



Is DFID 'Getting Real About Politics'?

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DAC Network on Governance

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DfID

Nothing new... *politics matters*

- Growing evidence¹: the difference between programming that supports successful developmental change and programming that fails is a deep understanding of the local political and power relations
- But understanding is not enough → need to move from thinking politically to working politically
- See also WDR 2017

^[1] Laure-Helene Piron et al (2016) 'Is DFID Getting Real About Politics? A stocktake of how DFID has adopted a politically-informed approach (2010-2015)', DFID Discussion Paper; David Booth & Sue Unsworth (2014) 'Politically smart, locally led development', ODI Discussion Paper, available at <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9158.pdf>

DFID has quite a long history of learning ...

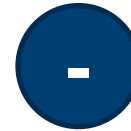
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- Early 2000s: *Drivers of Change*
 - 2009: *Political Economy Analysis “How to Note”*
 - Country Governance Analysis
 - New mandatory “*Country Poverty Reduction Diagnostics*” and “*Inclusive Growth Diagnostics*” – make politics/governance analysis mandatory
 - Identified “Politics” as the most frequent barrier to poverty reduction & growth
 - Importance of ‘politics’ mainstreamed across DFID?
 - ~ 120 strategic studies since 2010

Never stop learning:
Stock-take of how DFID has adopted a politically informed approach

Enabling environment?



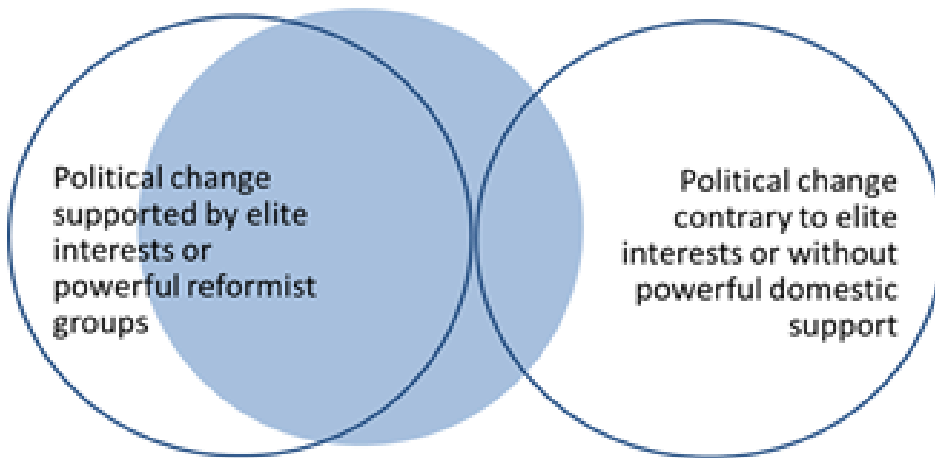
- 37 SMART Rules
- Understanding of importance of governance & politics
- External evidence
- Improved cross-government cooperation



- Focus on (short-term) results
- Focus on measurable value for money
- Other UK interests
- Challenging environments



Getting real about politics - What



- Sustainable change is most likely where interests align with partner governments/ local interests → ruthless realism
- But we can influence politics and change incentives

Getting real about politics - How

- Deep local knowledge – understanding politics & power
- Working on politics rather than around them
- Long-term processes
- Greater realism about results
- Flexible and adaptive programming
- Windows of opportunities (crisis)
- Different skill set: influencing and stakeholder management
- Different investment: time not money
- Whole-of-government approach
- Beyond aid (non-aid levers eg asset freeze)
- ...

 **Hugely Challenging**

Impact ? Policy & Strategy

- Some of DFID's international policy initiatives/frameworks clearly take politics into account;
- Some DFID country strategies take politics and power more into account;
- DFID's new diagnostic tools include 'politics';
- Chief economist has pushed for politically aware approach.

e.g. tax evasion/
avoidance and anti-
corruption – influence
elite behaviour through
non-aid political and
diplomatic processes

e.g. DRC, Nigeria, Nepal

BUT: no evidence that a politically informed approach was systematically influencing DFID policy or country strategies



Impact ? Programmes

- Politically smart approaches have made a difference in how DFID designs and manages programmes;
- Analysis is used to inform decisions on whether or not, and how to engage in a sector or geographical area;
- Some innovative sector programmes have adopted not only political methods but also political objectives;
- Politically informed approaches have supported locally led change and focus on incentives;
- Some programmes are more 'radically different' and have adopted a highly flexible and adaptive approach;

e.g. Education in Pakistan
(create demand for quality
education)

e.g. Investment Board in
Nepal – Hydropower
Foreign Investment Deals

BUT: these are still exceptions



Lessons for DFID: from ad hoc to systematic

- Even more cross-Government collaboration
- Good analysis is essential but not sufficient → needs resources to implement
- Greater role for local staff & focus on ‘everyday’ political work
- Politically informed work should be default mode – thinking & working politically needs to become basis across all policy, strategy and programme work
- Push boundaries of power and politics agenda beyond elites – include gender, social norms, inclusion/exclusion etc



Lessons for DFID: from ad hoc to systematic ctd.

- Internal enabling environment:
 - Protect staff time & enhance skills to work on this agenda
 - Improve programme delivery systems, particularly results frameworks, annual reviews, procurement and risk management.
- Get programme implementers on board



Questions for discussion:

- How do other agencies deal with these issues?
- What is could the GovNet's role be in this sphere?
- How can we ensure SDG 16 is supported in a politically savvy way?
- ...