

Summary of Parliament Support Project

This report provides information on the impact and effectiveness of the support provided by UNDP to the parliaments in Somalia: specifically NFP, Somaliland and Puntland. It provides a follow up of the earlier evaluation and provides recommendations for future support of UNDP projects for the parliaments in Somalia.

The strategy set out in the UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) for Somalia (2011-2015) cites inclusive, equitable and accountable governance as one of four broad themes for priority activity. Within that, “strengthening parliamentary and civil society actors” is a sub-outcome.

An in-depth evaluation of the project was conducted by a team of international experts in 2016. As per the evaluation report, the assignment had two main purposes: (1) To provide information on the impact, effectiveness, relevance and value addition of the support provided to parliaments in Somalia and Somaliland by UNDP since 2013; and to provide recommendations for corrective actions to be implemented prior to the end of the project; and, ^[1]_[SEP] (2) Strategic prioritization / Project Outline: Based on the findings of the evaluation provide information related to strategic prioritization and project outline for a follow up project for the period 2017-2020, including support to established parliaments, the Upper Houses, and newly formed parliaments, as well as the overall funding strategy.

Somalia represents one of the most protracted cases of statelessness. The purpose of the project was to establish and transform parliaments from institutions without the capacities to perform their constitutional functions into more effective representative, legislative, and oversight institutions. Parliamentary partners—the political and staff leadership (particularly the Office of the Speaker), participating MPs, and staff—were participants in both the design and direction of the project, and the agents through which transformations were supposed to occur.

The activities of the project were to be implemented in priority phases over a period of four years: starting with a) setting up the entity itself b) creating functionality and c) operationalizing functionality. This approach seems to have been founded on a careful appreciation of parallel initiatives by other donors and implementers, and also recognition of the critical importance of coordinating all Parliamentary strengthening initiatives, as noted in mission report of September 2012 and the consequent project document.

As required, a twin track, internal/external approach was adopted tactically reflecting both the intrinsic needs of Parliament and its importance within national governance and State-building arrangements. However, the external support function does not become readily explicit.

The theory of change for the project was based on institutional development as the main supply-side impetus to democratic development. This was supported by mechanisms to extend outreach, to enhance the representation functionality, and to initiate a process of transparent function and accountability of MPs.

Going forward, the ToC should qualify the functioning further and move towards achieving effectiveness in parliaments. The programme must base its design and operations on a realistic projection of how democratic governance in Somalia is likely to evolve, while still maintaining the flexibility to allow for rapid adaptation to a fluid scenario. The upcoming elections in Somaliland will be indicative of how well the current political context can support a transition into electoral democracy. Moreover, the ToC should elaborate coverage and how engaging with regional parliaments will result in more inclusive politics leading to peaceful political settlement.

Sequentially the project Theory of Change should be developed against the findings of the baseline political economy analysis and conflict analysis. The ToC narrative must take a broader view of both supply-side and demand-side dynamics – where in the first phase of the programme necessarily focused on the supply side institutional establishment, the next phase must necessarily focus on the functionality of stakeholders within that institutional infrastructure.

The priorities set out were sensible and the trajectories chosen were those which might have reasonably been expected to make progress towards the overall outcome identified by the UNDP: *The National Federal Parliaments (NFP) and Parliaments of Somaliland and Puntland capacitated to operate as inclusive, transparent and effective law-making, oversight and representative bodies contributing to national peace-building and nation-building goals.* However, whether the outcome was achievable by any single project rather than the donor/implementer group as a whole is, debatable.

There was almost universal agreement in the third party monitoring (TPM) reports, in the evaluation report, in an EU ROM evaluation report, and from those consulted by the evaluators during the mission that the Project was worthwhile and strategically necessary in the context. The strategic plan for the People's House of Somalia views the parliament as a space “where potential sources of conflict can be aired and addressed publicly and where issues of national importance including laws, government policies and other issues of public interest can be debated.” (Somali Parliament Strategic Plan 2012) In other words, Parliament remains an integral part of national reconciliation and the progress towards peace.

Elaborations, in the TPM, other reports reviewed, and also, some of the discussions, (specifically discussions with the ex-CTA and this review team), were along the lines of ‘the Project is doing what it is supposed to but it needs to do more of what it is doing at present’ and to build linkages where the results chain is de-linked, weak or non-existent. No respondent/key informant stated that the Project was unnecessary or unwelcome. All the Project staff Members are self evidently dedicated and determined to do their utmost in support of Parliament, a fact clearly acknowledged in the evaluation report.

Reviewing Project outputs in detail, a pattern is discernable in which subordinate or marginal activities, usually thoroughly worthwhile in themselves, generate relatively positive results whereas more fundamental reforms fare less well. This is perfectly understandable because subordinate activities may often be inherently more straightforward and achievable than fundamental reforms.

Outcomes are related to the external aspects of the intervention, and parliament's position within the overall governance infrastructure of the country.

To a large extent, it is logical to agree with the ex-CTA's argument of relating design relevance to time relevance¹. The project design is in line with parliament's functionality: oversight, legislation and representation. The priorities are set within the needs/baseline identified in September 2012, which articulates the need while conceptualizing parliamentary structure, roles and functions, whilst relating it to the baseline situation in Somalia at the time (David Payne Report 2012). However, the project did not have the flexibility of selecting its own timeline, as it is part of the support contributing to PSG 1, Inclusive Politics- the timeline it chose was up to the end of 2016. However, since the Somali Compact aimed at setting the foundations for peace and state-building, then by extension, the Parliamentary Support Project also aimed at setting the foundation of parliamentary functionality in Somalia. In our discussions with project staff, it appeared that they consider their work, to-date, as laying the groundwork, and of setting the pace. We agree with the ex-CTA that the overall outcome envisaged for the Parliament in the original Project document is probably some years away and we have found that it would not have been realistic, given the context, that the outcome could be achieved within the lifetime of this Project, although a solid basis has been established at output level towards achieving Outcome level results in the future.

Further, as mentioned in the evaluation report, the project came to a virtual halt following the terrorist attack on the Parliament, resulting in loss of lives. Moreover, "The months October–December in 2013 and again in 2014 were characterized by gridlock and infighting within the SFG over the dismissal of incumbent prime ministers and horse-trading over the selection of replacements." (Mosley 2014: 5)

It was, therefore, only towards the third quarter of 2014 that re-hiring resulted in a team being reinstated to resume the project. This, effectively, gave the project 15-18 months to implement a 36 month project trajectory which were an ambitious course of action to begin with and required more than 36 months to complete in order to deliver outcome level results.

In discussion with the evaluators, it was discovered that the project had planned a mid-term evaluation which could not materialize. This was based on the fact that the ToRs shared with the evaluators were that of a mid-term evaluation (MTE) even though they came onboard for the evaluation in the final year of the project.

Given that a project document rationalization exercise was, rightfully, undertaken in early 2015- a MTE would have provided the necessary roadmap for mid-term course correction and rationalization of the overall scope, activities, outputs and targets.

Programming interventions in democratic governance are generally subject to certain stakeholder dynamics, which have direct implications for program management and implementation. This is due to the inherently political nature of the beneficiaries, where the "buy-in" and engagement of political actors is necessary for the programme to achieve its outcomes. The dynamic renders a certain level of agency to political actors where their level of participation affects the timeline and inclusion in the implementation process more directly compared with other programmes in which project beneficiaries have less control. The project has responded well to this dynamic by maintaining a centralized system of communication, where the project (specifically the project staff) is the sole interlocutor with the Parliaments.

¹ Also, acknowledged by evaluators and termed realistic expectations

The proposed project design in the new phase, therefore, adapted well to build on being in this position, by assuming the responsibility for building connectivity and networking. Secondly, these institutions are nascent bodies in an evolving context and parliamentary stakeholders will require a regular re-orientation (corresponding to capacity development) on their roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework. For instance, as the representative function of MPs evolves into an electorate-based model, re-orientation on aspects of constituency relationship management and responsive governance will be required.

In spite of a challenging context, UNDP's substantial effort at creating functionality through capacity development of Parliamentary staff and MPs has broadly been successful in terms of transferring skills. Training reports indicate a rich curriculum of training content has been delivered through the project. The gap arises in being able to track and establish how well the transferred skills have been operationalised to create impact. The project successfully delivered competence and capability for selected functions for both Parliamentary staff and MPs. On the other hand, measures of the staff providing assistance to Parliamentarians or Parliamentarians actively engaging staff in initiating parliamentary business are sparse.

Overall PSP has made a substantial contribution to state building in Somalia through the establishment of active and functioning Parliamentary institutions. That the project has done so in a difficult post-conflict context is also highly commendable. This review considers the general dynamics of democratic governance programming and the adaptability of the programme structure and implementation approach to the local context of Somalia.

Our purpose in doing so is to identify where the project structure and implementation processes can be strengthened to improve delivery against project outcomes.

Going into phase 2, the project looks well-poised to continue supporting the evolving reform process. It is considered that a project supporting a reform process cannot be held accountable for the political economy of reform deterring any process i.e barriers to reform are pre-determined and therefore exogenous variables which the project must consider and mitigate, but not necessarily be able to address. However, the project by virtue of its positioning must be the information hub not just on reform progress but sustained political economy analysis should be knowledge products regularly shared with a larger donor and stakeholder group. Mainstreaming political economy intelligence into the programmatic Results and Resources Framework, logframe and risk matrix will be key to building in context-responsiveness for best results. Coordination will only work if the convened group gets regular analysis and information, beyond what they might have as being part of the development agencies group for Somalia.