

## **UK Support for Political Parties: A stock-take**

Produced for DFID and the FCO

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\* Disclaimer: The views presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the UK Government

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## **Acronyms**

APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AusAID	Australian Government Overseas Aid Program
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IRI	International Republican Institute
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

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## Executive Summary

In theory, political parties play a central role within well-functioning democracies, aggregating and representing citizens' interests and formulating policy agendas that can respond to citizens' concerns. They should be a crucial interlocutor between citizens and the state. In practice, in many countries – especially developing and transition countries – political parties are weak and disconnected from the policy process, and struggle to connect with or represent citizens and their interests.

The weaknesses of political parties in many countries derive from three sets of challenges: first, a lack of capacity within parties themselves; second, rules of the game – for instance on elections and on party financing – that are not conducive to the emergence of strong political parties and multi-party competition; and third, challenges relating to the wider landscape of governance and politics. Despite these challenges, and understandable sensitivities about intervening in processes that are clearly political, donors are increasingly of the view that political parties need to be part of the jigsaw of effective governance, and are in the process of working out how best to provide support for political parties and party systems.

This report is based on an initial stock-take or review of support provided to strengthen political parties by the UK Government, by both the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). It represents a first stage in providing the UK Government with a better basis for making decisions about whether and how to enhance its engagement with political parties in order to promote democracy and the reduction of poverty. The objectives of the project were:

- To provide a stock-take of UK support for political parties: how much support does the UK Government provide; in which countries; and, how?
- To identify the challenges that the UK (and its partners) have encountered in providing support for political parties; and
- To assess how effectively these challenges have been addressed, and the extent to which UK support for political parties conforms to emerging ideas about good practice.

This report draws on a desk-based review of relevant literature and policy documents, a small number of interviews, and responses to a questionnaire filled in by DFID and/or FCO advisers for 25 countries. The evidence collected allows us to take stock of the UK's support for political parties, but it does not – and was not intended to – provide the basis for a detailed evaluation.

Chapter two of the report outlines the challenges faced by political parties in developing and transition countries, the potential roles for donors, and the nature of support that donors as a whole provide for political parties. Chapter three sets out the findings of the stock-take of UK support for political parties.

In terms of **motivations** for DFID and FCO support for political parties, there appears to be a good level of alignment at the level of policy, particularly as DFID's approach to development has become more focused on providing support to political institutions and processes. This fit at the level of motivation seems to be supported by effective **coordination and collaboration** between DFID and FCO staff in developing and transition countries. At the level of specific programmes of support, the **stated purpose** of UK support for political parties is most frequently about enabling free and fair elections, with conflict resolution and prevention also mentioned.

In terms of geographical coverage, the FCO tends to be particularly active in **Eastern Europe and Central Asia**, with DFID – often in collaboration with the FCO – taking the lead in **sub-Saharan Africa**. The questionnaire returns provide more limited evidence of the UK providing support in Asia or Latin America, although there is some activity in Asia and DFID has worked with political parties in Latin America, with that experience informing its plans for working with political parties in Bangladesh. There are only a few examples of the UK providing support for political parties in fragile states, with rather more examples drawn from countries where politics is relatively peaceful and where there is some level of commitment to multi-party politics. The questionnaire responses do not allow one to get an accurate picture of the overall level of **funding** but they demonstrate that programmes of support range from small stand-alone projects costing tens of thousands of pounds, to programmes of support that are part of multi-year governance programmes costing in excess of ten million pounds.

The UK works with a wide variety of **implementing partners**, extending beyond the Westminster Foundation for Democracy to also include the National Democratic Institute, the Netherlands Institute for Multi-party Democracy and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance amongst others. The UK also works with **local implementers** and in a number of cases collaborates with other **donors** including Scandinavian bilaterals, USAID and UNDP. However, information-sharing amongst donors seems to be poor.

UK support for political parties tends to be pitched at the level of individual parties or the wider governance context, with support for **party systems** (the rules of the game) relatively rare. UK support for political parties tends to be provided through standard **methods** such as training, workshops and seminars, although there are some examples of more innovative approaches being employed such as the promotion of multi-party dialogue. There is limited evidence of UK support for political parties taking account of **gender** issues.

Overall, the questionnaire returns suggest that while the UK is surprisingly active in the field of support for political parties, the **pattern and nature of UK support for political parties is somewhat patchy and ad hoc**. The questionnaire returns demonstrate that DFID and the FCO put considerable effort into understanding the political context of the countries in which they work, but that **relatively little progress has been made in moving systematically from understanding context to tailoring support to context**. This is compounded by a **lack of evaluation and learning**, which means that the evidence base about what works – and still more, what works in a particular sort of context – is largely absent.

The UK has a number of strengths that it might further capitalize on in relation to support for political parties. These include a good level of coordination between DFID and the FCO, and an approach to development that is increasingly cognizant of the importance of politics. The UK could also build on its reputation for working hard to understand political context, and provide leadership in terms of working out how to move systematically from analysis to action that is appropriate to that context and integrated within support for the wider governance agenda in partner countries. But, to do that, a more concerted effort needs to be made to monitor, evaluate and learn about what works and about what works in different contexts. In the absence of evidence and learning, support for political parties will remain ad hoc and is likely to be ineffective.

A second phase of research could usefully explore – through a series of country case studies – how different donors move from mapping and understanding context to tailoring support to context, and how support to political parties might be integrated into broader governance work. Case studies might also explore innovative approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning. And they should explore – perhaps through collaboration with the Netherlands Institute for Multi-party Democracy – how support for political parties might be provided in ways that take seriously the importance of ownership.

## 1. Introduction

*"...in the past, aid agencies have too often been afraid to engage in building political institutions for fear of being accused of interfering in a developing country's politics. But our experience teaches us that we cannot address the challenges we face in fragile environments, in particular, through technocratic solutions alone...We also need to support political institutions and processes – parliaments, political parties, civil society and the media. We must recognise that development – at a fundamental level – is about politics... by which I mean the establishment of the right relationships across society".*

(Douglas Alexander, MP, Secretary of State for International Development, 2009)

1. In theory, political parties play a central role within well-functioning democracies, aggregating and representing citizens' interests and formulating policy agendas that can respond to citizens' concerns. They should be a crucial interlocutor between citizens and the state. However, in reality, political parties are often weakly institutionalized and disconnected from policy processes, and struggle to connect with or represent citizens and their interests. In developing and transition countries, political parties have been seen as the 'weakest link', perceived as weak, discredited and often reflecting their clientelistic contexts (Carothers 2006).
2. Despite these weaknesses, there is increasing recognition amongst donors that political parties may need to be part of the solution in building better governance and contributing to more responsive and effective states. Donors have conventionally focused their efforts on support to civil society organizations – seen as less politically sensitive – or have engaged with parties only around elections. But there is growing awareness that it may be more effective to develop longer term programmes of support for political parties, or party systems (the legal and financial framework for parties) as part of support for governance or democratisation.
3. This Phase 1 study is an initial stock-take or review of UK government (DFID and FCO) support for political parties. This is a first stage in providing the UK government with a better basis for making decisions about whether and how to enhance their engagement with political parties and party systems in order to promote democracy and the reduction of poverty. The objectives of the study were:
  - To identify the level, type and method of the UK's experience in working with political parties in various country programmes in different contexts;
  - To identify the challenges that the UK (and partners) have encountered in providing support for political parties; and,
  - To qualitatively assess how effectively these challenges have been addressed, and the extent to which UK support conforms to emerging ideas about good practice.
4. This report draws on a desk-based review of relevant literature and of UK policy documents, select interviews and responses to a questionnaire which was sent out to DFID and FCO offices for approximately 44 countries (including some regional offices, which covered more than one country). ODI received responses covering 25 countries, of which project information was provided for 20 countries (see Annexes 1 and 2). This information allows us to make some progress in reviewing the

UK's experience in supporting political parties and party systems, but it does not provide the basis for an in-depth evaluation of individual projects and programmes or of UK support for political parties as a whole.

5. The report proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 draws on the existing literature on political parties in emerging democracies, setting out the roles that political parties might play in these contexts, the challenges for parties to date, and the potential roles and motivations for donor support for political parties. It also reviews broader donor support for political parties, including some of the key challenges encountered by donors. Chapter 3 draws on the questionnaires, interviews and policy documents reviewed for this study to describe and analyse the nature of UK support for political parties. Chapter 4 builds on the findings presented in Chapter 3, setting out some next steps for UK support for political parties, along with some thoughts about further research.

## **2. Why and how have donors provided support for political parties?**

6. This chapter sets out why and how donors have provided support for political parties, outlining the fundamental reasons why donors might be interested in providing such support, the challenges that donors might address, and the ways in which donors have tended to provide support.

### **The potential of political parties**

7. Donors are interested in providing support for political parties because of the role that effective parties might play in the political process. These include: Representing citizens' interests to the state (interest articulation and aggregation); presenting policy choices and platforms; engaging and involving citizens in democratic participation; and forming government and opposition (drawn from Carothers 2006: 9). The importance of political parties is perhaps most clear at election time, but they play – or have the potential to play – an important role throughout the political cycle. Political parties may also play roles in reducing and managing conflicts among groups in society, and between society and the state (Behrendt 2008: 12). This can be particularly important in fragile and post-conflict contexts.

### **What are the challenges for political parties in developing and transition countries?**

8. Despite the central role that political parties can play in democratic systems, political parties are widely perceived to be in crisis. However it is important to recognise that political parties come in many guises and the nature of the crises that they face may differ. In Latin America, some countries have dominant two or three party systems (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela). In this context, "The 'crisis of parties'... is primarily about party decay – the decline of established parties" (Carothers 2006: 32). In other parts of Latin America (Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala) the 'crisis' of parties concerns the persistence of unstable and fragmented party systems (Ibid.). In contrast, African parties are relatively new institutions dating from post-colonial independence movements. They may have experienced the consolidation of one-party presidential rule and more recently the opening up of multi-party politics (Ibid: 36). This plurality of experience and the importance of local context make it difficult to generalise. Nonetheless, some common challenges can be identified at varying levels, in relation to parties, party systems (rules of the game), and the governance contexts in which parties operate.
9. A first set of challenges relate to weaknesses in parties themselves. One common challenge is the weak institutionalisation of political parties. In many African contexts, the parliamentary group may be the "only 'permanent' organ a party has... The party is a head without a body" (Burnell 2004: 17). With a small number of influential backers, and run in a command fashion, these weakly institutionalised parties invariably have weak links with their grassroots and few have well defined policy platforms (see Carothers 2006). New parties can appear and disappear and political parties often become moribund after an election is over (Chege 2007). Moreover, the dominance of 'big man' politics and the primary roles played by leaders mean that political parties can often be characterised as highly personalised (Carothers 2006: 6). And at the same time citizens' disaffection or disinterest in political parties poses challenges. For example, Bratton and Logan (2006) argue that, in the context of a number of African countries, people may have become voters but are not yet 'citizens' and have not developed effective relationships with political actors .

10. A second set of challenges relates to the enabling environment and rules or frameworks – referred to by Carothers as the ‘party system’ – within which parties operate (Carothers 2008). Many developing and transition countries lack robust legal, regulatory and financial frameworks for political parties and parties may operate in a context with a weak rule of law, all of which further undermine party development. Party funding is often low and there are few public funds for parties, compounding the influence of wealthy backers. There may be a lack of legal protection for the existence of political parties, or informal practices that subvert those legal frameworks which exist. The overall system for parties may also offer few genuine opportunities to influence the policy process and political parties may be more akin to ‘vehicles for elections’ than key influencers or drivers of policy. This has been compounded by the prevalence of de facto one party systems, particularly in parts of Africa, which tended to dominate the post-colonial period as independence movements consolidated their hold on power and parties became strongly associated with their founding leaders (Chege 2007).
11. A third set of challenges relates to the nature of the political and governance context. In some developing and transition country contexts, the broader governance context – and incentives within that context – may not support the development of effective political parties and party systems. Randall, for example, reminds us that in some countries the prevalence of poverty and inequality can instill in political actors, including parties, “a zero-sum approach to political power” (Randall 2007: 647). In addition, where the political context is shaped by clientelistic practices, these are likely to be reflected within the development of political parties – parties can be the “mediator of corrupt transactions” including between government and business (Amundsen 2007: 3). Additional challenges are presented in fragile or post-conflict contexts, where armed movements may be in a process of attempting to transition into political parties (Kumar and de Zeeuw 2008). There may be few incentives for them to transform into mass parties, aggregating a diverse range of interests (Ibid.). Where fragility has been triggered by issues related to religion, ethnicity or other affiliations, political parties may reflect or reinforce these divisions, further undermining the stability of the political settlement.

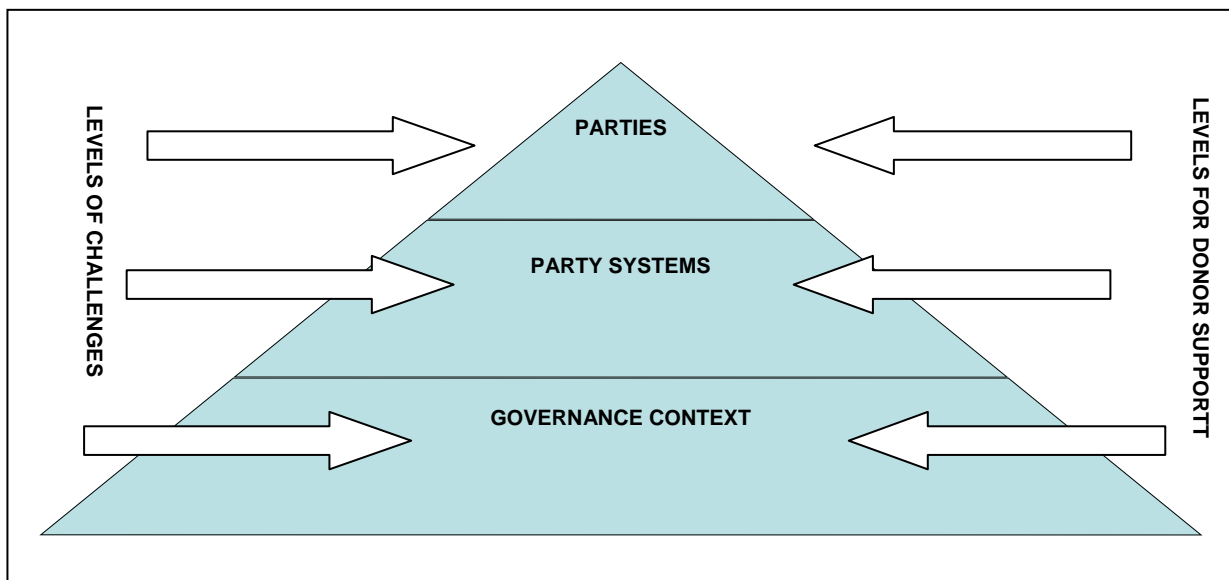
### **What roles can donors play?**

12. Political parties are often regarded as part of the problem of weak governance in developing and transition countries, but an increasing number of donors are – while cognizant of the limits of what they can do to fundamentally transform politics and parties in partner countries – coming to the view that political parties also need to be part of the solution. As Catón reminds us, “Much has been written about parties’ obvious shortcomings, but no other actors could replace them” (2007: 7). Donors can play a role in addressing the challenges that political parties face, enabling them to play a more effective role in the political process. For some donors, support for political parties in developing and transition countries forms part of programmes of democracy assistance, for others it sits within a good governance or developmental agenda (see Carothers 2009), with many donors varying their framing depending on the country concerned and the nature of the lead department.
13. Support to political parties can take a number of forms, depending on which challenges it seeks to respond to: weaknesses of parties themselves; weaknesses of the party system; or challenges inherent to the wider political and governance context (see Figure 1). Support does not usually involve direct funding of political parties, but rather capacity development support for parties themselves or for party systems. Donors might, for example, support political parties by providing training or capacity development to build parties’ capacity and ability to organise effectively, for example through improving

internal democratic procedures, supporting youth or women’s wings and improving internal party organisation (Carothers 2004: 6). This would usually be classified as direct support, and might typically be linked to elections or handovers of power – often seen as opportunities for reform.

14. Alternatively donor support might aim to strengthen the party system, in other words the rules of the game, including the legal and regulatory framework for parties, and party financing. This would likely involve more indirect support, either to facilitate parties to address these issues (including through inter-party dialogue) or working with other actors (such as state institutions) which shape the framework for party systems. Finally, donors might opt to provide support which aims to improve governance in a holistic manner, with political parties seen as one element in a wider landscape of political and social actors. Donor decisions about the appropriate form of support will – or should – to a large extent depend on context and the particular challenges it presents.

**Figure 1: Multi-level challenges and levels of donor engagement**



**What are the main types of donors, levels of funding and forms of support?**

15. Support for political parties has generally been a small proportion of broader engagement in developing and transition countries. In the 1980s and 1990s there was increased interest in political parties, as part of the ‘wave of democratisation’ at the end of Cold War, with a particular focus on Eastern and Central Europe. In the twenty-first century, there are signs of renewed interest in the role of political parties, partly as a response to growing disillusionment with the pace of democratisation in developing and transition countries, and partly because of donors’ increased recognition of the importance of engaging with political actors and the political context.

16. Four main categories of actors can be identified as supporting political parties, although in practice many of these collaborate with or fund work implemented by others. Firstly, there are bilateral donors, including the U.S., and the U.K., who support political parties as part of broader democracy or development assistance programmes; secondly, multilateral donors, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the European Union; thirdly, party foundations such as the German Stiftungen and the British Westminster Foundation for Democracy which tend to focus on

party-to-party and cross-party support; fourthly, institutes such as the American party institutes – National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (NRI) – the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and International IDEA, which tend to focus on multi-party projects.

17. Little data is available regarding total levels of support provided by these donors and actors. Some estimate that aggregate spending on political parties may be between five and seven per cent of total democracy assistance (Power 2008: 12). Analysis exists of some donor approaches, including evaluations of support for parties by Sweden, Germany and Norway. But most donors have not disclosed their total levels of spending in this area. Nevertheless, it is clear that some of the biggest actors in this field are the German Stiftungen, the American party institutes and UNDP (Ibid: 14). Common methods of support include training, workshops and exchanges, often provided on a short-term basis, although some party foundations have established field offices (such as the German Stiftungen) and work to build long term partnerships (Catón 2007: 16). Party foundations or institutes such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy have often supported ‘sister’ parties in developing and transition countries.

### **What challenges have donors encountered?**

18. While donor interest in support for political parties is growing, a number of challenges have been identified. A prominent challenge regards the extent to which support involves intervention in domestic politics. Amundsen sums up the potential for support to be construed as undermining domestic political relationships: “The democratic right of one man, one vote is no longer valid when donor resources push in certain directions, and the principle of party accountability to citizens is broken when donors set conditions for support” (2007: 5). In part this explains why donors have often preferred to work with civil society, seen as less ‘political’ in many contexts. At the same time, donors’ own domestic politics can influence the extent to which support for political parties is palatable. For example, an evaluation of Swedish support questioned the extent to which Swedish taxpayers would tolerate support to ‘undemocratic’ parties (Öhman et al 2004). Balancing these sensitivities and accountabilities can present multiple challenges for donors.

19. Another major challenge is that there have been very few evaluations of party support and little systematic learning – which means that, in practice, many donors do not know ‘what works’ in terms of support for political parties: “...what is most striking about the field of party assistance is the almost complete absence of monitoring and evaluation” (Power 2008: 18). For example, a review of the German Stiftungen found that German party foundations lacked specific strategies for party support and did not have overall frameworks for evaluating assistance nor systematic knowledge about work to date (Erdmann 2005: 28). Similarly, a review of Swedish support for political parties found discrepancies between objectives and activities implemented, with little focus on the long term impact of support (Öhman et al 2004: 12). Where evidence does exist, it highlights the limited impact of support in this area. Carothers, for example, comments that to date “party aid has only very rarely had transformative impact on the basic organisational make-up and operational features of recipient parties” (Carothers 2006: 214). This lack of lesson learning, and lack of knowledge of ‘what works’, has often resulted in ad hoc interventions and a lack of coherent strategy for how to develop programmes of support which can effectively impact on political parties in a given context.

20. Donor support has also been criticised for adopting template approaches to party support, with little adaptation to local context. Carothers argues that the overriding weakness of donor support has been

its reliance on a “mythic model of political parties”, at odds with the realities of parties in developed and developing countries (2008:7). This model is ‘mythic’ in that: “Few political parties in established democracies meet the ideal that party aid actors subscribe to and attempt to support in other countries ... few are managed in a rational, non-personalistic manner, highly inclusive of women at all levels, ideologically coherent, and committed to issue-based grassroots work” (Carothers 2008: 9). Use of ‘mythic models’ or template approaches may fail to acknowledge that the challenges faced by political parties – and what constitutes an effective political party – will vary depending on the wider social and political environment (Hudson 2009: 16). This blue-print approach has invariably involved the use of standard methods of assistance, such as workshops, training courses and exchange visits; these are often short term interventions that may have little purchase on the underlying power and incentive structures that shape party development in a given context.

### **3. How has the UK Government supported political parties?**

21. This chapter presents an overview of UK Government support for political parties to date, based on questionnaire responses and on a small number of interviews. UK support for political parties in general does not entail direct funding of political parties but rather consists of support for their capacity development or engagement in processes such as elections. This chapter reveals that while UK support is varied, there are some patterns and commonalities in terms of the motivations for support, the level of engagement, the methods of support and the approach to working with others (and across government). It also reveals some common challenges, particularly in terms of adaptation to local context and evaluation.

#### **Does the UK Government have a coherent approach?**

22. Two key departments within the UK Government have led on support for political parties to date, the FCO and DFID. Although these departments have different strategic objectives, there appears to be a high level of congruence in terms of the motivations for support for political parties, particularly in recent years.

23. The FCO has developed programmes of support to, and links with, political parties as part of its commitment to support democracy and human rights. It sees support for political parties as part of building better and more stable political institutions, which can contribute to the global security environment through greater political stability and democracy, as set out in the 2008 National Security Strategy (Cabinet Office 2008). The FCO has conventionally supported work on party strengthening conducted by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy's (an organisation that is not part of the UK Government), as well as providing some bilateral funding, particularly in relation to the conduct of free and fair elections.

24. Since its establishment in 1997, DFID has tended to adopt a technical approach to development with a dominant emphasis on development assistance aimed at poverty reduction. This meant that there were few DFID programmes which focused on support for political parties. However, in recent years, DFID has begun to take a more 'political' approach to development, which seeks to understand, work with, and ultimately transform, the political drivers of development. This is reflected in its introduction of tools for political economy analysis, such as Drivers of Change, and in the launch of a recent 'How To Note' on political economy analysis, which sets out DFID's commitment to understand "how incentives, institutions and ideas shape political action and development outcomes in the countries where we work" (DFID 2009a).

25. The link to political parties (and other political actors) was clearly set out in a recent speech by the Secretary of State for International Development, Douglas Alexander, who argued that: "...in the past, aid agencies have too often been afraid to engage in building political institutions for fear of being accused of interfering in a developing country's politics. But our experience teaches us that we cannot address the challenges we face in fragile environments, in particular, through technocratic solutions alone... We also need to support political institutions and processes – parliaments, political parties, civil society and the media. We must recognise that development – at a fundamental level – is about politics... by which I mean the establishment of the right relationships across society" (DFID 2009b).

26. DFID's most recent White Paper, *Building our Common Future*, further emphasises the need for DFID staff to think 'politically', particularly through its increased focus on fragile states: "...the 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" (DFID 2009c: 73). This shift in emphasis towards a more 'political' approach has led to greater focus on programmes which seek to support better governance and greater accountability within the countries in which DFID is active. Political parties have at times benefitted from, or been targeted, as part of these broader programmes.
27. Carothers has highlighted two strands in support to democratisation, namely political and developmental approaches (Carothers 2009). He characterises the 'political approach' as prioritising democracy as the primary aim of support (although there may also be recognition that this can bring with it socioeconomic development) and often directed at elections or other 'catalytic' events (such as handovers of power). A 'developmental approach' in contrast emphasises state capacity and building better governance (including a focus on transparency, accountability and responsiveness). Support for political parties in this approach might focus on indirect interventions which help build favourable conditions for political parties – and could involve working with state actors to strengthen their engagement with parties (Carothers 2009: 12). It might conventionally be argued that the FCO has followed a 'political approach' whereas DFID has opted for a more 'developmental approach'. However, in recent years, as the examples from DFID speeches and policy documents show, there has been some convergence between the two and in reality, the UK Government has engaged in both political and developmental approaches in a variety of countries.
28. This appears to be supported by effective coordination and collaboration between DFID and FCO staff in developing and transition countries, although the reader should bear in mind that this assessment is based on comments made jointly by DFID and the FCO. For example, strong collaboration was cited in a number of countries. In Ghana, following the 2008 election, DFID and the FCO reportedly held a joint brainstorming session on 'what next in furthering democracy' which involved "identification of the key challenges, institutions, and recommended actions we could both take to further improve democracy". They also held joint meetings with implementing partners. Similarly, in Mozambique it was reported that DFID and the FCO actively seek to consult each other and obtain approval and buy-in for their capacity building and engagement programmes with political parties and in support of multi-party democracy: "The two departments enjoy a close and mutually advantageous relationship across a broad range of policy spheres" and "The organisation's aims, objectives and approaches are broadly the same". In Zambia, reference was made to the extent to which the UK was able to project a coordinated presence in-country: "...beneficiaries look to the collaboration as one British contribution to the political parties rather than two competing institutions of the same government". Sri Lanka provides another good example of collaboration, facilitated by the Conflict Prevention Pool (see Box 1).

### **Box 1: Coordination in conflict prevention, Sri Lanka**

In Sri Lanka, it was reported that the operation of the UK's Conflict Prevention Pool out of the High Commission and an associated Conflict Prevention Pool Committee provides an effective tool for collaboration across various branches of the UK Government, bringing together DFID, the FCO and the Ministry of Defence. The Conflict Prevention Pool and its associated mechanisms facilitate cross-government working on a range of conflict-related issues, with engagement with political parties and support for inter-party dialogue – operationalised specifically through an NDI project focused on constitutional reform – one element of that.

29. However, collaboration is not always comprehensive. For example, in Sudan, it was reported that while there was a common DFID and FCO agenda (i.e. supporting the Comprehensive Peace Agreement) in reality there was 'coordination' rather than collaboration: "The political relationships and discussions that the FCO has with the parties do not inform the technical work DFID currently supports through UNDP well enough – partly this may be a result of the fact that political party work has not been a strong focus for the DFID office". Some areas of tension between the FCO and DFID were also identified in the questionnaires. For example, contrasts in funding levels and approaches were not always seen as conducive to facilitating greater collaboration, including in contexts where DFID provides large scale funds (such as through budget support or through multilaterals) and the FCO has access to smaller levels of funding, often channeled through NGOs. There were also challenges where offices were not 'co-located'. Finally, reflecting the different 'spheres of influence', in some countries only the FCO has a presence (for some countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia) and therefore there was no reported collaboration from these – and from some other – countries.
30. From this light touch review, it was possible to identify increasing convergence and collaboration between DFID and FCO but it was not possible to determine the extent to which this reflects coherence in terms of overall objectives or whether there were comparative advantages between DFID and FCO approaches. This is something which might be usefully explored through case study research.
31. At the level of programmes and projects a variety of purposes were stated. These included:
- Providing support to strengthen free and fair elections (for example, through support for party campaigning and election monitoring). Examples included Indonesia, Mozambique, and Zambia.
  - Linking support for political parties, or support for dialogue between parties, with conflict resolution and prevention, such as projects in Sudan and Sri Lanka.
  - Working with political parties as part of parliamentary strengthening and work with parliamentarians. This included projects in Georgia, Macedonia, and the Ukraine.
  - Providing support for political parties within broader governance programmes, for example in Tanzania.
  - Working with other political actors (such as civil society organisations) which interact with political parties, such as in Georgia.

### **What are the main areas and levels of UK support?**

32. Based on questionnaire responses, the dominant regions for UK support for political parties are sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (see Annex 2), with DFID more often in the lead in sub-Saharan Africa and the FCO in the lead in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. There were a smaller number of projects in South and South-East Asia, namely in Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. DFID has previously supported political parties in Latin America, but these programmes are now closed and no questionnaire responses were received from this region.
33. The UK is working to support political parties in a relatively wide range of countries and contexts, from those which might be classified as relatively stable political systems (such as Ghana) to those which are fragile or conflict affected (such as Sudan, Sri Lanka) to those which have de facto dominant one party systems. However, all of these countries – at least in theory – are multi-party contexts. This suggests that the UK requires, at least implicitly, a basic multi-party ‘enabling environment’ to be in place if it is to provide support for political parties and party systems. Indeed, rather more of the countries where the UK provides support for political parties are to be found at the ‘good performer, relatively stable politics’ end of the spectrum of country contexts; contexts that are perhaps more conducive to the provision of such support. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of UK support being provided to political parties in fragile or conflict affected contexts. This includes work which supports political parties in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Sudan (see Box 2).

#### **Box 2: Strengthening Political Parties in Sudan**

Implemented by International IDEA from 2007 to 2008, this project sought to work with all the main political parties in Sudan – including the National Congress Party and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement – in order to build their capacity, and abilities to engage effectively in forthcoming national elections. These elections had been due to take place in 2009 but have now been postponed until 2010. When they happen, the elections will be the first national elections in Sudan for over 20 years. With buy-in secured from the Ministries and Registrar of Political Parties, training workshops were held addressing issues of party financing, policy and manifesto development, election law and election campaigns, and working with the media. A follow-up project funded by DFID is currently underway.

34. In terms of funding, UK support for political parties ranges from relatively small projects of around £20,000 to major multi-million pound projects which have support for political parties as one component, such as Tanzania’s Deepening Democracy project (see Annex 2). There is also a wide variety in terms of the level of activity in each country. For example, information was provided for eight projects in Georgia, although it was more common for questionnaires to include information on one, two or three projects. In at least four questionnaires, it was reported that the UK did not provide any support for political parties. Where projects did exist, they varied in length from a few months to three years, and in some cases five or even six years.
35. A number of questionnaires identified specific country-level opportunities for support for political parties. For example, catalyst events such as the holding of elections were commonly identified as opportunities to provide (often short term) support for political parties. A smaller number of questionnaires identified broader contextual shifts as opportunities. For example, some questionnaires identified constitutional reform processes as opportunities for supporting parties and others saw the

broader governance context as in itself offering a number of opportunities. For example, in Mozambique, the existence of a relatively free media and active civil society were seen as providing openings for greater support for parties. Most of the questionnaires reported the existence of legal frameworks for political parties, with varying degrees of freedoms for multi-party existence and operation. Few questionnaires reported demand from political parties themselves as providing the opportunity to develop programmes of support.

**To what extent has the UK worked with others?**

- 36. The analysis of reported projects reveals that the UK has used a relatively wide number of implementing partners, including the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (see Box 3), but extending also to organisations such as the NIMD, NDI and International IDEA. The UK has also worked with a large number of local NGOs or organisations to deliver support for political parties (as shown in Annex 2).
- 37. For example, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy is the preferred partner in some contexts (for example Macedonia, Albania and in forthcoming work in Bangladesh), but the UK is also working with the NIMD (in Mozambique), International IDEA (in Sudan), and NDI (in Georgia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka). Moreover, it has used local partners (NGOs and party organizations) in a range of countries, including Georgia, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia. Overall, this suggests that the UK government predominantly works through specialist organisations or those with local knowledge when it engages with political parties.

**Box 3: The Westminster Foundation for Democracy**

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is a British non-departmental public body, and conventionally it is one of the key vehicles for implementing UK support for political parties. It was set up in 1992 to promote democratic institutions overseas, principally political parties, parliaments and the range of institutions that make up civil society. Initially its main purpose was to assist the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to manage their transition to democracy through the exchange of expertise and party-to-party training. Its aims have since broadened to include working with political parties and parliaments in regions such as Africa, the Middle East and increasingly, Asia.

While the Westminster Foundation for Democracy is not part of the UK Government, it receives approximately £4 million of funding per year from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and has been successful in securing £5 million of funding over five years as part of DFID’s Governance and Transparency Fund. Half of the core funding received from the FCO is spent in support of party to party work, involving the Westminster parties. The other half of the core funding is spend on cross-party support for political parties, parliamentary strengthening and working with civil society organisations. Cross-party programmes in Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Serbia are amongst the Westminster Foundation for Democracy’s successes in recent years.

This report has not involved an evaluation of WFD’s activities, and instead relies on reported projects submitted as part of a questionnaire. As such, it does not provide a comprehensive review of WFD’s activities; a process that is currently being undertaken for the FCO. Nonetheless, some questionnaires did report on the use of the WFD in a range of contexts and countries. Some referred to WFD involvement but without providing specific project information (for example in Albania and in Mozambique) and therefore are not included in the table in Annex 2. Beyond the questionnaire responses, the evidence suggests that the Westminster Foundation for Democracy is making progress

with improving its effectiveness, for instance by seeking to ensure that its activities are tailored to the local political context, are responsive to local needs and build local capacity. WFD is also committed to developing methods of evaluation that meet best practice and enable its partner organisations, including political parties, to demonstrate effectiveness and impact.

38. The questionnaire returns also reveal that the UK has sought to collaborate with other donors in supporting political parties – and has done so in at least 12 projects (it has also worked independently in at least 16 projects). Other donors have predominantly included Scandinavian governments and embassies, but there has also been some collaboration with multi-lateral donors such as UNDP and with other development agencies such as AUSAID and USAID. For example, in Sri Lanka, the UK is working with the Norwegian government. In Indonesia, the UK is collaborating with CIDA, the Netherlands Embassy, AUSAID and UNDP; in Georgia it has worked with the OSCE and SIDA. Through the Deepening Democracy programmes, the UK is also aligning its support with those of other donors, with UNDP often playing a coordinating role.
39. Some questionnaires demonstrated stronger awareness than others of the activities of a range of donors within the field of support for political parties. The Georgian questionnaire, for example, provided detailed information on the projects of other donors. But overall there were relatively few indications of coordinated approaches – or coordinated sharing of information – amongst donors at country level.
40. Little information was provided regarding the decision-making processes used when selecting implementing partners or collaboration with donors. This meant that it was difficult to determine how decisions were taken by the UK regarding the selection of implementing partners and working with other donors in a given context. While the aid effectiveness agenda emphasises coordination and collaboration with others, in support of a strategy that is locally owned and responsive to context, it is not clear that such collaboration and coordination takes place systematically in the sphere of support for political parties, and – perhaps most importantly – respecting and strengthening ownership clearly remains a challenge.

### **What are the core methods of UK support?**

41. Most questionnaires did not provide detailed outlines of activities, and the information received suggests that a variety of methods are employed as part of UK support for parties. The use of training, workshops and seminars appeared to be a common method across the reported projects. These were often linked to elections. In Zambia, for example, support was provided to improve political parties' campaigning and their ability to engage with and monitor election processes. In Georgia, a three year project 'Training political-party staff' is currently underway, implemented by a local organization. It uses courses conducted over three years which address party-building skills; political theory and practice; policy issues; campaigning, data analysis and elections. Lectures, mentoring and structured debates are used to address these topics, although no indication was given of the length of each course. The dominance of training such as this appears to conform to Carothers' description of the 'standard methods' of party support, although some projects have longer timeframes, such as in Georgia, which could be more conducive to embedding learning than the short-term training that is the focus of Carothers' criticism.

42. The questionnaires also reported some potentially innovative support for political parties, in the form of support for forums for dialogue. These took two main forms, either support for inter-party dialogue or support for dialogue between political parties and other actors. Some examples are set out in Box 4.

**Box 4: Forums for dialogue in Sri Lanka and Mozambique**

Some reported projects focused on support for inter-party dialogue, such as UK support for the One Text Initiative in **Sri Lanka**. This initiative sought to enhance multi-party dialogue processes by holding monthly Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue meetings (known as Long Tables) and Short Table and expert Working Group/Technical Committee meetings. Long Tables focused on key political debates and governance issues, while Short Tables focused on specific issues such as electoral reform, humanitarian concerns, and political processes in the eastern and northern provinces.

Other forums established dialogue between political parties and other political actors, such as a forthcoming project in **Mozambique**. With support from the British High Commission, the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy is embarking on a project that aims to consolidate democratic institutions in Mozambique, by supporting the development of a platform for dialogue between political parties and the National Election Commission. The platform, or forum, is intended to facilitate: the sharing of information; fostering of good working relations; consultation on legislative change and the resolution of administrative matters that may affect parties. Consultations with stakeholders are planned before commencing with activities. This forum is also planned to feed into, and support, the holding of elections.

43. Less common methods of support reported in the questionnaires included support for electoral reforms and changes to legislation (predominantly through support for advocacy activities), for example in Kazakhstan. There was some reported use of cross-country comparisons as methods of support. For example, in Indonesia, a project in support of electoral codes of conduct in Sulawesi and Papua reportedly utilised examples of party codes of conduct from other countries which had experienced conflict (including Cote D'Ivoire, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Northern Ireland) to identify appropriate political party behaviour (to avoid violence), to promote an informed and peaceful public discourse and to identify dispute resolution mechanisms between parties and community groups.

44. A small number of questionnaires reported the use of exchange visits or links with British political parties as a method for support. For example, in Mozambique, both the Conservative and the Labour Party were reported to have made links with the two main political parties, facilitated and funded by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. In Georgia, members of some of the major political parties took part in a visit to the UK to discuss electoral reform, meeting with the UK Boundary Commission, Electoral Commission, British parliamentarians and others.

45. Across these core methods of support, the questionnaires revealed that in some countries, these methods were aimed at party leaders, whereas others focused more on political party grassroots and activists. Some projects, such as ongoing work in Sudan, increasingly sought to work with both activists and party leadership. Most of the reported methods and activities included all political parties or at least all of the major political parties in a given context. In part, this was reported as one way of potentially mitigating fears regarding perceived bias. For example, the involvement of all parties, including the ruling party, was cited as important for the implementation of activities in the Sudan.

46. A number of projects linked support for political parties to programmes of support for other actors. For example, in Macedonia, a project linked support for political parties with support for Parliamentary Commissions and staff in the Macedonian Parliament. Similarly, a project in Mozambique focused on civil society organisations. The Deepening Democracy Programme in Tanzania provides a good example – although here we make no assessment of the effectiveness of the programme – of an approach which aims to provide support for a range of political actors in a comprehensive manner (see Box 5).

**Box 5: Deepening Democracy in Tanzania Programme**

This multi-donor programme, coordinated by UNDP, supports key institutions, such as Election Management Bodies (the National Election Commission and Zanzibar Electoral Commission), Parliament and Political Parties. Running from 2007 to 2010, its stated activities include: sensitisation to African Peer Review Mechanisms processes through workshops and seminars; reviews of the Election Management Bodies; scoping study for civic education; assistance to Clerks Office in the National Assembly; and, capacity-building support for political parties. The political parties element of the programme accounts for approximately 10 percent of the total programme; an element of the programme that is regarded as relatively high-risk.

47. As set out in Chapter 2, donors and partners may provide support for political parties at three levels: supporting programmes which provide support for political parties themselves; or programmes which support the party system; and/or programmes which address the broader governance environment in which political parties operate. Analysis of the questionnaires reveals that to date the UK has most commonly worked either with political parties or with the broader governance environment. The UK has commonly provided support to political parties themselves, particularly in the run-up to elections. Other projects have focused on the broader governance context. For example, in Macedonia, project activities focus on parliamentary reform. There is little evidence of support being provided in order to strengthen the party system – the legal, financial and regulatory framework in which parties operate.

48. Some examples, however, were provided which appear to address elements of the ‘party system’; the legal and financial framework within which political parties operate and the system of inter-relationships between parties. The examples from Sri Lanka and Mozambique involve support, often through third parties, for inter-party dialogue. In the long run, this might help contribute to building more effective party systems by socializing parties in their interactions with each other and through the possible development of norms and ‘rules’ for their interaction. Other projects sought to address the legal frameworks which impact on political parties, for example in Kazakhstan. Those projects which sought to build women’s participation in political parties, for example in Nigeria and in Indonesia, could also be seen as contributing to the development of the party system (described below). Some new programmes may develop the party systems approach further, such as in Bangladesh (see Box 6). Despite these examples, the overall dominance of support focused at political parties or at the broader governance context means that the ‘middle layer’ of the party system is relatively neglected.

### **Box 6: Strengthening Political Participation in Bangladesh**

A new programme, Strengthening Political Participation in Bangladesh (2009-2014) seeks to support “A political system that is more capable, accountable and responsive, especially to the needs of the poor and marginalised”. The programme is a collaborative effort between DFID, USAID, Transparency International and a number of other implementing partners. In relation to political parties, the programme aims to support the development of parties which are more responsive to their citizens and to citizens’ interests, building on some of DFID’s experience of working with political parties on pro-poor policy in Latin America (see Box 9). Inter-party dialogue is emphasised as part of this planned support.

### **To what extent has there been a focus on gender?**

49. A small number of questionnaire responses reported on specific projects aimed at strengthening women’s representation within political parties. In Indonesia, for example, two projects were reported as focusing on improving women’s representation in parties and in elections, one for the general election and one in Aceh. In Albania, through the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, a project brought Plaid Cymru officials to Albania to run workshops with female members of the Agrarian Environmentalist Party on women’s involvement in politics. Nigeria offers an example of a more holistic approach to increasing women’s participation (see Box 7). Other reported projects included the strengthening of gender equality and women’s participation in politics as a small element of a wider programme of activities, for example through the Deepening Democracy programme in Tanzania.

### **Box 7: Increasing the Involvement of Women in Nigerian Political Parties**

Implemented by a local partner – Legal and Defense Assistance Project (LEDAP) – a two-year project in Nigeria has since 2008 been seeking to increase the involvement of women in political parties, in order to strengthen women’s voices in political parties and to enhance their access to public office. The project has employed activities aimed at women themselves – such as skills training, facilitation of forums for women in six states and technical support to contest elections – as well as broader activities such as advocacy activities aimed at male leaders of major political parties, consultative forums with political leaders on improving parties’ internal practices and training for journalists to improve attitudes towards female grassroots politicians.

50. Despite these examples, from the overall review of projects it is clear that only a small proportion of support to date has focused on women’s participation in political parties. In part, this may be a reflection of context (with relatively low levels of women’s participation in political parties, and the ‘crisis’ these parties face, this may not be a strong priority for parties themselves in these countries). But it is perhaps surprising that this is not a bigger focus of UK support, given the UK Government’s strong commitment to gender issues in much of its work in developing countries.

### **What evidence is there of evaluation and of tailoring to context?**

51. Learning from past experience and evaluating the impact of aid is vital in establishing and monitoring the effectiveness of a given programme of support. Many projects appear to be new or ongoing, and few evaluations were available for this review, but the questionnaires received suggests that the UK, in common with many other actors, still struggles to effectively evaluate and learn from its support for political parties. Few evaluations measured outcomes or progress made towards objectives, opting instead to focus on whether or not activities had been completed. Moreover, there is little evidence – in

those evaluations mentioned – of a clear theory of change, linking activities to desired outcomes. In the absence of a theory of change, any evaluation will have little purchase and will do little to enhance donors’ understanding of what works.

52. Some questionnaires revealed that the use of ‘standard methods’ of support may have only a limited impact. For example, a project in Georgia sponsored a visit to London by a delegation of Georgian government representatives and parliamentarians, aimed at ensuring ‘meaningful engagement’ on Georgian electoral reform. Feedback from the visit was reported as stating that the visit was “very interesting and useful” however no evidence is provided as to whether meaningful engagement on a new electoral code was achieved. Instead, the questionnaire notes that “Unfortunately, meetings of the election legislation reform group continue to largely be caught up on self administration issues”. This suggests a mismatch between activities and the overall objectives of support for political parties.
53. Only two questionnaires mentioned learning from past projects or demonstrated that projects had built on the lessons of past work. One of these was the UK’s support in the Sudan, implemented by International IDEA. The initial project focused on grassroots activists but, according to the questionnaire response, it was unclear how effective this was as party leadership in practice did not have any knowledge of the project and its aims. In a follow up project, party leadership and grassroots activists were subsequently included in the project focus.
54. Other projects reveal some elements of lesson learning, for example through the use of mid-term reviews (in Nigeria) and through learning iteratively from ongoing work. In South Africa, the build-up of experience was reported to demonstrate that ‘elections work cannot be seen as a single event, but a process’ and there were stated plans to develop greater support between elections. Other questionnaires identified lessons regarding the management of activities (such as in Tanzania) but with less focus on impact. While there was some use of detailed log-frames (especially for newer programmes, such as in Tanzania) this was not uniform and there was no evidence of a consistent approach to evaluation of support for political parties across countries. There was no evidence, for example, of the development of common indicators or standards for measuring the effectiveness of support for political parties across countries.
55. Often linked to a lack of evaluation, donors have been criticized for the use of ‘template’ approaches to support for political parties which do not take account of the local context. This makes it important to attempt to assess the extent to which UK support in this area is tailored to context, both in its analysis/design and in its implementation. Overall, many of the questionnaires reviewed did include detailed information on the context for political parties and the challenges faced. There appeared to be a relatively high quality of analysis, demonstrating that the UK (both DFID and FCO) often had a good political understanding of the contexts in which they were operating.
56. Some excellent examples of analysis of the context for political parties were submitted along with the questionnaires, although these tended to be in countries where the UK was not currently providing support for political parties, as the example from Kenya in Box 8 shows.

### **Box 8: Analysis of context for political parties in Kenya**

In Kenya, a commissioned report, 'Drivers of Accountable Governance Program: Assessment Report – Political Parties', addressed whether political parties should be included in a new governance programme to be funded by DANIDA, DFID, and CIDA. It analysed the major challenges and weaknesses of political parties in Kenya, public perceptions and examined scenarios for the political context to 2012, as well as reviewing the activities of other donors in relation to support for political parties. This provides a useful model of what an in-depth assessment of the context for political parties might look like, but no further information was provided as to whether the recommendations it makes will be taken up.

57. Overall, while the principle that 'context matters' appears to have gained ground, there was relatively little evidence of a systematic move from understanding context to tailoring support to context. Box 9 provides an example of the approach undertaken by DFID in Latin America which sought to ground its work in developing context-appropriate strategies.

### **Box 9: DFID support for political parties in Latin America**

DFID no longer has a programme in Latin America but the support provided for political parties is an example of seeking to tailor support to particular political contexts and of seeking to expand the focus of engagement beyond civil society to include explicitly political actors. DFID worked with political parties in Latin America (and with partners such as UNDP, International IDEA, and NDI) to strengthen parties' engagement in, and support for, pro-poor policy-making processes. Studies were commissioned which analysed parties and their relationships with poverty reduction. These studies were then used as a basis for facilitating dialogue with parties themselves and conducting training. DFID also encouraged other donors, such as the World Bank, to invest more in analysing political systems and to engage with a wider range of stakeholders, including political parties (DFID 2008). Encouragingly, there are good signs that DFID is seeking to learn from its experience of working with political parties in Latin America, and to consider whether and how those lessons might be applied in other contexts.

58. There were some emerging examples of good practice which the UK could seek to build on. For example, in Sudan, UK support for political parties involved working with grassroots activists and party leadership to develop and implement programmes (through International IDEA). A smaller project in Sri Lanka, implemented by the NDI, also planned activities with local and major political parties and in Georgia, political parties were consulted on the purpose and activities of some projects, to secure local buy-in. In Zambia, it was reported that the use of a local organisation (the Zambia Centre for Inter-Party Dialogue – a membership organisation for all registered parties, set up with the help of NIMD) led to the development of projects which were better tailored to local context.

59. Overall, the UK appeared to be providing support for political parties in a variety of ways in a variety of contexts – but it was not clear that the projects being implemented were adequately tailored to particular contexts. Action did not seem to be informed by strategy or guidelines about if, how and when to support parties in a given context. And, there appeared to be a lack of clear strategy for putting the notion that 'context matters' into practice – something which is likely to be further compounded by a lack of monitoring, evaluation and learning.

60. It may be that some implementing partners are stronger at assessing and adapting to local context. For example, in reported projects where the UK was working with implementing partners such as NIMD,

greater emphasis appeared to have been placed on adapting to local context and securing ownership and buy-in from political parties. Similarly, there may be greater adaption to local context, and greater emphasis on ownership, in some of the newer programmes that the UK is supporting. Although these are mostly in the inception phases, information received for projects such as the ‘Strengthening Political Participation in Bangladesh’ appeared to have a stronger focus on embedding activities within the local context. Nevertheless, moving systematically from understanding context to tailoring support to context would seem to be a challenge for the UK, as it is for other donors and other agencies working in the field of support for political parties (see Power et al 2009 for discussion of the need for IDEA to develop a “flexible strategy” that allows room for programmes to respond to context.). Chapter 4 of this report develops this point further.

### **What challenges has the UK encountered?**

61. A number of challenges for UK Government support for political parties were identified in the questionnaires received. A first set of challenges relate to the position of parties themselves, with a number of these echoing the challenges summarized in Chapter 2 of this report. For example, in regards to weaknesses in political parties themselves, the questionnaires reported challenges in terms of weak capacity of parties (including in Sudan) and of the personalisation of politics and political parties, for example in Indonesia where political parties were reported to be ‘electoral vehicles’ above all else. A number of challenges for the party system in the countries in which the UK operates were also identified. For example, many questionnaires reported that political parties had only limited inputs into policy processes. In addition, the lack of sustainable party funding was identified as a key challenge in contexts like Indonesia, and the transition from one party to multi-party systems was also highlighted, for example in relation to Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa. Finally a number of broader trends within the context for governance were identified as posing challenges for UK support for political parties, including widespread corruption and patronage.
62. The questionnaires also reported on challenges for the UK’s provision of support, and for donor support more broadly, to political parties. A common challenge relates to the risk of support for political parties being regarded as unacceptable intervention in another country’s domestic politics. This was raised in relation to fragile political settlements such as in Sri Lanka, in contexts which may be particularly sensitive to external intervention, such as South Africa, and in contexts where there are complex internal arrangements such as Tanzania (in relation to Zanzibar).
63. Another common challenge identified in the questionnaires is that of (potential) opposition from the ruling party in a given country. So, in a context of consolidated power in one party, multi-party projects may be perceived as seeking to undermine one party rule, leading to opposition from the ruling party. Conversely, in other contexts it was reported that the dominance of a single party might mean that the provision of support for political parties might be seen as providing support primarily to the dominant party. The co-existence of both of these risks suggests that understanding the politics of supporting political parties is a complex task. The responses to the questionnaire suggest that the complexity of this task is acknowledged, but that there are few strategies in place to guide decisions about whether and how to provide support in particular contexts.
64. A number of other challenges for UK support for political parties were also identified. These included a perceived lack of local demand for support for political parties (as reported in Nepal and South Africa), a lack of appropriate interlocutors or capable partners through which to develop support projects (for

example in Albania), a lack of political will or incentives for support for political parties (cited in Malawi) and an absence of a culture of cross-party working, as reported in relation to Malawi, Mozambique and Uganda.

65. Finally, the questionnaires identified some contexts where it was deemed to be too sensitive, or too dangerous, to support political parties. In some countries, external support for political parties was likely to be viewed with a high degree of suspicion by the authorities (for example in Russia) or directly opposed by it (such as in Zimbabwe). In others, political sensitivities and complexities make it difficult for the UK to engage in support for political parties, for example in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In addition, an interview with DFID Rwanda raised the question of whether promoting vigorous multi-party competition was desirable – in the short run – in light of Rwanda’s history of ethnic enmity and its Government’s pursuit of ‘managed consensus’.
66. Clearly in some contexts, the political environment is such that support for political parties may be too difficult. But, drawing on the questionnaires, there was no discernable criteria for which conditions were conducive – and which were not – for support for political parties. There appeared to be some countries where the UK was currently not working with political parties but which could benefit from support for them. For example, it was reported that Yemen has, in theory, a multi-party system, but that in practice this is subverted by patronage. In this context, the UK provides some funding to the parliamentary training centre but none to political parties, yet the questionnaire response does not indicate any particular challenges which prevent the UK from supporting parties. For Nepal, the questionnaire states that no UK projects are currently underway in part because of a lack of local demand, yet commissioned reports by other donors, such as DANIDA, reveal that there are opportunities for support for political parties. Similarly, no response was received from Afghanistan but this may also be a context where support for political parties could be beneficial, and it is a country where the UK is currently heavily engaged.
67. Beyond these challenges, analysis of the questionnaire responses reveals one overarching challenge for UK support going forward. The UK is good at understanding political context, but – in common with other donors – does not seem to have a process in place for systematically moving from analysis to action, or a strategy to provide guidance about whether, when and how to provide support for political parties. Addressing this challenge will require a concerted effort to learn more about what works and about what works in particular sorts of contexts; an effort that is made more difficult by the lack of evaluation and monitoring in the sphere of donor support for political parties.

## 4. Conclusions

### Next steps

68. This report provides only a partial picture of UK support for political parties but the project has been able to shed light on UK support for political parties and as such represents a useful first step into challenging territory. There appears to be a wide variety in terms of the size and scope of projects of support, but – as Chapter 3 sets out – some patterns can be identified in terms of the ways in which the UK has provided support for political parties.

69. From this initial review, the UK appears to have a number of potentially unique features in relation to support for political parties, which it could further capitalize on. The questionnaires appear to show that there is a relatively high degree of coordination across the UK Government on this issue, suggesting that the UK might be better placed than others to develop coordinated diplomatic and developmental strategies (although this also needs further exploration to identify if collaboration is leading to greater coherence in common objectives). Secondly, the UK has been a leader in terms of understanding political context. DFID and the FCO could further capitalise on these strengths, and could themselves learn from the efforts of others to think through and experiment with different ways of moving systematically from analysis to action in relation to political parties.

70. A number of general principles for donors regarding aid effectiveness are often cited, principally those set out in the Paris Declaration.<sup>1</sup> In terms of support for political parties, emphasis has been placed on the need to build local ownership for programmes of support (see the work of the NIMD) and on greater alignment and coordination between donors. However, beyond these ‘commonsense’ principles, in the field of support for political parties it has proved difficult to define best practice in part because the nature of best practice depends very much on political context.

71. This is further complicated by the lack of evidence about ‘what works’ in relation to support for political parties. In the absence of evidence about the effectiveness of interventions in a range of contexts, there is little evidential basis to enable a move from analysis to effective action. A number of donors and implementing partners are struggling with these challenges. For example, the International Republican Institute is currently reviewing its impact in past programmes and its approach to evaluation, including through the use of case studies, and USAID is currently reviewing options in terms of diagnostic tools and approaches to monitoring and evaluation. The NIMD appears to be a leader in this field, having developed indicator-based frameworks for assessing impact in three areas: ‘institutional-development criteria’; ‘political party-party system nexus’; and ‘party-civil society relationship. (cited in Power 2008: 21). NIMD is also piloting approaches which seek to work with parties themselves to design programmes of support, through the creation of local Centres for Multi-Party Democracy.

72. Looking ahead, and in order to capitalise on the UK’s potential strengths, a medium-term goal might be to develop a strategy for UK support for political parties aligned to broader DFID and FCO governance and development objectives, combined with operational guidance for how to map local context against options for programme delivery (perhaps through the use of typologies of different political contexts).

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<sup>1</sup> The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness sets commitments for donors and recipient countries under five core principles - Ownership, Harmonisation, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability.

73. Any framework, and accompanying guidance, will need to address the following issues:

- Determining levels of coherence across the UK Government, including analysis of any comparative advantages across departments;
- Determining where and when to provide support for political parties (e.g. the minimum conditions or enabling environment needed, possible use of typologies for different contexts) in alignment with overall governance and development objectives. This will be particularly important in relation to fragile contexts;
- Determining how to build local ownership – and whether and how to provide support where the ruling party is opposed to that support;
- Achieving a balance between being flexible to context and having a coherent strategy;
- Determining decision-making processes at both headquarters and country office levels;
- Addressing the use of implementing partners, with criteria to guide the selection of partners and guidance regarding working with partners who may have differing strategies and approaches;
- Developing frameworks for effective monitoring and evaluation of outcomes and impact, rather than activities.

74. There are some emerging examples which the UK could draw on in these areas. Carothers has set out some thinking regarding the development of taxonomies of party systems (Carothers 2006). These would allow, for example, identification not just of a ‘one party’ system but whether that system was ‘benign’ (tolerating of some opposition and power sharing) or ‘malign’. Mapping context against nuanced taxonomies such as those starting to be developed by Carothers might help to improve the linkage between analysis and options for programming and action. Other organisations have developed guidelines for support for political parties – often linked to particular categories or taxonomies. For example, NIMD have developed guidelines for working in countries emerging from conflict (see Box 10). In light of the UK’s stated commitment to increase its overall support in fragile and conflict affected countries, developing clearer guidelines for working with political parties in these contexts is likely to be particularly helpful.

**Box 10: NIMD guidelines for work in post-conflict contexts (drawn from ten Hoove and Pinto Scholtbach, 2008)**

- Establish early engagement as part of peace processes;
- Build ownership of local actors;
- Do no harm;
- Facilitate inclusive, inter-party dialogue;
- Adopt a gradual, long term approach;
- Remain flexible and adaptable;
- Maintain continuous analysis of political and security context;
- Coordinate with other donors;
- Establish moderate goals linked to local context; and
- Develop a clear exit strategy

## Future research

75. This initial review has provided some preliminary findings on UK support for political parties, and has also identified a number of areas to be addressed going forward. These include the need for a strategic framework and guidelines for moving from mapping context to tailoring support to particular contexts; the need for appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools; the need to develop a clearer understanding of what donors can realistically achieve in this area; and the need for further consideration to be given to how support for political parties can be made compatible with the important principle of country ownership. These areas could all be usefully explored through case study research.

76. For example, case study research could seek to better understand:

- The extent to which there is coherence (as well as coordination) between DFID and FCO objectives in relation to support to political parties;
- The possible entry points for making clearer links between support to political parties and UK Government broader objectives for governance (for example, exploring the extent to which Deepening Democracy Programmes contribute to working with parties as development actors rather in the context of narrow party-strengthening activities);
- The ways in which a range of donors and implementing partners move from mapping context to implementing programmes, in order to identify areas of good practice;
- The appropriateness of current monitoring and evaluation tools, again comparing across a range of donors and implementing partners, to better understand the types of tools needed – and what, realistically, support for political parties can hope to achieve. There might, specifically, be value in exploring the applicability of “outcome mapping” methodologies in the field of support for political parties (see Smutylo, 2005).

77. From the responses received, there are a number of possible case study countries (based on reported levels of support and the need to include a range of contexts) including Bangladesh, Georgia, Indonesia, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. In terms of possible collaboration, NIMD appears to be an organisation which is developing innovative approaches, including in relation to context, ownership and evaluation; as such, there might be considerable value involving NIMD in a phase 2 of work on UK support for political parties. Finally, given the importance of ownership, it would seem sensible to use country case studies not only as research endeavours, but also as opportunities to stimulate in-country processes, dialogue and donor coordination regarding support for political parties.

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## Annexes

### Annex 1: Country responses

Questionnaires were received relating to the following countries:

1. Albania
2. Bangladesh
3. Central Asia (including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan)
4. Georgia
5. Ghana
6. Indonesia
7. Kosovo
8. Macedonia
9. Malawi
10. Mozambique
11. Nepal
12. Nigeria
13. Occupied Palestinian Territories
14. Russia
15. South Africa
16. Sri Lanka
17. Sudan
18. Tanzania
19. Uganda
20. Ukraine (no questionnaire but some project information)
21. Yemen
22. Zambia
23. Zimbabwe

Interviews conducted:

1. DFID Rwanda
2. Westminster Foundation for Democracy

## Annex 2: Overview of UK supported projects

POLITICAL PARTIES PROJECTS								
Country	Project Title	Budget	Year started	Length (years)	Implementing partner?	Other donor?	Gender focus (Y/N)	Fragile <sup>2</sup> (Y/N)
<b>Africa</b>								
Ghana	Breaking the Election Deadlock - Presidential Debates	\$128,800	2008	8 months	Local NGO	UNDP	N	N
Malawi	Tikambirane ('Lets Talk')	£11.5 million	2003	6	No information	Norway, CIDA, UNDP, GTZ, Irish Aid, USAID	Y	N
Mozambique	Observatorio Electoral (Electoral Observatory)	\$1,339,675 (£375,000 UK support)	2008	3	Local NGOs	Royal Netherlands Embassy, Royal Embassy of Norway	N	N
Mozambique	Electoral Rights - Provincial workshops	£66,895	2009	6 months	CAFOD, Local NGOs	No other donor	N	N
Mozambique	Dialogue platform between Political Parties and the National Election Commission	c\$50,000	2009	5 months	NIMD	No other donor	N	N
Nigeria	Increasing Involvement of Women In Nigerian Political Parties	£230,360	2008	2	Local NGO	No other donor	Y	Y
South Africa	Support to EISA for elections monitoring in the SADC region	£480,000	2008	1	Local NGO	No other donor	N	N
Sudan	Strengthening Political Parties In Sudan	£550,000	2007	15 months	International IDEA	No other donor	N	Y
Sudan	Political Parties Development	£500,000	2008	15 months	International IDEA	UNDP	N	Y

<sup>2</sup> Countries are defined as fragile according to their ranking in the Failed States Index, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/06/22/2009\\_failed\\_states\\_index\\_interactive\\_map\\_and\\_rankings](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/06/22/2009_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings)

Tanzania	Deepening Democracy in Tanzania Programme	\$12.6 million (10% for political parties component)	2007	3.5	UNDP	Norway, Netherlands, EC, Swedish Embassy, Irish Embassy, CIDA	No info	N
Uganda	Deepening Democracy Programme	£11 million (£1.2 million for political parties component)	2007	4.5	This programme is managed by a dedicated Programme Management Unit and implemented by a range of Ugandan organisations	Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands	Y	Y
Zambia	DFID and BHC support to the Presidential By-Elections 2008 Monitoring Fund	£400,000	2008	6 months	Local NGO	Royal Netherlands embassy, Royal Danish Embassy	N	N
Zambia	2006 ELECTIONS	£170,000	2006	5 months	Local NGO	Royal Netherlands embassy	N	N
<b>Eastern Europe and Central Asia</b>								
Georgia	Training political-party staff	£138,533	2008	3	Local NGO	No other donor	N	N
Georgia	Sponsored Visit to London in support of Georgian Electoral reform	£13,181	2009	1 month	No information	No other donor	N	N
Georgia	Strengthening Political Processes and Institutions in Adjara	£58,000	2008	1	NDI	SIDA	N	N
Georgia	The Majoritarian Project: Informed Citizens and Accountable Government	£180,000	2005	3	Transparency International Georgia	No other donor	N	N
Georgia	Monitoring of Election Day in Ajara Autonomous Republic	£10,843	2008	4 months	Local NGO	No other donor	N	N
Georgia	Monitoring Adjara 2008 Supreme Council Elections and By- Elections of the Parliament of Georgia	£13,000	2008	4 months	Local NGO	OSCE	N	N

Georgia	Monitoring Parliamentary Elections in Georgia	£10,843	2008	3 months	Local NGO	Open Society Georgia Foundation	N	N
Kazakhstan	Technical assistance to Kazakhstan in its preparations to chair OSCE in 2010, by effectively implementing electoral reform	£100,000 for 2009/10	2008	1.5	UNDP Kazakhstan, Local NGOs	UNDP	Y	N
Kosovo	Oversight of Public Finances in Kosovo	No information	2009	1	No information	No information	No info	N
Kyrgyz Republic	Monitoring of Presidential elections in Kyrgyz Republic	£72,959 (£32,959 NGO capacity building £40,000 election observers)	2009	1	No information	No other donor	N	N
Macedonia	Strengthening Parliamentary Commissions, permanent staff and political parties in the Macedonian Parliament	No information	2008	3	Westminster Foundation for Democracy	No other donor	N	N
Tajikistan	Enhancing the capacity of political parties in Khatlon Region	£698	2008	1 month	EC Delegation	No other donor	N	Y
Tajikistan	Supporting work between the media and political parties to raise political awareness	£3,645	2008	6 months	Local NGOs	No other donor	N	Y
Ukraine	Support for Parliamentary and political party governance and engagement with the electorate	£122,384.92	2005	3	Polish NGO	No other donor	N	N
<b>South and South-East Asia</b>								
Bangladesh	Strengthening Political Participation in Bangladesh	£19.5 million (£4 million party support)	2009	5	Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Transparency International	USAID	Y	Y
Nepal	Visit to the UK by student political leaders affiliated to the three main	No information	2007	1 month	No information	No other donor	N	Y

	parties							
Indonesia	Improving Women's Political Participation and Representation in 2009 General Elections	£1 million (£50,000 to women party candidates)	2008	1	UNDP	CIDA, Netherlands Embassy, AUSAID	Y	N
Indonesia	Strengthening Women's Legislative Candidates for the 2009 Election in Aceh	£16,562	2009	2 months	Local NGO	No other donor	Y	N
Indonesia	Electoral Codes of Conduct in Sulawesi and Papua	£67,000	2008	1	NDI	No other donor	N	N
Sri Lanka	One Text Initiative	£15,000	2009	1	Local partners	No other donor	N	Y
Sri Lanka	Multi Sector Dialogue, Consensus and Capacity Building on Constitutional Reform for Conflict Prevention	£230,000 (for 09/10)	2009	2	NDI	Norway	N	Y