K4D | Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

Engaging new governments on development priorities

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Question

What are the lessons learned from engaging new governments on development priorities?

Contents

1. Summary

This rapid literature review considers donor engagement with newly elected governments in aid recipient countries. It sought to focus on the immediate period after a new administration is elected and takes office. However, despite the importance of donor-government engagement, few studies were located during the timeframe of this review that focus on how donors should engage newly elected governments on development priorities. The small number of studies that consider this issue largely detail challenges for donors, as opposed to lessons learned or best practice.

Reports and strategies released by donors tend to emphasis positive elements of their relationships with aid recipient countries during a government transition period. For example, the 2019-2024 USAID Liberia strategy states that the US has enjoyed a "long and enduring relationship with Liberia" which has "remained strong…into the George Weah Administration" (USAID, 2019: 4). As such, few details on the nature of the relationship or how it is maintained are given.

Very few academic or grey literature studies consider how donors should engage newly elected governments. There is a body of studies related to how donors should engage prior to and during elections, but they do not seem to cover the post-election period. Similarly, studies focused on conflict and peacebuilding in conflict affected and fragile states seem to focus on the modalities or architecture for donor support including multi-donor trust funds and fora for donors and recipient states to meet, but not explicitly for newly elected governments.

Despite the extremely limited evidence base, this review draws on a small number of case studies and reports written by donor government research services which touch on the challenges for engaging newly elected governments. This report includes evidence from six aid recipient countries, including examples from conflict affected or fragile states, with varying levels of aid dependency. Country selection was partly driven by the limited evidence base, although the report sought to focus on presidential systems with a recent election.

The evidence base for this report largely focused on the challenges donors face in engaging newly elected governments, although there are a small number of lessons learned. Key findings include:

- New administrations may have negative or hostile attitudes towards international assistance. For example, in Egypt the immediate post-Mubarak administration expressed negative opinions of foreign assistance. In Liberia, the new Weah administration was sceptical of international support.
- There is sometimes a lack of clarity around a new administration's development agenda, posing challenges for donor alignment. In 2017 Somalia, the new President inherited a National Development Plan developed under the previous administration. In contrast, in Liberia, the new Weah administration released its own development plan, but 9 months after the new administration took office.
- Donors should avoid being perceived as partisan. In the run-up to the 2013 Presidential election in Kenya, comments by the international community were seen as anti-Kenyatta, who won the election. This created challenges for engagement.

- In contrast, in Zimbabwe, sensitivity to perceptions in a highly polarised political environment was critical in establishing successful engagement with the Government of National Unity.
- It is important for donors to understand a country's political economy, and where applicable draw on conflict analysis. In South Sudan, power struggles within the Government sharpened along regional and tribal lines raising the prospect of local outbreaks of violence escalating into civil conflict. In Zimbabwe, understanding the political economy and the particular challenges facing senior government officials was critical for successful engagement. This included in-depth understanding of the priorities, processes and players in each of the sectors.
- The capacity and will of the incoming administration and the wider government apparatus can pose challenges for engagement. In South Sudan, the new administration lacked the political will to engage in donor coordination and little capacity to oversee donors. The technical ability of line ministries was also low. In Liberia, limited political will and capacity affected engagement as donor officials had to build relationships with new staff who were not familiar with donor engagement.

2. Egypt

Following the Arab Spring there was a "highly antagonistic political environment towards Western aid" (Mustapha, 2012: 107). Attitudes to engagement with the international community in the immediate post-Mubarak administration included statements from Ministers that Egypt did not need 'somebody to tell us what is or is not good for us...or…force it on us" (Mustapha, 2012). Concerns partly stemmed from US support for civil society (Mustapha, 2012). State media accused the US of using civil society to undermine Egypt's revolution (Mustapha, 2012).

Mustapha (2012) argues that donor engagement was affected by donor foreign policy and security interests. As such, there was a "sudden rush" of many international policy actors to engage the Muslim Brotherhood at the expense of other actors (Mustapha, 2012: 107). During the transition in Egypt there were few cases of donor coordination meetings (Mustapha, 2012).

3. Kenya

Donors' primary concern in the 2013 presidential electoral cycle was preventing a repeat of election violence seen in 2007-08 (Brown & Raddatz, 2014). Kenyatta and Ruto, the Jubilee Alliance candidates for President and Deputy President, were both implicated in the 2007-08 election violence and had been indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Donors expressed concern in the run-up to the election about having anything other than essential contact with people indicted by the ICC (Brown & Raddatz, 2014). In the aftermath of Kenyatta winning the 2013 Presidential election, international donors including Germany and US congratulated the Kenyan people for a peaceful election (Brown & Raddatz, 2014). However, they did not congratulate the victors (Brown & Raddatz, 2014).

A Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik case study of donor engagement in Kenya around the 2013 election suggests that donors should avoid being seen as partisan around elections (Fiedler, 2015). In the run-up to the election some donors including the US made statements that were perceived by Kenyans as anti-the Jubilee Alliance (Fiedler, 2015). This created the impression during the campaign and after that the donor community were partisan (Fiedler,

2015). This has contributed to both development cooperation and civil society coming under strong criticism in Kenya (Fiedler, 2015). There was a turn to anti-Western rhetoric (Brown & Raddatz, 2014). Strained relations between donors and the Kenyan authorities make it difficult for donors to provide effective support to peace and democracy in Kenya going forward (Fiedler, 2015).

Many donors recognised that their comments prior to the election 'painted them into a corner' (Brown & Raddatz, 2014). Despite commitment to the ICC process, most donors were more concerned with their economic and security interests, which necessitated 'business as usual' (Brown & Raddatz, 2014). A 2013 US Congressional Research Service report published 6 months after the Kenyan election states that: "Going forward, Congress may face difficult decisions in balancing U.S. human rights concerns against other priorities in the U.S.-Kenya relationship" (Blanchard, 2013). This suggests that engaging with new governments can pose a number of challenges.

4. Liberia

George Weah was elected President in December 2017 and took office in 2018. The 2017 elections represented Liberia's first peaceful democratic transition in over 70 years (USAID, 2019).

Election period

The presidential election and change in presidential leadership coincided with the end of the UN Mission in Liberia and the transition from a UN peacekeeping mission (Forti & Connolly, 2018). The security transition, whereby responsibility for security was transferred from the UN to the Liberian government took place in June 2016, and was timed so as to not interfere with or influence the 2017 elections (Forti & Connolly, 2018). However, UNMIL was mandated to continue until June 2018 for a number of reasons including concerns that the 2017 elections would be highly contested (Liberia's centralised governance system enables the President to appoint nearly 90% of all executive branch officials- approximately 3,000 positions) and the election dynamics could be challenging (Forti & Connolly, 2018). Liberians perceived UNMIL as a valuable security guarantor during the election period (Forti & Connolly, 2018).

2017 USAID testimony to the US House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations prior to the election, stated that the US would "urge the newly elected Administration to consolidate democratic gains through effective and accountable governance, responsiveness to its citizens, and adherence to the rule of law"[1]. This appears to be consistent with ongoing US priorities to promote good governance and strengthen critical public administration functions[2].

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[1] https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/congressional-testimony/sep-13-2017-acting-aa-cheryl-anderson-democracy-governance-liberia (accessed 20/11/2019)

[2] https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/congressional-testimony/sep-13-2017-acting-aa-cheryl-anderson-democracy-governance-liberia (accessed 20/11/2019).

UN engagement

UN engagement during the election cycle included the Special Representative of the Secretary General Zarif acting as a critical interlocutor between Liberia's political parties, the outgoing administration and international partners in Monrovia (Forti & Connolly, 2018). Zarif had weekly meetings with outgoing President Johnson Sirleaf, and, regular and extraordinary engagements with the leaders of Liberia's political parties (Forti & Connolly, 2018). Combined, these promoted an inclusive environment for open and constructive dialogue among the main political actors (Forti & Connolly, 2018).

Through well-established relations with Liberia's political leaders, Zarif was able to ensure that political tensions emerging from legal challenges to the elections did not manifest themselves in outright rejection of the election's legitimacy or calls for violent protest (Forti & Connolly, 2018). Other engagement mechanisms included coordination between UNMIL, the African Union and ECOWAS to ensure the international community spoke with one voice; and, an ECOWAS, UNMIL, Government of Liberia established Election Situation Room as a temporary platform bringing together a range of actors to jointly monitor election dynamics and issue early-warning reports (Forti & Connolly, 2018). This united approach helped to defuse tensions, especially following petitions to the Liberian Supreme Court over the voters roll in November 2017 (Forti & Connolly, 2018).

Transition period

There was a comparatively smooth and orderly administrative transition in January 2018 (Forti & Connolly, 2018). However, context-specific political dynamics between the outgoing and incoming administrations contributed to a drawn-out transition (Forti & Connolly, 2018: 26). The UN struggled to navigate the complexities of the governance transition (Forti & Connolly, 2018).

Weah's administration comprised officials who were new to government and would require additional time and support to familiarise themselves with the administrative and bureaucratic underpinnings of governance (Forti & Connolly, 2018: 26). UN officials had to establish contacts with new officials in government (Forti & Connolly, 2018).

A senior Africa analyst from the UK country risk consulting firm Maplecroft stated in January 2018 that international donors would be "watching nervously for signs that former warlords are influencing the new government"[3]. Consequently, who the new President picked for his cabinet could impact relations with donors as "alignment with dubious characters from Liberia's war-torn past…might curb the enthusiasm of key international donors"[4]. However, the new Weah administration also inherited "extensive and ongoing donor-backed development and capacity-building assistance, including from the United States, initiated under Sirleaf" as well as donor good-will (Cook, 2018: 19).

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[3] https://qz.com/africa/1184931/liberia-inauguration-george-weah-takes-over-from-ellen-sirleaf-johnson-as-president/ (accessed 24/11/2019)

[4] https://qz.com/africa/1184931/liberia-inauguration-george-weah-takes-over-from-ellen-sirleaf-johnson-as-president/ (accessed 24/11/2019).

Engagement with the new administration

At the 'Liberia Moment' conference in March 2018 to mark the end of the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia, President Weah outlined his government's development agenda in his remarks (Forti & Connolly, 2018). However, President Weah could not formally present his government's development agenda at the conference and as such various international cooperation agreements could not be translated into concrete development support or a framework for mutual accountability (Forti & Connolly, 2018).

The government's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development was launched in October 2018 (Forti & Connolly, 2018). The PAPD has four pillars: empowering Liberians through education, health, youth development and social protection, enabling private sector-led economic growth, supporting a peaceful society, and creating an inclusive and accountable public sector[5].

The lack of clarity on Liberia's development strategy between Weah taking office and the PAPD being launched was a challenge for engagement (Forti & Connolly, 2018). It left the UN country team in programmatic limbo as it was mandated to align its priorities to those of the government (Forti & Connolly, 2018). A May 2018 report for the US Congress argues that much of Weah's platform essentially seeks to incrementally advance existing policies and institutional goals (Cook, 2018). This suggests substantial likely continuity with former President Sirleaf's agenda (Cook, 2018). However, the extent to which the Weah administration is able to effectively pursue its agenda remains to be seen (Cook, 2018).

Additional challenges for donors in engaging the new administration included (Forti & Connolly, 2018):

- The new government's scepticism of international support.
- The new governmental staff's lack of familiarity with UN engagement.
- Donor countries with embassies in Monrovia were waiting to see the new government's priorities before committing funds to UN programmes.

In August 2018, a missing currency scandal opened a window of opportunity to build on the Government of Liberia's willingness to engage the donor community, especially USAID (USAID, 2019: 5).

Whilst donors seek to align their development support with country priorities, they also have their own interests. For example, the USAID 2019-2024 Country Development Cooperation Strategy and the World Bank strategy for the same period are closely aligned with the PAPD. However, the USAID strategy also states that it is time to redefine the US' relationship with the Government of Liberia and move it towards a more self-reliance trajectory (USAID, 2019). This should be placed in the context of the US providing lower development assistance allocations compared to previous years (Cook, 2018).

Challenges in implementing the 2019-2024 USAID Strategy include limited political will and low capacity for strategic planning and resource management within local and national government institutions (USAID, 2019). The strategy states that USAID will continue to work through and

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[5] https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/liberia/overview (accessed 26/11/2019).

strengthen donor coordination across all sectors to ensure unified and coordinated responses to Government of Liberia needs and requests (USAID, 2019: 11).

5. Somalia

Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, known as Farmajo was elected President in February 2017 by the new federal parliament, which had itself been elected via a clan based system (Lunn, 2019). This was the first largely peaceful transition of power.

Engaging the new administration

A 2019 UK House of Commons Library Briefing Paper states that the international community "warmly welcomed the new president" (Lunn, 2019: 9). Despite initially favouring the incumbent, Western governments "adjusted their expectations when they saw that he was losing ground politically" (Lunn, 2019: 9).

The UN Secretary General's Special Representative played a key role in coordinating international engagement during and after the election (UN Security Council, 2017: 4):

> "Through regular meetings with international partners, Somali leaders and other stakeholders, he helped to ascertain unified positioning and interventions by the international community around the goal of a successful conclusion of the federal electoral process and in initiating consultations with the new Government".

The UK has also supported elections in Somaliland and congratulated the newly elected president (Lunn, 2019). Whilst the UK has not endorsed Somaliland's claim for independence from Somalia, it does support the government of Somaliland to delivery its development plan (Lunn, 2019).

Continuity in development priorities

Somalia is implementing the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. National and international priorities and budgets have been aligned through a New Deal Compact agreed in 2013 for the period 2014-16 (Hearn, 2016; Manuel, McKechnie, Wilson & das Pradhan-Blach, 2017). Donor engagement during the New Deal Compact 2014-2016 included a number of structures for aid coordination, including meetings of the Steering Committee and Working Groups, and financing mechanisms the World Bank Multi-Partner Fund and the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (Manuel et al., 2017). The Compact included both the federal government and the emerging federal states.

The Federal Government of Somalia developed its National Development Plan 2017- 2019 in 2016, but it was finalised in early 2017. The new government largely inherited the 2017-2019 National Development Plan: this outlined nationally defined priorities in all sectors (Manuel et al., 2017). However, it did not identify which priorities could be afforded going forward, or prioritise them in light of the likely financial resources (Manuel et al., 2017).

The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC) spearheaded drafting the National Development Plan (EU, 2017). As the National Development Plan would guide future EU programming, the EU "stepped up policy dialogue with the Government as well as

consultations with the line ministries and MoPIC on programming, contracting and implementation of EU funded programmes" (EU, 2017: 3).

An international conference on Somalia in 2017 agreed a new partnership pact for the next phase of reconstruction efforts and to facilitate implementation of the National Development Plan (Lunn, 2019).

6. South Sudan

The new President was elected in 2010 and South Sudan became independent in 2011. South Sudan released a 2011-2013 South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP) in August 2011. The process by which the SSDP was developed was "ad hoc, patchy and internationally led" (APPG for Sudan and South Sudan, 2015).

Engaging the new government

A 2013 Briefing Paper on lessons for EU joint programming from South Sudan highlights a number of challenges in engaging new governments (Furness & Vollmer, 2013). The EU's Single Country Strategy paper was prepared in the lead up to independence, ratified in the second half of 2011 and published in 2012, and is aligned to South Sudan's National Development Plan (Furness & Vollmer, 2013).

Challenges include (Furness & Vollmer, 2013):

- Government of South Sudan has little capacity to oversee donors. The technical ability of line ministries is low.
- The Government lacks political will to engage in donor coordination. Power struggles within the Government sharpened along regional and tribal lines raising the prospect of local outbreaks of violence escalating into civil conflict.

UK engagement with South Sudan following succession in 2011, along with the EU's Comprehensive Approach to Sudan and South Sudan, focused on preventing renewed conflict between the two countries (APPG for Sudan and South Sudan, 2015). Whilst this was important, there was a disconnect between international engagement and domestic developments including a number of complex issues in South Sudan (APPG for Sudan and South Sudan, 2015).

A 2015 report by the UK's All Party Parliamentary Group for Sudan and South Sudan examines the UK's engagement with South Sudan between 2011 and 2014. The report seeks to answer the question 'was the UK's strategy for engagement constructive?' (APPG for Sudan and South Sudan, 2015). Relevant findings from the report include:

- Disconnect between the activities of some of South Sudan's international partners and the political and social realities inside the country;
- Comprehensive conflict analysis was not properly integrated into donor development planning and was paid insufficient attention by many. The APPG recommend that conflict analysis should permeate diplomatic engagement and programme design. Power dynamics pervade the behaviour of domestic actors in South Sudan and donor activities need to reflect this.

- Engagement focused on the central government only helped to empower it, and contributed to the tensions within South Sudan. Moving forward the international community should engage more broadly including the subnational level.
- Moving forward diplomatic attention must more carefully balance important regional priorities with emerging domestic developments and this will require much greater investment in diplomatic resourcing.

7. Zimbabwe

The Government of National Unity was formed in 2008 after a disputed election, with a Global Political Agreement signed by the three political parties, splitting control of different line ministries between them (Salama, Ha, Negin, & Muradzikwa, 2014). However, a national development framework, the Medium-Term Plan was not endorsed by the cabinet until 2011. This replaced the more-emergency orientated Short Term Emergency Response Plan (Salama et al., 2014).

Engaging the new administration

The establishment of the power-sharing government accompanied by a consensus that this arrangement was the best chance for Zimbabwe to emerge from crisis, resulting in donors seeking to re-engage "albeit cautiously" (Salama et al., 2014).

Challenges for engagement included (Salama et al., 2014):

- lack of official engagement between the Government of Zimbabwe and the international donor community in the previous decade, including very limited direct donor funding;
- until recently humanitarian funding streams had been the dominant source of support; and;
- aid coordination mechanisms remained contentious and relatively non-functioning. Multiple line ministries vied for control of aid coordination mechanisms.

Between 2007 and 2010, UNICEF managed a multi-donor pooled fund the Programme of Support providing assistance to orphans and vulnerable children (Salama et al., 2014). This was followed in 2010 Transition Funds for different sectors, a new aid mechanism designed to bring partners together in a programme rather than a project approach, obtain national scale impact under line ministry leadership, whilst also addressing donor and political restrictions around channelling funds directly through government (Salama et al., 2014).

A key feature of this mechanism included the policies and priorities of the line ministry providing the basis for the scope of the work (Salama et al., 2014). Transition Funds were designed by teams comprising members of in-country partners including senior government officials, donors and the UN (Salama et al., 2014). Steering Committees for the Transition Funds have provided a fora, previously non-existent, for systematic sectoral-level engagement between donors and the relevant line ministries, which helped alignment with government policies, programmes and priorities (Salama et al., 2014). As such these fora have assisted in building relationships between donors and line ministry officials which had previously been non-existent or problematic for several years (Salama et al., 2014).

Salama et al. (2014) identify a number of factors that contributed to success, including:

- Understanding the political economy and the particular challenges facing senior government officials was critical during the Government of National Unity period following 2008.
- In-depth understanding of the priorities, processes and players in each of the sectors.
- Sensitivity to perceptions in a highly polarised political environment has been critical.

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