

State and Local Government Programme

Summary of Programme Reviews

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

SLGP was a long programme. Originally designed to run for seven years, it was shortened during 2003 so that DFID could increase the pace of expenditure through the programme. But later the programme was extended again (including additional funding) so as to consolidate the perceived gains in Nigeria. Eventually it ran from November 2000 to June 2008 (7 years and 8 months).

During that time DFID conducted five formal reviews (not including the end of programme evaluation). These were:

- June 2002 – Inception Review
- November 2003 – Joint Inception Review or JIR (“joint” because the programme was reviewed at this time in conjunction with the inception reviews other major DFD programmes);
- November 2005 – Annual Review;

- September 2006 – Output to Purpose Review; and
- September 2007 – Annual Review.

In order fully to understand the reviews (which are available through the knowledge management section of the SLGP website) it is strictly necessary for the reader to know about the context of the thinking in DFID Nigeria (and in the Programme) at the time of each one. It is also necessary to understand the context of changes in Nigeria itself during the period of the programme's implementation.

This then is the main objective of this summary paper – to provide a guide and interpretation, in a sense to “tell the story”, so that readers may:

- Be better able to interpret what the reviews said, and
- Understand better why the reviews took a particular position, and accordingly why the programme evolved in the way that it did.

Three sections follow.

- The first is by way of a quick glance at the main issues, covering just a little over three pages.
- The second provides a technical outline of the timing of each review and the general approach taken.
- The third expands the story into an eight page summary. However, the contents of the brief version (section 2 below) are not merely a cut back version of the main part of the paper (section 4), and so it is recommended that if you have time you might read both sections.

2.0 BRIEF SUMMARY OF PROGRAMME TRENDS

- When SLGP was designed (late 1999 to 2000) Nigeria had just replaced its military government with a civilian (elected) one. The programme's heavy emphasis on “process” was based on the belief that the new government would (naturally) be committed to achieving improvements in governance and service delivery.
- DFID opted for a state (as opposed to a federal) level focus for all its programmes because it was felt that it could have an impact there. (The size of the Federal budget was thought to make it more or less impregnable to DFID influence.) The selection of four “focal” states was still in process as the programme began, but was based more or less on previous knowledge and engagement, and upon the level of poverty in each state.
- Because of the rigour of the “process” approach taken by the early implementers of the programme (in agreement with DFID advisors) there was no formalised base-line.
- The initial inception review focused on questions about the decision not to engage at federal government (which it was felt was difficult to justify) and with the tendency for the implementers not to engage for the time being at local government. It endorsed the latter decision, owing to the perceived decrepit capacity at that level and the need first to sort things out at State level.
- The inception review also questioned the purity of process adopted at the outset, and called for more understanding of political interest. Following the review the programme took the decision (again together with DFID endorsement) to relax

the use of process approaches, and introduce more direction in programme interventions.

- By the time of the JIR, some greater understanding of the politics had been obtained, partly by the programme, but also through a significant Drivers of Change study commissioned by DFID Nigeria. This had led, amongst other things, to a growing questioning about the approach used to choose the states for engagement. It was felt that some other states would actually provide better opportunities for change, and following the JIR the painful process of withdrawal from two rural states (Benue and Ekiti) and eventual engagement with three other predominantly urban ones (Lagos, Kano and later Kaduna) was initiated.
- The political assessments also contributed to the view that the programme was too captured by state governments, and that more visible service delivery improvement demonstration was required to bring relevance to, and to help mobilise public support for, the reforms being attempted. From this the idea of Issues-Based Projects was born.
- Also at the time of the JIR, the second Obasanjo government had just been elected, and a more radical programme of reform instigated at Federal level (the NEEDS and later the SEEDS initiatives) was on the cards, and DFID needed to manufacture a rapid response to these efforts. Accordingly “spare” money in SLGP was mobilised to provide quick support, which brought the programme at last into engagement at the federal level, and which gave the programme a leading role in providing direction through its support to the SEEDS process in states.
- At this time also the DFID programme became more closely linked with that of the World Bank, which led to closer relationships in most of the engagement states, as well as a progressive sharing of responsibilities. A particular area of progress was in agreeing between donors, and with the federal government, the implementation of SEEDS benchmarking. This provided for the long-sought-after baseline, and was one of the inputs to a more joined-up approach to state engagement.
- Following the JIR the programme log-frame was revised, especially to include support to NEEDS and SEEDS (with additional inputs applied), and to provide for the implementation of IBPs. The length of the programme was reduced to June 2006 to allow for extra expenditure to be focussed within these lines of engagement.
- By the time of the November 2005 Annual Review therefore, the programme was quite different from the way it looked at its inception. Many of the new initiatives were underway, and the Review focussed on assessing progress with these. The Review also saw itself preparing for the end of the programme, which was thought to be only 8 months away.
- According to the Review some teething problems with IBPs were encountered, not least because of the short amount of time remaining in the programme. It was felt that this had impinged upon the choices of issues. Indeed it was becoming evident that fluctuations in programme length projections and the resulting uncertainty had, by this time, become a negative factor in programme performance. Expenditure had not been as rapid as anticipated, and the OPR

recommended the no-cost extension of the programme from June through to October 2006.

- There was also concern about the general performance of all states against the SEEDS benchmarks. It was felt that SLGP would achieve its outputs OK, but there remained concern about the contribution of these to the programme purpose. This was because there remained a continued apparent lack of commitment by state governments to allocate budget resources on the basis of pro-poor policies. The programme evaluation awarded a score of 3 at the purpose level.
- In early 2006 the programme was extended again, this time up to the end of 2007, but with a cost increase (up from £21 million to £28 million). In fact the fluctuations in programme expenditure speed, and the projections of programme completion date (which changed in four times during the programme's life) were also in part a reflection of changes in DFID's own expenditure priorities over the years. As described above, a large increase was required in 2003/4 following the advent of NEEDS and SEEDS strategies by the Nigerian Government, but by 2005 the programme was under pressure to cut back on its spending as the overall DFID allocation to Nigeria was restricted. By 2006 the pressure to spend was on once more and the programme received the additional funding extension described above. And then finally expenditure was once more slowed as (amongst other things) the period around the national elections in 2007 led to uncertainties. These changes had an impact both on the reviews conducted, and upon the approach the programme was able to take.
- An OPR was conducted later in 2006 (the report is dated September). The new review raised the purpose level score of the programme to 2, maintaining that good progress was being made and that with realistic objectives for the remaining 15 months of the programme it stood every chance of being able to consolidate the gains made. There was also a key requirement to ensure that the lessons of the programme (which were considered to be many) needed good capture and feed in to the design of the new generation of programmes slated for 2008.
- Some of the main lessons were in areas that had been issues of debate throughout the life of the programme. This included:
 - Engagement with local government, the difficulties SLGP encountered and the need to find a way of overcoming this problem;
 - IBPs, their growing contribution, and their potential usefulness for strengthening links between sector programmes;
 - The difficulties in working with "the demand side" in a programme that is close to state governments, while at the same time needing to maintain a working link between the two (thus avoiding demand-side programmes which work with civil society alone);
 - The need to improve synergy between DFID's major programmes (and with the work of other donors); and
 - The need (reflecting in particular upon the experiences of engaging with and then leaving some states, and the need to be clear about development objectives) to improve the clarity of partnerships.
- In addition the review raised the question of consistency in messaging. Differences between states, the early process-laden approach at the beginning, and a growing degree of decentralisation in management through much of the

programme, had led to a variety of messages being delivered. This also meant that there existed a discernable inconsistency between approaches in different states. The OPR suggested that, while SLGP had increasingly used SEEDS as a standard template from which to select related areas for focus, there were other frameworks available (such as PEFA for example) which could further enhance the consistency of advice proffered.

- In fact many of these issues then became core aspects of the challenge in designing the suite of programmes that DFID developed for commencement in early to mid-2008.
- The annual review carried out in August 2007 would also have constituted the End of Programme Evaluation, but once more the programme had been extended (partly because of under-spending and partly because of delays in the process of design and tendering for the next programme) until June 2008.
- The review produced similar results to the one a year before, but of course including assessment of progress against the recommendations of the OPR. The purpose level score was also set at 2, and again progress with SEEDS support, and the high illustrative value of IBPs was noted. Progress was recorded with specification of a structured approach to PFM, as called for in the OPR.
- There was also a perception that new governments, recently elected, were generally more positive about change than their predecessors had been. Especially at Federal level, there were moves to implement significant fiscal responsibility legislation that had been delayed by the previous government, and then moves to cancel and re-run some state elections where allegations of malpractice were verified. One of these was an SLGP-state (Enugu), but at the time of review it was far too early to speculate whether this new pressure on the electoral strategy that aspirants might follow might be discerned in government behaviour later.
- On the negative side, a general continued resistance to Civil Service Reform, and a difficulty in achieving any up-take of efforts to get government to engage with civil society, were also evident. Meanwhile some apparent improvements in attitude to reform amongst state governments had yet to bear fruit in the form of new positive action. It remains to be seen whether these improvements are superficial, or whether they reflect deeper changes in the political and economic structure of some places in the Country.
- Recommendations from the Review regarding the design of the new programmes were similar to those from the OPR.

3.0 THE REVIEW MATERIAL ATTACHED

3.1 Inception Review 2002

The Inception Review was conducted in June 2002, with the final report in July. It was conducted by a combination of DFID advisors (one from London and one from Nigeria) and consultants (one international and one local).

The review *did not* carry out a formal assessment against the log frame for the programme, despite the fact that it was conducted over 18 months after programme start-up. The review document does not provide an explanation for this, but a view is

put forward in section 4 below. Similarly there was no output to purpose score, and no structured assessment against a set of pre-structured questions.

Instead the review focussed on contextual issues, especially political change since the 1999 elections, and the implications of this for the approach designed, and being taken, by the programme. Hence there is a series of technical debates in what is simply a narrative report dealing with (for example):

- The need for engagement at the Federal level;
- Political commitment and the selection of states; and
- The difficulties in engaging with local government (see the section entitled Principles, Approach and SLGP Project Design).

Without scoring, the review provided a generally positive assessment of the programme progress, but hi-lighted a number of structural or contextual issues that it felt required a re-think on the design and the activities to be followed, including reviews of DFID's wider approach to development in Nigeria.

3.2 The Joint Inception Review 2003

This was so called because in 2003 it was felt by DFID that there was a need for overall review of its engagement in Nigeria. Some of the assumptions that had been made in 1999, immediately after the civilian regime took over, and which drove the direction of DFID's programme designs in Governance (SLGP), Health (Partnerships for Transforming Health Systems – PATHS), and Justice (originally called Access to Justice – A2J), had been brought into question. The other two large programmes had started about a year after SLGP, and so were coming up to their inception reviews anyway – hence the use of the “Joint Inception Review” terminology.

Despite the joint nature of the exercise, separate review reports were produced for each programme, though there was also an overall JIR summary report. The review report for SLGP is available through this facility.

The SLGP review was again conducted with involvement of external assessors, including three international and one local consultants, and with a broad involvement from eight DFID Nigeria advisors. (These advisors had dual roles in assessing the major programmes, whereas the consultancy team was dedicated to the review of SLGP.)

The review was conducted against a set of terms of reference, which placed an emphasis on reviewing programme context and strategies for re-direction of the programme. However a formal scoring was undertaken this time against the log frame and recorded in the format of the DFID Project Progress Report. (This is also available through this facility.) The programme received an overall purpose achievement score of 4 (a poor score with 5 as the lowest). However, the review did conclude that this was, “not a reflection on the SLGP managers, but rather the result of problems inherent in the programme structure, especially the focal state approach and the emphasis on generic capacity-building, without engagement with the politics of development.”

Note also that the review commented on the difficulty of carrying out the log-frame review owing to the fact that separate log frames for each state had been devised, but that these were not always in complete agreement with the overall programme log frame.

The covering report contains a lengthy discussion of the political environment, which was consistent with DFID's concerns at the time to ensure that the design of its new Country Assistance Plan reflected the results of the extensive Drivers of Change study that had been completed that year.

The section on the way forward included the possibility of closure in some or even all of the existing focal states, a refocus on federal level engagement, a refocus on non-government players, and a shift to issues-based work, all recommendations that can be observed in the later stages of the programme's implementation.

3.3 Annual Review 2005

This review was carried out in November 2005, and appears to have been done internally. By this stage DFID's annual review process had been introduced. However, the only documentation available to the programme at the time of preparation of this overview (March 2008) was the completed annual review form. This is available through this facility, but in order to make it a little more readable, the text from the form has been lifted into a separate pros-based document (also attached).

By the time the review was conducted a new log-frame had been agreed. This integrated the key recommendations of the JIR, especially engagement with NEEDS and SEEDS development, implementation of IBPs, and working in a different set of states. The programme had gone through the sometimes painful exercise of closing down its operation in two states (Benue and Ekiti), and then opening up in two new ones (Lagos and Kano).

Another factor was that by the time of this review it was thought the programme would end in October the following year, so there was an apparent emphasis on issues that would be built upon in the design of new programmes.

The review scored the output to purpose achievement of the programme at 3, and likelihood of achieving the programme outputs at 2, significant improvements over the previous scores. Whether this was because of the changes in the programme design, or because of the apparent improvements in the political environment for change during the second Obasanjo Government, is discussed in section 4 below.

3.4 OPR Review 2006

By the time of this review the Programme had been extended formally with a cost increase (up from about £21 million to £28 million) and with a scheduled end date of December 2007. Once again, therefore, there was an emphasis placed on recording lessons for the ensuing design of new programmes.

The OPR involved a review team with two external consultant members, and two from partner donors, as well as DFIDN advisors. There is an extensive written report together with a completed annual review form (both available through this facility).

The review scored the output to purpose prospects for the Programme at 2, and also gave 2 scores for the vast majority of the outputs. As with the previous review it was not felt that SLGP could realistically be expected to achieve all its objectives within the timeframe of the programme (despite its extension), but that it was making good progress towards achieving acceptable output and purpose.

3.5 Annual Review 2007

By the time of this review (dated September) the programme had been extended once more, this time to June 2008 (at the time of writing still the scheduled end date for the Programme). The review was conducted by four DFIDN advisors, plus one international consultant.

The documentation available through this facility is a written report, plus the (now standard) annual review form.

The scored rating for the programme was still put at 2, while the outputs scored a mixture of 2s and 3s, which implies a slight decline in expectations from the previous year.

While the review does concern itself with issues of relevance to the new programme (SPARC), this had been designed by the time of the review and was in the process of tender. The main focus at this stage was therefore upon issues concerning management, and the case was made for less involvement of DFIDN in the inputs and activities of the programme implementation, placing an emphasis instead upon regular review of the purpose and goal level achievement prospects, and the monitoring of risk. Otherwise the review confined itself to making recommendations aimed at achieving consolidation of the progress made leading up to the formal end of the Programme.

4.0 THE STORY BEHIND THE REVIEWS

One thing stands out as a key trend identified by the series of reviews. This is the notable improvement in the scoring of the programme's achievements during its life. Especially the scores averaging 4 at the point of the JIR improved notably to an average of 2 by the programme's conclusion. The improvement almost certainly needs to be viewed against the significant re-structuring of the programme undertaken following the JIR, but it needs also to be seen against the changes in the operating environment. The Programme did, after-all, span a period of very nearly eight years, during which time Nigeria went through some significant changes itself.

This section aims to tell the story of the Programme – the backdrop against which the results of the reviews, and the progress of changes in the programme's work and results, may be better understood.

4.1 Before the Start

There may be no written record, but it is known that the decision in DFID in 1999 to engage in Nigeria through a governance reform programme was not taken lightly. Indeed there were those who felt that to attempt such a thing given the levels of corruption prevalent in the country would be a mistake. Apparently there was a narrow margin in the informal vote to commence with the programme at all.

At the pre-mobilisation meeting held between senior DFID advisors and the implementing team in September 2000, the advisors made it clear that while the log frame was a serious attempt to describe what it was felt might be done, there remained considerable uncertainty in DFID and it was envisaged that the inception phase was to be used to test the waters and to help to define a more reasonable set of objectives.

On reflection this position seems to have been well thought through. Certainly the first two reviews show how initial efforts were not successful, and especially between the first review and the JIR some considerable thought and extra work, both by the

programme and by DFID, went in to re-thinking and re-designing the programme in order to take advantage of new experiences and knowledge.

At the JIR the SLGP received a relatively positive evaluation compared with the other major programmes, and it was felt at the time that this was a reflection of the programme's willingness to recognise initial problems and to work on devising realistic alternative approaches to deal with them. Certainly the ensuing measured success of the programme *might* be seen as a testament to this effort. But really this reflects positively on the designers of the programme, because they *never maintained* that they had got the design right in the first place. The expectation had always been that changes would need to be made, and indeed given the extremely high risk that the programme might not have succeeded at all.

4.2 Early Lessons

Probably there were a large number of errors or mistakes at the outset, and they may not all have been to do with the lack of certainty at the time the programme was designed. Drawing on the review documents it is probably reasonable to identify three key aspects of the programme start-up which proved to be problematic.

4.2.1 The Approach to Process Adopted

Based upon World Bank findings regarding the failure of conditional institutional change programmes, the original programme design for SLGP placed a heavy emphasis on a process approach, with local people taking decisions about the pattern of reform to be followed. It must be emphasised that the designers believed that the election of new civilian Federal and State Governments in 1999 (with local elections to come) had heralded a new approach to governance in Nigeria, with Nigerians themselves keen to adopt pro-poor reform programmes. Given this assumption the adoption of a process approach made sense.

The programme implementers took this aspect of the design seriously, and adopted the advice of reputed experts in the field of process consultancy. The approach was however, somewhat extreme, with local state partners being invited to choose from a menu of possible priorities. The position was that even if mistakes were made, learning would result, and so change would be more sustainable.

The approach may have been reasonable in some respects, and it did have the advantage of building a relatively rapid degree of client trust, but it did also have some negative consequences. Not least it was felt that doing a comprehensive baseline would be too directive and impinge upon the local ownership of the programme.

In fact it did not take long for the programme to begin to see that the initial assumption that civilian governments would be committed to pro-poor change was mistaken, and it was this that ultimately undermined the legitimacy of the rigorous approach to process that had been adopted. (See the sub-heading on choices of states below.)

4.2.2 Poor Partnership Relations

Although client relationships were good at the outset, there quickly developed (especially in Ekiti, and to some extent in Benue) a level of distrust because the aims and parameters of the programme had not been spelled out clearly enough at the outset. This was partly owing to the process approach adopted, the team being reluctant to pre-define what was on offer so as not to have undue influence over the decisions made. This was a mistake, however, because of course it soon became

evident that there were some things that the programme would not support – such as the purchase of vehicles (an item high on the list in Ekiti).

It emerged that decisions about funding matters were being made somewhat “on the hoof”, because there was no partnership agreement between the state governments and DFID. Therefore there was no basis upon which the implementers could make dependable decisions about what was and what was not permissible. The lack of clarity caused a growing level of distrust in two of the states.

This problem became more acute when, following the JIR, the decision was taken to withdraw SLGP from (quite relevantly) those two states. (See below for the real reasons for this withdrawal.) The two state governments (Ekiti and Benue) claimed, with at least some degree of validity, that the terms on which the relationship would be broken had never been clearly defined.

It must be said that the debates at this time within DFID itself, both about the need for, and then eventually the nature of, such agreements, was lengthy, and was not properly resolved until as late as 2007. It is dating back to the period especially immediately before and following the JIR, and the process of having to withdraw from some states, that really lies behind the decision to strengthen SPARC by founding it upon Partnership Agreements between DFID and the lead states.

4.2.3 The Choice of States and Lack of Political Understanding

At first the selection of states was done on the basis of previous experience. DFID had been engaged in Benue state since before the end of the Military regime (they implemented health and agriculture programmes there working with NGOs). So it seemed logical to remain there. In Jigawa there was a design already in place for a wetlands programme (this became Jewel), and although there was a debate at the time about selecting Kaduna (another DFID programme was working there with CSOs), Jigawa won the day because its Governor seemed to be an innovative moderniser.¹

DFID was also under pressure from the new Federal Government to choose states in different geopolitical zones (South South, South East, West, Central, North East and North West – Benue is in Central, Jigawa in North West). It was agreed to select the other two states from West and South East zones, and after a more structured assessment (which focussed on levels of poverty and visible signs of commitment to pro-poor changes in government), Ekiti (West) and Enugu (South East).

SLGP conducted some preliminary political investigation prior to the first Inception Review, and this began to indicate that the politics of the states chosen (factors that had not been taken into account before) might be less suitable for change than in some others. Political economy assessments done later (around 2004 to 2005) indicated that urban centres were more conducive to reform, partly because their civil societies included greater numbers of organisations as well as more powerful sets of potentially reforming interests. This was especially true of Lagos and Kano.

In addition the view grew that success in a small state, such as Jigawa, would not have much replicable impact in larger places, whereas it is said that if Lagos sneezes then Nigeria catches cold. The DoC assessment of 2003 also indicated that by limiting itself to 4 small and predominantly rural states, DFID might have been

¹ By 2007 he had been arrested on suspicion of grand corruption involving state government money.

excluding itself from taking opportunities to support significant change movements elsewhere.

The conclusion of this debate is covered below. But on reflection it is possible to conclude that the states where the programme began its work did not present the best opportunities for change, and this must have had a negative impact on its early progress.

4.3 Formulating Changes in Approach

The period of rethinking the programme was concentrated between the two inception reviews. Rethinking focussed on building upon the results of the DoC analysis, and changing states locations. But it was also significant that the second round of national and state elections took place during the same period, and by the time the JIR came around the new Federal Government had instigated a more convincing programme of reform. NEEDS and SEEDS programmes were being started, and DFID needed to provide support for these initiatives.

4.3.1 NEEDS and SEEDS Related Changes

Partly on the basis of its experience at State level, and partly because there was a budget line available in SLGP (nearly a million pounds allocated to dissemination), the Programme was able to engage quickly in providing support to the Federal Government in developing its support for this initiative. There were three associated lines of work that meant a significant change of tack for the Programme.

SEEDS Advice

By drawing on experiences from state work, the programme was able to develop a SEEDS manual for the Government which it then used as a basis for delivering advice to all the states around the country. Not only did this greatly enhance the delivery of dissemination of lessons for the programme, but it also meant that it was able to take a more directed approach. The scatter-gun approach driven by adherence to process (at the expense of content) was weakened.

SEEDS Benchmarking and State Selection

At the same time DFID and the other donors joined forces to support the Government in establishing a set of benchmarks against which to measure State performance in a range of governance, service delivery and poverty-policy indicators. The aim was to support change by publicising information about those states performing poorly and especially about the observed improvements in subsequent benchmark series. The exercise has become remarkably well established in the state psyche, with three sequences of benchmarking now having been conducted.

But the exercise also helped DFID and other donors to choose states for support on governance that had demonstrated a commitment against a set of measurable indicators. In fact the benchmarks demonstrated especially how poor *all* the states were in these areas, but the information was used as one input in the exercise of choosing new states for engagement.

It also meant that the baseline of governance, which was omitted from early stages of the programme, was now being conducted (and repeated). Recently DFID used these benchmarks, along with other available indicators, to develop a state-level equivalent to the standard Country Governance Assessment (CGA) which DFID now conducts in all the counties where it provides assistance.

Federal Engagement

Alongside its support to SEEDS, SLGP also began engagement with the (then) Ministry of the Federal Capital Territory – MFCT (this later became the Federal Capital Territory Authority – FCTA). This entailed support that was similar to taking on another state, but the MFCT was also a pilot Ministry for reform under the Federal NEEDS programme. The initiative provided the opportunity for the Programme to pick up lessons from reform in the MFCT, carry these in to the NEEDS exercise overall, and engage in discussions over issues at Federal level that would effect states' performance (for example on conditional grants). This had been an issue that had been raised as early as the first inception review.

4.3.2 Changes Intended to Achieve Better Political Commitment

The assumption was made in the original log frame that there would be political commitment to reform. However, early phases of the programme, and the DoC study, clearly indicated that this was not very strong, and that a lack of commitment presented a particular problem in many of the states where SLGPDFID was initially engaged.

The aim was therefore to find ways of legitimately “removing” this assumption from the assumptions column, and bringing in an output of the programme. There were essentially two means by which DFID attempted to do this following the JIR.

The first was to change the states where the programme worked. The shift to Lagos and Kano was partly based upon the benchmark measures and upon discussion and agreements with partner donors. (Note also that the adherence to the original rule that no two states should be in the same geopolitical zone was dropped – Kano, like Jigawa, is in the North West zone.) But there was also the sense that large, urban environments provided better opportunities to engage with reform interests *and* to demonstrate changes that would be more widely visible around the country. (Later Political Economy studies underlined the differing historical evidence for this in each of these vividly different cities.)

The second was to adopt an Issues-Based Approach for some of the programme's interventions. Emerging from the DoC work, the intention was to identify issues that it was felt would be of concern to a range of different society interests, especially those who had the power to have some influence over state governments. Nevertheless it was at the same time important to pick issues that, if resolved, would not present so great a threat to government that the chances of success were slim (or the risk of conflict great). The project idea also had the positive aspect of illustrating visible reforms to services, so became a way of making reform (hitherto mainly limited to internal systems capacity building) more obviously relevant to people outside government who may support and encourage it.

4.4 A Period of Consolidation

Having made these changes the Programme then embarked (from about late 2004) upon a period of establishing more these more standard approaches and in the new states selected (including later on the addition of Kaduna).

At least for some time running up to about mid-2006 the environment for change also seemed to be relatively good, with the Federal Government not only pushing ahead with NEEDS and SEEDS, but also publishing information about allocations to states and local governments, taking steps to tackle corruption through the Economic and

Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and prepared to instigate significant legislative reform, such as the Fiscal Responsibility Bill.

However, as the Federal Government achieved debt relief, and as the debate over the so called “Third Term Agenda”² intensified, so the foot was lifted from the throttle of reform. As the later reviews attest, there continued (and continue) to be concerns about the failure of state governments to control expenditure against budgets.

Despite these difficulties the last two reviews (the 2007 review was undertaken following this more difficult political period) indicated a clear positive result from the re-design of the programme.

Of course there were issues of concern and debate throughout this phase (2005 to 2007), many of which became key issues for resolution during the design of the new Programme. The sub-sections below review some of these key questions.

4.4.1 Demand-Side Working

The original programme document defined a need for SLGP to engage with civil society and strengthen its ability to influence government policy. This always provided difficult while retaining a positive working relationship with state governments that were not always keen to improve transparency or accountability. Certain improvements were achieved especially through the IBPs, and the development of some SEEDS documents (though not all) did entail good public involvement. But even these have suffered from the continuing difficulties in getting governments to spend according to the budget.

The solution to this in the new programme design is to invest in a parallel programme which will be linked through the log frame to SPARC, but which will work exclusively (and under separate management) with civil society groups. This programme will also have a component intended to strengthen the accountability role of State Houses of Assembly.

4.4.2 Local Government

The first Inception Review endorsed the decision of the programme implementers not to engage with local government at first. But as a sounder basis was established at the state level, there has been a move in this direction. The main vehicle has been the development of LEEDS documents, followed by limited support to the implementation of some aspects of these. In Jigawa the conduct of LEEDS has been linked to a challenge fund, though as the latest review attests, there were some teething problems with this.

Again, a slightly revised approach is recommended in the SPARC design, concentrating on getting State-level Ministries of Local Government to take on a new role in scrutinising and publicising local government performance records first, and then providing support also through LEEDS to those that do well.

4.4.3 Are Issues-Based Projects Working?

Not all the initial crop of IBPs were deemed a success. Some issues may not have been selected well (according to the recommended criteria), with possibly too much

² This was Obasanjo’s bid to have the constitution altered so that he could run for a third term as President in the April 2007 elections. He failed in that bid, but there were allegations that he brought pressure upon some Governors and senate members by, for example, using the EFCC against them.

emphasis on State Government priorities as opposed to those of more influential non government groups. But the reviews also highlight the fact that some issues selection was jeopardised by the perceived shortened length of the programme. After the JIR and by the time the IBP approach was taken on board formally, it was only expected that the programme would continue for another two years. It is also the case that the programme encountered some problems with the engineering content of some projects, and in some of these cases the work got bogged down in these problems and eyes were “taken off the ball” of the institutional reform objectives.

Despite these problems there were also sufficient successes, especially the very popular water project in Kano, for the later reviews to count the IBPs as a success. They also recommended that these be included as a significant element of the new programme.

4.4.4 Co-ordination Between Programmes

Adequate co-ordination between SLGP and the other programmes was always a problem. One review accepted that this was understandable as state team leaders had enough on their plates without also having to devote extra time to working alongside the priorities of the other programmes. In fact relationships between programmes were generally also dependent upon the personal traits of the staff based in a particular location. The challenge was also bound up with the role of the DFID state co-ordinator, and there were occasional problems in some states where the perceived needs of co-ordination by the DFID advisor ran counter to the apparent objectives of the specific programme implementing agent of one or other of the programmes.

Later advances were made in some instances through sharing inputs to IBPs based in the sectors of the other programmes, as for example through use of a media programme financed by SLGP in Jigawa to publicise debates about public health issues.

In an effort to overcome this coordination problem, DFID conducted the design of its new suite of programmes simultaneously. One result of this was that elements of the log frames for the different programmes refer to work required to help achieve the outputs of the others.

4.4.5 Standardising Advice

The SEEDS work helped provided a framework within which advice could be structured, and this produced a reduction in the scatter-gun that had characterised the early years of the Programme. However, within this framework it is still true that the programme provided different lines of advice in different states. While this makes some sense, responding to state-specific conditions for change, it is not obvious that a stepped or staged approach to progress was followed. It was suggested in the 2006 OPR that more use of instruments of international good practice (such as PEFA) would have helped to ensure that states were led through self-supporting stages of improvement.

4.4.6 DFID Programme Management

A variety of different management issues were raised through all the reviews. But the final review makes a strong argument for the need to stream-line DFID management. While a close relationship on technical issues has been one of the enduring successes of the Programme, the review argued that DFID had taken an excessive role in approving inputs. Especially with an even larger and more complex programme following this one, it will be necessary for DFID to, “adopt a consistently

strategic role, looking to influence governments' behaviour rather than to guide and/or police the work of the contractor.”