

support the period leading to the next general elections in 2011. This includes national reconciliation, the holding of local elections, and improved revenue and natural resource management. The conflict risks attached to decentralisation should also be identified and lead to shared discussion amongst donors.

S34 DFID DRC should be more explicit in what they see as the right balance in their choice of partners (state and non-state actors) and interventions (short-term and long-term).

S35 As the large amount recently committed to multi-donor programmes tends to overshadow other aspects of DFID's programme, reporting more regularly on minor, yet, strategic, spend and non-spend activities is required. The workplans recently established for the three delivery teams (Natural Resources Governance and Growth; Governance; Social Sectors and Humanitarian governance) could be used for this purpose.

S36 DFID DRC's expectations with regard to the role that Congolese CSOs can play in holding the government to account in DRC should be clarified. DFID should pay particular attention to the way outputs and

outcomes will be measured and monitored in this area, as plans to launch the Civil Society Fund forge ahead.

S37 DFID DRC should promote and publicise good practice in support of a whole-of- government approach in the mining sector. Whereas distinct activities falling under the responsibility of DFID, FCO, and Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR), will remain distinct, their complementarity should be discussed both across Whitehall and externally. The forthcoming FCO/DFID Joint Communication Unit strategy could provide an opportunity for communicating DFID's approach in this sector to external stakeholders.



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LONDON

DFID
1 Palace Street
London
SW1E 5HE

GLASGOW

DFID
Abercrombie House
Eaglesham Road
East Kilbride
Glasgow
G75 8EA

Switchboard: 020 7023 0000

Fax: 020 7023 0016

Website: www.dfid.gov.uk

Email: enquiry@dfid.gov.uk

Public Enquiry Point: 0845 300 4100

From overseas: + 44 1355 84 3132

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Evaluation of DFID's Country Programmes: DRC 2003-2008

Charlotte Vaillant, Ann Condy, Pierre Robert and Georges Tshionza

Introduction

S1 This report is an evaluation of DFID's programme in DRC from 2003 to October 2008.

S2 The modern history of the DRC has been particularly difficult. Full-scale civil war broke out in 1997, marking the end of Mobutu's 32-year regime. The civil war lasted almost continuously until 2003 and involved seven other African countries. With the support of the United Nations (UN) and international community, a peace agreement was signed, paving the way for a constitution and the election of Joseph Kabila as president in 2006. Instability in the east of the DRC has persisted, perpetrating one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

S3 Despite DRC's rich natural resource base and well-watered climate, poverty levels remain extremely high, with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Index for 2007/08 ranking the DRC in 168th place out of 177 countries. DRC will not meet any of the MDGs by 2015, although the lack of reliable data makes it difficult to see how far the country is off track.

DFID in DRC

S4 Over the evaluation period, DFID DRC's programme has been rapidly scaled-up, from around £20 million in 2003/04 to £83 million in 2007/08. The UK has become the third largest bilateral donor, after the US and Belgium. Humanitarian assistance totalled £168m over the evaluation period, equivalent to 65% of all UK aid to the country.

S5 DFID's programme in DRC was undergoing major changes at the time of the evaluation; many bilateral projects were in the process of being phased out and large-scale multi-donor programmes were just launched or about to start.

Relevance

S6 The UK rationale for engagement in DRC has been strong and aimed to promote peace and development in the country from the outset. DFID's plans to scale up support and move to larger, multi-donor programmes was also appropriate, given the country's huge needs for reconstruction and lack of donor coordination in the early years of the evaluation period.

S7 With regards to strategic quality, Country Engagement Plans (CEPs) during Phase I (2003–2005) were mostly revised in an ad hoc manner to reflect previous experience and/or new corporate priorities. Under Phase II (2006–2008), the finalisation of the Country Assistance Plan (CAP) was delayed so that DFID could become an active participant in the joint donor Country Assistance Framework (CAF) process. As a result, DFID functioned without a CAP for more than two years.

S8 DFID first took a pragmatic approach to its engagement in the DRC by choosing to build from existing projects implemented by UN agencies and INGOs in humanitarian assistance. As a result, DFID's portfolio of projects covered a wide range of sectors right from the beginning.

S9 Attempts to prioritise failed under Phase II, in large part because of the lack

of sufficient guidance from DFID HQ. The launch of the Pooled Fund in 2006, while highly relevant to the DRC context, was driven by DFID HQ. Some sectors (including forestry and Public Finance Management (PFM)) were also kept because they reflected corporate priorities, while activities in mining were left on the back-burner, and opportunities to scale down support in other sectors, notably health, were missed.

S10 Barring some concerns over the relevance of the health pilot projects, DFID's added value in PFM, and attention being diverted from the mining sector, DFID's choice of areas of intervention was largely relevant to the country's context. Under Phase I, DFID was right in its decision to finance the elections and the transition institutions, as this was part of the Global and Inclusive Accord.

S11 The model of working through other donors was ill adapted to the reality of the DRC context in the early years of the evaluation period. Consequently, an early and constant feature of DFID programme has been the institutional support that it provided to multilateral agencies. DFID also successfully built partnership with less traditional partners, including China, France and USAID. In part thanks to DFID's continued efforts, the model of working through other donors is now about to become a reality.

S12 While the diversity of partners has declined over the years, DFID performed relatively well in mixing aid delivery mechanisms in most sectors. This approach fitted well with DFID 2006 White Paper and the OECD DAC Fragile States Principles. DFID's approach to risk broadly addressed external and organisational risks.

Effectiveness

DFID support for UNDP-led programmes to build the capacity of transition institutions, hold free and fair polls, and ensure security during the electoral period was effective. Media performed outstandingly well, with Radio Okapi playing a key role in ensuring balanced reporting during the elections. Success in supporting civic education around the

election was mixed.

S13 Road rehabilitation and other infrastructure projects have contributed to improved communication in DRC, although some failed to initiate a satisfactory maintenance system and links with the government's own plans have yet to materialise under Pro-Routes. Activities have barely started in the mining and forestry sectors.

S14 The humanitarian response has become more coordinated, following the launch of the Pooled Fund in 2006. Whereas processes have evidently strengthened, improvement in the humanitarian response has been more difficult to measure.

S15 DFID DRC was largely effective in mainstreaming HIV/AIDS and gender in its programme, though addressing environmental issues was limited to Congo Basin Forest Fund and the road infrastructure projects.

S16 Conflict sensitivity has been relatively high at strategic levels, but has not been mainstreamed at project level, whereas peace-building projects suffered overambitious targets.

S17 DFID DRC spent substantial time lobbying and supporting other donors over the evaluation period. DFID also successfully built partnerships with less traditional partners, for example with China in the road sector. Silent partnerships were formed only recently.

S18 Relations between DFID and FCO were strong and essential to lobby the Government of DRC.

Efficiency

S19 Devolution in 2005 was largely successful, although the country office was under-staffed throughout the evaluation period. DFID HQ also underestimated the importance of mastering French as a working language.

S20 Working in a fragile and challenging country like DRC is more labour intensive with higher and less predictable running costs. This, coupled with a heavily project-based portfolio and limitation on headcount, left staff over-stretched.

S21 Working through other donors was not as good value for money as it first appeared. What was saved in administrative cost was often spent on covering administrative costs of other partners.

S22 DFID's M&E framework in DRC has lacked continuity and robustness. Plans to establish a results matrix for the entire programme have now been completed. The lack of regular access to first source information will remain an issue.

Impact and Sustainability

S23 The lack of up-to-date poverty data in DRC makes it impossible to assess trends in poverty reduction over the evaluation period, let alone DFID and other donors' contribution to them. General perceptions are that the population at large has not yet seen the benefits that were expected to follow the installation of the new regime.

S24 Most bilateral projects financed by DFID can claim to contribute to the local population's welfare. Their collective and lasting contribution to national levels of poverty remains unknown. Because of delays in starting large programmes, the donor community, including DFID, has not met their commitments to kick-start development assistance after the elections.

S25 Large-scale development programmes will work to scale and within government structures. Experience elsewhere, however, has shown that low government capacity and leadership (as well as the lack of in-country capacity of other partners) can slow these programmes significantly in their first years of operation.

S26 Corruption in DRC is widespread, and the government willingness to provide equitable access to services to the population as a whole appears weak. Support for democratisation and accountability also face considerable challenges. There is at the same time strong government momentum to show results before the 2011 elections, as demonstrated by the government's decision to borrow \$6bn from China to fast-track the implementation of the president's five priority work sites, referred to as "5 Chantiers".

Aid Effectiveness

S27 DRC has been an active participant of the aid effectiveness agenda and is a signatory of the Paris Declaration (2006). The country is also involved in the discussion on the Principles of International Engagement in Fragile States.

S28 The drafting of a joint donor strategy in 2006 remains the main donor response to the aid effectiveness agenda in DRC. Institutional arrangements to support dialogue between donors, civil society, and government around 15 thematic groups have since been consolidated.

S29 Despite improved coordination at the centre, donor harmonisation in DRC is still a long way off in practice. This is in part because the core of development assistance is disbursed using non-governmental channels, leading to a multiplication of projects and initiatives, and in part because of the lack of government leadership.

Recommendations

Recommendations for DFID Globally

S30 DFID HQ should dedicate more staff resources in supporting country offices operating in fragile states. Staff working in IT, procurement and other internal procedures should be encouraged to build up practical experience through occasional field visits and sharing of best practice.

S31 DFID HQ should start providing estimates on the costs and benefits of working through other partners, with particular emphasis given to their appropriateness in fragile states.

S32 DFID HQ should refrain from launching new initiatives that distract country offices from their Country Plan objectives unless additional staff resources can be invested in-country.

Recommendations for DFID DRC

S33 DFID DRC should do more to mainstream conflict awareness in its programmes, by showcasing examples of conflict mainstreaming at project level. DFID DRC should also work with other donors to update the critical paths analysis produced in 2005. Benchmarks and targeted interventions should be defined to