K4D | Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

Developing more inclusive politics through sub-national electoral processes

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Question

How have donors supported post-conflict countries in developing more inclusive politics through sub-national electoral processes in light of failure/challenges in delivering national/federal-level democratisation reform? Focus on countries with federal systems.

Contents

1. Overview

In post-conflict environments, the international community plays an important role in supporting successful planning, delivery and embedding of elections within a wider context of support to political systems and democratisation. This rapid review provides an overview of lessons on developing more inclusive politics through sub-national electoral processes in recent academic, policy and grey literature. The report notes that support to sub-national electoral processes is often embedded within broader initiatives to support democratisation, decentralisation and electoral reform. Accordingly, the literature reviewed in this report is drawn from a broad range of sources and is intended to provide an overarching response to the question posed.

The report is structured as follows, sections two and three provides background information to contextualise the rationale for supporting sub-national elections. Section 4 provides an annotated bibliography that explores how support for democratisation, decentralisation or inclusion intersect in many contexts.

Although well timed elections can contribute to conflict resolution and help to consolidate peace agreements or power-sharing deals between elites, they also have the potential to exacerbate latent or simmering hostilities. The evidence reviewed in this report indicates that the content and inclusiveness of pre-election dialogue between former combatants; the timing and sequencing of elections; the strength of electoral and security institutions; the choice of electoral system; and the independence and conduct of the electoral administration and observers are key variables. A number of findings emerge from the literature that discusses post-conflict elections including:

- In pre-election dialogue and negotiation, the importance of quickly securing a peace agreement has to be balanced with the need to ensure the talks are as comprehensive and inclusive as possible, in order to ensure smooth progress as elections are rolled out.

- The impact of early elections on post-conflict stability is the subject of much debate. While some argue that early elections facilitate peace agreements, hasten democratisation, and ensure post conflict stability, others suggest that they undermine genuine democracy and spark a renewal in fighting.

- Authors also disagree on the proper sequencing of post-conflict elections. Some argue that national elections should be carried out first on the grounds that they have a higher profile than sub-national elections and are more likely to attract international support. Others recommend in starting at the sub-national level to enable political parties time to organise themselves, build up a local support base, and gain political experience.

- The risk of elections resulting in tensions or renewed conflict is much greater in the absence of strong electoral and state institutions.

- The choice of electoral system is an important factor in the success or failure of post-conflict elections. Whilst there is no outright consensus on the most appropriate system for post-conflict environments, elections conducted under the auspices of the United Nations have almost always favoured proportional representation.

- There is a broad agreement that independent, non-partisan and permanent electoral management bodies represent best practice in terms of electoral administration in post-conflict environments.

- The presence of international observers can provide a conducive environment for independent, free and fair elections. However, it is better for international observers to

refuse to participate than to be complicit in an observation process that tells less than the full truth about an election.

In relation to supporting sub-national political entities, the evidence is mixed. What becomes apparent is that support for sub-national bodies does not necessarily mean fragmentation or division, rather if designed properly sub-national elections can help hold countries together, creating opportunities for democracy to be brought closer to the people without undermining their loyalties to the national state as a whole.

2. Post-conflict electoral processes

Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16) calls on UN Member States to promote responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making, and to build effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. While the means of promoting participation have diversified rapidly, in particular through the use of new technologies and social media, elections are the primary mechanism by which most governments derive legitimacy (UNDP, 2017).

It is acknowledged that many countries emerging from conflict face daunting challenges related to building a functioning and effective state; developing open, inclusive, and representative political orders; and revitalising links between state and society. Elections have featured prominently as an essential step in building legitimacy (UNDP, 2017). It is also important to note that elections can be destabilising, linked to violence and conflict if conditions are not conducive. Examples can be drawn from post-conflict contexts, including Cambodia, East Timor, Liberia, Nepal and Sierra Leone. Elections in post-conflict countries are considered to pose challenges due to the presence of a range of complex and interrelated issues that may include:

- a history of prolonged periods of (violent) conflict, often linked to 'horizontal inequalities', weak social cohesion and little sense of a collective national vision.
- a contested political settlement and disagreements about underlying rules of the game.
- state-society relations that are grounded on clientelism rather than citizenship.
- a politicised civil service.
- competition for power driven by personal interests, with little concern for public good.

In such contexts, emerging democracies are not only trying to democratise, but also to transform governance dynamics, underlying power structures, and state-society relations in fundamental ways. According to Menocal (2013), such transformations do not always work in harmony, and may pull in opposite directions. Elections, whilst often considered essential to fostering legitimacy, accountability and responsiveness of a political system have also been associated with clientelism and corruption. In addition, electoral competition can generate incentives that foment fragmentation and undermine coherent policy-making based on long-term priorities.

Timing, electoral system choice, administration, the disarmament of armed groups, and election monitoring are considered critical political choices in these settings. One question attracting increasing attention is the extent to which power sharing arrangements, often advocated in these contexts, are effective in bringing about enduring peace (Scott & Mcloughlin, 2014).

While some argue that early elections facilitate peace agreements, hasten democratisation, and ensure post-conflict stability, others suggest that they undermine genuine democracy and cause a renewal in fighting (Dreef & Wagner, 2013). Brancati and Snyder (2013) suggest that holding

elections soon after a civil war ends generally increases the likelihood of renewed fighting. However, favourable conditions, including decisive victories, demobilisation, peacekeeping, power sharing, and strong political, administrative and judicial institutions, can reduce this risk (Brancati & Snyder, 2013).

An expanding, though limited, area of research has explored the role that sub-national electoral processes can play in fostering more inclusive and sustainable democracy. To understand how elections and electoral processes can support the development of more inclusive societies a focus on sub-national units is needed. The below table captures the role sub-national research can play in expanding understanding contemporary issues afflicting post-conflict countries. Subnational research often has a multilevel scope that spans different subnational scales and can also include variables that operate at the national and even transnational level.

See: Table 1: Contributions of Subnational Research to Substance, Theory, and Methods in Comparative Politics, Source: Giraudy et al., 2019, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/inside-countries/subnational-research-in-comparative-politics/4BD2C316315942DC372F6D8676177621/core-reader

Federalism and elections

Elections in countries that have a federal system are particularly complex given the presence of distinct claims to cultural or regional identity. Political authority is divided between two autonomous sets of governments, one national and the other subnational. Usually a constitutional division of power is established between national government, which exercises authority over the national territory, and provincial governments that exercise independent authority within their own territories (Britannica online)[1].

Laws (2017) defines federalism as an organising principle according to which a political community or alliance is divided into constituent political units, which are afforded substantial autonomy and contribute to shaping the will of the higher political authority. In most federal systems, municipalities are integrated units or members of the state governments. Federal countries include: Russia, Canada, the United States, Brazil, Australia, India, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Ethiopia, Germany, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela etc.

Governmental structures and political processes found in federal systems show great variety. One may distinguish, first, a number of systems in which federal arrangements reflect cultural divisions e.g. Switzerland where people speak four different languages and the federal system unites historically and culturally different entities. The principal agencies of federal government are a bicameral legislature, composed of a National Council representing the people directly and a Council of States representing the constituent members as entities; an executive branch (Bundesrat) elected by both houses of the legislature; and a supreme court that renders decisions on matters affecting cantonal and federal relations (Britannica online).

The Russian Federation's arrangements also reflect the country's cultural and linguistic diversity. Depending on their size and on the territories they have historically occupied, ethnic minorities may have their own autonomous republic, region, or district. These divisions provide varying

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[1] https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-system/Federal-systems

degrees of autonomy in setting local policies and provide a basis for the preservation of minority cultures. The national government consists of the executive branch, led by the nationally elected president; the parliament; and a judicial branch that resolves constitutional matters.

In other systems, federal arrangements are found in conjunction with a large measure of cultural homogeneity. The Constitution of the United States delegates to federal government certain activities that concern the whole people, such as the conduct of foreign relations and war and the regulation of interstate commerce and foreign trade; certain other functions are shared between the federal government and the states; and the remainder are reserved for the states. Although these arrangements require two separate bodies of political officers, two judicial systems, and two systems of taxation, they also allow extensive interaction between the federal government and the states. Thus, the election of Congress and the president, the process of amending the Constitution, the levying of taxes, and other functions necessitate cooperation between the two levels of government.

Subnational political systems

Although national government is the dominant form of contemporary political organisation, a range of political forms exists below this level. These include: tribal communities, the political associations of villages and towns, the governments of regions and provinces, the complex array of urban and suburban governments, and the political and administrative systems of the cities and the metropolises. These subnational entities are often the basic political communities — the foundation on which all national political systems are built.

There has been a gradual recognition among scholars that local politics in many countries differs from national politics not only in scale, but in that the political rights and civil liberties afforded to local populations by local governments differ frequently from those guaranteed by national governments.

Herrmann (2010) explored the socioeconomic and political power structures that shaped the political evolution of the Mexican state of Oaxaca. The article demonstrates the importance of careful historical study of local political dynamics to understand how an authoritarian state government could survive and prosper in a nationally democratising Mexico. Herrmann reveals how political adaptations by Oaxacan elites to local pressures helped perpetuate patrimonial domination and to national democratic pressures led to the liberalisation of local politics. This process of "hybridisation" of the local political system allowed the hegemonic state party to respond to local pressures for political reform while also facilitating institutional and political linkages to the democratising national political system.

Montero (2010) explores how national-subnational partisan dynamics in Brazil shape the capabilities of national parties and local oppositions to challenge the hegemony of conservative clientelistic electoral machines. In Montero's analysis of the 2006 Brazilian elections one major factor stood out – opposition forces (leftist oppositions) were able to challenge local conservative clientelistic machines through partisan alliances with the national ruling Worker's Party (the Partido dos Travalhadores). This required concerted strategies of "localised party building" by the national party. However, these strategies had a particular characteristic. They were urban-based, focusing on the larger and more diverse urban municipalities. This dynamic conforms to a structural pattern of subnational politics that can be labelled "authoritarian province, plural cities".

Fenwick's (2010) study of Brazil and Argentina explores this issue of how federalism, the territorial regime, grants political powers to municipalities within the federal system. The differential powers granted to municipalities in federal systems influence how effectively local and national political contenders are able to use municipalities as territorial arenas from which to challenge the powers of authoritarian governors and local clientelistic machines. Fenwick's article confirms that the nature of a country's territorial regime matters to both the level and the quality of democracy in subnational jurisdictions of nationally democratic countries. In Brazil and Argentina, federalism accords municipalities different positions in the institutional hierarchy between levels of government. In Brazil, municipalities are recognised as autonomous federal units distinct from the states. In Argentina municipalities are seen as institutionally subordinated to provinces. This institutional variation has significant consequences for the distribution of power between territorially-based political actors (presidents, governors, and mayors) and thus for politics, policy-making, and subnational democratisation. Fenwick concludes that weak governors can become stronger when united with mayors, strong (hegemonic) governors can become weaker when mayors are bolstered by the central government, and mayors can strengthen a central government constrained by governors through direct cooperation (Fenwick, 2010).

Electoral assistance and reform

Donors have traditionally supported the technical aspects of elections: drafting electoral legislation and regulations; providing logistical support (ballots, ballot boxes etc.); educating voters; and setting up administrative and management institutions (such as electoral commissions and electoral management bodies) and election observer groups (Scott & Mcloughlin, 2014). But elections are increasingly viewed as part of an ongoing democratic cycle rather than as one-off events which require periodic technical support (Laws, 2017; López-Pintor, 2005). Many advocate electoral assistance that is sensitive to local socio-cultural settings, builds local ownership, and supports sustainable processes and institutions that function effectively without external assistance.

Electoral systems matter because – in interaction with other structural and institutional factors – they influence incentives regarding government effectiveness, violence and conflict, accountability, public policy, and electoral malpractice. There are trade-offs involved in all electoral systems. For example, proportional representation systems may be more likely than majority systems to produce desirable public goods – but they also foster greater corruption (Menocal, 2011). How electoral systems are designed determines the political representation of certain groups, including minorities and excluded groups, and citizen satisfaction with the electoral process. In a USAID review, López-Pintor (2005) argues that there are three basic conditions which need to be met before elections should be undertaken in post-conflict countries:

- A sufficiently secure environment is regarded as essential for organising and carrying out elections. The majority of combatants and militias should have been disarmed or pacified, and sufficient progress made in the building of new army and police forces.

- Administrative and communication infrastructure must have been re-established to allow for a smooth conduct of the elections, including voter registration and civic education.

- The justice system and police must be functioning and able to deal with fraud, abuse and other legal issues related to the proper conduct of elections, otherwise opposition parties and the population at large will have little confidence in the fairness of the elections.

In the 1990s, there was a great deal of optimism about the impact that elections and electoral assistance could have on stability and democratisation. This optimism has been tempered in subsequent years as the expected benefits, in many cases, did not seem to materialise. Much analysis has been conducted to draw out lessons learned from past electoral assistance programmes and to formulate best practices. In the process, new electoral approaches have been developed. The key change is the move away from viewing elections and electoral assistance as one-off events which require periodic support, to viewing them as integral components of democratic transition and governance, needing ongoing support (Haider, 2008).

3. Policy implications

Processes of democratic consolidation are protracted and complex and there is a growing consensus that the focus should be on principles of effective engagement, not blueprints or prescriptive solutions. Menocal (2013) comments that a number of policy implications emerge in relation to international support for emerging democracies. In particular, effective international engagement requires flexible and adaptable approaches that are grounded in contextual realities. This involves strategic patience and a pragmatic, incremental perspective to institutional reform that is more tolerant of risks and setbacks (Menocal, 2013).

A broader question emerges that pertains to sequencing i.e. which comes first, democracy or development. This is driven by a sense that many emerging democracies remain vulnerable and that too much is expected of incipient democracies. The strengthening of a culture where democracy is valued as a process, and not on the basis of expected material benefits, takes time. According to Menocal (2013: 5):

- Support for democratisation is not the same as support for development or state-building. While donors have tended to assume that fostering democracy, development and state-building are one and the same thing, tensions and trade-offs are involved.

- The focus should be on a gradual rather than a sequenced approach to change. Opportunities for reform need to be based on what is politically and institutionally feasible. This means designing both economic and governance reforms on the basis of clear diagnostics of the barriers to implementation.

- There needs to be more tolerance for risks and set-backs. Processes of democratisation and institutional transformation are about altering power structures and redefining state-society relations. As such, they are messy, nonlinear and deeply political in nature.

- It is vital to improve coordination between development and democracy support/programmes. While democracy and development are two leading goals for many donors, there needs to be greater integration and coordination between them.

- Promoting economic development and democratisation simultaneously has become an imperative, but we should not expect rapid transformations overnight. What is needed, , is strategic patience and a pragmatic, long-term perspective to institutional reform that can help prioritise improvements that are most crucial at a given moment, rather than relying on idealised models of change that have little grounding on contextual realities.

In a similar vein, but more focused on electoral reform, Laws (2017) summaries key areas when considering support for elections in post-conflict countries:

- In pre-election dialogue and negotiation, the importance of securing a peace agreement has to be balanced with the need to ensure talks are comprehensive and inclusive.

- The impact of early elections on post-conflict stability is subject to much debate. Some argue that early elections facilitate peace agreements, hasten democratisation, and ensure stability, others that they undermine democracy and spark a renewal in fighting.

- Authors disagree on the sequencing of post-conflict elections. Some argue that national elections should be carried out first on the grounds that they have a higher profile than sub-national elections and are more likely to attract international support. Others recommend starting at the sub-national level to enable political parties' time to organise, build up a local support base, and gain political experience.

- The risk of elections resulting in tensions or renewed conflict is much greater in the absence of strong electoral and state institutions.

- The choice of electoral system is important to success or failure of post-conflict elections. There is no consensus on the most appropriate system for post-conflict environments, elections conducted under the UN have favoured proportional representation.

- There is a broad agreement that independent, non-partisan and permanent electoral management bodies represent best practice for electoral administration.

- The presence of international observers can provide a conducive environment for free and fair elections. However, it is better for observers to refuse to participate than to be complicit in compromised processes.

4. Annotated Bibliography

General reviews

OECD (2017). *Hitting the Target, but Missing the Point? Assessing Donor Support for Inclusive and Legitimate Politics in Fragile Societies.* **OECD.**
https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/Hitting_the_target.pdf

This report takes stock of how bilateral and multilateral donors have conceptualised and implemented their commitment to promote Peacebuilding and State-building Goals (PSGs) – in particular by advancing 'legitimate and inclusive political settlements and conflict resolution' (PSG1). On the basis of empirical evidence acquired through case studies in Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan and Timor-Leste. The report finds that, at best, donors work with an incomplete and inadequate understanding of the fragmented and highly contested politics of fragile societies beyond the formal representatives of their governments and administrations.

The report also finds that in response to perceived or real deficits in governance legitimacy and/or inclusivity, donors tend to continue to offer a standardised 'political-support package' that focus on the technical and procedural aspects of an idealised democracy. This is exemplified by the continued international emphasis on holding national elections as a critical pathway for enhancing legitimacy. Given the state of knowledge about the nature of governance in fragile polities, this is unlikely to help develop more representative or credible systems of governance that deliver public services and goods to their subjects in the short to medium term.

Although efforts have been made in recent years to advance the thinking about, and practice of, the politics of development, the case study findings suggest that these are largely experimental

efforts. In fact, they are still quite far from influencing mainstream development practice in the realms of politics and governance in fragile environments, and have not been brought to scale. The report explores what donors can do to improve and increase their support for PSG1. The evidence gathered suggests five recommendations that can be grouped in two categories:

- What donors need to consider for improving their ability to support PSG1 effectively:
    - **Recommendation 1**: Conceive development engagement more politically, i.e. a political frame must drive each initiative.
    - **Recommendation 2**: Conduct political-economy analysis of internal donor operations to identify which constraints on current PSG1 support are malleable.
    - **Recommendation 3**: Enhance analytical capabilities for understanding the realities of political settlements in fragile societies and improve risk management.
- What donors need to consider for re-orienting their existing PSG1 support:
    - **Recommendation 4**: Broaden the scope of PSG1 engagement beyond the state.
    - **Recommendation 5**: Dedicate more attention to the output inclusivity (i.e. equitability) of political processes.

De Visser, J. & Steytler, N. (2018). *Multilevel Government in South Africa, Ethiopia and Kenya: Observations from the Practice of Designating and Implementing Multilevel Government Systems.* **Forum of Federations.** http://www.forumfed.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/OPS_20_Multilevel_Government1.pdf

This paper aims to inform stakeholders in the Philippines about the critical features of, and experiences with, federalism and decentralisation in South Africa, Kenya and Ethiopia. The authors assert that the most important indicator of subnational autonomy is the question as to whether the citizens of a particular territory, be it regional or local, are permitted to elect their own regional or local leaders. If political leadership is (partly) imposed by the central government, this often has a centralising effect. Another critical question relates to how regional or local leaders are elected. This relates to electoral system used for electing public representatives. It also relates to the question as whether the executive is directly elected or indirectly elected, i.e. choices between elements of a parliamentary system or a presidential system. The choices made have a significant impact on the management of intergovernmental systems.

South Africa: The South African Constitution establishes provincial and local democracy. Provincial legislatures are elected by the voters in the province and municipal councils are elected by the voters in the municipality. There is thus no imposition of national political leaders into provincial or municipal legislatures.

Following a parliamentary system, provincial legislatures elect a provincial premier and municipal councils elect a mayor. Provincial and municipal executives are indirectly elected. A premier or mayor remains in power for as long as they enjoys the support of the legislature. The politics of the majority in the legislature or the council is thus always aligned with the politics of the executive. Public representatives at national and provincial level are elected on the basis of proportional representation, i.e. via party lists and not to represent specific constituencies. The only exception is local government where half of the seats are elected by ward representatives (mostly party aligned). Political parties are powerful across the three spheres of government. ANC party hegemony across the spheres of government and between legislatures and

executives, had a stabilising and integrating effect on the multilevel government system, particularly in the early years.

As the new provinces and local governments began to use their spending powers and the risk of illegitimate expenditure arose, the national government could insist on fiscal prudence. Similarly, intergovernmental disputes could be kept at a minimum as most disputes between spheres of government could be solved politically. However, the ANC party hegemony is waning and the strength of the intergovernmental system is being tested.

An important lesson from the South African experience is that it was wise to carefully build a system of intergovernmental relations even though all three spheres of government were by and large controlled by one party. Now that there is more political diversity across the three spheres, that system of intergovernmental relations can be used to ensure coherence and avoid disputes.

Ethiopia: The Ethiopian Constitution (as do subnational constitutions) ensures that each subnational level of government, i.e. regional and local governments, is elected by voters in the corresponding jurisdiction. Ethiopia follows a parliamentary system with national, regional and municipal executives elected by the respective legislatures. Ethiopia uses a constituency-based electoral system (one representative elected per constituency). The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of national and regional parties, controls the federal government, all nine regional states and all local authorities. The EPRDF has been able to use the "first-past-the-post" electoral system to secure electoral victories in legislatures.

Alignment and coherence across the levels of government is pursued through EPRDF channels with little or no resort to intergovernmental relations. At first sight, this seems to have served Ethiopia well. Backed by a political party with power across all levels of government and a "democratic centralism" ethos, the federal government has pursued a state-led development strategy and achieved economic growth. However, growing tension between ethnic groups and a dispute over the status of Addis Ababa are testing the EPRDF's ability to subdue sectarian violence. One step taken by the federal government to those seeking a less rigid political system has been to revisit the electoral system and make it less hostile to smaller parties.

Kenya: The Kenyan Constitution ensures that county governments (consisting of a county assembly and a county governor) are elected by voters in that county. Members of the county assembly are elected from county wards. The county governor is directly elected and thus not dependent on the support of the county assembly. This has added complexity to the politics of the emerging counties as the governor and the county assembly often pursue different politics. The many disputes between governors and legislatures in the same county have been a source of instability in the new system. Although Kenya follows a first past the post system, because the parties are very concentrated (ethnic-based), the national legislature is more or less representative of minority parties, although it is not always the case at county level. The 2010 Constitution has also introduced the rule that in the national and county legislatures, there should not be more than two thirds from one gender.

Dreef, S. & Wagner, W. (2013). *Designing Elections in Conflict-Prone Divided Societies: the Case of South Sudan*. Peace Research Institute.
https://www.hsfk.de/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk_downloads/prif122.pdf

This report discusses electoral engineering and revolves around three features: the timing and sequencing of elections, the electoral administration and the electoral system. It is important to

note that the prime focus of the authors is not the success of democratisation or the quality of democracy but the mitigation of ethno-political conflict. This is based on an acknowledgment that although democratisation and conflict prevention/peacebuilding often overlap, they occasionally clash and create trade-offs. This is most obvious with respect to the timing of elections. The focus of this report is on South Sudan with the authors noting that whilst the international community pays much attention to the North-South conflict and the conflict in Darfur, less attention focusses on simmering intra-state ethno-political violence that could escalate on the occasion of competitive elections.

The design of elections in conflict-prone divided societies has a significant impact on peacebuilding. With a view to timing, the evidence suggests that the risk of renewed violence can be lowered by not having elections (too) soon after the end of conflict. In a similar vein, observers agree that independent, technocratic election management boards are the best guarantee against elections triggering new violence. In contrast, the electoral system choice has been discussed more controversially. The authors caution against recommending any electoral system across the board and argue that the choice of electoral system should be made dependent on the settlement patterns of ethnic groups in society. First and foremost the electoral system should ensure high levels of descriptive representation. If multiple systems have this effect, the additional benefits of the systems should inform the final choice.

SDC. (2016). Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance. Bern: SDC.
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/Policy%20Paper%20DDLG%20en%20lig
ne.pdf

The purpose of this paper is to define the SDC's orientation and scope in the area of democratisation, decentralisation and local governance (DDLG). It is a normative document for the SDC and serves as a reference for partner organisations. It describes the SDC's underlying development vision and positioning in this thematic area. It explains the principles that guide their work and spells out main thematic priorities and strategic approaches. These include:

- **Democratic governance allows sharing and control of power**: Strong governments are important to effectively fulfil their public duties and responsibilities. At the same time public control and power sharing are essential to ensure a certain counter-balance and to reduce the risk of power abuse and corruption.

- **Having a voice and participation are intrinsic to people's well-being**: Democratic values constitute a normative goal and a rationale of their own. Having a voice and being part of public decision-making is a sign of dignity and contributes to people's well-being.

- **Local governance provides a space conducive to participatory decision-making**: Localised initiatives are often the origin for active civic engagement. People more easily assemble around issues affecting everyday life in their neighbourhood, and for them it is usually more convenient to interact with local officials. State officials on the other hand are usually more embedded in the "social fabric" of their communities, especially at the lowest levels. As a consequence, they are more immediately exposed to public concerns and more likely to engage in public dialogue and deliberation.

- **More accessible and responsive state institutions (including governments, parliaments and judiciary) at decentralised levels**: Decentralised state institutions can play an essential role in promoting local development and engaging citizens in improved state-society relations through stronger participation and partnerships. They are likely to

have a better understanding of local needs because of their proximity to citizens, and they are able to adjust national development strategies to the realities of their territories. Citizens on the other hand can more directly voice their concerns and hold their governments and other state representatives accountable. From a gender perspective this is a convenient entry point, because local institutions and processes tend to be less formal, closer to many women's lives and more accessible to them.

- **Effective multilevel governance enables better outreach and anchoring of national development policies**: Sound national policies are a necessary but not sufficient condition for development. Without the effective involvement of subnational stakeholders there is a significant risk that they will not land on fertile soil. Decentralisation can enhance ownership and effectiveness of public administration throughout different government tiers, on condition that responsibilities, resources and decision-making power are balanced and well-coordinated.

- **Political engagement**: DDLG interventions are highly political because they aim at changing political systems, institutions and processes, and they address the sensitive issue of deep-rooted power structures and relations. Political systems are based on laws and formal institutions but also on hidden powers exercised by informal leaders or shaped by customs, social and cultural norms.

- **Starting from context**: A sound context analysis must be the starting point of any intervention to understand the complexity of political systems and actors, the prevailing mechanisms of power and exclusion, interests and belief systems as well as capacity gaps. Political economy and power analysis as well as gender analysis are a must in every context, conflict analysis and fragility assessments are compulsory particularly in situations of fragility and conflict, and local governance assessments are strongly recommended to capture relevant information at subnational levels.

- **Applying a systemic perspective and linking operations with policy reforms**: Working in DDLG implies a systemic approach, which means addressing multiple government levels, state institutions and non-state actors, and combining assistance for regulatory reforms, capacity development and behavioural change.

- **Principled but adapted approach**: The SDC perceives good governance and democratic values as essential enablers for sustainable development. However, the realities of a country's economy, policy and society, and the level of fragility and conflict require cautious, adjusted and sequenced approaches.

- **Engagement with a long-term perspective**: Working on political systems and transformation is never a linear process, but mostly cyclical and sometimes contradictory. It does not allow for quick-fix solutions, but requires long-term and sustained engagement. Building relationships of trust is essential and takes time.

Brinkerhoff, D. & Johnson, R. (2009). Decentralized local governance in fragile states learning from Iraq. *International Review of Administrative Sciences.*
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0020852309349424

This article examines the role that local governance plays in creating an effective state and builds constructive state-society relations. Reconstruction efforts in fragile, post-conflict states have focused largely on central government, yet the authors assert that decentralised local authorities offer a number of positive features. Looking at the governance reconstruction experience in Iraq, the analysis explores the extent to which these positive features have characterised Iraqi sub-

national government. The article draws lessons for governance reconstruction more generally, addressing decentralisation choices, capacity-building, and political factors.

In fragile, post-conflict states, good governance reconstruction agendas often aim too high. Targeting good enough governance solutions is more realistic. Decentralised local governance can be integral to such solutions, and offers several advantages to counter problems that central governments face: weak roots beyond the centre, poor distribution of services, and weak national integration. Experience shows that local governments can increase speed of service delivery, address ethnic/regional inequities, build democratic and conflict management capacities, mitigate political conflict, experiment to find creative solutions, and enhance legitimacy. The Iraq case offers some support for the argument that in fragile, post-conflict states, decentralised local governance is an important feature of good enough governance.

Research and practice reveal a number of benefits that decentralised local governance can deliver, addressing some, but not all, of the problems associated with centralised governance.

See: Table 2: Problems and benefits of central and decentralised governance, source: Brinkerhoff, D. & Johnson, R. (2009, p. 591), https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0020852309349424

The ability of local government to deliver these benefits depends upon a set of facilitating governance conditions 'institutional disciplines', which serve to shape the incentives for local officials. The study found that these disciplines mediated the actual outcomes that decentralised local government can achieve. They are:

A. civic disciplines, concerning the ability of citizens and civil society organisations to exercise voice and to choose alternate sources of services;

B. intergovernmental disciplines, the extent to which higher levels of government impose constraints and exercise oversight vis-à-vis lower levels; and

C. public sector management disciplines, which involve the rules and procedures that govern the behaviour of public employees and officials (e.g. anti-corruption provisions, civil service regulations).

Local governments can address ethnic and/or regional inequities although there is a danger that decentralisation can exacerbate territorial or ethnic group inequities unless accompanied by equalisation measures, a number of countries have sought to address pressures for local control and autonomy through increased devolution to local authorities or the creation of new sub-national entities. In Indonesia, for example, a quasi-federal solution to the long-standing secessionist conflict in Aceh has emerged, which grants special autonomy to the province. The Indonesian government has granted a similar status to the province of Papua, ending decades of repression of separatist movements in both provinces. Effective implementation of the special autonomy provisions for Aceh and Papua, as well as of the ambitious decentralisation measures in the rest of the country, will determine to what extent Indonesia can manage the forces of socio-political, ethnic, economic, and territorial fragmentation it confronts.

Rebuilding governance in fragile states confronts both external parties assisting in that task and the newly formed government with trade-offs between creating a strong central government presumed to be able to operate with speed and with power, and the perceived messier and potentially slower processes involved in a more decentralised system. At the time of writing in Iraq the dispersion of some authority to the sub-national level seemed to have had a positive

impact on citizens' perceptions of governance, and on service delivery and other improvements. In Iraq's turbulent and uncertain environment, the ability of local-level officials to work within their jurisdictions to overcome sources of factionalism, and to collaborate across provinces in ways that the central government has conspicuously failed to do, is instructive. This emergent governance capacity offers some support for the argument that in fragile and post-conflict states, decentralised local government is one of the features of good enough governance.

Dhinden, M. (2013). *Democracy Promotion at a Local Level: Experiences, Perspectives and Policy of Swiss International Cooperation.* **Swiss Development and Cooperation (SDC) agency. https://journals.openedition.org/poldev/1517**

Democracy promotion at the local level is one of the core knowledge areas of the SDC. Democratic transition entails building strong institutions and a capable state. Effective and responsive public administration, both national and local, is vital, not only due to its role in managing resources and steering economic and social development, but also as a key instrument for shaping democratic state-society relationships and good governance.

Among the important lessons learned by the SDC is that the various aspects of decentralisation (political, administrative, fiscal) must go hand in hand; local governments will not be able to deliver on their new responsibilities if they are not financially capable of doing so. In a similar vein, support also needs to address the generally weaker capacity of institutions at the sub-national levels, as only a viable and active local society is aware of its rights and duties. In order to be effective and sustainable, however, support must include all government levels. Further, as indicated above, decentralisation programs need to be based on sound political economy analyses that map out both influential actors that may drive the process forward and potential winners and losers of such processes, in order to avoid efforts by the latter to thwart progress.

The SDC is aware that one key challenge of support to political parties and parliaments is the political nature of such work. In order to circumvent this, they support capacity development of political parties in a systemic manner, including all parties and addressing the rules for the functioning and financing of political parties. There are three elements stressed in this report:

1. There is a need to comprehensively engage with the political elite and public stakeholders within and beyond the political institutions to further democracy and development. Democracy requires both horizontal and vertical checks and balances. Important players in this regard include political parties, the media, independent institutions and civil society.

2. With respect to actors not yet fully incorporated in (or convinced by) democratisation, engagement in a manner typified by an inclusive dialogue on the positive effects of democratisation. This might include emphasising the potential for increased efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability in development outcomes and heightened political dividends, such as increased legitimacy. This will be done through the appropriate channels, i.e. special partnerships, knowledge-sharing etc. Particularly when dealing with 'difficult partnerships', such an approach might be more successful than delaying engagement until a certain level of 'democracy' or accountability is in place.

3. SDC support local governance through the consistent promotion of local and domestic ownership of democratisation processes. The more political the development objectives,

the more important the adherence to local ownership becomes. Democracy promotion must thus be built upon the support of local drivers of democracy.

Dudouet, V. et al. (2016). *Post-war Political Settlements: From Participatory Transition Processes to Inclusive State-building and Governance.* **Berghof Foundation.** https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Papers/IPS_Synthesis_Report_web.pdf

This report presents comparative evidence that emerged from a 28-month collaborative research project funded by the International Development Research Centre entitled "Avoiding Conflict Relapse through Inclusive Political Settlements and State-building after Intra-State War: Opportunities, Approaches and Lessons Learned". The analysis is based on fieldwork data collected in Colombia, El Salvador, South Africa, South Sudan, Aceh (Indonesia) and Nepal, as well as numerous discussions on preliminary findings at various project events (partners meetings, as well as policy discussions and roundtables) in 2013-15.

Recent years have seen a growing convergence of policy and research discourses among development, peace and conflict, and democratisation experts, with regards to the assumed benefits of inclusive transition processes from conflict and fragility to peace and resilience. The realisation that the social, economic or political exclusion of large segments of society is a key driver of intra-state wars has prompted agencies, diplomats and peacebuilding practitioners, as well as the respective academic communities, to search for the right formula to support inclusive and participatory conflict transformation mechanisms and post-war state-society relations. While these various stakeholders profess rhetorical commitment to inclusivity, the term is used in very different and sometimes even in contradictory ways. There are profound disagreements on who should be included in peace processes and political transitions, at what stage and to what end.

The report identifies multiple dimensions of inclusivity which could be relevant for the subject-matter under scrutiny - these include:

- **Intra-actor, inter-actor and inside/outside inclusivity**: inclusivity might be assessed within a single actor or institution; between different actors or institutions that come together as a negotiation or dialogue platform; or towards 'non-elites' who do not participate directly in political settlements.
- **Objective vs. subjective inclusivity**: subjective perceptions matter as much as objective measures when it comes to assessing the degree of inclusivity in political settlement mechanisms and state institutions. Indeed, in some contexts, participation in decision-making may not be as important as the perception that governance outcomes are reasonably acceptable to non-elites by being responsive to their needs and interests.

The criteria used to assess process inclusivity vary extensively across the case studies, according to the researchers' own backgrounds and local circumstances – within a spectrum of 'conservative' approaches focusing on horizontal inclusivity between old and new elites, and 'emancipatory' approaches cantering on vertical elite-society inclusion:

- Some case study reports (Aceh) assess inclusivity according to the extent to which all sectors within the primary negotiation parties (e.g. civil and military leaders, moderates

and hardliners, exiled and local constituents) were represented – in addition to some forms of civil society/citizen consultation.

- Others (Colombia, South Africa, El Salvador) define inclusivity as the (right to) participation by the political opposition more broadly ('progressive' forces, leftist armed and non-armed actors, non-traditional parties) as opposed to the ruling elite/oligarchy.
- Finally, a range of case study reports (Nepal, South Sudan) focus on vertical participation (direct or indirect) of marginalised communities as the primary criteria for inclusivity.

Such discrepancies illustrate once more the difficulty of conducting any meaningful cross-case comparison with respect to the subjective principle of inclusivity. Nevertheless, the general trend which emerges from case studies confirms that peace negotiations are more prone to horizontal inclusivity between old and emerging elites, while national deliberation formats are more amenable to the direct participation of representatives from non-elites, i.e. the marginalised.

Constituent Assemblies: In cases where Constituent Assemblies (CA) were established, these are described by the case study researchers as the most inclusive decision-making arenas, in contrast to earlier or parallel peace negotiations. This echoes the recent trend depicted by constitutional experts towards more direct and extensive popular participation in constitution-making processes – through the introduction of new mechanisms for civic education and popular consultation, beyond referenda.

A number of common factors can be identified which made national deliberation fora (such as National Dialogues and CAs) particularly inclusive:

- The wide number of direct participants beyond the traditional elite and power contenders (with the exception of parties who opted to exclude themselves from these arenas);
- The degree of public participation in summoning these mechanisms (e.g. through referendums), in selecting participants (e.g. proportional electoral systems) and in validating or legitimising their outcomes (e.g. through referendums);
- The provision of guarantees for minority participation (e.g. through gender/ethnic quotas or allocated seats for non-elite representatives or power contenders);
- Decision-making mechanisms favouring minority positions, such as consensus-building within sectoral committees or qualified majority voting ensuring that no political group could get any victory without support from other factions.

IDEA (2014). *Electoral Law Reform in Africa Insights into the Role of EMBs and Approaches to Engagement*. IDEAs.
https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/electoral-law-reform-in-africa.pdf

The overall goal of this policy paper is to provide guidelines for Electoral Management Board (EMB) engagement in electoral law reform processes. The paper discusses the electoral law reform environment before exploring EMB roles and approaches, as well as challenges and risks linked to EMB involvement. The paper concludes with a set of ten recommendations intended to guide EMB engagement on issues concerning electoral law reform in Africa.

EMBs generally play a key role in electoral law reform processes. While acknowledging that electoral law reform can only be realised within a framework agreed with the government and the legislature, EMBs have crucial expertise and hands-on experience regarding election-related matters, as well as an extended network of partners that are relevant for legal review processes.

Research carried out for this paper shows that EMBs in Africa have played an important role in electoral law reform processes on the continent through, among other things, review, research, consultative processes and advocacy. Based on more than two decades of experience, there are important best practices and lessons learned to be extracted from the work that has been carried out to inform and guide the future engagement of EMBs in this area.

EMBs need to ensure that they have sufficient capacities to engage effectively in law reform processes. In simple terms, such capacities can be divided into human and financial resources. EMB decisions to get involved ought to be followed by consciously thinking about the need for the internal redistribution of resources and possibly also contemplating the pros and cons related to working with external actors such as electoral assistance providers and donors.

Provided that sufficient capacities are in place, EMBs can engage in a variety of activities, e.g. organise post-election review processes and consultations, carry out research, etc. To effectively gather views on challenges that need to be addressed, explore alternatives for change and promote reform among decision-makers, EMBs ought to maintain a good relationship and work closely with a range of stakeholders such as political parties, civil society, media institutions, public commissions, etc. In order to promote political will and commitment to the reform agenda, it is particularly important that EMBs consult regularly with the government and the parliament.

EMB engagement ought to be guided by underlying principles related to inclusiveness, neutrality and transparency. Broad consultations and inclusive participation of marginalised groups, such as women and ethnic or religious minorities, to name a few, are essential for electoral reform processes. Furthermore, it is crucial for EMBs to preserve their neutrality in such processes. Electoral reforms are sensitive matters, and perceptions of EMB partiality could jeopardise the outcome of any reform process. Closely linked to this, transparency—including information sharing—is key to ensuring that EMB engagement is well perceived by all stakeholders.

- Give priority to engagement in thorough post-election review processes:
- Establish clear plans and timelines for EMB engagement:
- Ensure that adequate and timely funding is in place:
- Undertake research to ensure adequate knowledge/capacities:
- Involve stakeholders by organizing wide-ranging and inclusive consultations:
- Work closely with interparty platforms:
- Engage regularly with decision-makers:
- Stay neutral—and be perceived as such:
- Incorporate a gender perspective:

Centre for Policy Alternatives (2016). *A New Devolution Settlement for Sri Lanka*. **CPA.**
https://www.cpalanka.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/PC-conference-report.pdf

This publication arises from the Conference of Provincial Councils on a New Devolution Settlement for Sri Lanka held in August 2016. The conference was organised by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) with the support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), Democracy Reporting International (DRI), and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). Of particular interest were the comments of Dr Wikfried Sewnden (University of Edinburgh) which are para-phrased below:

Devolution does not necessarily mean fragmentation or division. It provides a constitutional roadmap, which if designed properly can help to hold Sri Lanka together. It can create opportunities for policies to be brought closer to the people without undermining their loyalties to the Sri Lankan state as a whole.

However, actors should also acknowledge that devolution itself is not a panacea: much will depend on how devolved structures are designed (how many provincial units do you create; what powers do you give them; how do you involve the provinces in some central decisions which may affect their autonomy; how do you strike a balance between provincial autonomy and national solidarity; how do you protect minority communities at the national and sub-national level) and on how your devolved structures interact with society at large (political parties, media, etc.).

Comparative evidence also shows us that the stability of devolved arrangements is as much the result of shared rule (institutions which give the provinces a stake in some key decisions and institutions of the centre) as of self-rule (provincial autonomy). Shared rule arrangements give provincial elites a stake or interest in central policy-making and national party politics, not just in provincial politics. The current devolution arrangements under the Thirteenth Amendment provide very few shared rule mechanisms. These need to be strengthened through the operationalisation of a legislative second chamber in which provinces find representation and through the institutionalisation of a set of 'intergovernmental' procedural and institutional mechanisms enabling centre-provincial coordination on executive matters of mutual interest.

Devolved institutions interact with party politics, electoral politics, civil society, and the media. The success of a devolved settlement hinges on the ability of political parties to give its provincial politicians the space to craft policies, within their constitutional remit, which best suit the interests of their province. This may require parties to adjust their internal structure so that provincial wings (should they already exist) be given a degree of autonomy in processes of candidate selection, provincial policy-making and campaigning, and some representation in the central party executive. It also requires civil society to buy into the process of devolution; to participate in the advocacy of devolution ahead of a constitutional referendum or in the operation of devolved politics thereafter. It requires media to emphasise the potential benefits of devolution for Sri Lankan society. And it may require politicians, media, and civil society to adopt a different mindset in which some divergence in provincial policies in education, land, or policing, is not necessarily seen as undermining unity, but as a means to tailor such policies to specific provincial needs, or indeed through sharing best practices to help improve standards in these areas across Sri Lanka as a whole.

Agency-level reviews

Newsum, A. (2008). *DFID's Contribution to Decentralisation and Local Governance (D/LG): A Stocktake,* **Governance and Social Development Group, Department for International Development (DFID), London**

This report details the results of a stocktake of DFID's contribution to decentralisation and local governance (D/LG) in 27 partner countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It finds mixed results. Key findings of the review are:

- DFID's contribution has been most effective where there is political will and a sound decentralisation framework.

- D/LG projects often require complex institutional arrangements and multiple stakeholder groups for implementation.

- Establishing and sustaining good country partnerships for D/LG related projects present particular challenges. The need to engage with all partners during the design stage is not always recognised.

- Sound analysis is required to ensure that DFID support for D/LG, channelled through the sectors and public sector management programmes, contributes to pro-poor forms of decentralisation. For a complete view, Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessments need to be supported by information on the quality of the political, administrative, inter-governmental decentralised arrangements.

- There is a need for sound indicators for measuring results; stronger and more effective monitoring and evaluation systems; and good knowledge management to support the complex and multi-dimensional nature of decentralisation work in partner countries.

The following factors are identified as important for D/LG projects:

- **Understanding local politics and securing political commitment:** It is insufficient to focus on national politics and secure national agreements for delivery of projects involving D/LG. Understanding the politics at all levels and the political relationships between the levels is important. Consider working with smaller chiefs and family heads in cases where powerful chiefs have a vested interest in local assets.

- **Building partnerships and securing ownership - country partners and donors:** Building trust and managing relationships through regular dialogue and effective communications is important. There is a need to understand the social, political, cultural and administrative differences at regional and local levels and the different governance challenges in rural and urban settings, as well as to understand and manage local expectations. It is important not to bypass local institutions.

- **Working effectively with civil society organisations:** Involving civil society in the management structure of the delivery of the project can contribute to breaking down the barriers between local government, civil society and the institutions responsible for service delivery. It is important to have good information on the capacity and capability of CSOs and an understanding of the institutional incentives.

- **Managing institutional complexity:** It's important to ensure different levels participate in the design, field visits and monitoring. Also to establish appropriate feedback links to ensure the experience at local level is feeds into policy formulation.

- **Ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** Effective M&E requires careful design and use of results-based indicators. If local capacity is weak, technical assistance should be made available to build capability.

World Bank (2008). *Decentralization in Client Countries: An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 1990-2007*. World Bank.
http://wwwwds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/09/16/00 0333037_20 080916044226/Rendered/PDF/454080PUB0Box311PUBLIC10Aug07102008.pdf

This review assesses the effectiveness of support for decentralisation between 1990 and 2007 in 20 countries. It finds that better results were achieved where there was consensus around the

reform within the country prior to Bank engagement and when its support was combined with incentives for institutional reform at the subnational level. The review recommends:

- More timely and coordinated analytical work to underpin interventions, based on an integrative understanding of economic, political, and institutional factors at different levels of government and across sectors affected by decentralisation.

- Decentralisation to be underpinned by genuine country commitment.

- A more results based approach to monitoring and evaluation that focuses on local outcomes (such as enhanced accountability, greater citizen participation, and improved service delivery) rather than on just the process of decentralisation.

- Better coordination of fragmented sector-by-sector interventions, and support for policy reform with technical assistance to strengthen local government capacity.

OECD DAC (2004). '*Lessons Learned on Donor Support to Decentralisation and Local Governance'*, OECD. http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/46/60/30395116.pdf

This report presents a synthesis of evaluation studies of decentralisation and local governance support programmes from OECD countries. The main recommendations are:

- Improve co-ordination between donors and partner governments: In order to make donor support in this area more effective and sustainable, the donor community needs to:
    o Integrate programmes with partner governments" own policies and plans.
    o Support partner governments in preparing implementation plans that outline prioritised areas needing donor support.
    o Establish joint government-donor forums for reviewing and implementing reforms.

- Enhance co-ordination between donors: Donors and partner governments should examine obstacles to effective donor co-ordination and endeavour to ensure that donor programmes in this field are better co-coordinated. Donors should take the initiative to:
    o Establish forums for co-ordination and dissemination of information.
    o Establish systems for basket funding when appropriate.

- Ensure sustainability of donor support: Short-term and long-term sustainability concerns should be built into donor programmes supporting decentralisation and local governance. Donors should:
    o Formulate exit strategies and plans for up-scaling or institutionalisation of programme activities in the early stages of a programme.
    o Provide effective feedback from programme activities to national policymakers. - Ensure that support to other areas is not undermining support to decentralisation.
    o Design programmes in a holistic way taking into consideration LGs relations with the central government as well as civil society.

- Strengthen poverty focus: The poverty focus of programmes needs to be strengthened. The poverty orientation of local government transfer systems should be increased. For donors who provide support to civil society organisations interacting with local governments there is a particular need to:
    o Ensure that service delivery support targets underprivileged groups.

- o Stimulate bottom-up, grassroots-based governance (e.g. citizen-based budget watch and citizen-based service delivery monitoring).
  - o Enhance LG-civil society interaction at the lowest echelon of the LG system.
- Financial development and sustainability of local governments:
  - o Strengthen local government capacity, exercise economic autonomy and ensure incentives for improved local government performance are not restrained by intergovernmental fiscal transfer systems.
  - o Ensure a holistic design which takes into account reforms of LG tax systems, assignments, types of taxes and tax sharing arrangements.

European Commission (2007). *Supporting Decentralisation and Local Governance in Third Countries.* **EC-Europa.**
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/governancedemocracy/documents/decentralisation_local_governance_refdoc_final_en.pdf

These guidelines are based on EC experience of supporting decentralisation and subnational governance. They propose an open systems perspective on decentralisation; which entails viewing fiscal, administrative and political processes as linked and embedded in a political and societal context and influenced by regional and international trends. Several "guiding principles" for the design and implementation of support programmes are proposed:

- Country specificity: Donor interventions in the area of decentralisation are still often designed based on "models" from other places.
- Ownership and partnership: Country processes should provide the starting point for donor interventions. Promoting an ongoing national dialogue as well as a dialogue between national stakeholders and the donor community to define partnership principles, to identify relevant strategies and to ensure proper monitoring and evaluation.
- Legality and legitimacy: Support should be consistent with the legal framework for decentralisation (to avoid parallel "routes" or structures) and seek to respect the legitimate role division between the different actors in the development process.
- Flexibility and pragmatism. Decentralisation and local governance are stop-and-go processes and agencies need to use instruments and modes of cooperation that are sufficiently flexible to adapt to changes in the political and institutional environment.
- Alignment and harmonisation. A single donor is seldom in a position to influence all dimensions of the decentralisation and local governance system. There is a need for building strategic alliances and complementarities with other development partners.
- A long-term and gradual process. Assistance should focus on soft issues (such as effecting changes in the political culture and building new relations of trust between citizens and their elected representatives, and among a wide range of actors). Donor support modalities need to be based on longer time horizons and incremental action.

Country-level reviews/ programme evaluations

The Asia Foundation (2007). '*An Assessment of Sub-National Governance in Afghanistan'*, The Asia Foundation, San Francisco http://www.asiafoundation.org/pdf/AG-subnationalgovernance.pdf

This study by the Asia Foundation suggests that while the Afghan government and the international community recognise the importance of developing governance at the sub-national level, they have failed to develop a strategy and provide the funding to put a system in place. The Afghan government needs to formulate, communicate and effectively implement a policy that respects the cultural, linguistic and geophysical reality of Afghanistan. The delivery of services and the development of local infrastructure have had more impact than any other factor on sub-national governance and on people's attitudes towards the government. However, infrastructure at the sub-national level is a legacy of previous governments and is organised only down to the provincial level. Furthermore, the government's failure to develop and articulate a policy for sub-national governance makes it difficult to communicate what it is trying to do.

Asian Development Bank (2008). *Cambodia: Commune Council Development Project: Project Completion Report*. ADB, Manila http://www.adb.org/Documents/PCRs/CAM/35274-CAM-PCR.pdf

This evaluation report offers a detailed assessment of the ADB's support to the decentralisation and de-concentration (D&D) process in Cambodia. The project included facilities, capacity building, digital photomapping and civil registration components. The paper makes very specific technical recommendations, but concludes overall that: "given the impressive progress in decentralization vis-à-vis reforms in other areas and the positive achievements under the CCDP, ADB is recommended to provide long-term support for D&D reform—including for implementation of the organic law to devolve service responsibility to subnational levels".

USAID (2006). *Stock Taking on Indonesia's Recent Decentralization Reforms,* Report of the Democratic Reform Support Program (DRSP) for the Donor Working Group on Decentralization http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADH311.pdf

This stocktaking of decentralisation reform in Indonesia finds that decentralisation reforms have been progressive in principle, but incomplete and not sufficiently realised on the ground. The anticipated reform progress has not been met and may not have the sound foundation that it needs. Findings are grouped under the following headings:

- The legal framework: There have been weaknesses in the legal framework and process, lack of coordination among relevant agencies, and insufficient consultation with stakeholders and experts.
- Intergovernmental relations: With fragmentation of districts it is unlikely that new regions will be able to adequately fulfil their service functions as expected. Functional assignment was not clearly defined for the district/city level in the 1999 decentralisation reforms. Even where there was clarity, some ministries/agencies resisted assignment of important or income generating functions, leading to tensions between levels of government.

- Civil service reform: In short, regional governments have few incentives and discretion to right-size and make their civil service efficient. The remuneration system is complex, lacks transparency and provides no incentive for performance.

- Regional governance reform: The state of service delivery may improve if measures to improve service accountability are put in place: i) enabling citizens to monitor the extent to which regional government fulfils its responsibility in providing adequate service; and (ii) promoting transparency in regional government planning and budgeting.

- Third party support: NGOs have coalesced in networks for greater impact in advocacy work to influence government regulation, laws or ministerial decrees related to regional autonomy.

Ortega, M, (2008). *Support for Local Governance (SLG) for Enhanced Island Development Project.* **Evaluation Report, Fiji Multi Country Office, Suva**
http://erc.undp.org/index.aspx?module=ERC&page=EvaluationShow&EvaluationID=2930

This evaluation of UNDP support to local governance and outer island development in Tuvalu finds that a key contribution of the project was to support increased harmonisation between unwritten laws grounded in the customs and traditions of the people and formal laws as prescribed by the constitution. It is also noted that the project reinforced the concept of decentralised democracy alongside local traditional governance systems. Another factor contributing to the project's success was the full ownership of the project by the Government of Tuvalu. One of the main lessons learned was that the projects flexibility and adaptability to the local context enhanced project outputs.

UNCDF (2007). *Final Evaluation of UNCDF's Local Development Programme* **Submitted to: United Nations Capital Development Fund' Executive summary of main report, ECI Africa, Woodmead**
http://erc.undp.org/index.aspx?module=ERC&page=EvaluationShow&EvaluationID=3568

This evaluation of a 3-year UNCDF district development programme found that it performed well against objectives and some evidence that the approach could be replicated elsewhere. A number of factors contributed to successful implementation, including: policy commitments to participation; a positive role played by the MoLG in implementation; and sensitisation of the people of the need for them to participate in planning. The project also performed well on gender mainstreaming and building local capacity of gender actors in gender analysis.

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