lose out. In that sense, it is overtly political. The challenge for donors is to square the concern about interference with projects that recognize their political implications.

3. Setting realistic and meaningful objectives.

   The challenge of identifying the impact of democracy assistance is not new. It has always been difficult to find reliable quantitative indicators, and to identify cause and effect in democracy programmes. However, perhaps more significantly, the rationale behind democracy assistance needs to recognize that political change happens incrementally, over a long period and is shaped by a number of different factors. In short, the scope for donors to influence the quality of democracy will always be limited.

4. Integration.

   None of the component parts of a functioning democracy operates in isolation. Many of the newer analyses of governance challenges are explicit in recognizing the interdependence of different parts of the system. Nonetheless, democracy assistance is structured almost exclusively to deal with one part of the system at a time.

These challenges pose problems for donor agencies at multiple levels and in many different areas of activity. This paper explores how they are addressing them, specifically in relation to their work with parliaments and political parties. As is mentioned above, these have traditionally formed a relatively small part of democracy assistance, reflecting, in part, the fact that these were more overtly political areas of activity. However, the desire to engage with politics, combined with the fact that both parliaments and political parties are increasingly being seen as critical allies in donor agencies' democracy programmes, means that both spheres are gaining greater prominence.

The development of parliamentary and party assistance

Parliaments remain the single most important institution in any representative democracy, as the principal forum for holding government to account in between elections and connecting the public with government by providing the 'nerve-endings' of the political system. The United Nations Development Progamme (UNDP) highlights that parliaments are important because they empower ordinary people to participate in the political process.[9] Donor support has therefore sought to strengthen these key parliamentary functions by focusing on their oversight, lawmaking and representative functions.

Donors have sought to deliver parliamentary programmes most commonly based around four types of activities. First, there are training seminars and workshops that teach a certain standard model to local stakeholders, and aim to improve the processes and functions of the parliament. Second, there are the basic technical capacity building programmes that provide equipment and resources. Third, study visits are often incorporated into the programme as a way of introducing ideas of good practice and successful functioning. Lastly, there are interventions that establish a new department or process to make up a shortfall in current functioning. More recently, donors and practitioners have begun to include multiparty dialogue forums aimed at a particular issue, but these remain a small part of overall activity.

The traditional approach to parliamentary support is essentially a technical one—perhaps reflecting the fact that parliamentary support is highly sensitive if it actively increases oversight of the executive. Providing equipment, resources or training, by contrast, is much less controversial—and often actively encouraged by the recipients. Significantly, the approach is shaped by the expertise and experience of the practitioners and led almost entirely by them.

However, the impact of this approach has been limited. It is best summed up by Thomas Carothers, who commented in an assessment written in 1999: 'if asked to name the area of democracy support that most often falls short of its goals, I would have to point to legislative assistance'.[10] A 2005 Sida report proposed four reasons for this failure, all of which remain pertinent.[11] First, donors and practitioners focus on the parliament as a 'self-contained entity', rather than its position within a wider political system. Consequently, the deficiencies identified by donors are often merely the

symptoms of political problems rather than the cause. Second, there is often a lack of commitment on the part of the government or parliamentary authorities to change the status quo. In many nascent democracies, the system is dominated by a single party that has no incentive to implement qualitative changes. Third, there is a fundamental misreading by donors of the political dynamics within a given country. Incentives and disincentives that may hamstring progress are not well understood or articulated within the programme design. Lastly, there is a disconnect between the objectives and the modes of delivering them. In other words, technical support is unlikely to achieve political outcomes.

Support to political parties has followed a similar trajectory, but forms an even smaller part of overall assistance efforts than parliamentary development. Again, this reflects the traditional donor aversion to overtly political activity, and a preference for engaging with civil society. The dominant view has been that civil society played a catalytic role in the spread of democracy, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, and negative perceptions of 'the party' in former dictatorships have further diminished the reputation of these organizations among citizens and international donors.

However, in recent years there has been a refocusing of priorities, not least due to the number of countries where strong civil society has failed to overcome the weaknesses of political parties in order to produce viable democracies.[12] Academic and strategic literature began to demonstrate the invaluable role that political parties play in the political system,[13] and, despite their drawbacks, that they remain the most effective way to aggregate public opinion and represent citizens' concerns. Donor literature has begun to look at political party support and an increasing number of organizations are designing a range of programmes in the political party field.

The institutions and agencies working in this field tend to fall into one of three types of activity. First, there are those that support the multiparty system as a whole, and which view party support as part of wider democracy assistance programmes. Second, there are the bilateral organizations, most notably the German *Stiftungen,* which prioritize sister party support and are not always directly involved in wider democratic development issues. Third, there are a number of institutions, such as the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), which provide multiparty support that also includes some bilateral elements.

Again, party assistance has been subject to significant criticism for its reliance on a standard model.[14] The charges include that donors often rely on an idealized party model, which informs how they think about the problems of and solutions for parties; and that programming is built around activities that are once again practitioner-centric—more often than not characterized by workshops, training seminars and study visits—all of which rely on the assumption that a standard model is applicable to all contexts or that the experiences of one country are transferable to another. As Thomas Carothers notes: 'Western party aid seems to be based on a old-fashioned idea of how political parties were in some earlier, more virtuous era, before the rise of television-driven, image-centric, personality-driven politics … and the growing cynicism about partisan politics that characterizes political life in many established democracies.'[15]

In addition, much party assistance has been devoid of any wider links to a strategy for democracy support. There is a common tendency, especially among the party-affiliated organizations working in the field, to assume that assistance to political parties is, by definition, a good thing. Often motivated by a desire to enhance the position of their sister parties, it is taken for granted that party support will be meaningful and constructive in the long term, regardless of content or context. Party assistance projects have also failed at the more basic level of simply ensuring that the projects are in line with the desired outcomes. In a report for Sida, the party-affiliated organizations in Sweden are strongly criticized for the lack of connection between activities and outcomes: 'the effect on democracy is both vague and, at best, very long-term'.[16] As other authors have noted, these problems are not confined to Sweden—the German *stiftungen* have been criticized for their lack of a specific strategy for party assistance.[17]

The challenges for donors in party and parliamentary support

Donor agencies, recognizing the weaknesses of previous strategies for parliaments and political parties, have started to alter their approach in both spheres of activity. This has also been influenced by the wider focus on greater impact and aid effectiveness as well as a more overtly political analysis. The emerging priorities are characterized by a desire to engage with both parliaments and parties at a deeper and more political level,

addressing the 'drivers of change', and to understand and tackle the causes of the problems, rather than simply treat the symptoms. Yet, the four sets of challenges listed above present specific problems for donors and have a particular set of dynamics in the fields of party and parliamentary support.

i) Translating strategy into action

In both parliamentary and party assistance there is an emerging consensus within the donor community about the need for a more strategic approach which deals more directly with the political factors influencing the performance of parties and parliaments. Among those working on parliamentary assistance there has been a marked effort to improve coordination and collaboration between donor agencies at the international level. For example, donors and institutions such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the NDI, the UNDP, the World Bank Institute and the Inter-Parliamentary Union have been at the forefront of efforts to develop benchmarks for parliaments in the past five years. Since 2007, practitioners and donor agencies working with parliaments have met several times to share experiences and discuss common challenges at meetings coordinated by DFID, the World Bank Institute and the UNDP.

In addition, the emphasis on technical support is giving way to a more nuanced view of the factors that determine parliamentary effectiveness. Recent developments suggest that donors are starting to congregate around a shared understanding of the problem and a new strategy that seeks to engage at a deeper level in order to achieve meaningful change. The outlines of this strategy exist in analyses commissioned by donors such as DFID, Sida and the UNDP.[18] The papers display a notable level of consensus in identifying the problems that have troubled parliamentary assistance programmes in the past. They also provide a common agenda, closely linked to the Paris Declaration, on how parliamentary assistance should develop in the coming years, placing greater emphasis on projects that are focused on getting tangible results, and that are suited to the political context, deal with incentive structures, ensure ownership by the parliamentary institution and are based on a long-term commitment by donors.

There has been a similar set of developments among those working with political parties. Initiated by International IDEA and DFID, a conference at Wilton Park, UK, held early in 2010 brought together the key institutions and actors in the field to discuss the main challenges for party assistance work. It provided the basis for an ongoing set of discussions and, potentially, greater coordination in promoting party support work.

The content of party assistance is also evolving to address some of the deeper political issues. For example, the NDI's *Guide to Political Party Development* (2008) specifically addresses many of the political factors likely to enhance or hamper support programmes. It stresses the importance of understanding party interests, ensuring buy-in for programmes by the party leadership and encouraging the party to take ownership of any programme. There is also increased interest in the conditions and incentives that cause parties to behave in certain ways and, in particular, the factors that encourage parties to adopt progressive or pro-poor policies.[19]

However, this process is being driven primarily by donor agencies at the strategic level, and it is not yet clear how far these principles are being translated into practical projects on the ground. That is not to suggest that such projects do not exist. There are undoubtedly individual country-level projects working with parliaments and parties which have built from the local political context and engage with both at a more political level, but these may be exceptional. This paper suggests that there is little evidence of a fundamental shift in the way that such projects are designed and delivered. The value of the strategic analysis and donor consensus is in the way they are applied in practice, and as yet there are few tangible examples on which to draw.

ii) The challenge of 'political' intervention

As is noted at several points in this chapter, the new emphasis on engaging with incentive structures and drivers of change in a particular country takes donors more deeply into political territory. It is based on the recognition that attempting to improve the performance of parliament or a political party means more than simply providing technical support or improving infrastructure. Ultimately, it is about changing political behaviour. In evidence to the British House of Commons All-Party Group on Africa, a senior figure from one of the main implementing organizations highlighted the need for change in parliamentary support work, 'Too often donors and implementers "teach" MPs about their "role". [The problem] is usually not MPs' lack of understanding, but the incentive structure that governs their behaviour. Programming needs to focus on changing these incentive structures,

rather than simply "teaching" or "training" MPs'.[20] In other words, the role of donors is less about supplying resources and capacity to parliaments and parties, and more about shaping what they do and how they do it.

As a result, there is a growing sense that donors need to be more explicit about the fact that these forms of support are not only political, but also potentially partisan. That is, democracy assistance work, in so far as it seeks more transparency, accountability and representation, means a redistribution of political power. Some political actors will benefit while others will see their influence constrained. It is partisan in that it will benefit one political grouping more than another. As Thomas Carothers argues, however, acknowledging the partisan nature of support is not by definition a bad thing if it forces donors to accept the implications of their activity.[21]

This, however, takes donors into areas of which they have long been wary. Yet, as the quality of governance has risen in the order of donors' priorities, so the need to work more with parliaments and parties has become more pressing – and to do so in a political way. Different donors have responded in different ways. A recent 'How to note' on working with political parties published by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggests that country offices need to be clear about the rationale of the programme and the eligibility criteria of the political parties with which they will work, and to be aware of political sensitivities at different stages of the electoral cycle.[22] Others have been more explicit about their political role, particularly in challenging environments. NIMD, for example, states that: 'Without compromising its impartiality, NIMD … cannot hold to a traditional concept of neutrality and thus should not shy away from exercising political pressure'.[23]

However, the fear of being accused of interfering in the political process, either through parliamentary or party support, means that many projects are characterized by tentativeness in engaging with political drivers. Establishing the strategic principles to guide such work is important. However, implementation of a project on the ground will have to take into account the need to negotiate the different political forces within that country and the potential for those in power to undermine the project's objectives, and aim not to conflict with donor countries' other diplomatic objectives.

iii) Establishing politically realistic objectives

There is now a common acceptance among donor organizations that the process of democratic reform needs to be driven from within, rather than imposed from the outside. If programmes to support parliaments and political parties are genuinely aimed at changing the behaviour of key political actors, the aims and objectives of the support programme need to be owned by those actors. This means that donors have to work with the grain of political will within the parliament or party, and work with, or around, the various incentive structures which determine the effectiveness of the institution.

In this context, programmes need to be realistic about what sort of change they can hope to effect. There will often be a limited political window within which donors can operate and programmes need to be built on more modest, but realistic objectives. This means that programmes need to be designed and delivered in a different way. At the Wilton Park conference on support to political parties, one participant made a plea to the representative of a major donor organization: 'What we need is less money and more time'. The comment generated much sympathy in the room and was a recognition of the fact that many donor agencies are still expecting significant political change over a relatively short time period. To this end, a report for Sida from 2002 made a point for many programmes: 'The insight that institutional reform requires deeper changes underscores how slow and difficult change will be. We will most probably, therefore, have to revise our notion of long-term change from five to ten years, as at present, to several decades at a minimum.'[24] The conception of what is achievable over what timeframe needs to be based on a more realistic assessment of how political change happens.

iv) Integrating parliamentary and party support

As is mentioned above, democracy support work tends to address items in isolation from each other, particularly when it comes to institutional development. This is a weakness, but it is particularly significant in support to parliaments and political parties. Parties are, of course, central to the quality of parliamentary performance. In the first instance, they usually provide parliamentarians with the principal route to re-election and the means to a political career. Parliamentarians therefore look primarily to their political party for advice and guidance

on how they should behave in parliament, which way they should vote or from where their support can be expected to come. Perhaps more significantly, parties provide the basis for parliamentary organization. While the standing orders or parliamentary by-laws provide the rules of the game, the parties determine the games within the rules, providing the vehicles for negotiation between government and opposition over legislation and parliamentary business. In short, they ensure the smooth functioning, or not, of parliament.

The quality and character of the political parties will therefore have a significant impact on the effectiveness of parliament. For example, strong, disciplined parties, such as those which exist in some African states, may mean that parliament is entirely dominated by the government. At the other extreme, a multiplicity of parties with little discipline or internal cohesion, such as exist in some Latin American countries, makes parliament unpredictable and difficult to organize. Where a party has no control over its parliamentarians, the legislature will struggle to organize its business, let alone take decisions over legislation or government policy. By the same token, a party's electoral appeal should be based, at least in part, on its record in parliament. An ineffective, badly organized parliament which fails to use its powers to influence policy decisions and legislation should be of direct concern to the political parties within it.

In short, support to parties and parliaments is closely linked. Practitioners working on party assistance will engage with political parties in the course of their work, and need to understand their interests in either strengthening or weakening the parliament and play to those political incentives. Practitioners working with political parties are almost certain to be concerned with the organization of the parliamentary caucus, how policy positions are pursued in parliament or the implementation of manifesto commitments through the legislative process.

Given this level of interdependence it would seem obvious that support to parties and parliaments should be better linked, but there has been little activity which does so effectively. For example, although some organizations claim to be working with parties in parliament, closer examination of such projects suggests that rather than using parties to address some of the fundamental weaknesses of the parliament, the parliament is simply the venue for traditional party assistance work. Although efforts to support political institutions will involve donors working towards similar aims, the design and implementation of programmes for parties and programmes for parliaments persists, with little attempt to align objectives and outcomes.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper is to examine how donors are meeting these challenges in projects in different countries. As is highlighted above, the shift in donor attitudes to parliamentary and party assistance is a relatively recent development, with most of the activity taking place at the strategic level—between the key actors from the headquarters of the main agencies. This is, it should be stressed, an important and welcome development. There is an emerging consensus about the importance of both parliaments and parties to donor objectives, and the need to engage with both at a deeper and more political level. However, the adoption of these principles still leaves a number of practical difficulties and there has been relatively little assessment of how these strategic changes are playing themselves out in projects on the ground.

Chapter 2 looks in more detail at the challenges facing donors in translating strategic rhetoric into projects on the ground, problems of integration and coordination, and the effectiveness of such programmes. Chapter 3 explores these themes in relation to four case studies: from Tanzania; Uganda; Macedonia; and Ghana. Each case study reflects a different approach to engaging with the politics of the reform process and efforts to integrate support to parliaments and political parties. Chapter 4 draws on these examples to set out the main lessons and recommendations in the development of support to parliaments and political parties.

From strategic objectives to project implementation

Chapter 1 highlights the extent to which donors are seeking to improve the delivery and impact of support to parliaments and political parties. This has involved a recognition by most donors of the need to engage with the politics of institutional change, drawing on more sophisticated forms of political analysis and developing projects on that basis. This chapter provides a brief assessment of the way in which donor agencies are translating those strategic insights into programme design and implementation, and the continuing difficulties they face.

This chapter has four sections. The first examines the recent emphasis on international standards and context-specific programming to improve effectiveness, the second looks at how these strategies are being applied in country programmes, the third assesses coordination among donors and integration of programme objectives and the fourth looks at the effectiveness of such projects overall. It concludes that, despite the rhetoric of aid effectiveness, there is a lack of clarity and coherence around much of the work in this field, which undermines the continuing impact of parliamentary and party support work.

i) Strategic approaches to parliaments and political party assistance

The attempt to improve the impact of both parliamentary and party assistance should be understood as part of the wider emphasis on aid effectiveness. Most donor agencies make support to parliaments and parties an explicit part of their good governance and development programmes. For example, DFID has paid increasing attention to parliaments and parties in recent White Papers,[25] and the UNDP describes legislative assemblies as an 'integral component' of development assistance,[26] and states that 'parliaments and parliamentarians have a critical role to play in spurring and sustaining national action towards the [Millennium Development Goals, MDGs]'.[27] Similarly, NIMD's work with parties is premised on the belief that 'without more accountable governments and better performing political systems, the international endeavour to deliver on the MDGs is destined to fail'.[28]

As is noted in chapter 1, donors are attempting to address the challenges of engaging with politics and translating strategic insights into country-specific programming. The pressure to show results has improved coordination between donor agencies, and led to a degree of consensus over the priorities and approaches to this end. Two dominant trends have become apparent in recent years. There has been a concerted attempt to identify universal standards, benchmarks and indicators to which parliaments and parties should conform. In addition, there has been an emphasis on understanding the specific local context in which a parliament or a party operates, and on designing programmes which fit such contexts.

In the field of parliamentary support, a number of recent initiatives from the NDI, the UNDP, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), often in collaboration with one another, have sought to establish internationally recognized standards.[29] The concept rests on an agreed set of international norms and benchmarks against which an institution can be measured and through which interventions can be planned, and draws heavily on the examples of human rights and electoral standards which are widely used. Typically, the benchmarks will suggest minimum standards for a parliament on the powers of committees, the right to amend legislation and parliament's control of its own budget. Or, to take one specific example, the Canadian Parliamentary Centre's *Parliamentary Report Card*[30] sets out four areas which are 'almost universally regarded as the core functions of the parliament':[31] legislation; oversight; representation; and budgets. The card is then used to score the performance of a parliament in these areas.

There have been similar drives towards a standards-based approach to political parties, the most notable exponent being the NDI in its *Minimum Standards for Democratic Functioning of Political Parties*. This document was drafted in 'response to requests from [NDI]'s political party partners in emerging democracies for universally accepted guiding principles and norms for open and democratic parties'.[32] The standards are meant to both guide the activities of practitioners and inform political parties on their own development. NDI considers the standards to be a reflection of the current practices and principles of established and broadly democratic political parties.[33] The document itself consists of a number of clauses, grouped into two main sections: party behaviour and party organization. The clauses cover a wide range of issues, and there is particular emphasis on the inclusion of cross-cutting issues of human rights, freedom of speech, minority representation and financial transparency. It is an attempt to ground political parties in internationally accepted norms.

Other initiatives use broad categories to inform their programming, describing the general function of an institution within the political system. For example the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) publication *Political Party Assistance* (2003) establishes criteria for assessing whether a party is democratic, and whether it can be assisted as a result. There is an acknowledgement that the majority of parties will be somewhere along the spectrum, rather than at one end or the other, and that the ultimate criterion is a demonstrable commitment to reform. NIMD takes a similar approach in *A Framework for Democratic Party Building* (2004), which explains the 'institutionalization' of a party, that is, the process 'whereby parties become better organized, practice democratic values and establish rules and procedures that will allow them to compete more effectively and be more successful in elections and at implementing their policy preferences.'[34] The publication contains analysis of the hallmarks of an institutionalized party, and of some of the practices that may hinder their emergence. There are lists of positive and negative practices, which suggest the possible aims of activities.

At the same time, many of these documents also emphasize the need for a detailed analysis and understanding of the local political context. This quote from the UNDP's Parliamentary Strategy Note is typical: 'parliamentary development programmes that are not politically contextualized can do as much harm as good'.[35] Beyond the broad strategic documentation, organizations frequently provide contextual studies in programme literature, keen to demonstrate the connection between the specific shape of the political landscape and the objectives of the programme. This is often formed through the use of various political economy tools such 'drivers of change' or 'power analysis', which allow practitioners to choose more suitable aid modalities and to make them more 'politically intelligent interlocutors and more effective operators'[36] by grounding programmes in a meticulous reading of the political context. This, in turn, is intimately linked with an emphasis on local ownership, which reflects the recognition that 'programme sustainability, particularly in political environments, requires local ownership and engagement in parliamentary strengthening'.[37] Again, the aid effectiveness agenda is the primary driver of this trend, stipulating that donors should be grounding support within the institutions and strategies of the partner countries.

ii) Managing the tension between universal standards and context-specific programming

Although these two trends do not directly contradict one another, there is a tension between them which the design and delivery of support projects will need to navigate carefully. The development of programmes that conform to international standards for parliaments and political parties is partly driven by a desire to insulate donors from accusations of partisanship and political interference. However, the focus on political economy analysis and local context is designed to immerse programmes more deeply in the politics of the country. This highlights, once again, the challenge of applying strategic principles to project documents and country-specific programmes.

Although donors are evidently using political economy tools in their assessments of parliamentary and party support, this contextual analysis is often broached in very broad terms and means that programme documents often shy away from any objectives which might be construed as political. Too often, they fall back on generalized objectives, such as the following which is taken from one agency's project document:

- Political parties become more institutionalized, improving internal capacity to enable greater responsiveness to citizens, and improved representation of their interests.
- The parliament becomes more institutionally effective, the work of committees and individual MPs is enhanced, and oversight and accountability roles are strengthened.

- Civil society is increasingly engaged in connecting citizens with the political process.

Although these are worthy ambitions, they offer little guidance or political context, and would be difficult to translate into concrete activities with targeted outcomes. The objectives merely reiterate the necessary functions of these institutions in any democratic system.

The consultants and practitioners in the field with whom we spoke were clear that most donors were simply too cautious to approach anything deemed political. In parliamentary support, donors tend to talk about 'strengthening oversight and accountability', or 'increased assertiveness' and a cursory glance might suggest that these aims are political as they may enable parliament to challenge the government and its policies. While this is true to a certain extent, the objectives fail to articulate any partisan differences that exist between individual parliamentarians. It is likely that parliamentary oversight, accountability and assertiveness will be driven primarily by the opposition members in the assembly, rather than those from the ruling party with a stake in maintaining the status quo. However, most parliamentary objectives do not do this. By regarding the parliament as a self-contained entity, its constituent members are similarly seen first and foremost as generic parliamentarians. This allows the donor to avoid accusations of partisanship or bias, and makes it easier to keep activities within the safe boundaries of the parliamentary institution.

Political party objectives show a similar inclination towards depoliticization. Although individual organizations and programmes may differ in the specifics, the 'overall objective remains that of building political parties that, through improved organizational capacity, programmatic coherence, and abidance by the rules of good governance, can constitute a fundamental building block for the consolidation of democracy.'[38] The tendency is to view the multiparty system as a single institution, with parity between each constituent party. The effect of this is that all political parties are diagnosed with similar capacity deficiencies that do not take account of the inherent differences between them. They do not explicitly acknowledge the different roles of a government party, on the one hand, and an opposition party, on the other. This is because the implication of treating them according to their separate roles and functions would be to invite accusations of partisanship and bias.

In that light, the existence of universal standards or benchmarks is useful, and can provide a framework within which to work. The danger, however, is that such indicators are used in isolation and independent of the political context. Our interviews suggested that much support to parliaments and parties is still falling back on what Thomas Carothers describes as the 'standard model', failing to understand the incentives that drive political actors and relying on methods that are not necessarily suited to local conditions. A 2007 analysis by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) states that: 'donors are often naive about the political incentives which MPs work under, assuming incorrectly in many cases that they are primarily concerned with representing their constituents and holding the executive to account, when in fact they are most interested in retaining their seats.'[39] This highlights one of the most notable standards of parliamentary and party assistance, which views both politicians and parties as driven by altruism rather than self-interest—the ideal democrat who would instinctively support political reform as a good thing.

This, in turn, has an effect on local ownership. Our research has shown that locally owned programmes are still thin on the ground. Local stakeholders are largely uninvolved in building strategies or shaping the direction and content of programming, and as a result there is little enthusiasm or commitment to the programme itself. This situation results in what Kumar has called 'benign neglect',[40] in which recipients do not actively oppose assistance but are hardly fervent in their dedication to the programme and its objectives. For some programmes, the most prevalent form of local ownership has been to ask recipients what assistance they require. Ostensibly, this seems like an efficient way of ensuring that programmes are contextually appropriate. However, those we spoke with were generally scathing about this approach, remarking that parliamentarians and party members will necessarily gravitate towards material support or travel opportunities. Although these may be suitable in some cases, many institutions in developing democracies are now materially and technically quite proficient, and the acquisition of more resources is really surplus to requirements.

It should be stated explicitly that the development of international standards for parliaments and political parties (and support to parliaments and parties) is a positive development, which should improve the way in which many programmes are designed and delivered. Most of the benchmarks and indicators, however, stress the need for them to be accompanied by an understanding of the local political context.[41] Yet, it

appears that many programmes are failing to translate the analysis of political drivers into project objectives as the practicalities of applying these insights on the ground often present difficulties. Devoid of this context, the use of benchmarks could encourage a reliance on a standard approach and further shift the emphasis away from 'political programming'.

iii) Coordination and integration of objectives

Our research suggests that the gap between the theory of greater political analysis and its application to programme delivery is also evident in the way in which programmes are designed and managed. In the first place, although contextual analyses will uniformly emphasize the interdependence of political institutions, programmes are invariably compartmentalized, with each institution treated as a separate and discrete target for intervention.

This gap is especially apparent in relation to parliamentary and party support, where the role of opposition parties in parliament, or the pervading institutional dominance of the ruling party, are often central to the analysis, but the objectives rarely address these dynamics explicitly. Noting this trend, the academic Peter Burnell has stated that 'the two areas [party and parliamentary support] have tended to proceed in parallel and along separate lines, even when funded or, even, carried out by the same organisation'.[42] One parliamentary consultant with experience of projects in the Asia-Pacific region notes that party and parliamentary projects are rarely co-designed, and both will continue to underperform until this is addressed.

Parliamentary support has come under particular criticism in this regard. Sida's 2005 review notes that: 'too often, parliamentary support programmes have focused on the parliament as a self-contained institution and, as a result, have concentrated on the symptoms of a dysfunctional political process, rather than the underlying causes'.[43] This last point is of particular importance. When viewed in isolation, institutional deficiencies are most frequently portrayed in terms of the capacity to fulfil certain functions, perceived as integral to that institution *alone*. Without reference to other cross-cutting dynamics in the political system, there is a tendency to view the problem as a lack of technical capability or appropriate legislation. For example, in Uganda, one practitioner active in the country told us that donor support since the late 1990s has meant the parliament is technically proficient, and is constitutionally capable of holding the government to account. However, the dominance of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party means that legislative oversight is not exercised effectively. In other words, to understand the weakness of the parliament, one needs to understand the power balance among the parties. One experienced practitioner has said that the need to address political parties in parliamentary work remains the 'elephant in the room'.

The second factor is the lack of coordination between donors working with parliaments and parties in the same country. Although the Aid Effectiveness agenda has prioritized greater harmony of donor activities, there remains a lack of communication, let alone full coordination, between organizations on the ground. An experienced parliamentary consultant noted after a recent visit to Kosovo that despite the large number of democracy support organizations working with the Assembly, there was no coordination at all—and that this situation was not exceptional.

One country we examined has two major democratic support organizations working with political parties, implementing a whole spectrum of activities. Yet, despite the fact that both receive funding from USAID, there is little formal cooperation between the organizations beyond the monthly USAID-organized implementers meeting. There is a tacit agreement not to 'tread on each other's toes', but, according to a former employee of one of the agencies who is still working as an independent consultant in the region, the relationship was characterized by competition between the two organizations for territory and project space with key politicians, parties or committees, with neither willing to cede ground. Our discussions with consultants in post-conflict countries suggest that the bigger the project, the greater the pressure on the donor agency to show tangible results, and the greater the competition between them.

The effect in such environments is that there is not just duplication and waste of resources, but also occasional contradiction in donor approaches. Although ultimately these organizations are working towards similar goals, the lack of coordination can have a detrimental effect on the overall aims of programmes. In both party and parliamentary support, failure to coordinate among donors has allowed recipients to maximize their resources. As is noted above, several interviewees attested to the tendency for local stakeholders to secure material support, regardless of its utility. The 'donor marketplace' means that recipients can request this type of support and donors tend not to ask for much commitment in return, simply because the lo-

cal stakeholders can choose to go elsewhere if material comes with too many conditions. In the words of one interviewee, 'donors are frequently chasing their own tails'. An example of the effect this can have on programming can be seen in monitoring and evaluation. In one extensive party support programme in Eastern Europe, someone involved with the programme indicated that effective means for capturing institutional change were hamstrung by the reluctance of the donor to request any substantive information from the parties, lest they baulk at the imposition and simply walk away from the programme. There is little stopping them when they can secure identical support from other donors.

In such circumstances projects can develop a momentum of their own, where the project team is under pressure from the agency to achieve something. By struggling to engage the local partners fully in the original objectives of the programme, the project team finds itself either pandering to the requests of those partners, changing those objectives or simply measuring signs of activity rather than tangible outcomes.

iv) Impact and effect

We were told candidly by more than one interviewee, reflecting experience of projects in Africa, Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe, that the principal problem was that most projects were 'rubbish', or words to that effect. Such was the strength of feeling about the quality of many projects that we should perhaps finesse this reflection. The effect of the design problems noted above can be summarized as poor planning and design resulting in unrealistic objectives, a focus on outputs rather than outcomes and a mismatch between activities and outcomes.

First, few projects seem to be underpinned by a clear understanding of how political change happens. They seem to be premised on an assumption of linear progress, so that certain activities will inevitably lead to certain results. Most of the people working on such projects know that political change is difficult, messy, haphazard and rarely quick—such assumptions are reinforced by the use of political economy analysis. Nonetheless, project planning documents seem to leave no room for such uncertainty, and are thus built on faulty logic.

This is most evident in the timeframe for such projects, which always seems to assume change can happen within 2–3 years. At the strategic level, there is a clear acknowledgement of the need to take account of the long timescales required to see substantive political change. DFID's 2007 governance policy paper states clearly that: 'building democratic values and institutions takes time … progress can be slow and difficult'.[44] The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) is more explicit in its report:

> Few, if any, aid interventions ever provide 'quick fixes' to a challenge and this certainly applies to parliamentary strengthening. Parliamentary strengthening requires a long time horizon. Effectiveness, let alone long-term impact, in terms of functioning parliaments can only be achieved through patient and painstaking work over the long run. A decade would by no means be excessive. It should be recalled that electoral cycles are typically 4–5 years. Hence, the duration of an intervention over two electoral cycles would be justified, preferably even three or more.[45]

Yet these insights rarely translate into project design. As the NORAD report hints, electoral cycles are a favourite 'window' in which to implement a programme, yet this amount of time is woefully short. Despite the broad and ambitious wording of objectives, programme documents will often contain a set of outcomes based around the next set of elections, a maximum of four or five years away. Democracy programming has become what Thomas Carothers has termed 'projectized',[46] that is, bound by bureaucratic structures of systematic planning and evaluation—there is a pressure to see quantifiable results as a return on donors' investment. As a result, there is a conflict between the long-term, overarching objectives of a programme, and the short-term outputs that are used to measure success. Programmes need to have a manageable timeframe to fit into the evaluation culture.

Second, an additional effect of the difficulty recognizing the challenges of political change means that activities and outcomes are mismatched. Donors almost set themselves up to fail. The 2010 NORAD report draws attention to the concrete problems that can arise from a poor understanding of political dynamics. The report characterizes training of parliamentarians as a 'Sisyphean Task': once one batch of MPs has been trained, 'a large proportion of them will lose the next election and be replaced by novices … the turnover rate of parliamentarians often reaches 30–50 per cent, and sometimes even more'.[47] Two issues arise from this observation. First, it demonstrates the pitfalls of a narrow institutional view of democratic assistance. By wanting to affect the parliament in isolation, programmes miss the other elements of the system that

directly affect it. Second, it highlights the importance of understanding who the key players are in the political system, who shapes the rules of the game and whose influence is more likely to transcend the confines of the electoral cycle.

There is little evidence in programme documentation that donors and implementing agencies take account of such factors. Instead, donors frequently try to affect as many people as possible through an enormous range of training programmes. For example, one report from an agency announces that its programmes in a Balkan state mean that their trainers worked with some 11000 activists from 13 political parties and coalitions between 2001 and 2006. This tells us nothing about impact. It suggests the importance of quantity over quality. This is a significant omission given that the next stage is where meaningful results will take place, rather than the training itself. As one interviewee working in a post-conflict country told us, the underlying principle appears to be 'we throw as much mud at a wall as we can, and hope that some of it sticks'.

Third, given the pressures mentioned above, projects tend to be built around what can be measured, which tend to be quantitative indicators, rather than the more difficult qualitative indicators which are likely to reflect genuine political change. As a result, projects tend to focus on measuring activity and outputs rather than genuine outcomes. In February 2010, the Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation (SADEV) reported on the impact of the support provided by Swedish party-affiliated organizations to international political parties. The report recorded that while output objectives (concrete services and products) were mostly fulfilled, the achievement of outcome objectives (short- to medium-term change) tended to vary considerably.[48] Although much of the donor community working in this area is eager to find better ways to measure the impact of such projects, this is proving elusive and, in the meantime, they are relying on hard, quantitative data. The problem is that once a project is built around measuring certain indicators, the activities are distorted towards meeting those objectives. In short, if you set the wrong indicators, you end up doing the wrong things.

Conclusions

Our analysis of international agencies' strategic documents and discussions with project implementers in a variety of countries with differing political environments suggests that most programmes are struggling to translate their analytical insights into their programmes on the ground. Donors are beginning to engage with the political dynamics of a country, rather than simply making an appraisal of the technical capacity of each institution. In the case of Georgia, ODI found that 'most donors are very aware of the hurdles and incentives that currently limit the capacity and reach of many opposition parties. These are often of a political rather than a technical nature, and they are grounded in the historical legacies of the Soviet era as well as in the current constitutional, economic and political power of the ruling party.'[49] Yet, these analyses tend to examine the political landscape in a broad narrative that, while containing the main points, does not employ a consistent model for distilling and presenting the information. Consequently, when the objectives are set out, it can be difficult to make a sound connection between the issues on the ground and the desired change. It is increasingly apparent that despite growing contextual awareness there has been little impact on the form and content of programmes, as is demonstrated by the increasing number of political economy and context-driven analyses but the continued publication of traditional programme documents.

However, these are generalizations. The way in which such programmes are implemented will vary from organization to organization, and country to country. A basket committee rolling out a programme across the entire range of political institutions is likely to differ greatly in the presentation and scope of objectives from an organization working on the model of sister-party support. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight some of the tensions and difficulties donors face in moving away from the strategic to the specific. These trends and challenges are examined in more detail in each of the case studies in chapter 3.

Four case studies: Support to parties and parliaments in practice

This chapter examines the experience of support to parliaments and political parties with reference to four specific programmes. The dynamics of assistance programmes vary from country to country and from agency to agency. However, our discussions with agency staff in the field, those at headquarters, and independent consultants working in a variety of contexts highlighted a number of recurring problems. These problems were set out in chapter 1 in the four challenges facing donor programmes: translating strategy into country-specific projects; the challenge of political engagement; establishing meaningful objectives; and integrating parliamentary and party support.

The case studies below were chosen because each has sought to achieve overtly political outcomes. We recognize that the choice of countries is, in some senses, arbitrary and can only present a partial analysis. The purpose is not to assess the individual projects, but instead to understand some of the challenges of political programming with reference to some illustrative case studies. We do not, however, make any claim that they are representative. In the process of identifying examples, we looked for projects that actively sought to engage with the politics of change. That is, they used a form of political analysis to identify the underlying problems (such as drivers of change), and the subsequent project design not only reflected this analysis, but also sought to use political, rather than solely technical, means to achieve the desired change. Each was based on a sophisticated analysis of the political context and sought to engage with the political drivers and incentive structures affecting the performance of the parliament and political parties. In these respects, they differ from the majority of projects providing technical support. The studies also highlight the practical difficulties of translating strategy into practice, how programmes handle the reality of sensitive political interventions and the challenges that come with integrating assistance to parties and parliaments.

The first two case studies are examples of multi-donor funded 'deepening democracy' projects: one in Tanzania and the other in Uganda. The premise for both was a recognition of the interdependence of the different institutions of democracy and the need for a programme which integrated support to a diverse set of political institutions and actors. Nonetheless, they provide very different experiences and insights, highlighting the difficulty of translating political analysis into the planning, management and delivery of projects.

The third and fourth case studies examine the work of individual institutions in addressing the challenges highlighted above. They examine, respectively, the work of the NIMD in Ghana and that of the WFD in Macedonia. The Ghana case study provides an example of a project explicitly designed to strengthen political parties but which sought also to influence other aspects of the political system, not least the parliament. The Macedonia case, meanwhile, is an example of a project that sought to strengthen the parliament by working through and with political parties. Both projects were based on a detailed understanding of the political dynamics in the country and engaged directly with them in order to foster institutional, cultural and behavioural change. They reveal some of the potential problems such programming can face, not least dependence on local stakeholder buy-in, but also offer some principles which might inform future work. The lessons from each of these projects are drawn out in the broader context of how international donor agencies design and fund political programmes in chapter 4.

Deepening Democracy in Tanzania

The Deepening Democracy in Tanzania Programme (DDTP), which ran from mid-2007 until June 2010, was a UNDP-implemented project that aimed to affect a wide range of democratic institutions simultaneously. The programme had a number of objectives relating to institutions within the Tanzanian political system, including strengthening electoral processes, civic education, parliamentary oversight and communication, and increasing the capacity of political parties and of a pluralistic party system. The overarching rationale of the DDTP was to expand and entrench existing democratic achievements by building the capacity of these institutions. The Project Document (2007), signed by the UNDP and the Government of Tanzania in 2007, puts specific emphasis on the desire to develop democratic 'principles, values and culture', reflecting a tacit recognition that democratic development means changing political behaviour as well as its institutional structures.

The DDTP's implementation was premised on: first, a basic level of democracy within Tanzania; and, second, genuine commitment by key political stakeholders to developing participatory politics. The opening paragraphs of the Project Document stress this commitment and make it clear that the programme rests on a record of democratic development. It highlights evidence of three successful elections since the return to multiparty politics in 1992, and especially the 2005 elections which were broadly recognized by international observers as free and fair (albeit not without challenges).[50] The programme documentation identifies a lack of 'political liberalism' as the primary challenge for Tanzanian democracy,[51] emphasizing that the lack of a democratic political culture is ultimately tied to the institutions of the political system.

The DDTP evolved, to a large extent, from the UNDP-led basket committee, which supported the 2005 electoral process. The Project Document makes clear that this intervention, and the response of various local and international stakeholders to it, informed the design of the DDTP. In particular, the coordination of support through a single basket committee was regarded as beneficial, preventing overlap or duplication in assistance. The timeframe for the implementation of the programme was set to coincide with the 2010 elections, and, according to the development partners we interviewed, the elections provided the timeline, the objective and the bellwether of the programme's success or failure.

Political context

Tanzania's transition to multiparty politics began in 1992, when the recommendations of the Nyalali Commission were implemented. The Commission had been set up in 1991 by the then-president, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, to consult with citizens and make recommendations on the viability of a return to multiparty politics. Since 1963, Tanzania had been a de facto one-party state,[52] and the socialist Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) had dominated the political scene since the 1977 merger of the mainland Tanganyika African National Union and Zanzibar's Afro-Shirazi Party. The fall of communism in Europe and the failures of the Nyerere administration's economic policies meant that the one party structures could not be sustained.[53] The CCM therefore instigated a policy of reform, through the Nyalali Commission, which opened up the political system to a number of new parties in 1992 and paved the way for multiparty elections in 1995. The process of change was driven from the top and carefully managed by the CCM. The CCM was able to win a landslide in the first elections, and remained head and shoulders above the other parties for the next eighteen years. Although reform did not begin and end in 1992, and positive steps have been taken towards greater democratization since then, the CCM-dominated continuity means that there has been little 'meaningful alteration in the operative rules of the game'.[54]

Three primary trends emerge from the UNDP's analyses in the programme documentation. First, the CCM's continuing dominance of the state machinery means that the institutions that guarantee and implement the rules of the game have not changed significantly since the days of one-party rule. Second, the legal framework that governs the political system has not kept pace with the needs of multiparty democracy. Third, the population is generally ambivalent about democracy. While they support democratic politics as preferable to the alternatives, there is little understanding of multiparty politics and support for the CCM remains high despite widespread discontent with the pace of reform. As a result, the DDTP objectives are stated as:

- Support efforts to advocate legal reforms (and, possibly, constitutional amendments) for a more liberalized political environment;

- Strengthen and entrench the human and material elements of existing democratic practices and institutions, making them more robust, responsive, effective and efficient in their operation;
- Enhance democratic beliefs and culture and intensify understanding of and respect for democratic principles, culture and values.[55]

Concepts such as behaviour, culture, values and principles were conspicuous in the early stages of the DDTP design, and played a clear role in explaining the rationale of the programme. Yet, there was also an attempt to ground these cultural elements of democracy in the institutions and legal framework of the state. At the strategic level, the DDTP suggests that an understanding of principles and political culture is bound up with the political institutions, so that strengthening the institutions will affect the political culture.

Activities and outcomes

This section of the project document focuses on the political parties and parliamentary components and their connections with each other. Although the two were merged under the heading 'Good and Accountable Governance', implementation appears to have remained separate—a point that is reflected in the Terminal Evaluation, which examines the two elements separately.[56]

First, in relation to parliamentary strengthening, the project documents identify 'severe capacity constraints' as a primary concern, with inadequate technical, material and human resources identified as significant hurdles.[57] In addition, the weakness of the opposition in relation to the CCM and the executive means there is little competent or sustained oversight and accountability, as these parties have little capacity or presence within parliament and the committees to fulfil their oppositional role. As a result, legislation is often passed with little debate.[58]

The analysis in the documentation places the greatest weight on the need for more internal capacity, and the Mid-term Evaluation lists the intended outcomes of the parliamentary components as:

1. Strategic coordination of donor contributions to parliament;
2. Increased capacity of Parliament to carry out its roles more efficiently and effectively;
3. Improved responsiveness of Parliament to Civil Society;
4. Tracking by Parliament of the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

These outcomes cover the whole spectrum of parliamentary activity. The first is a continuation of the single basket committee for the 2005 electoral support, and reflects the importance of harmonized support in the aid effectiveness agenda. The second and third outcomes are more general in scope, covering a range of parliamentary functions, although a more detailed description of these outcomes is not given in the documentation. Finally, the fourth outcome ties the programme into the wider development agenda, while enhancing local ownership and management of the development process.

There are few specific indicators for measuring progress towards these outcomes, and no quantifiable baseline data were collected.[59] Instead, the Mid-term Evaluation uses the list of interventions and activities as a set of outputs for assessing progress, but there is no mention of the connection between activities and their effects. These activities are aimed primarily at plugging capacity gaps, and are technical in nature. For the most part they consist of training on information and communications technology, policy and research methodologies and communications skills for parliamentary staff as well as seminars for parliamentarians and committee members. The primary activity aimed at improving dialogue between parliamentarians was to be a regularly held breakfast forum. However, according to the Mid-term Evaluation, only one of these had been held at the time of writing.[60] Overall, the implementation of the parliamentary component was heavily weighted towards the more traditional, capacity building activities, with qualitative, behavioural projects only making a marginal appearance. Ascribing qualitative changes to the DDTP was difficult not only due to the nature of the activities, but also because there were concurrent programmes run by other organizations such as the World Bank, Political Parties of Finland for Democracy (Demo Finland) and USAID. That said, there have been a number of noted improvements connected to the more technical activities. These include: improved parliamentary reporting, parliamentary committees refer to and consult relevant ministries before presenting their reports; and new skills in various areas have been acquired and applied to improve efficiency and effectiveness.[61]

The political party component of the Project Document notes that there has been a proliferation of parties since 1992, but no corresponding increase

in genuine political competition. In fact, the performance of opposition parties has not greatly improved since the first elections. In the 2005 presidential election, CCM won 80 per cent of the vote,[62] compared with 61 per cent in the 1995 ballot. In 2010 there was an improvement in political competition, with the CCM share of the vote reduced to 62.8 per cent, meaning that there has nonetheless been no electoral gain by the opposition since 1995.[63] The UNDP's Project Document identifies a number of barriers to a more effective multiparty system. These include an obstructive legal framework, poor party capacity and organization and a lack of internal democracy. The analysis links these problems directly to voter dissatisfaction and the low levels of support for the opposition. The intentions of the project were therefore to reduce systemic constraints on political parties, increase the capacity of political parties and produce an environment conducive to competitive party politics.

In common with the parliamentary component, the political party outcomes were kept general, encompassing elements within both individual parties and the multiparty framework in which they operate. In this way, the outcomes were in keeping with the UNDP analysis that highlighted deficiencies in both these areas, although it is hard to identify any element of the political party system, internal or external, that is not covered by these objectives.

Throughout the political party component the emphasis was on delivering interventions at the multiparty level. This was to be achieved through two local institutions: the Tanzania Centre for Democracy (TCD), which is owned by the parties represented in parliament and aims to create an environment conducive to multiparty politics; and the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (RPP), which is the government body responsible for overseeing and facilitating the multiparty system. NIMD is one of the TCD's primary external partners. The activities involved enhancing the capabilities of the organizations in order to encourage parties' ability to participate in the political system. Workshops and training seminars were held on party financing, party structure and organization, and conflict resolution. In addition, there were multiparty forums on inter-party dialogue and improving relations between the parties around issues such as a revised party code of conduct and an increased understanding of the role of the RPP.

Despite the fact that the DDTP analysis highlighted party capacity and internal democracy as primary obstacles, there was no direct engagement or assistance with individual parties. Instead, everything went through the two multiparty institutions.

Implementation management

The DDTP had a complex management modality and, according to those we interviewed, the Mid-term and Terminal Evaluations had a significant impact on the implementation of the programme. The key modality according to the Mid-term Evaluation was National Execution (NEX), which meant that management and institutional arrangements for the programme relied on existing national processes and systems. The executing agency for the DDTP was therefore the Office of the President, which delegated responsibility to a minister of state. The intention was to ensure local ownership and harmonization with local strategies throughout the programme. However, as the Terminal Evaluation points out, this may not have been the most 'appropriate agency to house a process designed to encourage capacity building between competing political parties'.[64]

As such, implementation lay with the beneficiary institutions, for example, the TCD and the RPP were responsible for planning, implementing, financial management and reporting progress of the party components, and the UNDP provided administration and handled the entire budget through its Programme Coordination Office (PCO). In other words, control and management of the programme rested with the local institutions, with the UNDP taking the role of administrator and facilitator. In addition, an Oversight Committee (OC) was created which included lead donor agencies, implementing bodies, the government and two independent institutions. However, our interviews with those involved in the programme indicate that in practice the OC was limited to the local implementing agencies with little input from the lead donors. To compensate for this lack of involvement in the OC, the donors and development partners, including Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU) and the UNDP, established a basket committee to review progress, provide advice and guide local institutions when required during the programme.

Further complications were added to the lines of responsibility by the fact that a lead development partner was appointed for each of the four programme components. The idea was that the donor would support beneficiary institutions in planning activities and brief the basket committee on progress and challenges. However, as the evaluations note, each lead development

partner approached the role in different ways. Some were more directly involved with the institutions than others.

Analysis and assessment

Political analysis, technical activities

One of the strengths of the DDTP was its explicit acknowledgement of the need to change the democratic culture and structures. The Terminal Evaluation noted the positive and timely nature of the programme, stating that 'the vision and objectives of the DDTP were and remain critical and relevant to Tanzania's continuing democratic evolution'. This is seen in the main themes of the UNDP's analysis. First, the imbalance in political power was the most significant challenge to Tanzanian democracy, reflected in the weakness of the opposition parties, the CCM's dominance of parliament and its control of government institutions. Second, the top-down process of reform had failed to instil the rules of the democratic game. Third, a more participatory, pluralistic democracy required stronger opposition parties, as movements for representing the public and as parliamentary actors.

Redressing this imbalance was central to the most basic conception of the DDTP's purpose. Even the timeline was informed by the political cycle. Those we spoke with suggested that because the whole programme was aimed at creating more competition in the 2010 elections, the DDTP was 'inherently political'. These changes could only come at the expense of the CCM. Fundamentally, the DDTP sought to level the political playing field.

However, this analysis seemed to have little impact on project design and delivery. Our conversations with development partners consistently highlighted the tension between the political aims of the DDTP and the technical means used to achieve them. All the practitioners we spoke to suggested that the UNDP conceived the project as a mechanistic exercise rather than one aimed at culture and behaviour, providing only technical support to the national institutions. As one well-placed stakeholder put it: 'The UNDP did not have its political glasses on'. When development partners pressed the UNDP about the discrepancy between the political programme rationale and the technical interventions, the UNDP stated that this was a debate that was occurring 'internally within the organization'. This seemed to reflect the ongoing tension, mentioned by all the stakeholders with whom we spoke, within the UNDP, which acknowledged the need to engage at a political level but found it difficult to work this into specific activities. This problem is not unique to the UNDP. Concern over appearing partisan is common across the sector. However, political programming poses particular difficulties for the UNDP. As a multilateral organization, which places a particular emphasis on preserving its neutrality, there is a sense that 'politics matters' means an especially dramatic culture shift for the UNDP.

In terms of the DDTP itself, the documentation attempts to place political institutions as the key ground for the development of political culture. However, although behaviour is seen as a key component in the opening parts of the project documentation, most project activity seemed to be based on building institutional capacity. When the problems are viewed entirely through the institutional prism, interventions tend to focus on the capabilities of that institution to carry out its function. Moreover, by concentrating on the institutions, they become viewed as self-contained entities, and their capabilities and functions are viewed in isolation from other elements of the political system.

As a result, the DDTP depends heavily on technical activity to build capacity. This was not without success—work to improve the material capabilities of political parties and the parliament made significant progress towards meeting the outputs. However, efforts to alter the political culture and political behaviour were less successful. For instance, attempts at multiparty dialogue faltered. According to the Mid-term Evaluation, only one of the Special Breakfast Forums designed to bring parties together was held over the period 2007–2008, and the interparty work with the TCD failed to get off the ground due to the lack of a consultant. Such work relies on genuine commitment and buy-in from local politicians, which can be time-consuming and difficult to track. This is particularly true in countries such as Tanzania, where trust between political parties is minimal. One stakeholder who had worked on a number of governance projects across Africa noted that endemic mistrust between politicians and the personalization of politics are among the most significant problems in Tanzania. As the leader of one party put it when asked why his party ideology was 'conservative'—'because the other options—socialist and liberal—had already been taken'.

Overall, there seemed to be a disconnect between project objectives and activities, and a lack of useful indicators. The Mid-term Evaluation noted that without indicators or a baseline assessment, almost any outcome can be deemed a success—and that the activi-

ties themselves become the only benchmark by which to judge the programme. The contextual analysis explores some of the problems facing the institutions, but it is difficult to discern how the context feeds directly into the interventions themselves. These issues can be traced to the reluctance of the UNDP to design an overtly political programme. The difficulty of establishing measures of political and cultural change beset many agencies working in this field, but the project documentation does not address the issue at all.

Management of the DDTP

The problems in project design were compounded by the structure for managing the project. Although the DDTP attempted to incorporate effective local control and ownership over the programme, both the Mid-term Evaluation and the Terminal Evaluation drew attention to problems. These can be divided into four broad areas:

First, the NEX modality was strongly criticized. The evaluation identified it as a significant obstacle to effective implementation. The document suggested that this modality was chosen because it conformed to Paris/Accra principles of local ownership and buy-in, but one stakeholder neatly summed up the problem by noting that it meant the implementing partners and the beneficiaries were the same organizations. In addition, the institutions seem to have lacked the capacity to manage the programmes effectively and were unable to produce the high-quality progress reports on which the OC, the basket committee and the PCO relied. This in turn led to delays at all stages of the programme, unsatisfactory monitoring and unclear lines of responsibility. The problems with the national institutions should not come as a surprise given that the DDTP aimed to help them carry out their most basic functions, which would suggest that they might not possess the expertise to run such a large programme—or understand the solutions to the problems.

The second element, connected to this, was local ownership. The beneficiary institutions also had significant input into the form and content of the activities. The UNDP approached the various national institutions and asked them what interventions they felt would be most beneficial. While this in itself is an effective method of increasing local buy-in, our interviewees suggested that the UNDP did very little to probe or rationalize the suggestions of the institutions. Invariably, they would request technical, capacity building projects which suited the UNDP's activity preferences and moved the project away from more sensitive political interventions.

Third, tensions existed between the development partners and the UNDP from the inception of the programme. Those interviewed indicated that the UNDP required development partners because it could not approach this type of project unilaterally, because of the potential political sensitivities. The development partners were there to lend weight to the DDTP and present a united sense of purpose to the local institutions, so that in addition to the financial contributions made by the development partners, they were also expected to play a more active role in the programme. However, the terms of reference were never clearly delineated by the UNDP. The Terminal Evaluation suggests that there was a 'failure to distinguish between management responsibilities and coordination and advisory functions'.[65] Furthermore, although the programme document mentions the role of a lead donor for each component, the terms of reference made no mention of this.[66] As a result, the development partners saw their responsibilities in terms of oversight, coordination and the provision of advice to the various local stakeholders. The UNDP, however, wanted hands-on involvement from the partners in working with the national institutions. Furthermore, our interviewees indicated that the UNDP viewed itself as a 'disinterested party', which was hosting the programme rather than managing or implementing it. These tensions were never resolved as far the interviewees were concerned and this had a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of the DDTP's design and implementation.

Finally, a number of administrative challenges affected the DDTP. A great number of these were caused either directly or indirectly by the three issues outlined above. The OC never fulfilled the crucial role assigned to it and representation was limited largely to the local partners. As the OC was integral to coordinating the disparate components of the programme, the failure to organize it effectively was a significant hurdle. In addition, due to the confused roles of the various stakeholders, some elements of the programme failed to get off the ground. We were told about the failure to find consultants for activities and the lack of permanent PCO staff to manage such a large and complex set of interventions, problems also discussed in the Terminal Evaluation.[67]

Overall, the management problems experienced by the DDTP were a result of the way in which the UNDP approached the more controversial elements of the programme, compounded by the wide scope of

the activities and institutions involved. Ultimately, many of the elements of a more innovative programme were there in theory. There was a clear emphasis on local ownership and involving stakeholders in deciding the form and content of activities. Furthermore, the DDTP ensured the participation of a number of the leading donors at various levels of the programme. However, synthesizing all the elements of the management structure proved a serious obstacle.

Conclusions

The flaws in project design and implementation structures meant that the DDTP was not as effective as it might have been, and did not live up to what were a sophisticated political analysis and a worthy set of project objectives. The five components of the programme were treated as separate interventions, planned by each target institution and guided by different development partners. The general management problems meant that the oversight and coordination roles assigned to various actors were not adequately carried out. One striking example came out of the interviews. The TCD and the RPP would have been particularly effective forums for integrating the party and parliamentary components of the programme. However, while the activities were being implemented, it was discovered that both institutions were carrying out almost identical functions without knowing. The UNDP's response, in keeping with the project modality, was to request that the TCD and the RPP sort out the problem themselves. Had there been a methodical approach to coordination, this situation would have been avoided. As it was, there was no coherent, formalized way for the different components to communicate, and the institutions 'suffered as a result'.[68]

In addition, the delegation of the planning and management of interventions to beneficiary institutions prevented a strategic approach from being taken to the activities. Treated as separate, isolated institutions there was little chance that they would view themselves as intersecting with other parts of the political process. This is despite the fact that a number of intersecting issues had been clearly identified in the project document, particularly in terms of the role of the opposition parties in parliament, where strengthening the opposition was noted as a key element of improving parliamentary oversight and accountability. The sheer size of the programme and the relatively short timeframe of 42 months meant that the programme was 'overly ambitious',[69] and that an organized and coherent approach required the UNDP to carve up the political landscape into manageable chunks. The most obvious way to do this was along institutional lines. Once the programme was viewed through the institutional prism it was difficult to harmonize or coordinate these previously segmented elements.

In part due to the size of the programme and its rigid, institutional design, the stakeholders we interviewed highlighted a lack of flexibility in the approach of the DDTP. The Terminal Evaluation also highlighted the fact that despite criticism of management structures in the Mid-term Evaluation, there was no programmed time in which to take stock of these challenges and rectify them.[70] There seemed to be an inability to change and adapt to the evolving context in Tanzania, which meant that some of the most pressing problems went unaddressed. For example, there was a serious breakdown in communication between the speaker of the Zanzibar House of Representatives and opposition MPs. This was paralysing the parliament and polarizing the parties. Despite the significance of this issue, the DDTP did not attempt to address the problem or even open dialogue between the factions. Failing to deal with it undoubtedly hindered many of the interventions aimed at improving the functioning of the House.

The Deepening Democracy Programme in Uganda

The Deepening Democracy Programme (DDP) in Uganda is a multiple intervention project developed by Partners for Democracy and Governance (PDG)[71] in conjunction with Ugandan stakeholders. It was launched formally by President Museveni in 2008 and is scheduled to run until the 2011 elections.[72] Uganda's first multiparty elections for 25 years were held in 2006, and PDG donors had provided support leading up to the poll. In response to this event, the donors decided to examine opportunities for future programming by reviewing previous assistance and consulting local stakeholders. Despite differences over the management and specific content of the programme, there was broad consensus among the donors on the importance of initiating wide-ranging support to a variety of democratic institutions. As a result, the funds of the six donors were pooled and the five components of the DDP were established. These com-

ponents are: 1) enhancing the integrity of elections; 2) institutionalizing an effective multiparty political system; 3) strengthening parliamentary autonomy and oversight; 4) encouraging more active and participatory civic engagement; and 5) strengthening a free media to promote accountability. This chapter focuses on components 2 and 3, which are directly concerned with political parties and parliaments.

The Ugandan context

The most significant feature of Uganda's recent political history is the non-party system initiated in 1986 by President Yoweri Museveni. Under this system, political parties could not campaign in or directly contest elections, and so were effectively irrelevant. As a result, the National Resistance Movement, led by Museveni, became the dominant political force in the country. Elections were held on this non-party basis in 1996 and 2001, and Museveni won with a landslide on both occasions. However, in July 2005 a referendum was held to decide whether to return to a multiparty system. Despite the low turnout of around 47 per cent,[73] there was overwhelming support for an end to the no-party system (92.5 per cent voted in favour),[74] and, as a result, the Political Parties and Organisation Act was passed. The following year saw the first elections in 25 years to offer voters a choice of political parties.

Two of the parties—the Democratic Party (DP) and the Uganda People's Congress (UPC)—that registered and competed in the 2006 poll had been established as far back as the 1950s. However, the disestablishment of political parties after 1986 meant that, although individual candidates may have had political experience in the intervening period through standing as independent candidates, the parties themselves had no organizational memory of contesting elections. Furthermore, legal restrictions on freedom of association before 1995 had left the parties with little or no cohesion or support base, which would have been achieved through public meetings, rallies or conferences. Consequently, in 2006 all the opposition parties were entirely unprepared to undertake the most basic functions of a political party, such as coherent campaigning, cadre-building, citizen outreach and policymaking. In the light of the NRM's electoral and organizational capabilities, it is not surprising that the EU's Election Observers' Mission Report bemoaned the lack of a level playing field in Uganda.[75]

This imbalance was subsequently reflected in the dominance of the NRM in parliament. Despite procedural and constitutional changes, the Westminster system means that the majority party controls the chamber and the committees, and the re-emergence of the party caucus system and the use of whipping has only emphasized this institutional control.

The development of the DDP

In this political context, the DDP was established 'to contribute to improved democratic governance in Uganda'. Its purpose 'on the one hand is to increase informed, active and pluralistic participation of Uganda's citizens in the political process. On the other hand, the DPP aims to build the capacity of institutions critical in promoting public participation and in holding the state accountable to citizens' needs and concerns.'[76]

Underlying this rather anodyne description, however, are clear political objectives—principally to increase the influence of the opposition parties and address the imbalance of political power. Specifically, the programme aims to address the institutional weaknesses of the parties and the performance of those parties in parliament. This is not to suggest that the DDP focuses exclusively on the opposition. The inter-party dialogue component and the funding of individual parties both aim to include all political actors. Critically, however, the programme is built on a recognition of the interdependence of the party and parliamentary elements.

At first, the parliamentary strand of the programme sought to 'strengthen parliamentary autonomy and oversight'. This, however, was less to do with a lack of formal parliamentary power than the composition of parliament. As one observer noted, 'parliament has the mandate and the authority to act',[77] but after the 2006 elections the NRM had 67 per cent of the seats and thus controlled 'the agenda of both the plenary and most committees'.[78] The project identified three outputs contributing to this component objective, each of which has a set of verifiable measures of progress:

- More effective oversight of the executive: an active and constructive opposition; well informed committees, producing more reports on government policy; carefully considered policy and legislative workshops.
- Developing parliamentary support services: improvement in the number of users and in their estimations of the service provided; an increase in the number of policy briefings produced.

- Improving parliamentary infrastructure: targeted at building capacity where it might be most effective, linked to the support services that can enhance parliamentary scrutiny.[79]

Significantly, the first outcome explicitly states the importance of the opposition to ensuring accountability, rather than treating all parliamentarians as equally important to the process no matter what their party affiliation. This political insight—that the opposition needs assistance more than the ruling party—means that the differential impact of the programme on the political parties is accepted at the outset. In addition, the infrastructural capacity building component is targeted specifically at those parts of the institution that will most effectively strengthen oversight.

However, in acknowledging a central difficulty of political programming, the DDP documentation highlights the qualitative nature of such outcomes, and admits the limits of capturing impact objectively, saying that it is 'extremely difficult to measure'.[80] However, it asserts that a 'triangulation of opinions' from local and external stakeholders, recipients and observers, in combination with quantitative data where applicable, is sufficient for measuring progress. These observations are important in shaping the form and content of the interventions themselves, through baseline assessments and an ongoing consultative process with the local stakeholders. For example, the DDP will agree indicators with the parliament for measuring the success of information technology (IT) capacity building. The specific indicators detailed in the project documentation for the parliamentary component are a mix of qualitative and quantitative tools, and include the quantity and *quality* of committee reports; an increased number of briefings and reports for parliamentarians; increased use of a bill tracking system; and acknowledgement by legislators and ministers that parliamentary scrutiny is becoming more effective.

The political party element is built around the aim of 'institutionalising an effective party system'. In Uganda, the party system is still in its infancy and the DDP views an effective party system as comprised of a genuinely competitive system and a stable political arena. Activities to promote the first objective are built on two principles: first, 'multi-party democracy will thrive where citizens have a sense that power can alternate. [For this] there must be two relatively evenly matched parties'.[81] However, the NRM contested 90.1 per cent of the seats in 2006, and the next party (the Forum for Democratic Change, FDC) only managed 22.8 per cent.[82] The second principle is that the multiparty system should become more widely accepted. At the moment, around four in ten Ugandans believe that party politics is 'divisive and causes confusion'.[83] The entire political system is undermined if parties do not gain legitimacy among voters. It is significant that the DDP explicitly targets party competition in general, and achieving viable alternatives to the current NRM dominance in particular.

The second objective builds on the assumptions 'that parties become the major cue for voter choice in elections, the patterns of party competition become increasingly more predictable over time, and that local opinion formers and leaders accord parties greater legitimacy.'[84] There is an emphasis on ensuring that parties retain and improve their electoral presence and performance, and that cohesion and party loyalty are strengthened. A more stable system will also assist in improving the public's perception of the multiparty system, which is currently viewed as divisive.

Measuring progress on the political party front depends on a variety of indicators. Developments are tracked using election results and Afrobarometer data, reinforced by specific measurements such as the increase in the proportion of citizens supporting multiparty politics, and that party candidates secure first or second place in half the seats contested. Qualitative indicators include those which focus on the cohesion of parties, such as whether a change in party leadership causes defections or dissatisfaction, or on whether trust in community leaders approaches the same level as their electoral support. What is notable about these indicators is that the DPP is attempting to capture qualitative changes—cohesion and electability—with objectively verifiable data.

Activities and implementation

In planning the parliamentary activities, the DDP Programme Management Unit (PMU) worked in consultation with the Parliamentary Development Coordination Office, the committee chairs, the whips and the Speaker. There was an acknowledgement by the donors and the project management that parliamentary support is inherently political. Previous support to the Ugandan Parliament in the 1990s had been in the form of technical, capacity-building interventions, and was seen as largely successful, but by the time DDP was in development the parliament was technically quite competent, and its powers were, in theory, strong. Thus, further technical support would have been redundant and the programme concentrated on areas that would enhance scrutiny:

- A Research Fund (RF) for the opposition cabinet;
- An Expert Advisory Fund (EAF) for committees;
- IT capacity building;
- Legislative training and seminars.

In these four elements, there is an emphasis on the availability of reliable information and research, and its importance to the effective functioning of the parliament. The first component is a fund for the shadow cabinet. The RF allows shadow ministers to commission reports and gather information from a range of sources outside the parliament. The EAF is much the same, but is for the exclusive use of parliamentarians who are committee members. The DDP has a list of approved sources that can be used to conduct research, which includes university departments, professors and think tanks. While the list is the primary source for both the RF and EAF, the shadow cabinet is granted a wider licence for research projects, and is able to engage the services of other contacts and researchers.

Naturally, the establishment of these research funds created a certain amount of political resistance. In particular, the parliamentary research directorate felt that the funds were usurping its role within the institution and undermined its authority. In addition, the parliamentary commission and the parliamentary staff found the plan problematic, and support specifically to the shadow cabinet proved controversial. They all required careful handling and time to reassure key stakeholders.

Implementation of the four components, particularly the EAF, has had some success. Seven committees have used the EAF to commission 15 different reports on various topics, including sensitive policy areas such as military expenditure. The fund has also informed the climate change bill and issues of electoral reform. The shadow cabinet RF has seen less use, in part due to the absence of the leader of the opposition for six months through illness. However, one DDP staff member suggested that another factor may have been that the shadow cabinet is made up of MPs from different parties. Currently, cooperation and collaboration between opposition parties is not high, and this has hampered use of the RF. Nevertheless, some shadow ministers have been keen to use the fund. Notable among them is the Finance Minister, who has frequently commissioned the fund to inform his work. Despite this lack of use, shadow cabinet members are generally enthusiastic and have seen how information has benefited their colleagues.

The final two components of the parliamentary support (IT capacity-building and legislative training) have had mixed success. The IT interventions have established the systems set out in the project documents (e.g. a bill tracking system). However, there have been difficulties getting the necessary information from various departments to enter into the system. The legislative and policy training has been a small proportion of the parliamentary support, but has helped with the passage of a bill banning female genital mutilation, and is currently being used to get a new divorce and marriage bill through parliament.

According to those involved with the programme, the political party component has proved to be more controversial than the parliamentary support. There are three dimensions to this component: direct grants to political parties; inter-party dialogue; and enhancing cooperation between civil society and political parties. The first of these is the most innovative and controversial, despite its apparent simplicity. The genesis of this dimension is important. During the consultation phase, the PMU approached 28 of the 34 political parties and asked them what they needed the most. The response was invariably 'money'. This posed great difficulties, but the DDP felt that financial assistance was necessary for a number of reasons. In general, party funds are very short, and the NRM is able to utilize state resources for financial support. Furthermore, direct funding to parties would aid the process of institutionalization.

In order to take the grant activity forward, the PMU conducted a detailed assessment of the 25 parties that took part. Significantly, the NRM failed to respond to requests to participate, despite repeated invitations. The assessments involved the primary governance implementers active in Uganda: the NIMD; the NDI; and the IRI. In addition, three independent academics were consulted on the framework for the proposed participatory party assessment. On completion, the assessments were sent for comments to the parties. The assessments were designed to check that the funding requests made by the parties were in line with the requirements identified by the assessments. For example, the FDC requested funds to train cadres and candidates; the UPC wanted to increase internal party cohesion; and the Peoples Progressive Party wanted to build its branch structures in various parts of the country. The PMU felt that these requests fairly reflected the most pressing needs of the parties.

The next stage of planning centred on devising a set of criteria to judge a party's eligibility for funding. This posed particular difficulties because the multiparty system was so new. However, the PMU was keen to ensure that it was not imposing a set of Western standards and models on the Ugandan parties. As one interviewee said, it wanted to base the criteria on what parties were currently doing, not on what they might do in the future. The main criteria devised for grant eligibility are:

- a legal limit on foreign donations of about USD 230,000;
- parties must be compliant with current political party laws;
- parties must not have committed any electoral offences or have incited violence; and
- the size of the grant cannot exceed the average amount of funds raised annually by the party itself.

This last criterion was important, as it means that if a party's funding drops, then the grant will drop by the same amount. This ensures that the DDP never becomes 'the majority shareholder' in any of the parties. Additionally, it should encourage parties to increase their fundraising efforts. The grants cannot be used for any direct electoral purposes.

Interviews with several stakeholders highlight the fact that the level of political sensitivity became apparent when President Museveni made his unease about the grants clear at an EU meeting. This reinforced the concerns of several donors, and some referred the matter upwards, seeking ministerial clearance from their home departments. In addition, the donors urged the PMU to include the NRM in the grant scheme, but, although they were repeatedly contacted, officially the party has so far not made a decision about participation. As a result of these difficulties, it was decided to make the grant component into a pilot programme to run until the end of 2010, after which it will be reviewed.

Of the 25 parties that applied for grants, six have been deemed eligible, and a further two were provided with limited direct procurement of goods and services. This has most often taken the form of one-off delegate conferences, for which the DDP has financed the hiring of the venue and other associated costs. The PMU representative we interviewed pointed out that the grants were proving to be good value for money, in comparison to other direct funding activities, for example, with civil society. The parties were subjected to external audits, which suggested that they made the maximum use of the money, and did not to use it to simply buy cadre support.

The second dimension of the political party component focused on inter-party dialogue. This has been implemented through NIMD. The aim was to facilitate discussion around aspects of procedure within the political system. Formally, there is commitment to this process from all sides of the political spectrum. However, informally, those involved have indicated that the various actors are playing a 'zero-sum game' that limits the impact of these sessions. The government views every move by the opposition parties as part of the political game, while the opposition uses every opportunity to increase pressure on the NRM. Additionally, there are differing perceptions around the purpose of multiparty dialogue. The government feels that it has done enough to balance the rules of the game, and sees discussions as a way of reinforcing their viewpoint. On the other hand, the opposition sees it as a conflict management tool.

Finally, the activities involving civil society groups have had some notable successes. The DDP has attempted to increase citizen outreach by producing short policy segments for radio with each party, which will be broadcast by 50 stations across the country. The aim is to expand this into a full discussion programme based around a comparison of specific policy areas. Those involved are realistic about its prospects. They realize that it will not 'trump vote buying', but it is a start towards a more institutionalized, policy-based approach to winning support.

Analysis and assessment

The DDP in Uganda is demonstrating both the difficulties and the possibilities of inherently political programming. The DDP, much like many other democracy support programme, has a set of objectives that seek to change the culture and quality of the political system. Yet, in contrast to a programme such as that in Tanzania, it is a rare example of a programme that has translated its political analysis into overtly political interventions that clearly aim to redress imbalances in the political system.

This has entailed numerous difficulties for the programme since its inception in 2006. The timeframe alone demonstrates this. Although the initial idea for a project was first raised four years ago, some of the most controversial elements have only recently begun

in earnest. It is notable that the political party grant-making took over a year to begin, and then only as a limited pilot programme. The recalcitrance of the ruling NRM, including its unwillingness to participate in the funding component, and the parliamentary directorates is an indication that the activities are challenging the status quo. In addition, the parliamentary work, part of which is aimed exclusively at the opposition, has, according to one interviewee, caused serious disquiet among the ruling party.

Given these sensitivities, the DDP has sought to mitigate certain risks. It has proceeded through intensive and exhaustive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, local and international, government and opposition, in order to ensure a degree of buy-in from all elements of the political spectrum. For the party and parliamentary components, discussions about the form and content of the programme were an integral part of designing the activities. Although the NRM did not participate in every aspect of the programme, the party was kept informed of every development. This is not to say that all problematic issues were successfully resolved, and those involved have indicated some ways in which improvements could be made. However, the DDP does show how a programme of this type can begin to overcome such difficulties.

The next stages of the DDP will build on these political insights. The 2011 elections will signal a pause in the programme as undertaking party and parliamentary assistance during the campaign would invite heavy criticism from both Uganda's ruling elite and donors. It would also have limited impact. The elections will thus provide a period for review when the various components will be assessed and altered as appropriate. For example, those we interviewed believed that on its own, the impact of multiparty dialogue was limited. Although the discussions have not disintegrated, there has been limited tangible progress. There had been formal commitment to the process, but the underlying politics and atmosphere of mistrust prevented meaningful dialogue. One interviewee suggested that this situation was unlikely to change as long as there was no change-over of power. Only when both sides have experienced both sides of the coin will there be the degree of tolerance required for effective dialogue.

This willingness to adapt has informed the entire programme. Extensive consultations with numerous stakeholders have ensured that the programme is tailored to the situation, while the interventions themselves allow for a degree of flexibility and local ownership. The funding components of the parliamentary support are a good example of this. The DDP provides the resources for commissioning reports and gathering information, but the specific use of the money is decided by the parliamentarians themselves. They decide exactly what they need most and are able to access the funds when appropriate. In this way, the programme stays relevant to the situation. The grants to political parties work in much the same way. Although carefully monitored and approved by the DDP, the money is spent where and when each party itself believes it is most necessary.

Critically, the DDP does not impose a formula or a linear development plan on local stakeholders from the outside. The parties are provided with funds which they decide how to use best, so the parties and parliamentarians can take them or leave them as they will. One downside is that this tends to mean that the most engaged parliamentarians and the larger 'functioning' parties are the primary beneficiaries, while those which are largely inactive will remain so. However, the parties that are participating now recognize that they need to be *real* parties to function effectively within the system. They understand the direction in which they need to travel because they are driving development. However, the design of the DDP means that the requests of the parties and parliamentarians do not go unchecked. There is no assumption that local ownership means a hands-off approach. It is rather about ensuring that genuine consultation and buy-ins are programmed.

Conclusions

The overall strength of the Deepening Democracy Programme lies in the way in which the insights from the analysis of the political situation in Uganda have been translated into project objectives and the implementation of activities. The problem underpinning both the parliamentary and political party strands of the programme was the imbalance of party political power, which meant that parliament was simply not functioning as it should in terms of holding the executive to account. The parliamentary strengthening element was therefore conceived in terms of the political parties, making them partners and, to a large extent, the principal drivers of that component. Support to the parties in parliament was reinforced by work to strengthen the organization and administration of political parties outside parliament. It was a tacit recognition that in order to play an effective role, the parties needed not only parliamentary resources but also a better organizational structure as well as a more robust party system in order to increase

the public legitimacy of and authority for that parliamentary role.

Three aspects of the implementation of the delivery of the programme are worth emphasizing. First, the programme accepted at the outset that the activities would have a differential impact on the political parties. In short, that it would be of more benefit to the opposition parties than it would be to the NRM. It is this sort of admission that donor programmes have found particularly troubling in the past, and it was clearly an issue for this one. The fact that key decisions needed to be referred back to be signed-off by ministers in the donor agencies' countries is an indication of the level of political sensitivity. However, the programme appears to be managing those tensions.

Second, the programme is being run by people who understand and engage with the political dynamics in Uganda. Our discussions with key individuals delivering the programme indicated that they understand the incentives that drive the politicians and the political parties and, more importantly, they are comfortable handling them. This has meant, in turn, that the programme has been flexible and adapted to the political situation as it has evolved, and that those staff and consultants have been able to anticipate and defuse problems.

Third, this flexible approach has meant that the programme is still being driven by its outcomes rather than by its activities. In too many political programmes, the activities in the original planning document tend to be regarded as set in stone, and are followed rigorously, regardless of their effectiveness. The DDP in Uganda is built on a clear and common understanding of the need to redress political imbalances and improve the quality of democratic politics. Within that overall objective the programme identified key areas for support, such as greater research capacity or direct grants for opposition parties, and could potentially expand its work to other committees, which would help to alter the balance of power. However, activities have been modified and the timing of the programme has been allowed to slip in order to stay focused on the outcomes.

The programme is thus regarded as a positive example of political programming, which integrates the objectives of parliamentary and party support. However, it also highlights the difficulties of quantifying that success. Although indicators exist, various interviewees expressed the same view that they did not truly capture the extent of change, and that it was still easier to use numbers to justify programme activity than more qualitative signs of shift. Our discussions reinforced the view that it is often easier to sense political change than it is to measure it. This has implications for the way such programmes are funded by donors, and these are examined in chapter 4.

NIMD's work with political parties in Ghana

NIMD's work on the Ghana Political Parties Programme (GPPP), which began in 2001, is an ongoing joint initiative with the Accra-based Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA). Since its inception, the programme has worked with the four political parties represented in the Ghanaian parliament to develop a 'shared agenda for democratic reforms' in the form of a Democracy Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP).[85] The DCSP provides a wide-ranging analysis of Ghana's democratic landscape, the quality of its political institutions and further reform measures to extend the country's democratic development.

The programme in Ghana was initiated through a series of identification visits made by NIMD in 2001 and 2002, which culminated in a start-up conference with the IEA in 2002. An important part of these initial visits were extensive talks with representatives of the four parliamentary parties. The aim was to 'introduce the NIMD to a wide spectrum of political stakeholders in Ghana and to engage in consultations about options to support—in impartial ways—the institutional development of political parties'.[86] The key to this initial process was the IEA, which was already working in the field and which was perceived as a neutral actor on the Ghanaian political scene. NIMD was keen to ensure that the political parties programme revolved around a permanent local presence in Ghana. As a result, ownership was not restricted to occasional input from local stakeholders. The programme was managed and shaped entirely by a local institution. The IEA became a trusted forum for the parties at all stages of the programme.

Following the initial contact, consultations at the IEA involving all parliamentary parties and the Electoral Commission resulted in an expression of interest to

participate in 'a platform of political parties to identify a national agenda aiming at consolidating the democracy within a spirit of national consolidation'.[87] The involvement of local actors from the earliest stages of the programme is of particular note. The 2004 Evaluation indicates that establishing the programme was a 'sensitive process', which was 'successfully concluded by NIMD by bringing on board and reaching agreement with all main stakeholders, including the IEA as the programme facilitator'.[88] This is an important element of the NIMD approach. It acts as a facilitator or consultant to initiate the programme, providing guidance and funding as and when required. This also avoids a prescriptive approach to programme components and institutional set-up. Another significant part of the programme design was that NIMD was intuitively aware of the length of time required to implement such a programme. The sensitive politics of attempting to reshape the political landscape requires not only the input of all major stakeholders, but also resolve on the part of the donor to take the incremental and time-consuming steps necessary to ensure that the myriad of complex issues can be resolved. For example, the first year of the programme had the relatively modest objective of assessing 'the opportunities and constraints for the long-term institutional development of political parties in Ghana and to develop an agenda on how these challenges can be addressed and supported'.[89]

NIMD took a collaborative and inclusive approach in Ghana. Although the programme had a broad objective at the outset, to promote 'the process of democratization by supporting political parties in the area of capacity building',[90] the substance of the programme, its form and content, has been decided by local actors and facilitated by the local partner— the IEA. There is no list of preconceived objectives that specifically address certain issues. Instead, the idea for the joint platform was reached through an inclusive and extensive consultation process with the political parties. However, it places party support in the context of wider democratic development. In other words, parties should be viewed as the primary conduit for political change, and, by ensuring their engagement in the programme, other institutions and elements of the political landscape can be reached and affected. This indicates why NIMD decided to work only with those parties represented in parliament, their institutional reach is greater. One final point to note is the definition of capacity building, which suggests a technical approach to programming, but NIMD's conception of capacity explicitly includes 'the promotion of a democratic culture and behaviour'.[91] The 2004 Joint Action Plan (JAP), signed by all four parliamentary parties, reflects this thinking. The priority is the creation of 'a level playing field for all political parties in Ghana'.

The Ghanaian context

The timing of NIMD's intervention in Ghana coincided with a significant turning point in Ghanaian political history. The 2000 election signalled the first democratic transition from one elected government to another, when John Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) defeated the incumbent Jerry Rawlings of the National Democratic Congress (NDC). One well-placed official we spoke to remarked that this was the moment when Ghanaians realized that 'democracy had come to stay' and that they needed to take control of their own development.

Ghana's democratic history up to this point was relatively short. Between 1966 and 1981, the political landscape was characterized by endless military coups, which ended when Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings came to power in 1981, abrogated the constitution and banned multiparty politics. Over the next decade, domestic pressures for political liberalization combined with 'official desires to conform to global and regional trends and thus pre-empt the application of political conditionalities by international donors led a reluctant [Rawlings' administration] to plan the return of constitutional rule'.[92] A Constitutional Advisory Committee was appointed and recommended a draft constitution, which was approved by popular referendum in April 1992. The presidential elections of November 1992 returned Rawlings as the president, and in 1993 the new constitution was ratified by parliament.

Of course, the transition was not as straightforward as this simple narrative suggests, with one observer labelling it 'seriously flawed'.[93] The 1992 presidential elections were characterized by NDC interference in the electoral process and manipulation of voter registration.[94] As a result, the opposition boycotted the parliamentary elections of December 1992 and voter turnout was around 29 per cent.[95] Although the situation has improved markedly with each subsequent election, at the time of the 2000 elections the political system was still characterized by a high degree of acrimony between the main political players. However, the opposition NPP grew in strength in the eight years after the 1992 elections and when Rawlings stepped down in 2000, at the end of his second term, as he was constitutionally mandated to do, NPP candidate John Kufuor won the Presidential election.

This transition was repeated in 2008 when John Atta Mills of the NDC won back control of the government from the NPP after a closely fought run-off ballot (with 50.1 per cent of the votes and a margin of only around 40,000 votes). It was the second peaceful transition in Ghana's multiparty history and demonstrated that Ghana had acquired a genuinely competitive democratic system, with strong democratic institutions (especially the Election Commission) and where elections were able to effect a change in government.

However, the success and relative stability of the political system in Ghana has not automatically reduced tensions and mistrust between the principal parties, the NDC and the NPP. Their relationship has been one of 'persistent polarisation and mutual loathing',[96] to the extent that in previous transitions the incoming government has thrown out every single policy of the previous government without review. Unresolved weaknesses in the political system have been blamed for the continuation of this dynamic. One particular focus for observers has been the strength of the executive and the allure of state capture that comes with it.[97] Consequently, some of the patrimonial practices associated with the pre-1992 government have continued unabated, which has stalled key government reforms such as regional devolution and local development. Once gained, governments are unwilling to release the financial and political benefits that come with centralized control. Nonetheless, since the low turnout in 1992, voter participation in subsequent ballots has been consistently over 70 per cent,[98] and public support for democracy stands at over 79 per cent.[99]

Thus, the political situation in Ghana is characterized by two particular trends. First, that the return to multiparty politics has been successful and the public perception of democracy is extremely favourable. Furthermore, a genuinely competitive multiparty system has developed in which power has twice changed hands. The main political actors are therefore signed up to the democratic project, and have recognized the benefits of further progress and reform. Second, there are still gaps in the system that need to be filled. Acrimonious relations between the NDC and NPP have been detrimental to the overall development of Ghana, and have hamstrung some much needed reforms.

Dialogue platform: Building commitment and consensus

It is in this context that the NIMD/IEA programme started and developed. As is noted above, there was no set of preconceived objectives or model of development for the GPPP. Instead, the programme form and content grew entirely in response to consultations with local actors, facilitated by the IEA. As the 2004 Evaluation notes: 'The agenda for the development of joint activities is fully the responsibility of the platform of the Secretaries General and the Caucus of Chairmen of the four parties, supported by their policy analysts and facilitated by the IEA staff.'[100] These initial consultations suggested that the way forward should be based around creating a multiparty platform for addressing the concerns of the parties and agreeing on a strategy for future reform. This format for the programme reflects the fact that despite the antagonistic relationship between the main political actors, there is enough commitment to democratic politics for these actors to recognize the importance of continued reform in the public interest and to increase the chance of having policy influence. The multiparty platform was seen as the best way to improve the 'mechanisms of communication' which are integral to building mutual confidence among the parties, and then to the creation of effective working plans.[101] It provides a safe space for dialogue in which parties do not have to play the act of enemies but are transformed into political opponents. The first year of the GPPP, 2003, was focused on this task of the depolarization and normalization of relations, while admitting this would 'require dedicated time and attention'. The 2003 JAP shows the modest, short-term aims of the programme at that stage, including the organization of political party broadcasts, the drafting of a code of conduct, and the organization of joint symposia. This cautious approach appears to have paid off, as the 2004 JAP demonstrates a much broader set of aims: the creation of a level playing field; the strengthening of the institutional capacity of political parties; and enhancing the public image of political parties in Ghana. In addition, there were firm commitments to establish regular bi-monthly meetings between the party representatives, and the completion of the code of conduct. The 2004 agreement should be seen as particularly successful in the context of the general elections held that year, with all the associated political difficulties playing in the background.

After the first priority of NIMD/IEA, to bring the parties together, and to 'institutionalize the dialogue process' as one staff member put it, the programme recognized that a multiparty dialogue could easily break down, or lead merely to more dialogue rather than concrete steps. The ongoing strategy has therefore been to ensure the buy-in and commitment of the parties as a key process for the GPPP. First and foremost, NIMD has given complete ownership to local

stakeholders. The primary conduit for this is the local partner, the IEA, which handles the day-to-day management of the programme. In addition, the IEA has acted as a think-tank, producing reports and providing information for the parties and other stakeholders on topics of relevance to the programme. Beyond this, the IEA has engaged the services of a wide range of sources in the research process, from civil society to the parliamentary directorate itself. The IEA has therefore become a focal point for the disparate institutions, organizations and individuals involved in the politics of Ghana, and is a well-regarded forum around which the programme revolves. All the parties regard it as a neutral partner. The IEA is keen to point out that it has facilitated an open relationship with the parties, which feel they can approach the IEA when needed both formally and informally.

Local ownership also extends to the political parties. The staff we interviewed emphasized that the programme works equally with all four of the parties represented in parliament, despite the overwhelming dominance of the NPP and the NDC (128 seats and 94 seats, respectively, in the 2004 elections—116 and 107 in 2008 out of 230). There was no single owner of the process among the parties and all enjoyed equal input at every stage. The strategies and recommendations made during the programme have therefore been reached by consensus among all the main political actors. NIMD had a presence at all the meetings, but at no time did it dictate or shape the dialogue.

The second element to ensure buy-in to the process was to demonstrate the complete neutrality of the dialogue platform and the programme. This meant that in the beginning it was important that the GPPP should be financially independent of the domestic political actors, but also as inclusive and equitable as possible towards the parties, perhaps especially the smaller ones, to guarantee all voices and reservations were heard and taken seriously. This also means regular interaction with the group of non-parliamentary political parties which are also invited to the round table meetings that take place twice per year.

Third, NIMD also offered to work directly with the participating parties in supporting their organizational capacity. When the JAP was signed in 2004, agreements were made on the funding of these activities. According to the programme, these activities are worth up to EUR 20,000 per annum to the Ghanaian parties, to be used for capacity building, technical assistance and training. The local parties are understandably very keen to secure this support for their organizations. All support and detailed activities are decided on the basis of the priorities identified by the party itself through a needs assessment process (SWOT analysis).

The rationale, according to NIMD, is that this individual party support may initially work as a simple incentive, reflecting the political reality of party involvement which is invariably a combination of self-interest and other incentives. Over time, however, this strictly short term view of the benefits is replaced by genuine commitment to the dialogue process. Furthermore, the specific programme approach also includes the use of specialist expertise and lessons from the Dutch political party scene to support the different country programmes on a needs basis. In addition, more and more valuable lessons are shared between NIMD country programmes through so-called peer-exchanges. Organizationally there are two cycles of meetings for the local stakeholders. The first is a semi-annual Round Table meeting established and attended by NIMD, at which parties and the IEA review progress, identify current deficiencies and agree actions and activities to focus on in the next year. These monitoring and planning sessions are presided over by the designated party Chair of the Platform.

Second, the regular dialogue is 'institutionalized' in the monthly meetings at the senior party political level: the Secretaries General joined by their policy analysts. The Chairmen of the parties also meet as a caucus to tackle escalated issues. The platform and caucus are meant to provide regular forums for discussion of political developments and issues in general, and to monitor the progress of the recommendations arising from the semi-annual Round Table meetings. According to IEA staff, this was the first joint platform 'devoid of partisanship' in Ghana. In practice, it also functions as a tension breaker and pressure valve for contested issues. In addition to these meetings, the GPPP established a number of initiatives to involve other actors in the programme. The IEA has brought together civil society organizations 'to be part of the dialogue and debate on critical policy issues confronting the country'.[102] By engaging with wider elements of society, and involving them in the programme, the GPPP is attempting to broaden the scope of political interactions and involvement. There has also been an emphasis on ensuring that the programme is well publicized, understood and supported by the public. The IEA has disseminated documentation and reports on the work of the GPPP nationwide to help citizens see both the benefits of multiparty politics and the progress being made by the GPPP. Furthermore, there has been a concerted effort to engage with the media

through workshops and retreats, which has resulted in a number of articles, television and radio broadcasts, and reports on the GPPP, and has 'contributed to [it] being recognized as an effective national programme'.[103] The success of these activities was noted in the 2004 Evaluation, which stated that 'the proactive public relations policy and practices of the IEA have stimulated the excellent coverage of the joint activities by the media'.[104] The media attention has also had an effect on the parties themselves, which have begun to see the benefits of 'promoting a better image of themselves in the public perception'.[105]

Key outcome: The democracy consolidation strategy paper

Given these concrete developments in the establishment of the inter-party dialogue platform and the improvement in inter-party relations, the parties felt that a next step should be made. In meetings with NIMD in 2005 they proposed that the disparate recommendations that had come out of the first years of the GPPP needed to be consolidated into a single strategy. That single strategy was the Democracy Consolidation Strategy Paper. The fact that it was the parties themselves that came up with the idea of the DCSP is an encouraging sign of the progress made by the GPPP in its first years—they had recognized the importance of consensus to democratic development.

In 2006, the IEA initiated the DCSP process by contracting two external consultants, one from Zimbabwe and one from Ghana, to carry out initial assessments of the Ghanaian political situation. The next stage involved another group of experts preparing a document that could be used in countrywide consultations. This was submitted in December 2006. The following year saw a wide-ranging consultation with stakeholders at both the national and the local levels. This process was designed to comment on the interim DCSP, and to 'solicit new and fresh proposals'.[106]

The final document, published in August 2008, is both an analysis of current problems in the political situation and a set of practical reforms for addressing these problems. It covers the entire spectrum of political institutions and actors, with a particular emphasis on:

- The macro-political environment, examining particularly the constitution, political parties and the electoral system;
- The legislative framework for governance, particularly how to make parliament more effective;
- The agenda for good governance, covering such topics as decentralization, anti-corruption, human rights, media independence and the role of chiefs, women and the youth in governance;
- Judicial independence and the justice system system; and
- The role of civil society organizations in the governance system.

This is a wide remit, but it demonstrates the commitment of the political parties to addressing the whole spectrum of controversial issues. As is noted in the contextual analysis, the issues of decentralization and parliamentary strengthening in relation to the executive are particularly sensitive in a system in which power has been so highly centralized in the executive. What the DCSP demonstrates is that political parties are the lynchpin of the democratic system. By gaining their support, and building consensus among them on a strategy for development, every element of the political landscape can be affected. To take one example, some of the most troublesome issues that parliamentary support programmes have tried to tackle—effective oversight and accountability, funding of the activities of parliamentarians, and access to information resources—have all been addressed specifically in the DCSP, not by working directly with the parliament, but by working with the political parties. This partisan dynamic is often the most significant determinant of parliamentarians' behaviour. Interestingly, the GPPP, by recognizing the centrality of the parties, has obtained a commitment to improve the institutional independence of parliament. The first recommendation for the parliament in the DCSP therefore states that it 'should strive hard to establish an identity that will enable it to act as an effective check on the Executive. To be able to do this, [parliamentarians] should shed the extreme partisanship that they bring to bear on debate...'.[107]

The impact of the DCSP: Main results

The reaction to the recommendations in the DCSP has been positive, and has had an impact at the most senior levels of the political elite. Although the DCSP was started under the Kufuor Administration, President Mills mentioned the programme in his State of the Nation address and spoke of his commitment to taking

its recommendations forward. This cross-party success was also reflected in the 2008 election campaign. All four of the parliamentary parties quoted from the DCSP in their manifestos, with a particular emphasis on constitutional reform. The IEA representative we interviewed remarked that this was an unprecedented show of consensus between the parties, and it was particularly noteworthy that it came at election time when antagonism is traditionally at its apex.

Since publication, 39 issues from the DCSP have been identified and discussed. It is an encouraging sign that all four parties have established committees specifically tasked with examining these issues and formulating party policy on each one. These committees have engaged every level of the party hierarchy, including significant consultations with the grassroots. These are particularly important developments as the DCSP process has resulted in a more transparent and inclusive policymaking process within parties. Before the GPPP, one interviewee noted that parties were little more than electoral organizations without any coherent policy platforms, which meant that incoming governments had no agenda for their term in office. The GPPP has been able to shape a scenario in which the parties have recognized the benefits and importance of articulating policies and having an institutionalized method for formulating them. This demonstrates the impact that effective multiparty dialogue programmes can have on the internal capabilities of individual parties.

In addition, the commitment to constitutional change has not been confined to electoral rhetoric. President Mills after his inauguration initiated a process of constitutional reform by the setting up of a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) with a remit to review the main gaps and unclear passages of the 1992 constitution and recommend changes. This process will result in a final proposal for updating the text to be put to a national referendum. The CRC consists of nine prominent Ghanaians, including the IEA Executive Director, Jean Mensa. In this regard, an NIMD representative noted that they view working together with the Commission as the key next step for the NIMD/IEA programme and in work with other parties to implement the constitutional changes proposed. NIMD therefore is in a good position for this next phase of the political reform process through their good offices with all the main Ghanaian political actors.

The DCSP notes that 'at most of the meetings and symposia of the political parties, representatives were able to reach consensus on issues that had previously appeared intractable and on which different [parties] appeared to have divergent or even irreconcilable differences.'[108]

A number of other direct outcomes of the DCSP are identified in the documentation. A Code of Conduct was produced for the 2004 elections, and revised for 2008, which aims to achieve a 'cleaner and more sober campaign'.[109] A joint communiqué was signed by all the parties, pledging to work on a common pro-youth policy regardless of each party's current policy position, and a draft was made of a Political Parties Act, positioning parties as key actors in democratization.

One other example of the success of the DCSP is the Presidential Transition Bill. This has been a point of some significant controversy over the years, as one of the key problems facing parties in Ghana 'is the exploitation of incumbency by ruling parties'.[110] Governing parties have been unwilling to address this issue, both because of the benefits they gain when in office, and the potential benefits for the opposition. However, in the wake of the DCSP, President Mills has set up a committee to look into the possibility of passing the Bill, with the stipulation only that the DCSP recommendations should serve as the basis for negotiation because it has the agreement of all the parties. The measures under discussion include state funding of political parties, and a more flexible framework for party financing from corporate and foreign sponsors.[111]

Lessons, challenges and priorities ahead

Despite the progress, NIMD has suggested three groups of challenges which the programme continues to face, and which may have a wider relevance for political programming. The first is the impact of the electoral cycle on political reform. For example, the GPPP parties developed and proposed a draft Public Funding of Political Parties Bill, which enjoyed the support of the four political parties and was endorsed by the Electoral Commission, but was withdrawn by the president after it had been tabled in parliament. The key issue was timing—it was tabled just before the elections and was unpopular with the public. Many of the key actors felt wary of pursuing the initiative at that time and in the face of public opposition.

Second, there is the significance of interpersonal relations to political dialogue. For example, a change in party leadership means new party representatives

around the table. This usually has an influence on the inter-party dialogue, as trust and mutual understanding will often need to be developed afresh between party representatives. As a result, the dynamics can never be taken for granted and regular meetings with all parties are required to validate and ensure their continued commitment to the process and principles.

Third, there is the challenge of matching a flexible approach on long term development- and process-oriented work with the accountability and reporting demands of the funders of the programme. Political processes are not based solely on input/output activities, but take a long time and a fertile environment to flourish, which is difficult to plan and capture in tools such as logical frameworks and detailed budgets.

Going forward, the NIMD/IEA programme is aiming to build on established working relations to broaden the impact of the project, for instance with the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), which is responsible for the national development plan. As a first step, the NDPC has requested NIMD/IEA to facilitate the link between the parties and the formulation of the national development strategy by asking planning experts from the parties to join in the process, and committees that previously were made up only of government and ruling party experts. This is an exciting new step since we understand that in the past these development plans were passed unilaterally by each new government but subsequently thrown out by the next administration. An NIMD representative remarked that this link to the NDPC was a major opportunity for them to link the multiparty dialogue structure to the wider development process because it provides an opportunity to align the DCSP with the national development programme and budget. In this regard, the NIMD/IEA programme ties in with the overarching objective of so many international organizations—that democracy becomes an essential part of the wider development agenda.

Conclusions

The experience of NIMD and the IEA in Ghana suggests that, for the most part, parties are either unable or unwilling to address such issues in an effective manner, and that it takes a significant amount of groundwork and political development to arrive at a stage where any connection between democracy and poverty alleviation is even viable. The NIMD/IEA programme concentrated on politics for its own sake and is reaping the benefits as a result. Overall, it demonstrates that small, targeted interventions, initially aimed at improving the capacity of parties and multiparty dialogue, can have a profound impact across the system, simply by understanding who the key players are and how long democratic development can take.

NIMD's programme design in Ghana is in marked contrast to the original design of the deepening democracy programmes in Tanzania and Uganda. Rather than attempting to tackle a range of political institutions at once, it used the political parties as a single conduit through which wider political change might be promoted. As such, it sought to engage the parties through a mixture of self-interest and political priorities and, as a result, encouraged them to become the catalysts for a wider process of political reform, not least in terms of parliamentary strengthening. However, in common with the deepening democracy programme in Uganda, the basis of the programme was an overtly political one, which was reflected at every stage of the project.

Critically, the programme was allowed to evolve from its original premise—that the parties could aid development across a range of democratic institutions. It was the 2004 evaluation that first proposed this connection, albeit in general terms, but as the programme developed, it gathered an internal momentum which reached its peak with the parties' promotion of the DCSP. This, in turn, has resulted in a number of concrete changes across the political system. Part of the success also lay in accepting the long timescale required for political change, and avoiding preordained deadlines for measuring success. The project has thus been characterized by a flexibility of implementation, allowing it to respond to political dynamics over the course of its life. In other words, although the project had a clear sense of its strategic objectives at its outset, the activities and project delivery did not have to conform to any predetermined activities or methods. Instead, they were allowed to emerge as the project deepened and developed.

The other significant characteristic worth emphasizing is the balance the project struck between local ownership and external pressure to deliver. The programme sought to provide incentives to the parties for their continued participation, but responsibility for development lay with the parties, which ultimately determined the pace and content of political change. In this sense, the role of NIMD was less as implementer of political reform, and more that of a consultant and facilitator. This point—and its implications for funding political programmes—is elaborated in chapter 4.

The WFD's work with the Macedonian Parliament

In October 2008, the WFD began a parliamentary strengthening programme in Macedonia. According to the project documentation, the programme 'aims to enhance the capacity of parliamentary commissions, permanent parliamentary staff and political parties to enable smoother functioning of the Macedonian Parliament'. With the support of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Embassy in Skopje, the intention was to continue project implementation for three years.

The WFD operates through two arms of its organization. The parliamentary strengthening work is managed by WFD staff, although project delivery is often carried out in conjunction with a number of UK partners.[112] The WFD works with the government and opposition parties in a multiparty setting, along with local academic, civil society and journalistic institutions to support and enhance parliamentary functioning. Political party support is conducted by the British political parties through the WFD on a bilateral basis. This work is aimed at building the capacity and skills of sister parties, and the relationships between parties are initially facilitated by the WFD. The Macedonia programme looks at how parliamentary strengthening was approached by direct engagement with the political parties in parliament.

The parliamentary programme needs to be understood in the context of Macedonia's desire for membership of the EU. The catalyst for the intervention by the WFD in Macedonia was the publication of a critical report by the European Commission in 2007, assessing the country's compatibility with EU norms and regulations. Macedonia became an EU candidate country in December 2005, and as part of this ongoing process an Accession Partnership has been established, based on a number of previous agreements, including the Copenhagen Criteria (1993), the Zagreb Declaration (2000) and the Thessaloniki Agenda (2003). All these agreements prioritize and reiterate the development of peaceful democratic processes in the candidate country. Consequently, one of the 'key priorities' of the Accession Partnership is the 'establishment of a constructive political dialogue'.[113] The annual EU reports that monitor Macedonia's progress towards these criteria have indicated that 'insufficient dialogue' has hampered the work of the parliament.[114] In other words, the reports and the Accession Partnership view dialogue between the political actors as a prerequisite for any genuine democratic development. There is a broad consensus among the Macedonian parties on the need to work towards membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the EU, and the annual reports have served as something of a 'wake-up call' for parliamentarians, according to WFD staff in the country. Those involved in the WFD programme spoke of a 'flurry of activity' on publication, when legislators were perhaps more willing than usual to address the significant issues remaining in Macedonia. As a result, in the wake of the 2007 report, the British Embassy in Skopje initiated a programme with the WFD, the primary goal of which was to bring the parties towards achieving this constructive dialogue. Achieving successful multiparty dialogue, in the context of the EU Accession Partnership, therefore became the foundation of the Macedonia programme.

In our conversations with WFD staff, there was an overriding aim of initiating and sustaining dialogue between the parties, and progress on this front was to be the first measure of success or failure of the programme. The documented objectives, which the programme aims to meet by March 2011, are divided into three sections:[115]

1. To enhance the capacity of the President of the Assembly's Cabinet to manage the business of parliament more effectively through:
    - Increased skills of administrative and expert staff
    - More effective coordination and communication between the President of the Assembly and Parliamentary Coordinators.
2. To deliver more effective political parties in their roles in opposition and government, resulting in more effective management of parliamentary business through
    - More effective functioning of Parliamentary Coordinators
    - Greater cross-party scrutiny of legislation
    - More effective cross-party caucuses
    - Enhanced cross party relationships in parliament

- Improved understanding of the roles and responsibilities of individual MPs.

3. To strengthen the role and impact of parliamentary commissions through
   - More effective internal commission management and functioning in regard to use of procedures and practices.
   - Increased skills of commission members and expert staff in legislative drafting and scrutiny.

Two trends emerge from these objectives. First, the smooth running of parliamentary business is an integral part of the programme rationale. Second, communication, coordination and dialogue between the actors in the parliament are of vital importance to the successful functioning of the institution, and the form and content of the parliamentary activities necessarily involve a multiparty dimension. The indicators given in the documentation show how dialogue underpins these two trends: '2.2 Parliamentary Coordinators and MPs have developed skills in mediation, negotiation and understand how to utilize current systems and procedures in a constructive manner to present their position in Parliament'.[116]

Another notable element of the programme design is the implicit integration of party and parliamentary support, with both spheres cutting across the three sets of objectives. While the emphasis is on improving the running of parliament, the programme acknowledges the role played both by the parliamentary leaders and the parties themselves. This is most apparent in the prominent role given to the parliamentary coordinators —the term used by the WFD to refer to the party whips of the Macedonian Parliament. The coordinators have a dual role and therefore a dual impact. First, they are important to the functioning of the President's office by making sure that parliamentary business runs smoothly, and are therefore integral to the overall success of the parliament. The coordinators are the main party contact for the President of the Parliament and the parliamentary staff, and therefore take the lead in any multiparty forum in parliament. In other words, they have a collective duty to the parliament as an institution. Second, they ensure the effectiveness of the parties in parliament by promoting cohesion and coordination among caucus members. The coordinators therefore stand at the nexus of both parliamentary and party functioning, and are the best placed individuals to effect change in both. In the Macedonian context, where antagonism between the parties is one of the main reasons for parliamentary dysfunction, the WFD has identified the most efficient driver of change within both institutions. The documentation outputs signal their dual role. 'Strengthened cohesiveness of political parties in government and opposition' is achieved by working 'through the Parliamentary Coordinators', while a better understanding of parliamentary mechanisms among the coordinators will 'improve and institutionalise cross-party coordination for the more efficient functioning of Parliament'.[117]

The Macedonian context

The Macedonian political context is integral to understanding the form and content of the WFD's programme. Since breaking away from Yugoslavia, Macedonian party politics has been shaped by ethnic tensions between the Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority (around 25 per cent). The problems are centred on issues of equal constitutional status for minorities, and the use of the Albanian language in public institutions. The war in Kosovo escalated the situation within Macedonia and in 2001 a conflict erupted between an Albanian militia and government forces. The violence lasted for most of that year, but a peace agreement was brokered relatively quickly by international actors in August 2001. The main Macedonian and Albanian political parties signed the agreement, which granted a high degree of self-government to the Albanian areas of the country, sought to increase the representation of minorities in state institutions and established a double-majority system in parliament for voting on minority issues.

However, tensions between the political parties did not diminish, and low-level violence between party activists continued. After the 2006 elections, the main Macedonian party, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), refused to form a governing coalition with the main Albanian parties, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP). Instead, the party went into government with a smaller Albanian party, further antagonizing the bigger parties. Over the next two years, the DUI and the PDP periodically boycotted parliament and there was a brawl between the Albanian factions in parliament in September 2007.

The 2008 elections led to allegations of ballot stuffing, fraud and intimidation, and the coalition saw another shift in alliances as the DUI joined the VMRO-DPMNE in coalition. Furthermore, the ruling party rushed through a number of pieces of legisla-

tion, including new parliamentary rules of procedure, during an opposition boycott. To a large extent, this was done in order to push through legislation to meet EU accession criteria. Despite the fact that all the major parties agree on EU membership, the manner in which the VMRO-DPMNE passed the legislation only increased antagonism. At the time, committees suffered from a severe lack of administrative expertise and technical support, which meant that they could not be used effectively for oversight and accountability. When parliamentary procedures are used, however, they are used in a combative way by the opposition to protest at the ruling coalition's apparent disregard for the rules of the parliament. Institutional inertia combined with a highly charged political atmosphere mean that the Macedonian Parliament is particularly susceptible to disruptive tactics. It is noteworthy that since 2001, virtually all the main parties have boycotted the parliament for several months at one time or another.

The two trends that emerged from the objectives—better functioning of parliamentary business and greater communication—are clearly rooted in the most pressing political problems facing the country. Those in the WFD we spoke to stressed that there was a 'virtual paralysis' of the parliamentary institution in 2008, and a total absence of any dialogue between the parliamentary parties. Specifically, a lack of consensus on a new set of procedural rules for the parliament was hampering any movement forward.

Activities and implementation

The programme began with an event aimed at bringing the key local stakeholders together to agree a way forward. To this end, the British Embassy convened a private meeting for senior parliamentarians at Wilton Park in the UK in 2008. The intention of the gathering was to overcome the initial barriers to dialogue and coordination that had previously proved intractable. The neutral venue, away from in-country pressures, proved beneficial in three ways. First, it allowed some of the communication problems to be addressed, which was a significant step, considering the extremely acrimonious relations between the parties. Second, the meeting demonstrated the commitment of the parliamentarians and their willingness to engage in constructive dialogue. Finally, the event began to instil a sense of institutional ownership among the participants. This had been identified as a key obstacle. Parliamentarians felt little pride in or engagement with the parliament as an institution. Progress on this front proved useful in maintaining momentum during the programme by appealing to a shared sense of pride in the parliamentary institution.

The Wilton Park event set the pattern for the direct work with the parliamentary coordinators. This type of consultative workshop therefore constituted the main kind of activity, with the cross-party element also featuring prominently. This format was of particular importance in the Macedonian context where the primary hurdle was simply creating a space in which political rivals could communicate constructively. It is important to note that the WFD does not attempt to 'teach' local stakeholders the British parliamentary system through preconceived training programmes and seminars. Instead, the WFD's primary role is to facilitate the workshops and structure them in a coherent way, only one element of which was to present the British experience. The aim of each workshop was for the parliamentarians themselves to produce a set of recommendations and benchmarks that could act as a basis for further discussions or, ideally, could be implemented in their parliamentary work.

Workshops typically lasted two or three days and consisted of five different stages:

1. Prior to the commencement of the workshop a baseline assessment was carried out to highlight issues of particular concern to parliamentarians. This was then sent to the party offices in order for the parties jointly to develop an agenda for the workshop.
2. The first session presented an overview of the Westminster experience of the particular issue, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the current system.
3. In the second session, the Macedonians discussed their positions regarding the issue and their individual roles in the parliamentary system.
4. The third session attempted to bring together the different opinions of the participants and to discuss possible improvements.
5. Lastly, the closing session aimed at drawing up a list of possible action points and recommendations. These were not binding, but were usually taken forward.

Many of the needs that were identified in the assessments were first raised through visits by parliamentarians to the British Parliament. For example, in June 2009 a Macedonian delegation observed the work of

the committees and the public hearing process. The subsequent workshops then focused on fiscal scrutiny and budgetary planning. Specifically targeted visits and meetings with UK representatives were used as a learning tool. In December 2008, the Speaker of the Macedonian Parliament, Trajko Veljanoski, met with the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament. In addition to providing an overview of the workings of these two institutions, the visit had two direct outcomes. First, Mr Veljanoski introduced the idea of a weekly Prime Minister's Questions session in the parliament, the procedures for which were incorporated into the training curricula for MPs. Second, the visit increased the Speaker's awareness of the importance of parliamentary oversight, which was echoed in the extensive media coverage garnered by the trip.

Although the workshops covered a wide range of issues, they were carefully planned. As WFD staff pointed out, each activity contributed to the shape of the whole programme, working towards the three sets of objectives, while tacitly sustaining political dialogue. In January 2009, the parliamentary coordinators and their deputies participated in a workshop on committee scrutiny and cross-party coordination. Previous visits and the presentation of the British model played a role, but the outcomes were firmly grounded in the practicalities of the Macedonian system. For example, participants raised the issue of better coordination of committees, given that rooms were frequently double booked, and committee work was not well apportioned, leaving parliamentarians overburdened. The result was an agreement to initiate discussion on the creation of a committee that could monitor and coordinate committee business.

Cohesion and continuity in the programme were also achieved through the involvement of the parliamentary coordinators at all levels of the programme. Their participation extended beyond the activities aimed specifically at their roles. They were invited to all the workshops in order to increase their understanding of the entire parliamentary process. For example, the financial oversight workshops were targeted primarily at finance committee members, but the coordinators attended and provided input into each session. Furthermore, the coordinators played an integral role in the planning and management of the programme through the Steering Committee. The Committee consisted of the Speaker, the coordinators, a WFD representative and a representative of the British Embassy. The purpose of the Committee was to discuss the direction of the programme, the content of future activities, and the next steps required to implement the workshops' recommendations. As a result, the coordinators enjoyed direct input into the development of the parliamentary institution at all stages.

In addition to the workshops set up by WFD, a weekly coordination meeting between the Speaker and the coordinators became another central feature of the programme. This was identified by WFD staff as one of the most positive outcomes, and contributed significantly to the smooth running of the other programme components, not to mention the parliament itself. Inter-party meetings involving the coordinators had been arranged at the start of the project to overcome some of the initial communication issues. However, they proved so successful in building trust and communication that the coordinators themselves requested that they be continued. The weekly meetings became an important multiparty forum in which a whole range of relevant issues could be discussed. According to the programme documentation, the meetings allowed the Speaker and the coordinators to agree a legislative agenda and on motions for debate, and to coordinate important parliamentary projects.[118] The meetings served as more than a forum for discussion, and contributed directly to the functioning of the parliament. However, they demonstrated that successful administration of parliamentary business is underpinned by constructive dialogue between parties. Understandably, this was viewed by all stakeholders as a major step forward, given the complete absence of any meaningful dialogue or coordination prior to the start of the programme.

The WFD staff have stressed that the primary successes of the programme have been the behavioural changes. The sense of pride in the parliamentary institution that was instilled through the workshops and meetings has been a particularly interesting outcome. In the same vein, the coordinators and parliamentarians involved have an increased sense of ownership of and control over the institution and its processes. In addition, the dialogue between the opposition and governing parties, which was previously lacking, has been one of the key benefits of the programme. As a result of these improvements, the other focus of the programme with the coordinators, increased coordination of parliamentary business, has seen some positive developments. For example, at a workshop held in October 2009, the coordinators and committee members reached a consensus on a number of proposals and recommendations for improving the budgetary planning and oversight processes. For the most part, the proposals consist of expressions of commitment

to discuss specific issues that have arisen during the workshop.

However, moving to the stage where these proposals can be implemented has proved problematic. In our discussions with WFD staff, we were told that in recent months, dialogue has stalled and that the opposition parties are boycotting the weekly coordination meetings. The recommendations of a workshop had committed to the establishment of an audit commission to oversee the government's fiscal policy. In the run-up to elections, this proved controversial. The ruling party viewed the recommendation as antagonistic posturing, and a direct challenge to their policies. The opposition felt that the reaction of the ruling party was an excuse to stall meaningful development of parliamentary processes, and return to unilateral policymaking beyond the control of the opposition. Consequently, communication surrounding these issues has entirely ceased, and the work with the parliamentary coordinators has halted. These events demonstrate how rapidly progress can be eroded by contextual pressures and incentives, despite the fact that local commitment and buy-in had been high.

Analysis and assessment

WFD's work in Macedonia revolves around local ownership. Ensuring that local stakeholders are engaged and included at every stage of the project was the overriding feature of programme design. This is particularly true of the parliamentary coordinators, who, due to their position, were not only involved in attending activities, but also organically integrated into the planning and implementation of the project. The rationale is clearly that with greater buy-in comes greater sustainability. In addition, input from local actors into project targets means that the most pressing needs are identified by the beneficiaries themselves. The programme was not initiated extraneously, and came in direct response to specific in-country dynamics. In this particular case, it was a series of critical EU reports that provided the impetus for action. This is an important element of the project, as the local stakeholders were intuitively aware of the programme's objectives because they were intimately involved in drawing them up. Furthermore, it demonstrated a certain degree of commitment to parliamentary development as the programme relied on the momentum of the local actors to make the workshops happen.

The meeting at Wilton Park in 2008 proved crucial in setting the tone for the whole project. The WFD staff we interviewed felt that this was a major contributor to the initial successes of the project. The event became a 'touchstone' for the participants. For example, at one workshop the discussion became heated, and one parliamentarian began to rail against his opposition counterparts. The situation was calmed when another said: 'Let's not return to the days before Wilton Park'. The neutral venue was the first space in which parliamentarians had been able to communicate and discuss in a constructive manner. The results of the meeting were of such benefit that WFD attempted to use a similar event as a springboard for other programmes. However, it has not always met with the same success, indicating that a basic level of willingness and commitment to the aims of the programme is required from the stakeholders prior to commencement.

The Wilton Park meeting was important for three reasons: first, WFD built in a level of reciprocity that allowed the local stakeholders to feel in control of the programme; second, as a result, these stakeholders began to feel a sense of institutional pride and direction; and, third, the meeting established multiparty dialogue as the main framework for the programme. The workshop format that resulted from this was designed to allow maxim input from the coordinators and parliamentarians, and allowed for a degree of contextualization at every stage of the programme. As each workshop was based on the needs and issues identified by the participants, there was a reduced danger that the activities would become irrelevant.

Another noticeable feature of this inclusive model was that the WFD documentation did not contain any preconceived indicators or a list of prior outputs. Although there was a set of objectives, these remained broad and were primarily in keeping with the original request for assistance, that is, they focused on improving communication and the coordination of parliamentary business. As those involved with the project pointed out, no standard set of benchmarks would decide whether the parliament was functioning 'correctly'. Instead, the parliamentary coordinators and the parliamentarians themselves decided on the measures of progress. The final sessions of the workshops produced these measures in their draft recommendations. The benchmarks are therefore owned and understood by the local stakeholders. The WFD has been a facilitator, moderating the workshops, providing expertise where required and ensuring that momentum was maintained.

However, this role is not without its difficulties, as the breakdown in communication between the parties has demonstrated. The recommendations produced by the workshops are largely pledges for more discussion. Of

course, given the previous problems with dialogue, this type of commitment should not be dismissed. Yet, the fact remains that concrete steps and real institutional changes remain scant, and early in 2010, when establishing the audit commission became a reality, there was a serious rupture. The fact that the WFD programme did not overtly engage with the sources of these political sensitivities, not least the dominance of the ruling party, meant that they cast a shadow over the discussions.

This is not to detract from the value of the more intangible, qualitative outcomes of the programme. On the contrary, addressing issues such as a lack of dialogue or a dearth of pride in parliamentary institutions is a prerequisite for any sort of basic legislative functioning. This component of the programme is all the more relevant because these types of issues are common in nascent democracies and need to be addressed. The WFD is keen therefore to stress both the qualitative and the quantitative aspects of its programming. It points out that too great an emphasis on either will skew the picture. While the meetings and workshops were taking place, however, there was a sense that the regular communication and increase in institutional pride were of significant value. Despite its recent problems, the WFD model has been capable of incorporating these important elements into the programme.

The WFD took the view that the parliamentary coordinators, with their dual role as party organizers and facilitators of the parliamentary process, could be the most viable and effective points of entry for interventions to strengthen parliament. As senior party figures, creating an arena for discussion and communication between the coordinators was viewed as an integral part of the whole development of Macedonian democracy. They would act as both drivers of change within the parliament and catalysts for greater cohesion and trust within their parties. This coordinated approach is present in the objectives, where the role of the coordinators straddles both the aims for the office of the President and those for the political parties. In addition, by focusing on the interpersonal relations between individual parliamentarians and by enhancing dialogue, the WFD attempted to affect the parliament by first affecting the behaviour of the parliamentarians. By working with the coordinators, the intention was to have an impact on both the parliamentary and the party institutions.

Conclusions

The WFD programme provides a useful comparison with the work of NIMD in Ghana. Both programmes have worked with key political figures to promote dialogue and wider political reform. In the case of Macedonia, the objectives were more tightly focused from the outset and revolved entirely around improving the functioning of the parliament but, like Ghana, this was to be achieved principally through providing a trusted forum for multiparty dialogue. Both programmes thus depended on the continued commitment and involvement of those key actors for their success.

However, the limits to that involvement, and the implications of its withdrawal, are much more evident in Macedonia. Staff at the WFD have suggested several reasons why this happened, and the organization appears to be applying these lessons in its approach to other programmes. First, the incentives for continued involvement were not as apparent or explicit as those in Ghana. It may be that future projects will establish certain preconditions at the start. Second, the programme highlights the delicate balance between local ownership and external pressure. As in Ghana, the WFD conceived of itself as a facilitator of the process, but relying on the parties to be drivers of political change makes the project vulnerable, and when the dialogue broke down the WFD had few forms of leverage over the local partners and the project stalled.

Third, the project never sought to tackle the imbalance of power between the political parties. In its attempt to foster dialogue and ensure the parties' faith in the neutral forum, the programme was based on treating all parties equally. However, political reform ultimately means some redistribution of power, even if this is only in the form of closer scrutiny of the executive branch of government. When this was broached in Macedonia, the balance of incentives for the dominant party suddenly shifted away from continued participation. Whereas in Uganda the redress of political imbalances was at the core of the programme, in Macedonia it was a subtext to the broader discussions.

However, these difficulties should not obscure the achievements of the project. Simply getting the parties around the same table, opening the channels of communication between them and building a greater sense of institutional pride in the parliament were significant changes. Even though discussions have stalled, the basis on which the parties engage with each other has changed and provides the ground for the project to develop. However, such a development is likely to rely on identifying new incentives for continued participation and, in all likelihood, linking dialogue more explicitly to key issues of political reform.

Conclusions: Continuing challenges for political programming

The four country case studies highlight some of the challenges facing parliamentary and party support programmes. All of them are informed by a sophisticated political analysis, and have sought to engage with the dynamics of political reform in each of the countries. However, due to project design, implementation and, partially, the nature of politics itself, they met with varying degrees of success.

Our interviews with stakeholders suggest that the deepening democracy programme in Tanzania was undone by a nervousness about the implications of encouraging political reform, which affected the way in which activities were designed and was compounded by a complex and ambiguous management structure. It provides a useful contrast with the similar programme in Uganda, which was based on a clear intention to alter the balance of power. That clarity from the outset meant stakeholders understood the nature of the programme (even if they did not support it) and meant that the political tensions could be addressed directly. The work of NIMD is of a different order, but placed party assistance in the broader context of the parties' role in Ghanaian democracy, allowing the parties themselves to establish and extend the nature of that role. The WFD worked in an alternative direction, identifying the need to strengthen the parliament through key political party figures, in this case the parliamentary whips. Both the latter projects took a flexible approach to programming and ultimately relied on the local partners to determine much of the pace and content of political development. This reliance on local buy-in means such programmes can be vulnerable if one or more parties withdraws its support. It reflects the continuing difficulty in establishing the terms on which local partnership is based, and the extent to which a donor agency or implementing organization can bind local partners into the overarching ambitions of the project. This goes to the heart of political programming. If the point of such programmes is to secure political change, this has to emerge from within—it cannot, ultimately, be imposed from the outside.

All the case studies highlight the advantages and challenges of aligning the objectives of party and parliamentary assistance. Where programmes are seeking to engage with the drivers of political change, they have to take account of the role of political parties in determining the quality of parliamentary activity. By the same token, the role of parties as campaigning organizations and vehicles for representing the public interest is intimately tied to what they then go on to do in various legislative and congressional institutions.

However, the limitations to integration should be made explicit. In the first place, it is not an argument for integrating every aspect of party and parliamentary work. Rather, the key point is that donor agencies and implementers need to be able to identify where there are synergies—which usually exist around efforts at political reform—and then be flexible enough to exploit them. Second, focusing on parliaments and parties is only part of the analysis. The performance of parties and parliament will largely depend on the way in which other parts of the political system are working. This is not an argument for ignoring them—they should provide part of the basic analysis. The fact that parties and parliaments are so closely intertwined means they present an obvious starting point, offering potential gains. However, the rationale behind the deepening democracy programmes is the interdependence of the governance system as a whole. Programmes which genuinely seek to engage with and shape the structures of political incentives will have only a limited impact if they seek to address one institution or area at a time. Therefore, the principles for the development of political programming (see below) are premised on the assumption of integrating donor assistance to both parties and parliaments.

It should also be stressed that agencies and institutions working in this field differ in their approach and in the challenges they face. Although, as is mentioned above, the use of various forms of political analysis, such as Sida's 'power analysis' or DFID's 'drivers of change', have added a new dimension to donor agencies' understanding of governance problems, their ability to deploy these insights varies according to a number of factors. For instance bilateral support programmes sometimes present problems for the donor country when its aid agency's democracy strengthening work conflicts with its foreign ministry's diplomatic objectives. The former is often about strengthening the opposition, while the latter sometimes involves working almost exclusively with the executive. Multilateral agencies, such as the UNDP or the EU, might be in a better position to deal with such difficulties, but are often even more cautious about preserving their neutrality and limited by complicated management structures. Intermediary bodies funded by donor agencies often have a more overtly political role, such as the NDI or the WFD, and are instinctively more comfortable operating in this terrain. They also seem more able to integrate the parliamentary and party aspects of their work. However, even here organizational structure distinguishes between party assistance and parliamentary programming. There is undoubtedly overlap between them, especially when it comes to implementation of country programmes, but a number of staff across a range of agencies suggested that a gap continues to exist between the strategy that informs most international support to parliaments and parties, and the reality of how that work is implemented on the ground.

The country case studies, our interviews with staff from the headquarters of donor agencies and international democracy support organizations, as well as the local staff, consultants and stakeholders involved in party and parliamentary support work suggested two broad areas which should inform how such political programming should evolve. The first is around project flexibility, and the second is about matching political programmes to the reality of politics.

Project flexibility

i) Programme design

A number of people we interviewed suggested that the fundamental problem with an unsuccessful project was frequently the way in which it had originally been designed. The fact that we spoke to a number of 'seasoned experts' in the field may reflect a particular bias, but there was a common sense that many such programmes were simply designed badly, driven more by a desire to carry out particular activities than achieve certain outcomes. In both parliamentary and party support, programmes had been designed by agency or embassy staff after discussions with local stakeholders, but often ended up addressing the symptoms rather than the causes of the problem

For example, parliamentary strengthening projects still try to train parliamentarians in 'oversight' or 'legislative scrutiny' rather than addressing why these issues are given such a low priority by parliamentarians in the first place. Similarly, party assistance projects encourage models of good party organization, ideological coherence and mass membership, but fail to convince the party partners that such things matter, or how they might help them. Many still treat the problems of parties and parliaments in isolation, rather than identifying the common root causes of both.

These tendencies again seem to reflect the gap between the political analysis which is now common at the strategic level, and the way in which projects are designed locally. This situation is undoubtedly changing, as political analysis is deployed more widely, but it remains a legitimate concern for many working on such projects.

ii) Implementation and delivery

A linked issue is related to the way in which the original planning documents were then implemented. A comment made by one interviewee resonated with every other person we spoke to: that the best projects were those that diverged significantly from the original programme plans. This highlights two continuing issues for the way in which political programmes are implemented. First, even where a project is based on a highly sophisticated political analysis, it assumes that, first, an initial scoping exercise can capture all the political dynamics affecting parties and parliaments and, second, that politics will remain static over the course of a two-, three- or even five-year programme. The chances of capturing all the important factors in the first analysis are small but, more importantly, a programme document needs to be able to respond to the context in which the programme is operating. Political programming should be seen as an iterative process, which is constantly evolving and adapting to changing political dynamics. Yet, too often programme documents are regarded as rigid instructions, to which the whole of the programme must then conform.

Second, as one senior figure from an implementing organization told us, 'we understand how politics works in our own countries, but then we seem to want to employ a totally different set of methods in developing democracies'. Political campaigns are based on broad strategies with tactics often changing from day to day, allowing politicians and staffers to respond to opportunities as they arise. In the field of party and parliamentary assistance, this is dismissed as being 'too ad hoc', and programme documents concern themselves with not just the strategy, but the daily tactics over the project's lifespan.

The result of both factors is to undermine project effectiveness. If the originally envisaged project activities are not progressing towards the desired outcomes, they need to be changed. Instead, what frequently occurs is that the activities remain the same, but the project ambitions are scaled-down or altered.

iii) Measuring political impact

As can be seen from the case studies, flexibility of implementation characterized the projects that worked well. However, the case studies also highlighted the difficulty in finding indicators which capture political change. As one interviewee working in Uganda suggested, political change rarely occurs in significant shifts of behaviour or a perceptible change in the political culture, but instead is the result of a whole host of small, incremental movements which then inform the way in which political parties engage with each other or the tone of debate in parliament. It may be, as the conclusion to the Uganda case study notes, that political change is often better sensed than measured.

However, this does not resolve the problem for projects. As we pointed out in a previous report for International IDEA,[119] flexibility cannot be used as a substitute for strategy. If programmes are based on their ability to respond to local developments, it is then difficult to identify whether a project has succeeded or failed. This also highlights the tension that exists in every organization between the head office, which wants to ensure consistency and quality, as well as a sense of progress in line with strategy, and the field offices, which understandably know more about the local political environment and want the latitude to respond to it.

Most of the donor agencies are wrestling with this problem, with USAID perhaps making the most comprehensive attempt to capture political change through the work of the University of Pittsburgh.[120] However, all such exercises are generally regarded as 'works in progress' with few settled conclusions. The challenge for programmes is not to resort simply to quantitative results, as these are often misleading and, as is pointed out above, if you use the wrong indicators you end up doing the wrong things. The projects that seem most effective are the ones that have a flexible approach to measurement, and while this may not, for the time being, provide hard facts, it seems worth preserving this flexibility.

Political realism

i) Supporting the process of political change

At the heart of the problem of project design set out above is the fact that political change is often messy, haphazard and unpredictable. It does not occur in a linear fashion. Yet the presumption underlying most programmes is that isolated interventions (training, capacity building, seminars, etc.) with individual institutions may have an effect on capacity or behaviour. What characterizes these programmes is that there is little theory of how political change happens, and no strategy for managing that process of change. Contrast this with the business world, where there is an entire sub-industry built around 'change management'. Yet most businesses have a broadly hierarchical structure that looks relatively straightforward compared with the complexities and competing interests that exist within a parliament or a political party.

Political programming is still, to a large extent, based on a 'hit and hope' strategy. There is, at best, a tenuous link between some of the techniques used and the hoped-for outcomes, and little evidence of strategy for managing these activities towards particular outcomes. There are efforts to apply political analysis to strategies for change in parliaments and parties,[121] but the shift will involve not just the application of political insights but also a change in the way that projects are conceived and the role that donor agencies play in that process of change—a point picked up in the sections below. The key, however, is to have political programmes based not just on an integrated analysis, but an integrated strategy to achieve change which takes account of the impact of parties on parliaments (and vice versa) but also the way in which parliaments and parties relate to the rest of the political system.

ii) The challenge of local ownership

Political change rests on the parliament and political party recognizing the benefits of adopting new patterns of behaviour and embedding them in the institutions, perhaps through rule changes or institutional reforms, so that they eventually become part of the accepted political culture. When conceived in these terms, the ability of donor agencies or implementers to impose such change is obviously constrained. Ultimately, they can encourage, advise and cajole politicians into different forms of behaviour, but these have to be implemented by the local partners themselves. Programmes thus provide the conditions conducive to change and play to the incentives of those partners—in other words, they lead the horse to the water but the horse has to decide it wants to drink.

This reinforces the extent to which political projects are dependent on the goodwill and buy-in of local stakeholders. As the WFD case study shows, this makes programmes vulnerable if, as happened, the politicians suddenly decide they do not want to continue to be involved. This will often occur when local partners feel the project is starting to work against their own political interests, and perhaps to favour the interests of others instead.

A number of programmes are using a better understanding of incentives to place conditions on the involvement of partners. Two tactics seem to be emerging. First, the benefits to the local partners need to be sequenced, so that they are only delivered once particular milestones or indicators of progress have been met. Second, programmes need to be built around a package of reforms rather than single issues. This means that trade-offs can be built into that package, so that partners have to accept the things they do not like in order to get the things they do. Underpinning both is the intention of making local partners ultimately responsible for the project's success, without which they do not receive the benefits established at the outset of the programme.

iii) Assessing the scope for meaningful change

Given the emphasis placed on the interdependence of the constituent parts of the political system in most political analyses, it is tempting for donor agencies to design wide-ranging projects which affect every aspect of the polity: in short, to attempt to try to fix everything. Our analysis and interviews suggest that such programmes invariably fall far short of their lofty ambitions. As the examples of Uganda and Tanzania show, such projects bring with them specific challenges of integration and management.

However, the Uganda project is notable because of the way it set its objectives in relation to parliaments and parties. Although the project had quite broad objectives in improving oversight and tackling the imbalance of power, the methods used to achieve this were tightly focused. The emphasis on research support in parliament, for example, does not appear to be a hugely significant activity. However, this was based on an understanding of some of the root causes of opposition weakness, as well as the incentives at work. The intention to improve scrutiny was not achieved by telling parliamentarians how to do it, but by giving them the resources. It reflected a recognition of their interests and finding ways of aligning that recognition with the wider systemic problem.

This sort of example may offer wider lessons for party and parliamentary assistance, and it appears to be an implicit tenet of such work for most of those who work in the field, best summed by a consultant in Iraq as 'think big, act small'. In other words, identify targets that you can have an impact on, but which are likely to have a much wider ripple effect on the institution and the political culture.

Conclusion: Rethinking the approach to party and parliamentary support

As is suggested above, greater effectiveness and integration in party and parliamentary support depends on donors changing their role. This means altering the way in which projects are delivered, with a better translation of political analysis into project design and greater flexibility in the way projects are implemented. However, the prospects for this sort of change look particularly bleak.

In the first place, the logic of programmes seeking political change must reflect the fact that this is an internally driven process. In such circumstances, the role of the donor agency or institute becomes less about 'implementation' than about being a consultant or facilitator to the process of change, providing advice and guidance. Some of the institutes working in the field are playing this role effectively, shaping the process of reform but recognizing the limits of their own ability to 'implement' change. This role has two distinct implications for donor agencies. First, as one senior governance adviser

from a donor agency told us, it challenges the traditional conception of the agency, which was always there as the 'expert'. Donor agencies rightly draw on the expertise of staff across a range of policy issues, such as agriculture or water, whose job is to develop, design and implement programmes in other countries. This model is likely to work less well in the field of governance. Donor agencies need governance experts, but that expertise needs to be used in different ways, perhaps reflecting a shift from hands-on implementation to arms-length advice and consultancy. However, the structures and delivery mechanisms for donor agencies are based on the conception of implementation and are unlikely to change in the near future.

Second, it also challenges the way such projects are funded by donor agencies. In this respect the aid effectiveness agenda appears to be pulling in two different directions. On the one hand, there is the emphasis on local ownership and mutual accountability. On the other, there is the desire for results. This latter emphasis is generally being interpreted by donor agencies as the need for a 'return on investment' with tangible signs of change. As is discussed above, this is particularly difficult in the field of party and parliamentary assistance, and is distorting the way in which such projects are being delivered. For example, one interviewee working on an international institute's parliamentary strengthening programme suggested that there was a distinct gap between their funding applications and what happened on the ground. Whereas 80 per cent of their project plan would involve 'box-ticking' activities that the donor needed to see, in practice they would only spend 60 per cent of their time on such work. The remaining 40 per cent would be spent on more intangible political activities which were likely to generate meaningful political progress.

This has been described, as is mentioned above, by Thomas Carothers as a 'projectization' of such work, which places greater emphasis on fitting work into the structure of bureaucratic forms required by donors.[122] As another senior figure from a donor agency, with experience in the field and at headquarters, stated: 'our government is now more interested in doing things the right way, than in doing the right things'. She went on to suggest that because of the emphasis on results, projects were becoming increasingly risk-averse, as they tended to fund projects that had previously worked, reducing experimentation and limiting the opportunities for effectiveness. In the field of parliamentary and party support, as in the financial markets, past performance is no guarantee of future success.

A greater realism about the limits of donors' ability to effect political change is at odds with the current interpretation of aid effectiveness. The emphasis on 'results' runs the risk of reducing the effectiveness of such political programmes, as the desire for quantitative data means that projects end up with the wrong indicators, which in turn means that they end up doing the wrong things. In short 'success' will be judged more by process rather than by outcome.

A more effective approach to parties and parliaments requires flexibility in the design and implementation of programmes, so that they evolve and adapt to changing political circumstances. It means that project implementers need to be astute enough to identify the synergies between party and parliamentary support, and able integrate them around the desire for specific political outcomes. A flexible and genuinely outcome-oriented form of programming would mean that donors take greater responsibility for the results of their interventions, but ultimately exercise less control over the way they are implemented. At present, however, such developments seem highly unlikely.

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Notes

[1] Huntington (1993).

[2] For example, the European Commission budget for electoral assistance in 1992–2007 was EUR 612,073,304, http://www.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=30.

[3] For example, in 2005, parliamentary support comprised only 2 per cent of the overall UNDP budget. UNDP (2009b), p. 4.

[4] Carothers (2006, 1999).

[5] Sida (2005), p. 5.

[6] DFID (2009a), p. 4.

[7] DFID (2009b), p. 73.

[8] Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2009), p. 22.

[9] UNDP (2009b).

[10] Carothers (1999), p.181.

[11] Hubli and Schmidt (2005).

[12] Doherty (2001), p.26.

[13] See NIMD (2004); WFD (2009c); UNDP (2006); International IDEA (2007); Lipset (2000); Reilly and Norland (2008).

[14] See Carothers (2006).

[15] Carothers (2004), p. 10.

[16] Ohman et al. (2004), p. 8.

[17] See Erdman (2005).

[18] Hudson (2007); Hubli and Schmidt (2005); Murphy and Alhada (2007).

[19] See, for example, Gonzalez (2009); NDI (2004); NDI (2005).

[20] All-Party Parliamentary Group on Africa (2008), p. 44.

[21] Carothers (2004), p.13.

[22] Available at http://www.danidadevforum.um.dk/en/menu/Topics/Publications.htm.

[23] Hoove and Sholtbach (2008), p. 20.

[24] Sida (2002), p. 38.

[25] DFID (2007); DFID (2006).

[26] UNDP (2009b), p. 3.

[27] UNDP (n.n.), p. 1.

[28] Berg, Rottenberg and O'Gorman (2009), p. 6.

[29] Inter-Parliamentary Union (2006); Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (2006).

[30] http://www.parlcent.ca/indicators/index_e.php.

[31] Von Trapp (2010), p. 23.

[32] National Democratic Institute (2008), p. iii.

[33] Ibid.

[34] NIMD (2004), p. 8.

[35] UNDP (2009b) p. 16.

[36] DFID (2009a), p. 18.

[37] UNDP (2009b), p. 18.

[38] Domingo (2010), p. 18.

[39] Hudson and Wren (2007), p. 30.

[40] Ibid., p. 21.

[41] For example see International IDEA (2007).

[42] Burnell (2004), p. 464.

[43] Hubli and Schmidt (2005), p. 5.

[44] DFID (2007), p. 20.

[45] Tostensen and Amundsen (2010), p. 26.

[46] Carothers (2010), p. 16.

[47] Tostensen and Amundsen (2010), p. 26.

[48] SADEV (2010), p. viii.

[49] Foresti et al. (2010), p. 13.

[50] UNDP and Government of Tanzania (2007), p. 2.

[51] UNDP (2009a), p. 6.

[52] Goran (1999), p. 143.

[53] Ibid., p. 144.

[54] Ibid.

[55] UNDP and Government of Tanzania (2007), p. 1.

[56] Cook et al. (2010).

[57] UNDP and Government of Tanzania (2007), p. 9.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Cook et al. (2010), p. 35.

[60] UNDP (2009a), p. 26.

[61] Cook et al. (2010), p. 35.

[62] UNDP and Government of Tanzania (2007), p. 9.

[63] Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA) at http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/tan1995 results2.htm.

[64] Cook et al. (2010), p. 53.

[65] Cook et al. (2010), p. 55.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., p. 56.

[68] Ibid., p. 38.

[69] Ibid., p. 57.

[70] Ibid., p. 57.

[71] Six members of the PDG are funding the DDP: Ireland; Denmark; Sweden; the UK; Norway; and the Netherlands.

[72] The content of this paper was finalised before the 2011 elections in Uganda. Therefore, new developments in Uganda's political context might have since also impacted on the Deepening Democracy Programme.

[73] DDP Programme Management Unit (2008), p. 3.

[74] Ibid.

[75] EU Election Observers Mission Report (2006), p. 1.

[76] DDP Briefing Paper, 13 October 2009, p. 1.

[77] DDP Programme Management Unit and PDCO (2008), p. 7.

[78] Ibid., p. 3.

[79] Ibid., pp. 9–10.

[80] Ibid., p. 9.

[81] Ibid., p 7.

[82] Ibid., p. 7.

[83] Arfobarometer Round 3 Survey, May 2005, quoted in ibid, p. 7.

[84] Ibid., p. 8.

[85] These are: the New Patriotic Party (NPP); the National Democratic Congress (NDC); the People's National Convention (PNC); and the Convention People's Party (CPP).

[86] Dijkstra and Kumado (2004), p. 8.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Boadi-Gyimah (1994), p. 78.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid., p. 146.

[97] Ibid., p. 147.

[98] Boadi-Gyimah (2009), p. 138.

[99] Afrobarometer (2008).

[100] Dijkstra and Kumado (2004), p. 17.

[101] Ibid., p. 10.

[102] IEA (August 2008), p. 11.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Dijkstra and Kumado (2004), p.18.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., p. 12.

[107] Ibid., p. 86.

[108] IEA (2008), p. 10.

[109] Ibid., p. 9.

[110] Ibid., p. 30.

[111] Ibid., p. 79.

[112] These include the House of Commons Overseas Office, the National Audit Office, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the University of Essex and the Electoral Commission.

[113] Accession Partnership with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, available at http://europa.eu/legislation_ summaries/enlargement/ongoing_enlargement/r18013_ en.htm.

[114] European Commission (2008), p. 8.

[115] WFD (2009d).

[116] Quarterly Project Progress Report July–September 2009 p12.

[117] Quarterly Project Progress Report October–December 2008 pp. 7–9.

[118] Ibid., p. 6.

[119] Global Partners and Associates (July 2009).

[120] Finkel et al. (2006).

[121] See, for example, Power (2010).

[122] Carothers (2010), p. 16.

International IDEA at a glance

What is International IDEA?

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. International IDEA's mission is to support sustainable democratic change by providing comparative knowledge, and assisting in democratic reform, and influencing policies and politics.

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- providing comparative knowledge derived from practical experience on democracy-building processes from diverse contexts around the world;
- assisting political actors in reforming democratic institutions and processes, and engaging in political processes when invited to do so; and
- influencing democracy-building policies through the provision of our comparative knowledge resources and assistance to political actors.

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