



# DIIS REPORT

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Pragmatic aid management  
in fragile situations

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## Contents

Abstract	4
Summary	5
1. Introduction	13
2. Danish engagement in and around Somalia, 2006-10	25
3. Development cooperation between Mozambique and Denmark, 1992-2006	36
4. The education sector in Afghanistan	46
5. Security-sector reform in Sierra Leone	56
6. The Office of Transition Initiatives Programme in East Timor financed by USAID	70
7. UNDP-supported reintegration of ex-combatants in Tajikistan, 1999-2003	78
8. GTZ-supported reintegration of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone, 2000-2005	84
9. Conclusion	87
Literature	92

## **Abstract**

This report examines the relationship between aid management and results in the context of fragile situations. The success of aid-supported activities in fragile situations is highly uncertain. Yet, aid programmes sometimes succeed despite the adverse conditions. The report discusses the extent to which pragmatic aid management can explain relatively positive results based on an analysis of evaluations of reasonably successful aid-supported activities. Pragmatic aid management is conceptualised in terms of policy liberty, flexibility, responsiveness, context dependence and political sensitivity. The report concludes that, while a high degree of pragmatic aid management appears to be linked to relatively positive results of aid-supported activities, such aid management is rarely enough to count as success. Other factors are important as well. These include high-level political commitment, quality of aid management staff on the ground, and a process of transferring ownership and responsibility to actors and institutions in fragile societies.

## Summary

This report examines the relationship between aid management and results in the context of fragile situations. Specifically, it seeks to identify the characteristics of pragmatic aid management practices that have been conducive to producing positive results in fragile situations. In so doing, it seeks to examine how to achieve a useful balance between donor policies and guidelines on the one hand and responsiveness to the particularities of fragile situations on the other. The study is part of the Research and Communication Programme (ReCom) on Foreign Aid and has been commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The success of aid-supported activities in fragile situations is highly uncertain. Not only is the success of aid programmes difficult to predict, there are numerous reasons why such activities fail, especially in fragile situations. These include social tensions and disruption, political uncertainty, weak human and institutional capacity, absent infrastructure, uncoordinated aid management, irreconcilable interests among major actors, etc. This study seeks to explore how and why aid programmes nevertheless sometimes succeed despite the adverse conditions for programme implementation in many fragile situations.

The report is based on case studies of particular aid-supported activities, including:

- Danish-supported activities in and around Somalia, 2006-2010
- Danish support to Mozambique, 1992-2006
- Danish support to the education sector in Afghanistan, 2002-2011
- British support to security-sector reform in Sierra Leone, 1999-2008
- US support to East Timor, 1999-2002
- UNDP support to the reintegration of ex-combatants in Tajikistan, 1999-2003
- German support to the reintegration of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone, 2000-2005

These activities were selected on the basis of a review of more than fifty evaluations of aid-supported activities in fragile situations. While not completely satisfactory, the evaluations of these seven activities were those that satisfied the following five criteria reasonably well: (i) positive and significant results of aid-supported activities, (ii) discussion of aid management practices in relation to results, (iii) variation in aid-supported activities, (iv) variation in implementing donor agency, and (v) variation in programme country.

To facilitate the analysis, the study has developed an understanding of **pragmatic aid management** as including five elements:

- **Policy liberty** – the extent to which the portfolio of activities can be carried out with a certain level of freedom regarding the general, overarching policies of the aid agency.
- **Flexibility** – the ability of aid managers to redirect resources and revise and change approaches during the execution of aid-supported activities.
- **Responsiveness** – the extent to which consideration is given in both the formulation and implementation phases of aid programming to the opinions and outlooks offered by partners, state institutions and beneficiaries.
- **Context dependence** – the degree to which the conception of aid-supported activities relies on the historically and socially specific conditions, structures and institutions of a society.
- **Political sensitivity** – the extent to which aid management is based on an understanding of the political economy, power and political settlements in a country.

It has been argued that such characteristics of aid management are conducive to making aid successful. The study seeks to analyse whether this is so through case studies of the above-mentioned aid-supported activities.

In determining whether the results of aid-supported activities are positive, the study concentrates on results in terms of:

- Poverty reduction
- State-building and capacity development
- Aid effectiveness principles
- Planned outputs

Results in these respects are related to aid management practices, which, however, may only be one factor among many explaining the relative success. Still, the assumption is that aid management practices are important and that, if they were to share characteristics across diverse aid-supported activities with positive results, this would be an indication that these characteristics are important for achieving results.

The study has had to confront numerous **methodological challenges**. First, aid programme evaluations have their own criteria for measuring success, and these do not necessarily match the ones used in this report. Evaluations typically seek to assess

the overall success of aid activities according to the five DAC evaluation criteria, namely relevance, effectiveness and coverage, impact, efficiency and coordination, and sustainability. Depending on the approach of the evaluators, these criteria do not always lead to analyses which provide the information necessary for this study.

Second, many evaluations describe various positive aspects of the activities, followed by a listing of shortcomings, unfulfilled objectives, waste, lack of coordination and sometimes negative consequences. As such, these assessments are rarely compiled so as to provide a clear overall view of the intervention, and they seldom provide a strong viewpoint regarding the merits or demerits of the programme in its entirety.

Third, few evaluations manage to say much about the actual impacts of aid interventions, despite this being an identified criterion by which to measure its success. The review of various evaluation documents revealed that actual assessments of aid-supported activities are more concerned about budget execution and input and output in the context of immediate objectives than about the impact on poverty. Additionally, those evaluations that do seek to report on actual impact on addressing poverty typically face a dearth of data. This is all the more acute in fragile situations.

Fourth, in the context of fragility, it appears that the established criteria upon which measures of success are made presupposes what is to be considered as constituting success. For example, that the fact that effectiveness is a measure of the completion of pre-determined objectives presupposes that the programme is a success if it is completed as it was conceived in the first place. This leaves no room for questioning the validity or appropriateness of that initial conception, nor for introducing adaptations should the situation on the ground change and require a new approach or new objectives. The implications for this study is that the very nature of the pragmatic aid management practices being analysed could be interpreted as 'negative' in such standardized evaluations of aid-supported activities.

Fifth, the study has not come across many evaluations that discuss the management of aid-supported activities. To some extent, evaluations treat management issues as a black box between inputs and outputs and rarely attempt to open it up. This dearth of explicit analyses of management issues has pushed the study to undertake a careful reading to extract management-related observations in sections discussing other issues. However, this is again not ideal, as the basis for such observations is not always clear. There is a risk that minor issues are blown out of proportion and that the observations are of little general relevance.

In sum, the methodological difficulties of discussing the relationship between pragmatic aid management and positive results in fragile situations are considerable, and existing evaluation practices need to be significantly improved to enable firmer conclusions to be made. The uneven quality of evaluation reports and the differences in approaches to determining development aid results meant that the choice of case studies was quite limited. Thus, the conclusions of the report remain tentative.

## Conclusions

The overall conclusion of the study is that, while a high degree of pragmatic aid management as defined in this report appears to be linked to relatively positive results of aid-supported activities, such aid management is not necessarily enough to count as success. Other factors seem to be of importance as well.

Beginning with the five characteristics of pragmatic aid management (see Table 1), the *policy liberty* of aid managers seems to have been great in most cases. Only in the case of Denmark's support to Somalia might this liberty not have been very extensive. Aid management had to take a complex collection of guidelines and policy documents into account, and management responsibilities were shared between the Danish embassy in Nairobi and the headquarters in Copenhagen, with a tendency towards centralisation in the latter part of the period being evaluated. On the other hand, the evaluation report notes a 'relative policy vacuum for much of the evaluation period'. Setting it aside from the other cases analysed in this study, a distinguishing characteristic of the Danish support to Somalia was that there was no official representation within Somalia itself.

The most pronounced aspect of pragmatic aid management in these case studies is *flexibility*. The ability to reallocate resources and to respond to unforeseen changes is much noted and appreciated by partners and fellow agencies. This characteristic is highlighted as the major factor explaining success in several evaluation reports. In Denmark's support to Mozambique and Somalia, a certain inflexibility is noted at the policy level and across instruments respectively, but this does not seem to have been a major stumbling block. Aid management practices and systems enabling easy reallocation of resources *within* programmes are strongly underlined.

*Responsiveness* to locally expressed concerns and needs is a less shared characteristic of the aid management practices analysed in this study. An important distinction to be made here is between policies and implementation. In terms of the former,



domestic constituencies seem to play an important role, while national partners have a stronger bearing on the latter. Given the lack of staff on the ground in the case of the Danish support to Somalia, it is not surprising that the level of responsiveness here seems limited. Notably in the early years, the British support to Sierra Leone was distinguished by a large number of those in central decision-making positions within the Sierra Leonean state being British, and this made the issue of responsiveness somewhat redundant. Moreover, some of these individuals confronted vested interests, and some got even away with it in a relatively successful manner. Despite this uneven concern for responsiveness, aid management practices can certainly not be accused of disregarding local views and policies (see below).

Chasing flexibility, *context dependence* seems to be an important characteristic of successful aid management. Most of the aid-supported activities analysed here have been developed in accordance with the specific nature of the society in which they have been carried out. They have clearly addressed appalling needs, to a large extent they have taken capacities and structural constraints into account, and they have sometimes been developed on an ad hoc basis to adapt to rapidly evolving circumstances. Interestingly, successful aid management may be context-dependent without necessarily being responsive to locally expressed concerns. For instance, British advisers strongly promoted a police reform adapted to local realities, while challenging customs and cultures in the force. One observer believes that this was a condition for the success of the security-sector reform.

The *political sensitivity* of the aid management analysed here has been rather uneven. From a sometimes extremely sensitive approach in Sierra Leone to a politically relatively insensitive approach in Afghanistan, where inappropriate management structures were set up in the Ministry of Education, aid has been managed in clearly different ways. Yet, it seems from the limited cases covered in the study that more politically sensitive management practices produce better results. The British support in Sierra Leone and the Danish support in Mozambique are praised more in comparison with the Danish support to Afghanistan and Somalia, and this can be linked to the historical ties, trust and long-term cooperation that existed in the former cases. Under such circumstances, aid managers are likely to know more about politics and power configurations where aid-supported activities are carried out.

Pragmatism in aid management means a lot. Notably flexibility and context-dependence appear to have characterised all the relatively successful aid-supported activities analysed in this report. Policy liberty and political sensibility are also important fea-

tures which help aid management to achieve results. Responsiveness is interestingly a feature which is sometimes useful, sometimes less so. A possible reason for this is that vested interests and spoilers may seek to divert efforts to carry through necessary reforms, which, given the fragility involved, it may actually be possible to implement. In post-conflict situations, although windows of opportunity may be open, responding to the concerns of vested interests could close them again. Thus, responsiveness in a politically tense situation should not be pursued in any case.

Though pragmatic aid management seems to help produce positive results, the case studies indicate that other factors have also been conducive to the relative success of the aid-supported activities. First, political support from above is likely to be important. This is most clear in Sierra Leone, where both national and foreign political support was very strong. The president of Sierra Leone saw the security-sector reform and the revamping of the police force as crucial conditions for his own political survival, and the British development secretary made these activities a pivotal issue in her development policies. This strong support enabled aid managers to carry through activities that were daring and challenging, as they enjoyed a lot of policy liberty at the same time. In relation to Mozambique, political support in Denmark was also strong in the 1990s, albeit of a slightly different kind, as it was more broad-based, including development organisations and trade unions. In East Timor, aid managers had a clear sense that what they were doing was contributing strongly to contemporary US foreign policies in the area. Moreover, they had the trust and support of their immediate superior, the Senior Mission Officer in USAID/Jakarta. Political attention has also characterised Danish support to Afghanistan and Somalia, but the concern has been less development-focused and more security-related. This creates a different context for aid managers.

Second, the quality of staff has been highlighted repeatedly in the reports. The ability of competent aid managers to act under extremely difficult circumstances seems to be crucial. A former political officer in the US State Department described the aid team in East Timor as follows: 'OTI team members were totally appropriate for East Timor. These independent types were just what was required. Career officers would not have been nearly as effective' (Clark, von Briesen Lewis et al. 2003: 10). In Afghanistan, it seems that the relative success of Denmark's support to the education sector in the early 2000s hinged on a technical advisor posted in the Ministry of Education. In Sierra Leone, the British head of the police from 1999 to 2003 appointed by the President introduced 'local needs policing', out-manoeuvred opponents within the police and even arresting political leaders accused of war crimes. Qualified staff in

the right place at the right time *and* equipped with the policy liberty to manage aid according to context undoubtedly helps bring about success.

Third, coordination with other donors and partnerships with national and local institutions, embryonic though they may have been, have been emphasised in a number of reports. In Somalia, aid managers have been praised for stimulating international coordination, and in Mozambique the evaluation report argues: 'The Danish financial support operations were valuable in themselves, but their wider benefits in setting a pattern for other donors were probably even greater' (Lister et al. 2008: 16). Danish aid managers in Mozambique also challenged WB and IMF policies for not being sufficiently adapted to the context. In East Timor, aid managers were commended for facilitating the engagement of both domestic and international actors. Such coordination and cooperation help building an aid environment conducive for results, and more human and financial resources are mobilised for similar goals.

Fourth, the focus on pragmatism in the management of aid has not been such that no principles have guided it. The principles of ownership, alignment and on-budget management of aid have to an important degree characterised the cases analysed in this study. Most striking is the British support to security-sector reform in Sierra Leone because, on the one hand, it involved the deployment of foreigners in key decision-making positions in the state and, on the other hand, it was managed with a strong consideration for Sierra Leonean ownership of the changes. As national institutions and actors stepped up their performance, foreigners were gradually withdrawn from the central positions. In Afghanistan, it was decided right from the beginning to provide on-budget support to the education sector, something which preceded other donors with several years. In Mozambique, alignment with national policies characterised Danish aid management from the early 1990s.

Principles evidently help aid managers to navigate in very volatile surroundings, but the nature of the principles is hardly irrelevant. A strong sense of the temporary nature of the support stimulates a focus on making institutions perform. Yet, it is a difficult balance to strike because short-term cooperation may not produce the desired results. Sierra Leone is again a case in point because the British and Sierra Leonean governments agreed to a ten-year memorandum of understanding as a framework for their cooperation. Yet, London would not agree to the deployment of a British Military Training Advisory Team for more than three years due to concerns about Sierra Leone becoming dependent on it, although it was obvious to people in Sierra Leone that more than three years were needed. Thus, the conclusion may be that a

strong focus on ownership and a gradually handing over of responsibility are needed and that this helps build capacity, but the precise moment for pulling out should be determined along the road in a pragmatic way.

Fifth, the evaluations of the reintegration of ex-combatants in Tajikistan and Sierra Leone indicate that a particular approach to this issue has been developed on the basis of experience from many different contexts and that this approach is conducive to success. While this approach must be adapted to the specifics of the context, it nevertheless has a number of characteristics, including comprehensiveness in terms of economic, political and social issues, a combination of short and long-term perspectives, and the inclusion of many different actors in addition to the ex-combatants.

All this indicates that *pragmatic and principled aid management with political support and qualified staff in coordination with relevant domestic and international actors and characterised by a focus on transferring ownership is conducive to the success of aid-supported activities in fragile situations*. In addition, luck is probably also needed to prevent spoilers succeeding in their endeavours and closing the windows of opportunity in fragile situations. Nevertheless, this study tentatively documents that a great deal can be done to provide optimal working conditions for aid management in order to achieve positive results. Though the study is based on a limited number of evaluations and analyses – which, moreover, are only partly focused on the study's objectives – the diversity of the cases discussed here strengthens those conclusions that cut across the activities analysed. Thus, it appears reasonable for donor agencies to review whether they have established optimal conditions for the management of the activities they support. In addition, it would be useful to strengthen and review seriously the monitoring and evaluation of aid to fragile situations.

## **I. Introduction**

Fragile state situations present special challenges to the management of development aid and inevitably have an impact on the success of aid initiatives. As donor agencies seek to establish effective programmes in conflict and fragile situations, the process of planning international assistance necessarily requires a balance between setting and aligning agendas with established institutional visions and policies, and adapting the course of action to meet the needs of the specific context in which they are to be applied.

Donor agencies set policies, which serve to guide the organisation in decision-making. This helps staff working in often very complicated situations where information may be scarce, time constraints considerable and change rampant. Often, donor agencies engage in fragile situations not only to facilitate conflict resolution and reduce poverty, but also because of domestic political concerns about national security in particular. Thus, the domestic demand for quick results is sometimes pronounced. When this is the case, and when donor agencies start activities in a country where they have no prior working experience, their staff are forced to rely on general policies and guidelines.

Yet such policies must not be turned into a straitjacket. Evidently, no general policies and guidelines can produce effective aid in all circumstances. As policies and guidelines may be based more on policy concerns and donor values than on a close reading of actual needs in fragile situations, considerable adaptation is always needed. Moreover, unknown, rapidly changing and unpredictable environments require substantial levels of ability to observe, engage in and understand local realities.

To this end, in recent years donor agencies have tended to promote decentralisation with the aim of ensuring the appropriateness of their programmes. Indeed, decentralisation offers a way to move decision-making closer to the particularities and changing conditions of the countries concerned. When sufficient authority is delegated to country representations, goals and objectives for development aid can be set locally having due consideration for the needs and opportunities of the recipient country.

Still, it is important to consider the importance of aid management practices beyond their decentralisation and to analyse in greater detail the planning, organizing, staffing and directing of aid programmes for the purpose of accomplishing their objectives. This is especially of interest in the context of fragile states, where volatile environments necessarily require responsive management practices. This begs the question: which aid management practices are conducive to better results in fragile situations?

Current official thinking about these issues is strongly influenced by the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States adopted at the Busan High Level Meeting in 2011. A central point in this document is to ‘support country-owned and -led pathways out of fragility’ and to ‘ensure harmonisation and donor co-ordination, reduce duplication, fragmentation and programme proliferation’ (International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding 2011: 2). This is an important framework for development cooperation in fragile states, which, however, does not specify the details of aid management.

This report examines the relationship between aid management practices and results in the context of fragile situations. Specifically, it seeks to identify those characteristics of aid management practices that have been conducive to producing positive results in fragile situations. In so doing, it seeks to examine how a useful balance between donor policies and guidelines on the one hand and responsiveness to the particularities of fragile situations on the other can be achieved. The study is part of the Research and Communication Programme (ReCom) on Foreign Aid and has been commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## **1.1 Objectives**

The primary objective of the study is to examine to what extent pragmatic aid management practices are conducive to producing positive results in fragile situations. In so doing, the study will:

- 1 Identify the criteria of pragmatic aid management and relate these to the ability to produce the desired results;
- 2 Analyse the positive results of specific aid programmes with a particular emphasis on the management approach; and
- 3 Assess the validity and scope of pragmatic approaches in producing positive results in fragile situations.

## **1.2 Rationale and approach**

This study takes its point of departure in the observation that the success of aid-supported activities in fragile situations is highly uncertain. Not only is the success of aid programmes difficult to predict, there are numerous reasons why such activities fail, especially in fragile situations. These reasons include social tensions and disruption, political uncertainty, weak human and institutional capacity, absent infrastructure, uncoordinated aid management, irreconcilable interests among the major actors, etc. It is not the intention of this study simply to reiterate these obvious challenges and affirm that they pose limitations on the potential success of development aid. Rather, this study seeks to explore how and why aid programmes succeed, despite the adverse conditions for programme implementation that are latent in fragile situations.

It is the aim of any aid-supported activity to produce beneficial and positive results at a local level. Donor agencies thus put forward policies and guiding principles with the objective that these will generate coherent and successful aid programmes on the part of their organisation. Yet it is poorly understood whether these guides to decision-making are conducive to generating positive results, especially in the complex and heterogeneous nature of fragile situations. Nor is it clear which aid management approaches might be most useful in producing results.

The study therefore sets out to explore the nature of successful aid activities in fragile situations and to examine the extent to which pragmatism in aid management is a contributing factor to positive results. It identifies five specific characteristics of pragmatic aid management – policy liberty, flexibility, responsiveness, context dependence and political sensitivity – and analyses their usefulness in producing positive results in fragile states.

### **1.3 Case study selection**

In order to explore the potential importance of pragmatic aid management approaches to producing results, a selection of cases have been identified based on a review of more than fifty evaluations of aid-supported activities in fragile situations. The selected cases include evaluations of specific aid programmes that permit an analysis of how pragmatism in management is related to positive results in fragile situations. Thus, the study is based on an analysis of aid programme evaluations in order to establish an understanding of what constitutes positive results, how aid programmes are managed and how the two are connected. The selection of the cases analysed here has been undertaken according to the following criteria:

- i Positive and significant results from aid-supported activities
- ii Discussion of aid management practices in relation to results
- iii Variation in aid-supported activities
- iv Variation in implementing donor agency
- v Variation in programme country

Aid activities may fail for many reasons, regardless of how they were managed. Accordingly, to establish the role and importance of aid management practices, the study concentrates on evaluations of successful activities (below we discuss what this means). Furthermore, the evaluations selected need to discuss aid management to some extent. This is not common practice, and often management issues are only discussed haphazardly or indirectly. In order to provide as comprehensive an analysis as possible, efforts were made to ensure that the case studies reflect the variety of sectoral activities undertaken in fragile situations. Of course, it was not possible to cover all sectors, but the study sought to ensure a broad scope by including both national and local activities, as well as programmes in both state-building/institutional development and different sectors. An attempt was also made to include examples from different donor agencies, as they each have their own concerns, mandates, protocols and home constituencies. Conclusions would be firmer if similar management practices could explain aid success in fragile situations across donor agencies.



## 1.4 Analytical framework

The definitions of positive results and of pragmatic aid management respectively is particularly important for the analysis.

Many different objectives and concerns guide aid-supported activities in fragile situations, and positive results or successes may accordingly be quite different things. However, to strive for consistency in the analysis across different cases, the study analyses them in four different respects. This may not do complete justice to the individual activities being analysed, but it aids the study in its attempt to build conclusions regarding aid in fragile situations in general. The four dimensions include:

- 1 *Poverty reduction*. Ideally, good results are achievements in terms of poverty reduction. Results in this respect are taken as an indicator of the best possible achievements of an aid intervention.
- 2 *State-building and capacity development*. According to DAC and many donors, these issues are crucial elements in fragile situations. They are seen as prerequisites for stability, service delivery, reasonable state–society relations and sustainable development (OECD/DAC 2007; 2008). The strengthening of legitimate and effective state institutions is therefore considered an important result of aid-supported activities.
- 3 *Aid effectiveness principles*. These principles, as stipulated in the Paris Declaration, have also been emphasised in fragile situations, where they are particularly difficult to achieve given the weakness of state institutions. Establishing alignment with sometimes absent policies and ownership in the context of overburdened civil servants and more or less illegitimate governments is clearly a challenge. Likewise, harmonisation of donor approaches is a big task in many fragile situations, where donor organisations argue for a mixture of humanitarian, security and development reasons. Nevertheless, the aid effectiveness principles are important for long-term state-building and development, though bypassing the state may sometimes be better in producing very immediate results. Given the long-term importance of the aid effectiveness principles and the difficulties in implementing them in fragile situations, the study considers results in this field to be significant achievements.
- 4 *Planned outputs*. Fragile situations are volatile and unpredictable. Achieving planned outputs under such circumstances is a challenge. Since planned outputs may not always turn out to be relevant for poverty reduction, fulfilling immediate objectives does not in itself represent a significant result, but given the conditions it is still well worth noticing.

The study does not in any way attempt to *measure* results, but searches evaluations for indications that ‘results were positive’ in these four respects.

Moreover, the study also relies on a particular understanding of pragmatic aid management as a basis for analysing the links between aid management and positive results. As already mentioned, the rationale for considering a pragmatic aid management approach lies in the fact that, especially in fragile situations, aid has to confront complex and highly multivariate contexts. What works in one place does not necessarily work in another. Pragmatism has the positive connotation of an approach that derives theory from practice and is thus grounded in actual experiences. But what would constitute a pragmatic approach to aid management? Table 1 sets out the specific characteristics that the present study considers define pragmatic aid management.

The five characteristics outlined in Table 1 can be used to identify pragmatic aid management practices. Essentially, pragmatic aid management is characterised by an ability to manage aid according to local conditions, rather than in agreement with official policies and blueprint development models.

Table I. Characteristics of pragmatic aid management

<b>Policy liberty</b>	The extent to which the portfolio of activities can be carried out with a certain level of liberty regarding the general, overarching policies of the aid agency. Such aid is more concerned about conforming to local opportunities than about implementing overall aid agency principles and policies. Local opportunities and general policies may resonate together, but when they do not, policy liberty means that aid management emphasises the former, not the latter.
<b>Flexibility</b>	This has to do with the ability to redirect resources and revise and change approaches during the execution of aid-supported activities. Development cooperation typically follows a project life-cycle according to which a project/ programme document is elaborated and subsequently implemented. The extent to which the course of action of that programme can deviate from its original plan during implementation and to which this change is made through a conscious management decision for the benefit of the project demonstrates flexibility.
<b>Responsiveness</b>	The extent to which consideration is given to the opinions and outlooks of partners, state institutions and beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation of aid programming determines the responsiveness of aid management practices. Responsiveness implies that locally expressed needs and concerns are deemed important in the conceptualisation of development underlying aid-supported activities. This necessarily requires an ability and willingness to listen and consider views that differ from previous assumptions and to act accordingly.
<b>Context Dependence</b>	The reliance of the conception of aid-supported activities on the historically and socially specific conditions, structures and institutions of a society determines whether or not aid management approaches are context-dependent. While most aid agencies typically have a large variety of development policies and strategies, context dependence requires aid interventions to be formulated and implemented on the basis of a thorough understanding of the society in which they are undertaken. Accordingly, it requires aid practitioners with the capacity and necessary time to analyse socio-economic conditions and change.

**Political Sensitivity**

This issue is related to context dependence, but it focuses on the political economy, power and political settlements in a country. Development is rarely politically neutral; it often benefits some and not others. Thus, development can be an object of political struggle, and an aid agency may sometimes be able to promote particular ideas about development when this opportunity is closed in other situations. The extent to which an aid agency has the ability to identify actors and opportunities that may further a development process which the agency supports determines whether or not it masters political sensitivity.

While certain aid agencies may have a strong organisational culture emphasising partnership, ownership and other principles favouring pragmatic aid management, this approach is often at odds with much other management practices that are based on general ideas about development and has a system of accountability that favours interests and views in the aid agency's home country. Accordingly, pragmatic aid management is a challenge and is sometimes disputed for political reasons ('the donor has the right to determine where and how its resources should be spent'). Moreover, as noted above, pragmatic aid management may constitute a significant challenge due to a lack of capacity. Sensitivity to local conditions requires time and specific knowledge – resources that donor agencies do not always have at their disposal. When this is the case, staff are often forced to rely on general policies and guidelines.

It is for these reasons that the five characteristics of pragmatic aid management mentioned above were chosen to inform the detailed analysis of the evaluation reports. The point is to uncover practices in programme management that qualify as pragmatic and to determine their relationship to the relative success of the programme in question. In turn, if such characteristics are revealed to be important explanatory variables, the study offers some support for the idea presented in the introduction. If not, other factors may be more important in explaining the relative success of aid-supported activities in fragile situations.

## 1.5 Methodological challenges

There are two methodological challenges that the study has grappled with. First, aid programme evaluations have their own criteria for measuring success, and these do not necessarily match the ones used in this report. Donor agencies subject their programmes to periodic evaluations. This has the twin aims of assessing the overall success of the respective aid-supported activity and providing some lessons learnt to inform future agency policy and programming. Thus, evaluations offer an appraisal of aid-supported activities and seek to identify the reasons which led to their success or failure. For the most part, aid programme assessments are based upon the five DAC evaluation criteria, outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria

<b>Relevance</b>	The extent to which the objectives of the aid activity are suitable for and consistent with the priorities and policies of the recipient and donor.
<b>Effectiveness and coverage</b>	The extent to which expected outputs and outcomes have been delivered and distributed
<b>Impact</b>	The intended and unintended changes in the local social, economic, environmental and other developmental indicators produced directly or indirectly by a development intervention.
<b>Efficiency and Coordination</b>	The extent to which the aid activity used the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results.
<b>Sustainability</b>	The extent to which the benefits of the aid activity continue after donor funding ceases.

Appraisals of aid-supported activities typically seek to evaluate the overall success of such activities according to these criteria. In so doing, many evaluations adopt an approach according to which they describe various positive aspects of the activities followed by a listing of shortcomings, unfulfilled objectives, waste, lack of coordination and sometimes negative consequences. The success of a programme is often balanced by some indication of where outcomes were disappointing, went below target, or led to a wasteful use of resources. As such, these assessments are rarely compiled so as to produce a clear overall opinion on the intervention and seldom provide a strong viewpoint regarding the merits or demerits of the programme in its entirety, that is,

from conception to implementation. This is, of course, quite understandable, given that it is impossible, and unproductive, to compare, for example, the development of new educational curricula with the physical construction of schools, which could be two elements of an education programme being evaluated. Positive results in one field cannot be measured unambiguously against a lack of results in another field. This is one reason why evaluations rarely conclude clearly whether aid-supported activities have been successful or not.

Moreover, few evaluations manage to say much about the actual impacts of aid interventions, despite this being an identified criterion by which to measure its success. It can be reasonably assumed that the ultimate goal of any development aid intervention is poverty reduction, but the review of various evaluation documents revealed that actual assessments of aid-supported activities are more concerned about budget execution and input and output in the context of immediate objectives than about the impact on poverty. Additionally, those evaluations that do seek to report on actual impact in terms of addressing poverty typically face a dearth of data. Aid-supported activities often suffer from poor monitoring: in many cases baseline studies are not undertaken, indicators are few and of little relevance, and data are gathered unsystematically. This is all the more acute in fragile situations.

In the context of fragility, it appears that the established criteria upon which measures of success are made presuppose what is to be considered successful. For example, the fact that effectiveness is a measure of the completion of pre-determined objectives presupposes that the programme is a success if it is completed as conceived in the first place. There may be no room for questioning the validity or appropriateness of that initial conception, nor for making adaptations should the situation on the ground change and require a new approach or new objectives. All criteria for evaluation are geared towards a framework of understanding that assumes that the completion of the project *as expected* is a value in itself. This, however, does not allow for adaptation to changing circumstances or realisations of poor assumptions that would lead one to re-evaluate pre-established intervention objectives for the better. The implication for this study is therefore that the very nature of the pragmatic aid management practices being analysed could be interpreted as 'negative' in such standardized evaluations of aid-supported activities.

A further challenge in assessing results is the complication, if not the impossibility, of comparing aid interventions across different sectors. For instance, how should results in relation to state-building be measured against the provision of more clean drinking water? Particularly in fragile situations, results are likely to be somewhat mixed, and comparing mixed results across sectors becomes rather dubious.

The discussion of results in this study should accordingly be treated with care. This is partly based on the evaluations' own assessments. Reports of evaluations of aid interventions in fragile situations have been selected for closer scrutiny when they conclude that remarkable or significant results have been achieved. Although the evaluations do not quantify the success of the aid-supported activities, the phrasing of the reports typically indicates whether the activities have produced relatively good results. As the teams conducting the evaluations have been close to the activities, this study gives some credit to their qualitative assessments.

The second methodological challenge is that only few evaluations discuss the management of aid-supported activities. To some extent, evaluations treat management issues as a black box between inputs and outputs, and rarely do they attempt to open it up. This is partly due to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria mentioned above and their failure to address the management of aid programmes. Yet, a reason may also be that donor agencies do not like external actors to assess their management practices, although such assessments could constitute valuable inputs for improving the work of the agencies. All in all, this dearth of explicit analyses of management issues in most evaluations has pushed the study to undertake a careful reading to pull out management-related observations in sections discussing other issues. However, this is again not ideal, as the basis for such observations is not always clear. There is a risk that minor issues are blown out of proportion and that the observations are of little general relevance.

In sum, the methodological difficulties of discussing the relationship between pragmatic aid management and positive results in fragile situations are considerable, and existing evaluation practices need to be significantly improved to enable firm conclusions to be made. The uneven quality of evaluation reports and the differences in approaches to determining development aid results meant that the choice of case studies was quite limited. The intention was to locate as many successful cases in fragile situations as possible and to make a selection to ensure geographical diversity, sectoral variety and variation in principle donor. As far as possible these criteria were observed, but the conclusions of the report remain tentative.

## **1.6 Outline of the report**

The report consists of analyses of individual case studies, followed by a concluding discussion (Chapter 5) outlining the main points regarding the relationship between pragmatic aid management and positive results in fragile situations. Each case study starts by presenting the aid-supported activity, its context, objectives, main activities and actors. The nature of the evaluation is also briefly discussed. Subsequently, the results of the activity are explored and an attempt made to identify the causes of these results. In this discussion, the analysis concentrates on the management of the support and its importance for the results achieved. In the last chapter, similarities and contradictions in the different cases are identified in order to establish general conclusions on the links between aid management and results.



## **2. Danish engagement in and around Somalia, 2006-10**

### **2.1 Context**

The analysis of this case is based on an evaluation of the total engagement by Danish International Development Assistance (Danida) in and around Somalia between 2006 and 2010. Starting in 2005, the Danish Regions of Origin Initiative (ROI) was rolled out to work with Somali refugees in neighbouring countries. The engagement was principally guided by the policy paper for Danish engagement in Somalia, drawn up retroactively in 2009, which reflected the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for the Somali national reconciliation process and the installation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) based in Mogadishu. The overall aim of Danish involvement as outlined in this paper was 'to support the development of a peaceful, moderate and democratic Somalia in sustainable pro-poor growth'. All in all, Danida's strategy of engagement over the period from 2006 to 2010 was guided by the 2009 Policy Paper, the ROI Strategic Frameworks, the Good Humanitarian Donor Principles and the Somalia Reconstruction and Development Programme.

The engagement took place in a very complex political and security context. While the UN, African Union, Arab League, European Union and wider international community recognised only a single 'Somalia', with Mogadishu as its administrative capital, the reality of the situation was quite different. The aid activity took place in a context in which Somalia was de facto divided into three zones: South and Central Somalia (SCS), Somaliland, and Puntland. The evaluation report cited SCS as having the characteristics of a collapsed state, and Somaliland and Puntland as being two fragile states. Indeed, at the time of the aid activity SCS had deteriorated into one of the world's worst humanitarian and security crises. While Somaliland and Puntland were more stable, each of their respective capitals, Hargeisa and Bossaso, were the targets of bombings in October 2008, with piracy escalating in Puntland over the evaluation period.

### *Objectives*

The strategic aim of the ROI was to provide protection and livelihoods to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees while promoting durable solutions for both groups. The ROI specifically sought to explore opportunities to engage in South and Central Somalia (SCS).

The evaluation report outlines the objectives of Danish assistance according to the 2009 Policy Paper as including:

<p><b>Increasing Danish funding and coverage</b></p>	<p>Retaining a strong Danish assistance engagement, including increasing bilateral assistance to DKK 50 million per annum from 2010, as well as increasing ROI efforts in and around Somalia to DKK 56 million in 2010. The increased assistance engagement can, for instance, be utilised to support activities in South and Central Somalia.</p>
<p><b>Making Danish assistance more effective</b></p>	<p>Organising activities in accordance with the OECD/ DAC's guiding principles for effective aid to weak states and other internationally ratified principles; this includes close collaboration and coordination with other donors in implementing efforts.</p>
<p><b>Being flexible and taking risks to support new activities</b></p>	<p>Displaying the necessary flexibility and willingness to take risks in order to facilitate support for significant activities.</p>

Moreover, specific objectives were outlined by each funding modality of Danish humanitarian assistance, the ROI Programme, as well as bilateral assistance. These were:

<p><b>Humanitarian Assistance</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continuing humanitarian assistance at a significantly high level in light of the development in the food crisis, the drought and in humanitarian needs;</li> <li>2. Ensuring that the humanitarian aid benefits the most vulnerable population groups and furthering the protection of civilians;</li> <li>3. Becoming more strongly involved as an advocate for the protection of the humanitarian space in Somalia.</li> </ol>
<p><b>ROI Programme</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exploring the possibilities for supporting activities in South and Central Somalia if better longer-term possibilities for lasting solutions emerge in these parts of the country;</li> <li>2. Ensuring better cohesion between the individual activities within the framework of a regional perspective.</li> </ol>

<b>Bilateral assistance</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthening the participation of all parts of society in the democratic process in Somalia, including Somaliland and Puntland;</li> <li>2. Supporting the build-up of political institutions at the local, national and regional levels, with the aim of supporting the peace process;</li> <li>3. Contributing to the continued reconciliation process;</li> <li>4. Contributing to the implementation of activities directly linked with the transition period, inter alia the drafting of a new constitution;</li> <li>5. Maintaining efforts that benefit local communities, including support for the education of children and the promotion of women's rights;</li> <li>6. Initiating employment and growth-promoting economic activities.</li> </ol>
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### *Framework of engagement*

Denmark's assistance in and around Somalia was thus framed by several national guidelines, most notably the 2009 Policy Paper (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009), but also by a number of international and Somalia-specific strategic frameworks. These included a variety of documents that set out strategies and principles for effective engagement in Somalia or in fragile states more generally. This elaborate list of different policies and guidelines illustrates how complex the strategic framework is for becoming involved in a difficult situation such as Somalia's, where one set of guiding principles in itself is not always sufficient. But it also illustrates that a great many partly overlapping Danish and international strategies and guidelines have been elaborated to cover a country such as Somalia.

### *Actors and management*

The management responsibility was shared between Copenhagen and the Danish Embassy in Nairobi. Other MFA stakeholders, including the embassy in Addis Ababa, also played a role. Danida was one of the first donors to decentralise its aid management, in line with Paris Declaration principles. However, for security reasons, Denmark had no official presence within Somalia. Thus authority over Danida's funding modalities was allocated to both the MFA's Department of Humanitarian Assistance and Civil Society (HUC) and the Nairobi embassy. In addition, the following MFA units were involved in the cooperation: Centre for Global Challenges, Centre for Africa, Asia, Americas and the Middle East, Centre for Global Security,

Centre for Development Policy, and the embassies in New York (for liaison with the UN), Brussels (for liaison with the EC), Kampala and Addis Ababa.

A particular characteristic of Danida's aid management, and concomitantly its funding to Somalia, was that, once the three funding modalities had been established in the annual Finance Act, there was no flexibility for making transfers between them.

In total, Danida aid to Somalia has been channelled through 21 partners, including nine UN organisations. Multilateral organisations received 48% of total budgetary expenditures, Danish NGOs 38%, other international NGOs 7%, and government administration and departments 3%.

### *The evaluation*

The aim of the evaluation was to focus on assessing the relevance, effectiveness and organisational efficiency of Danida's programming in order to generate lessons learnt and make recommendations. It was guided by the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. It is important to note that *assessing impact* was considered to be outside the scope of the evaluation.

The evaluation report presented its assessment of the overall relevance and effectiveness of Danida's policy objectives in relation to the three funding modalities: the ROI, humanitarian assistance and bilateral assistance. Here, the evaluation was specifically concerned with the extent to which Danida's engagement in and around Somalia had been relevant to the Somali context, as well as its overall success in achieving its set objectives.

The evaluation did specifically consider the extent to which Danida's aid management contributed to achieving the overall goal of supporting 'the development of a peaceful, moderate, and democratic Somalia in sustainable pro-poor growth'. Specifically it sought to evaluate the extent to which Danish assistance in and around Somalia was coherent, flexible, innovative, timely and efficient, and it also tried to identify its main strengths and weaknesses.

## 2.2 Results

The general conclusion of the evaluation was positive. The report sought to evaluate Danida's achievements in Somalia with reference to funding modality, region and way of working or management. Based on these three assessments, the general conclusions were drawn. The main arguments behind the positive evaluation were associated with the breadth of assistance and coverage, aid effectiveness and sustainability.

First, despite the challenging operating environment, Danida continued to provide much needed humanitarian assistance in SCS and contributed to the development of a potentially highly effective donor coordination mechanism for on-going humanitarian assistance to Somalia – the Common Humanitarian Fund. Second, the ROI funding mechanism enabled Danida to extend its activities beyond humanitarian support to displaced peoples and focus on community development, capacity development and advocacy with local authorities. Third, Danida managed to overcome in part the political restrictions that come with engagement in Somaliland by combining ROI-funded interventions with support through Interpeace and the Danish Refugee Council in particular.

The evaluation deemed Danish engagement in Somalia to be aligned with its overall policy objectives. It is important to note that the evaluation did not justify its conclusions in terms of impacts. It did, however, consider the extent of assistance. In this regard the report was positive, stating that Danida had achieved a remarkable level and range of engagement, with its funding portfolio comprising over 15 partners and 23 interventions over the evaluation period. The evaluation also remarked that Danida was successful in providing continued and much needed humanitarian assistance in SCS.

In terms of aid effectiveness, the report considered that Danida was committed to coordination with other donors, which was seen as positive, but it also noted that transaction costs were very high. The report did not address the potential development impacts of such coordination, but only considered the ease and costs associated with attempts to harmonise activities with those of other donors. Danida's interventions in Somalia were also deemed relatively coherent in the sense that there were no apparent overlaps or contradictory approaches.

According to the evaluation by funding modality, the ROI's strategic objective to provide protection to IDPs and refugees was largely achieved, though its aim in

providing durable solutions failed to meet expectations. However, this should not necessarily be seen as a poor success in itself. When ROI was initially rolled out to Somalia, the focus was on the prospects for the return of refugees, which substantially weakened as a result of continuing conflict over the evaluation period. As a result, many ROI-funded activities supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and host communities moved away from the ROI strategic definition of 'durable solutions' over the evaluation period. Instead a more realistic approach was preferred, combining assistance to refugee/IDP camps with community-driven reconstruction and development-based activities in areas affected by internal displacement and/or prone to conflict. The report also states that, for these reasons, Danida's engagement in Somalia did not achieve the specific ROI objectives set out in the Somalia Policy Paper either.

The evaluation found the approach to the geographical distribution of funds relevant to the Somali context. No ROI support was provided in SCS, for the conditions there meant that the limited funds available were better spent elsewhere and that assistance to IDPs in SCS could be directed through humanitarian channels. Interestingly, the report mentions that there were areas within SCS that were more stable and thus suitable for the receipt of ROI funding, and at certain periods, conditions in the South were also suitable for such funds. However, the report also qualified this by saying that these windows of opportunity were too short to permit a move from humanitarian support to ROI.

The evaluation concludes that success in ROI funding interventions was dependent on the zones in which they operated. In other words, the success of the programme as such was uneven, and Danida had been unable to pursue a coherent and strategic vision of how to apply an ROI approach in the Somali case as a whole.

The objectives Danida sought to attain with regard to humanitarian assistance rested on an assumption that peace and stability would return to the region. This did not materialise, thus curbing the potential for Danida to meet its planned objectives in the first place.

The evaluation celebrated Danida's willingness to accept risks associated with providing humanitarian aid to al-Shabaab-controlled areas. Increasing humanitarian funding to Somalia from 2008 also increased Danida's profile in the humanitarian community. A measure of success in the report relates to the ability of Denmark, despite being a

relatively small donor, to ‘punch above its weight’, thus raising the profile of Danida on the international donor scene. Danida’s role in donor coordination for Somalia was also highly appreciated by the international community.

In line with the four criteria for success outlined in the introduction to this report (poverty reduction, state-building and capacity development, aid effectiveness and planned outputs), the evaluation reports positive outputs, especially in state-building and capacity development and with respect to aid effectiveness. Specifically the Danida-supported activities in Somaliland focusing on democratisation and local governance were considered successful and were received locally with widespread popular support and appreciation. Danida’s support of the Somaliland National Electoral Commission was also seen as highly effective. Furthermore, a Danida-supported local partnership was reported as having generated innovative action-oriented research into conflict and peace specifically in the Somali context. Moreover, in Puntland, successful support to state-building initiatives included improvements in court performance. This resulted in a reported fifty per cent increase in the use of the courts between 2007 and 2009, reflecting growing confidence in the ability of the Puntland authorities to administer justice. The evaluation report offers limited information on the other criteria with the exception of aid effectiveness, where Danida’s contributions to donor coordination received much greater praise.

### **2.3 Reasons for results**

The section of the evaluation report that provides an analysis of ‘Danida’s ways of working’ serves to assess the extent to which a link can be made between the management and the results of the aid-supported activities. In line with the aim of this report on the linkages between pragmatic aid management and results, the evaluation sought to assess the extent to which ‘Danish assistance in and around Somalia [had been] coherent, flexible, innovative, timely, and efficient’ (Danida 2011: 15).

In terms of strategic management, the report found that there was a high level of strategic thinking on the part of those responsible for Danida’s engagement with Somalia, but limited strategic planning for the engagement as a whole. That is, Danida’s engagement consisted of collection of separate interventions that were generally relevant to the context individually, but this did not collectively provide a well-articulated, coherent approach to Danida’s activities in Somalia.

In terms of management responsibility, while formally decentralised, there were indications that management of the ROI was in practice a collective responsibility assumed by both Copenhagen and Nairobi. The report also stated that the use of different funding instruments with shared management responsibilities between Nairobi and Copenhagen presented a management challenge as it created confusion, especially in relation to the ROI, about where responsibility, and in turn accountability, exactly lay. The report states that, as Somalia increased in strategic importance, decision-making was 're-centralised'.

### *Policy liberty*

According to the evaluation, the intervention in Somalia did not seem to have much policy liberty per se in that it was guided by a complex collection of guidelines and policy documents. Yet at the same time, the evaluation refers to a 'relative policy vacuum for much of the evaluation period', given that there was no 'overarching Danida country policy' (ibid.: 53) with respect to Somalia. This is presented as part of the explanation for why individual instruments were strategically well adapted to the context but did not collectively provide a coherent approach. Thus in reality it seems that some policy liberty characterised these activities, but to some extent the evaluation views this as a problem, although it does not specify clearly why a coherent overall approach was important. As long as the different activities did not overlap with or contradict each other – which they seemingly did not – the overall coherence may be an administrative concern rather than a developmental one.

### *Flexibility*

According to its implementing partners, Danida's support was characterised by a lot of flexibility within the individual instruments. However, the rigidities involving Danida's three funding modalities meant that the relative allocations between them during the evaluation period could not be fully reflective of the highly complex and fluid realities on the ground across and within each of Somalia's different zones. Still, Danida demonstrated flexibility in its use of the ROI. While there was rigidity between funding mechanisms, Danida used the ROI flexibly to accommodate other strategic priorities identified for its engagement in Somalia, allowing key interventions concerned with bilateral assistance to take place over the evaluation period. Despite the rigidity of the funding modalities and the complexity of supporting state institutions in Somaliland that were not internationally recognized, it seems that flexibility was a major characteristic of Denmark's aid management.



### *Responsiveness*

Two elements appear to have reduced the responsiveness of Denmark's assistance to Somalia. First, the evaluation argues that Denmark's and other donors' bilateral development assistance was built on the assumption that service delivery through the Somali authorities would increase their legitimacy and that this would lead to peace. However, this was not the case in SCS. On the contrary, 'slow progress in providing basic needs delivery, the deteriorating security situation, and allegations of corruption and human rights abuse by TFG have combined to reinforce public perceptions that TFG has no legitimacy beyond that conferred by international recognition' (ibid.: 41). While the support provided may have corresponded to the interests of the TFG, it did not respond to the concerns of actors outside Mogadishu. Thus, the assumptions about how to achieve progress in a conflict zone seem to have been erroneous and to have out-competed an aid management trying to be responsive to broader segments of Somali society.

Secondly, and partly explaining the above, Danish assistance was channelled through a large number of partners that were responsible for the actual activities. In the conflict-affected areas, these partners depended on 'remote management' due to the security risks. This very arm's-length management, combined with Danida having very few staff in the region, evidently limited the scope for responsive aid management.

On the other hand, it should be mentioned that Danida seems to have played a significant role in facilitating international and regional responses to the developments in Somalia: 'Danida-coordinated support for IGAD and the African Union was seen as immediately relevant to the Somalia peace process' (ibid.: 40) and in relation to both Somalia in general and Somaliland in particular, Danida was instrumental in facilitating donor coordination. Thus, it could be argued that Danida was responsive at the levels where it had a direct presence.

### *Context dependence*

There are some indications of context sensitivity in the Danish engagement in Somalia. Denmark was one of few donors willing to provide humanitarian assistance inside SCS, where the need was greatest. Denmark's assistance also relied on partners with substantial experience of Somalia, and the ROI programme changed objectives when it was realised that refugees would not be in a position to return home as was hoped at the start of the programme. This shows an ability to adjust to changing circumstances and alter the focus of the aid intervention accordingly to ensure that its objectives

remain valid. Finally, it should be mentioned that the assistance was adapted to the different circumstances in the different parts of Somalia. The evaluation thus praises the support to governance and state-building in Somaliland and Puntland.

However, the aim of supporting state-building and democratisation in SCS at a time of continued conflict appears to have been based less on a thorough understanding of the context, which was also limited by Danida's 'palpably low capacity' to engage effectively across all its areas of potential and existing interest' (ibid.: 66).

### *Political sensitivity*

Certain signs of political sensitivity include the point mentioned by the evaluation that Danida has not passed legislation criminalizing financial support to al-Shabaab (ibid.: 65). As this organisation controlled most parts of SCS, criminalizing this organization would have prevented Danida from supporting activities in the area. The evaluation also commends the close and trusting relationship that developed between Danida and its implementing partners that enabled the latter to take advantage of sudden opportunities.

However, the fact that most support has been managed either from the Danish embassy in Nairobi or from head office in Copenhagen substantially limited the agency's ability to follow political developments in Somalia. Undoubtedly, much relevant information can be gathered in Nairobi, but a physical presence in some form and somewhere inside Somalia would enable a much more intimate understanding of the main political actors and opportunities in the country.

## **2.4 Concluding remarks**

The evaluation report states that the unbureaucratic, risk-taking and flexible nature of Danida's engagement in relation to the implementing partners was a strength that characterized the management of Danida's aid to Somalia over the evaluation period. Specifically, Danida used the ROI flexibly to accommodate different strategic priorities, even though rigidities involving the three funding modalities meant that they could not fully accommodate the highly complex and fluid realities on the ground, across and within each of Somalia's different zones.

The evaluation report highlights three main explanations for the positive overall assessment it attributed to the programme. Firstly, it states that the 'bottom-up' approach to state-building was conducive to alignment with local priorities in a

post-conflict situation such as that of Somaliland and Puntland. Secondly, the success of the Danida programme is attributed to its coordination and partnership with other stakeholders. Specifically, Danida's ability to forge mutually beneficial partnerships based on trust and transparency is seen as a key aspect of its relative success. Furthermore, the use of the Common Humanitarian Fund allowed for a strategic, prioritised and well-coordinated approach. Thirdly, the evaluation highlights the 'whole of government' approach whereby Danida combined political dialogue with humanitarian and development assistance. This approach enabled Danida to engage in Somalia with a variety of instruments at its disposal and accordingly to pick an appropriate tool depending on the specifics of the context.

Along different dimensions, Danida's approach seems to reflect pragmatic aid management as defined in this report. A certain policy liberty, a large amount of flexibility and a concern for context-dependent support all characterise Denmark's involvement in and around Somalia. However, in terms of responsiveness and political sensitivity, the limited number of Danida staff and remote aid management by Danida and some of its implementing partners reduced the pragmatism of the engagement. The evaluation largely ascribes the relative success of the engagement to flexibility and context dependence. Yet, it also emphasises Danida's willingness to engage in donor coordination and to support regional initiatives in relation to Somalia. Thus, Danida's relative success here may partly be ascribed to its quite pragmatic approach combined with its strong cooperation with other stakeholders and partners.

### **3. Development cooperation between Mozambique and Denmark, 1992-2006**

#### **3.1 Context**

This case study is based upon the evaluation of the entirety of Danish aid to Mozambique from 1992 until 2006. Specifically, it is based upon the principal evaluation report and one of its working papers – Working Paper 11 on the Management of the Danida Programme. The evaluation report assesses the achievements against the overall development objectives of poverty reduction as outlined in the strategies for development in Mozambique and the Danish country strategies for Mozambique. The Working Paper seeks to assess the management of bilateral development assistance by the MFA to Mozambique during the evaluation period. It specifically focuses on the organisation, systems and approaches of the MA and the Danish Embassy in Mozambique in order to examine how these institutions adapted and managed the aid programme in Mozambique in response to changes in the aid environment over the fourteen-year period.

The case has been selected partly due to the relatively positive results of the Danish support to Mozambique, partly because Mozambique for most if not all of the period evaluated must be characterised as fragile, and partly because the evaluation includes considerations of aid management.

Denmark's bilateral development cooperation with Mozambique was initiated in the 1970s. Initially Danish support was focused on agriculture, fisheries, water supply and vocational training, as well as support for the rehabilitation of both social and physical infrastructure. Humanitarian assistance also formed a prominent part of Danish support to the war-torn country in the 1980s. However, following the implementation of the peace agreement in 1992, development cooperation was implemented through larger and longer term development programmes within selected sectors. It is this phase that the evaluation is concerned with.

At the beginning of the evolution period Mozambique was in the process of liberalizing its economy, yet foreign exchange dealings were still highly restricted. In this context, balance of payment support from international financial institutions (IFIs) was necessary to support the currency, facilitate imports and, by way of the counterpart funds generated, finance government expenditure. Between 1992 and 1999, Danida

implemented five financial aid programmes, all classified as balance of payments (BOP) support or import support. In 1996, a sixth programme run jointly with the Netherlands was Mozambique's first debt-relief operation. The seventh programme was also a collaborative effort with other donors and was the subject of a joint review of BOP aid provided by Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Lastly, starting in 2000, Danida undertook a series of budget support operations aimed at backing Mozambique's PRSP/Strategy for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty.

The main category of Danish aid to Mozambique was bilateral assistance in the form of project, sector and budget support. This included support through private companies and technical assistance. The bilateral programmes were managed administratively by the Country Office in Copenhagen together with the embassy in Maputo until 2003, when most aid management responsibilities were delegated to the embassy. Total Danish assistance to Mozambique in the evaluation period was distributed as follows:

- Country programme 77%
- NGOs 9%
- Advisers 5%
- Mifresta 5%
- Humanitarian assistance 3%
- Private sector 1%

#### *Framework of the engagement*

Danish aid to Mozambique over the evaluation period was not strictly governed by formal strategy documents. Country strategies only became a prominent feature for Danida in the mid-1990s. Moreover, only two such documents were adopted by Danida for Mozambique during the evolution period, that is, in 1995 and 2000. According to the evaluation report, these strategies guided the process and plans for aid support delivery, but were not regarded as providing rigid directives for resource allocation.

#### *Actors and management*

During the course of the evaluation period, there were significant changes in the way Danish aid was managed. In 2003, Danish embassies in programme cooperation countries assumed a much greater responsibility for country-level strategy and the administration of aid programmes. With this came a system whereby agreed work plans or performance agreements were put in place and monitored by the quality assurance section (KVA) of the MFA. Most observers regarded this important change

in aid management modalities as positive. Furthermore, aid management in Mozambique now demands a more collective effort among aid agencies (the harmonisation agenda), which influences the need for staff resources and certain skills both at the embassy level and among programme staff. The evaluation report mentioned that the 2003 decentralisation was not accompanied by any increases in staffing, and in fact the number of professional posts in Maputo declined, putting increased pressure on the administration of the programme.

Denmark was an early advocate and practitioner of partnership with recipient governments and of the use of government systems to build capacity and promote ownership. Danida was one of the first aid organisations to design programmes at the sectoral level rather than focus on isolated projects.

### *The evaluation*

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to assess achievements against the overall development objectives of poverty reduction as formulated in the strategies for development in Mozambique and in the Danish country strategies (Lister et al. 2008). In particular, the evaluation seeks to analyse the effectiveness of Danish aid in adapting its development activities to the rapidly changing conditions in post-war Mozambique. While the report is concerned with activities from 1992 to 2006, its main focus is on the period from 2000 onwards. The evaluation takes into account Mozambique's national policies as well as the activities of other donors and is based on the five standard evaluation criteria used by the OECD/DAC outlined in the introduction to this report.

The evaluation considered four levels of analysis, namely:

- 1 Context, framework conditions and effects of the combined development efforts made by the Government of Mozambique and its development partners;
- 2 Combined donor efforts and their effects on development trends in Mozambique;
- 3 The contribution of Danish-financed activities to Mozambique's development; and,
- 4 Implementation modalities and follow-up to Danish development cooperation with Mozambique.

*Working Paper 11* on Danida Programme Management (Visti 2008) reports on the overall institutional framework and flow of funds to the Danish aid programme in Mozambique. In so doing, it attempts to link aspects of staffing and technical assistance, modalities of engagement, and systems of aid management to the effectiveness of the

programme over the years. Specifically, it seeks to link these issues to the ability of the Danida programme to meet new challenges that arise in a changing aid environment.

### *Programme Management*

According to the Working Paper on Danida Programme Management, the key entities in the MFA and the management of the programme changed over the course of its implementation. The two key departments framing the management of aid assistance until 2003 were the Country Office and the Technical Advisory Services (TSA). In the first eleven years of the period being evaluated, the Country Office played an important role in the management and administration of the programme. More specifically it was in charge of the programme and acted as liaison between the embassy and the decision-making bodies in the MFA, and until 2002 it was also in charge of budgets and accounts. After 2002, one larger office responsible for Southern, Eastern and West Africa was established, which reduced the aid management role of the head office, as responsibilities were delegated to the embassy. Similarly, until 2003 TSA were in charge of recruiting staff for all short-term missions and were in close dialogue with most of the resource base over the programme. Subsequently TSA came to have a smaller role in the cooperation, primarily appraising sector programme proposals developed by the embassy.

## **3.2 Results**

The evaluation found that the overall programme had been successful and had made a valuable contribution to Mozambique's progress. Over the evaluation period, macroeconomic growth in Mozambique was impressive, poverty reduction significant, and social service coverage improved. Moreover, the evaluation found that aid in general had contributed explicitly to the rehabilitation, expansion and operation of public infrastructure and services, as well as to the development of public institutions. Danida's aid involvement in Mozambique is seen to be of high quality and as having contributed explicitly to rehabilitation, expansion and operation of public infrastructure and services in the country over the evaluation period.

In accordance with the evaluation scheme outlined in the report, which considered *relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impact/results; sustainability; coherence and complementarity*, Danida's interventions are generally assessed positively. In terms of relevance, most of Danida's support, which was typically linked carefully to the Mozambican government's priorities, was deemed 'clearly relevant to the relief and reduction of poverty' (Lister et al. 2008: 23). The specific elements of the programme

that are seen as strongly relevant include humanitarian relief; early support to the restoration of infrastructure; the focus on basic education, health and agricultural services; the focus on provinces with greatest need; and support for the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS.

The positive assessment of the Danish involvement in Mozambique over the years was also attributed to its effectiveness. The strongly effective elements included inter alia the humanitarian work and rehabilitation in the early years, including the restoration of social and physical infrastructure in Tete province; the support to the recurrent costs of education and health; macroeconomic support and debt relief; and Denmark's role more broadly in the creation of the Programme Aid Partnership scheme and its associated mechanisms of government–donor dialogue.

The Danida programme was assessed to be efficient. That is, Danish assistance to Mozambique had been efficiently aligned with national policies (PRSP) and harmonised with aid from other donors. Specifically it was deemed that resources and inputs (funds, expertise, time etc.) were generally converted into results in an economic manner. The specific geographical focus on Tete, the attention paid to recurrent costs and capital cost requirements, and the strong focus on planning, budgeting and monitoring capacity in the education and health sectors were factors listed as enhancing efficiency. Indeed, the strengthening of planning and budgeting systems, as well as Denmark's economic advocacy for Mozambique, its pioneering of debt relief and its role in developing budget support as an aid modality, strengthened the efficiency and effectiveness of the aid programme. Contrary to this, however, the evaluation found that Danida had not always carried through the degree of concentration and streamlining between and within sectors that its strategies had called for, thus reducing the efficiency of the programme.

According to the evaluation, Danida's interventions in general have been influenced by a concern for sustainability. This is manifest in a systematic preference for working with government institutions rather than on stand-alone projects, as well as for linking interventions to coherent national and sector policies whenever possible. Danida has committed itself to long-term support for Mozambican institutions by focusing on governance and environmental management. While the evaluation report does not make a clear statement regarding the sustainability of the programme, the discussion concerning the choice of modalities seem to indicate that the programme resulted in the increased and sustained organisational capacity of national and local institutions, or at least that the planning of the programme was conducive to sustainability.



Regarding coherence, the evaluation addresses the dynamics of building relationships and the consistency between interventions supported by Danida and the wider activities of the government and other aid partners. The evaluation found the programme to be coherent and highlighted the positive influence of the design of programmes which were strongly aligned with the priorities established in sectoral and national plans, as well as in playing a leading role in anchoring its activities in sector programmes.

In terms of the criteria of successful development aid programming set out in the introduction to this report, Danida's programme in Mozambique seems to have performed strongly on more accounts. Notably in health, education and energy, results appear to include poverty reduction or at least mitigation in rural areas. The programme has also helped build the state in strengthening service delivery, planning capacity and macro-economic balance. Moreover, the programme has played an important role in stimulating Mozambican ownership, as well as harmonisation among donors. The degree of overall efficiency and effectiveness also seems to be significant. Notable negative effects, however, include a total lack of results in the fisheries sector, two instances of withholding budgetary support due to a court case involving Danish citizens in 2004 and dissatisfaction with the financial management of Danish funds in 2006. The evaluation states that 'both of these actions [withholding funds] were an abuse of the budget support system, and rightly damaged Danida's reputation and credibility' (Lister et al. 2008: 16).

The evaluation goes on to note:

Apart from these blemishes, Denmark's financial support was an extremely valuable component of its aid to Mozambique. Financial support was highly relevant to Mozambique's needs in supporting macroeconomic stabilisation and reform and easing the constraints of the government budget. The Danish financial support operations were valuable in themselves, but their wider benefits in setting a pattern for other donors were probably even greater. (ibid.)

In the present context, this is a particularly interesting set of results. As noted above, Danish assistance included repeated balance of payments support during the 1990s, a period when the Mozambiquan state was very weak and the stability of the country highly unpredictable. Accordingly, this kind of support was fraught with risk, yet it seems to have had significantly positive results. As another publication noted about this particular experience:

There is a need to address the main problems during post-conflict reconstruction: how to break internal debt circulation and how to pay for recurrent costs, both of which require the use of budget-like support. An important by-consequence is that recurrent cost payment in key service provision areas addresses three fundamental legitimacy and authority problems that all post-conflict societies encounter: first, it creates formal jobs [...]; second, it gets soldiers and the younger generations activated [...]; third, if allowed to be used for policing, it creates formal employment and training in an area where most demobilized soldiers will try to get a job and where local perceptions of legitimacy and authority count the most – local crime management and security provision. (Buur and Flentø 2011: 4)

The financing of recurrent costs is notable given that, because of sustainability concerns, donors typically prefer to leave that kind of financing to the national budget. In fragile situations, however, it may be relevant, albeit risky, to pursue such support.

### **3.3 Reasons for results**

How can the above-mentioned results be explained? Concentrating on the 1990s, it seems that aid managers have enjoyed considerable *policy liberty*. Danish aid to Mozambique was not governed strictly by formal strategy documents. In the early 1990s, Danish assistance to Mozambique was primarily seen as support to a front-line state and as part of the struggle against apartheid – a relatively significant political priority in Denmark at the time. The working paper on aid management describes a strategy document for 1988-1993 as follows:

As a management tool, the strategy appears pragmatic – appearing as a very open overarching framework for possible new initiatives; [...] Denmark will be working in the sectors of agriculture, industry, fishery, transport, water, education and health.’ (Visti 2008: 18)

The broad framework is probably linked partly to the immense needs in Mozambique at the time and partly to the ‘widespread enthusiasm’ (p. 19) following the peace agreement and the political changes in Mozambique and southern Africa more generally. Moreover, it seems that aid management was influenced by domestic politics in Denmark less in the early 1990s. An embassy staff member recalls: ‘Work was less politicised then and it was as if there was more respect of development assistance in the various sectors as a professional and specialised trade’ (Visti 2008: 20).

The strategy for Danish assistance to Mozambique in 1995-1999 was more detailed and 'provided less room for interpretation and less scope for new initiatives' (Visti 2008: 21) Conversely, it put greater emphasis on working through Mozambican institutions, a theme which was not very significant in the first half of the 1990s. While it was a country office in headquarters that had the formal responsibility for programme management in this period, in reality day-to-day management was in the hands of the embassy. The paper also observes that, while the Ambassador had to be involved in all major decisions, 'there was a high degree of delegation of power to staff' (Visti 2008: 19). Overall, policy liberty appears to have been significant in the 1990s.

Policy liberty was complemented by an important degree of *flexibility*. Many observers outside the Danish embassy seem to believe that this is the most important characteristic of Danida as reflected in its ability to respond quickly to sound requests for funds (Lister et al. 2008: 63). Two points explaining this are mentioned. First, the country programme was a rolling one in the 1990s, with considerable room for manoeuvrability and scope for annual adjustments. Secondly, Danida can reallocate unspent money within a programme relatively easily. Moreover, Mozambique was considered to be able to absorb funds effectively. At a different level, however, Danish assistance to Mozambique is described as inflexible. The paper on aid management notes that:

Overall, Danida has displayed a surprisingly cautious approach to making changes to its aid programme. A more innovative and flexible approach should be considered. (Visti 2008: 33)

This conclusion is based on the inability of Danida to concentrate its assistance on fewer sectors, despite this being a recurrent theme throughout the evaluation period. The flexibility called for here is of a more strategic nature, but it is interesting to note that strategic inflexibility of this sort may coexist with an ability to reallocate funds within programmes.

Regarding *responsiveness* to local views, the evidence seems to be mixed. On the one hand, country strategies in the 1990s were predominantly influenced by Danish organisations. Mozambican ownership only emerged as a concern late in the period, and the choice of sectors appears to have reflected Danida and Danish stateholder interests (Visti 2008: 23). On the other hand, Danida 'was always careful to link its activities to GOM priorities' (Lister et al. 2008: 23), and the evaluation seems to link

the relative success of certain activities to the relationship between Danida and the government of Mozambique:

*Danida has made a substantial contribution to public sector reform, to the improvement of public finance management and to the strengthening of analytical capacity in government. Denmark's long and close relationship with the government has facilitated these interventions.' (ibid.: 19)*

Thus, the management of Danish aid in the 1990s was probably quite responsive 'on the ground', but less so at the policy level.

*Context dependence* appears to be a rather important feature of Danish aid, given that it provided unusual assistance on at least two accounts during the 1990s. Both the balance of payments support and the readiness to pay for recurrent costs indicate an ability to understand the context and its development needs, a willingness to react accordingly, and a readiness to abandon normal practices.

Danida showed an early appreciation of the importance of recurrent cost financing and of the constraints on the GOM budget. Denmark had pioneered support to recurrent expenditures in Tete. (An RDE informant recalled: *We said there is no point in doing the maintenance programme if you don't also pay the salaries for the teachers. And it was allowed! A year later we did the same for nurses. You can argue a lot in front of a Danida Board when per capita GDP is USD 80.*) (ibid.: 77)

There are some indications that this ability to understand the context may have been challenged in later years. Though highly appreciated on many accounts, embassy staff report that the decentralisation of aid management to embassies in 2003 increased inappropriately the workload related to budgets, accounting and reporting to headquarters. A programme manager is cited: 'We spend 65% of our time serving Copenhagen' (Visti 2008: 27). A scarcity of human resources available for non-administrative matters is likely to weaken the context dependence of aid management.

To some degree, Danish assistance to Mozambique also reflects *political sensitivity*. In the first years of the intervention, Danida provided successful support to the peace process and was an important dialogue partner with the Government of Mozambique. There is little doubt that Denmark's strong support for the anti-apartheid

movement, the presence of Danish NGOs during the civil war in Mozambique and the Danish willingness to take risks in the years after the peace agreement created some level of confidence between the Government of Mozambique and the Danish embassy. But it is especially with respect to the relationship between Mozambique and other donors that Danida seems to have demonstrated political sensitivity. In 1995, it played a part in making IMF and World Bank policies more relevant to the context in Mozambique, and 'it has gained respect and appreciation for the role it has played, supporting politically fraught processes of reform and sector coordination' (Lister et al. 2008: 94).

### **3.4 Concluding remarks**

The evaluation report commended Danida's persistence and willingness to remain engaged with the same partners, sectors and issues over long periods of time. This was seen as contributing significantly to service delivery in both the health and education sectors, and it was central in strengthening planning and management systems for both sectors. The same persistence is, however, also criticised when Danida has continued support to, for example, fisheries despite the meagre results. Nevertheless, the long-term perspective on cooperation between the two countries is probably an important aspect explaining the relative success.

Based on the evaluation report, it seems that Danish support to Mozambique in the 1990s to a large extent lived up to this study's criteria of pragmatic aid management. In terms of policy liberty, context dependence and political sensitivity, the management of Danish aid was highly pragmatic. In terms of flexibility and responsiveness, there was a difference between policy and implementation. Within projects and programmes, aid was managed flexibly and responsively, but at the policy level the influence of Danish stakeholders affected the degree of pragmatism that was attained.

Regardless of the finer details of aid management, Danish support to Mozambique in the 1990s should undoubtedly be assessed in the broader context of Denmark's wholehearted support of the anti-apartheid movement. There was a high degree of common values and goals between Denmark and the Frelimo government, which was also supported strongly by Danish NGOs in the country. Denmark was not a 'neutral' donor, but rather a political ally. While this may have changed gradually, the relative level of confidence between the two parties probably facilitated Danida's rather pragmatic aid management in the 1990s.

## **4. The education sector in Afghanistan**

### **4.1 Context**

The purpose of the evaluation (Taylor, Jespersen et al. 2012) of Danish support to education in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2010 was to assess Danida's contribution by considering the strategy, implementation and results of the programmes. Denmark has provided development assistance to the reconstruction of Afghanistan since 2001 and has been specifically active in the education sector since 2003, mainly through bilateral programmes.

The aid intervention took place in a context of extremely poor education indicators: literacy has never risen above 25%, and the state has played a very limited role in the provision of education. Islamic traditions are well entrenched, and religious leaders exert influence over the political, social and cultural life of local communities. Accordingly, educational development in Afghanistan has long reflected the religious and traditional nature of society. While the constitution of 1964 made basic education compulsory, a robust education system was never established. In the decades of conflict following the Soviet invasion of 1979, the majority of school buildings were destroyed or damaged, and many qualified teachers were killed or left the country. During this time, two parallel education systems operated, one provided by the Soviets and the other by the Mujahedeen groups with Western support.

The Soviet efforts to provide education were met with resistance. The pro-Marxist ideology clashed with Afghan religious and social values, creating scepticism and distrust of schools and teachers by resistance activists. The end of the Soviet occupation in 1989 did not improve the situation either. Rather, factional conflict between Mujahedeen parties resulted in the destruction of the remaining education infrastructure, further delaying the reconstruction of the country. The already crippled education system was further dismantled when the Taliban took control: female participation was banned, leading to a significant reduction in support from the international donor community, and formal and informal schools across Afghanistan were converted into madrassas under the direction of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Thus in 2001, at the time of the implementation of Danish development aid, the education sector was not only dysfunctional, but needed to be rebuilt entirely. It is this early period of Danish support that is the subject of the present study, primarily because it is best documented.

### *Objectives of the engagement*

The focus of Danish assistance to Afghanistan's education sector evolved over the evaluation period. The first bilateral agreement on education, the Primary Education Programme Support (PEPS) of 2003 to 2006, had five components: teacher development, physical infrastructure, curriculum development, provision of education materials and administrative reform of the Ministry of Education (MoE). It was recommended that the bulk of the Danish support for the MoE be on-budget support with a high degree of earmarking.

The support to education was extended in 2007 for another two years with the aim of covering additional grades beyond primary education (i.e. grades 1-12). The focus of the extension period was more concentrated and concerned general education, curriculum development, including the printing of books, and administration reform.

A further extension of Danish support activities was approved for 2009-2010, despite the fact that the Danish embassy in Kabul did not follow Danida procedures or formats for its proposal for continued funding. The Technical Department's Desk Appraisal nevertheless approved the proposal, noting the difficult circumstances in Afghanistan.

In addition, an important approximately 15% of Danish development support to Afghanistan was channelled to Helmand province, known to be a Taliban stronghold, even though the national plans direct priority activities without earmarking by province. Since 2008 Afghan priorities for the province have centred on increasing access to education to accommodate the growing number of students in safe areas.

### *Framework of engagement*

The evaluation report does not specify the policies which framed the aid activities in Afghanistan over the evaluation period. However, assistance was largely provided through bilateral sector support to the MoE, closely linked to the Afghanistan National Education Strategic Plan. The evaluation outlines the logic of the support programme to draw on Results Based Management (RBM) as a strategy which focuses on outputs, outcomes and impacts. That said, the report does clarify that Danish support to Afghanistan from 2003 was *not* informed explicitly by RBM, though the logic in Danida's programmes depended explicitly on a similar results focus to guide programme management.

### *Actors and management*

Management inputs to Danida's education programmes from the embassy were as essential as technical support to education management in the MoE (Taylor, Jespersen et al. 2012: 47). This function was troubled throughout the implementation of the programmes by the modality, size and complexity of programme funding, as well as the lack of staff continuity at the embassy.

A Grant Management Unit (GMU) was established under the Office of the Minister which was responsible for the management of education grants, development of management capacity, the preparation of budgets and coordination of all donor assistance to the Ministry. The report states that, given the limited capacity of the MoE in 2003, assigning such critical responsibilities to the GMU entailed major risks. Indeed, programme records show problems in establishing, staffing and clarifying procedures for the unit. Quarterly steering committee meetings were used to monitor programme support.

A principal component of Danida's support model was the implementation of a two-track development approach that would attend to local, emergency interventions, as well as to long-term systems and policy development. The report considers this to be essential for programme management and for broader system development. More specifically, it notes that such a management approach permits flexible budgetary allocations in response to need as this becomes evident or as data and reduced levels of conflict allow. Furthermore, the management mechanisms are praised for providing a means to manage the funding risk through transparency and accountability. The flexibility in resource allocation was a central part of the programme design, with documented annual reviews to inform the feedback loop as a means to reduce the challenges posed to management by fragility and weak capacity.

Though most of the support was provided bilaterally, Danida did also engage in multilateral and NGO cooperation, albeit to a limited extent.

### *The evaluation*

The evaluation report (Taylor et al. 2012) examines the Danida-supported programme components with reference to the DAC/OECD evaluation criteria of *relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact*. Given the specific design of the programme, the inputs and activities of each component were not expected to produce outcomes in the short term. As such, the evaluation does not give great attention to



the actual impacts and outputs of the programme. That said, it does highlight key measurable outcomes, especially those which informed management decisions as part of the programme design.

The evaluation examined the specific programme components (curriculum development, teacher development, educational materials, physical infrastructure and management capacity development) separately before providing an overall performance evaluation for the entire programme phase. Accordingly, while the evaluation is guided by OECD/DAC criteria, it does not only seek to address each of these criteria directly. Rather, these inform the overall performance evaluation, the main assessment being addressed through each programme component separately. Moreover, the evaluation specifically discusses management issues, which is helpful in the present context.

The evaluation has been criticized for being too positive. A number of so-called experts interviewed in a Danish daily argue that the problems of conflict and corruption have not been sufficiently assessed by the evaluation (Aagaard 2013). The evaluation report itself reports that it experienced severe methodological difficulties with respect to data collection and field trips (Taylor et al. 2012: 25-31). However, we, the authors of the present study, do not find evidence that the report painted too rosy a picture without sufficient documentation, given the circumstances. Better data and more extensive field visits would obviously have improved the report, but conditions in conflict-ridden countries rarely allow for this.

## **4.2 Results**

Denmark's support was assessed as having provided a major contribution to progress in the Afghan education sector over the evaluation period. The success of the programme is largely attributed to the marked increase in child enrolment in schools, especially in the enrolment of girls, an eight-fold increase in teacher numbers and the establishment of 8,500 community education committees and a Provincial Education Department in each of the 34 provinces. Moreover, there has been a remarkable expansion in education provision over the past decade, through an increase of about 10,000 of schools under the MoE's ownership, the recruitment of 93,000 new teachers and the printing of millions of textbooks based upon a new curriculum. The positive evaluation is also attributed to the increase in public management capabilities.

The first phase of the aid activities (2003-2006) achieved expected outputs for curriculum development in terms of printing books based on a newly defined unified

curriculum and subject syllabi. However, the report mentions that it is not easy to determine Danida's precise involvement from the available records. In terms of the teacher training and development component of the first phase of the programme, the evaluation found that this activity was a clear response to need and thus highly relevant. By using government channels for deployment, inputs to the component were delayed, though the evaluation specified that this in turn drew attention to central budgeting and management and that these were subsequently strengthened. The development of educational materials and the printing of books component of the project resulted in the production of textbooks and teacher's guides. The report specifies that flexibility in budget allocation allowed for the reallocation of funds to this component from the under-spent budgets of other components. While the report appreciates this flexible use of funds, which it deems appropriate, it also points out that the final output in terms of books distributed to schoolchildren is unknown. In terms of developing physical infrastructure, the first phase of the programme was seen to have resulted in a substantial and rapid construction of schools. This component was deemed highly relevant, as the lack of classrooms was a principal limitation for the government in providing educational services. The increased availability of suitable classrooms and schools benefited thousands of Afghan children. As for the final component of the first phase concerning management capacity development, the evaluation cited mixed results. On the one hand, it did lead to the establishment of management systems such as the GMU, which would contribute to capacity-building within the MoE. On the other hand, the component was unsuccessful in terms of donor coordination.

Overall, the evaluation of the first phase of the aid intervention was seen as positive, with substantial outputs having been achieved despite considerable obstacles. Furthermore, Danish aid provided important and substantial support through the very unsettled period in the establishment of the MoE.

The second phase of the programme, which consisted of a two-year extension, proved more difficult to evaluate thoroughly due to poor record- and document-keeping. Nevertheless, the overall assessment of Danida's support for this phase suggests that management capacity was gradually being developed in the MoE, and there was documentation of Danida-supported outputs in terms of physical infrastructure and the printing of school books. Similarly, the 2008-2010 extension was difficult to assess due to a lack of records and the necessary documentation.

The overall performance of both extension periods was positive. The evaluation report specifies that, while formal records are scarce, this does not indicate a lack of progress in Afghan education or the absence of Danida involvement. Significant outputs reported for the period include the completion of 72 classrooms and the near completion of a further 130 classrooms by the end of the second extension period. The main negative assessment concerned the lack of visible improvement at the levels of policy, strategy and systems due to a weak focus on management and aid management.

The report's overall assessment concluded that the programmes were relevant. The intervention came at a time when, following the fall of the Taliban, the education sector was paralysed and the bulk of the physical infrastructure had been destroyed. Denmark's support to the education sector was very much aligned with the priorities and modalities of the national authorities. Moreover, the on-budget support strategy was an appropriate choice which contributed to the relevance of the programme, as this modality allowed support to complement government plans and budgets.

In terms of effectiveness measured as the extent to which intended inputs and outputs were achieved, the results of Danida's support were perceived as highly positive, though the report states that a full measure of the Danish contribution was obscured by a lack of documentation. Danida has also been lauded by other donors for taking a leading role in aligning development aid with government priorities, which contributed to the effectiveness of the programmes through its proximity and dialogue with the MoE.

With respect to the criteria used in this study, the programme appears to have achieved certain results. First, although there is no documentation of the quality of the classes taught, the large increase in the enrolment of children in general and of girls in particular must be seen as a step towards poverty reduction. In terms of state-building and capacity development the results are doubtful, although the support was specifically aimed at this. The aid effectiveness principles were honoured to a surprising degree, given the absolute lack of institutions, capacity and infrastructure when the support began in 2003. In relation to planned outputs, resources seem to have been reallocated to a very large extent, exhibiting a high degree of flexibility, but not always for well-documented reasons. Thus, overall the results are mixed, but not trivial given the highly fragile context.

### 4.3 Reasons for results

The evaluation report did not engage with the specific management responsibilities of the programme in terms of their repartition between headquarters in Copenhagen and the Embassy. Yet the report does make it clear that a core aspect of the programmes was to involve local authorities and operate with and through the national government extensively. This was an appropriate approach given the choice of on-budget modality for implementing the aid activities. Indeed, host capacity and a robust monitoring framework are recognised as essential elements in the deployment of an on-budget modality. As Afghan capacity was weak in both these respects, strengthening the state's ability in the provision of education and developing management capacity were formal components of the aid programme.

Regarding *policy liberty*, the evaluation report did not elaborate upon any formal policy framework that informed the programme directly. Rather, it appears that the programme was guided by the continuous assessment of needs, outputs, and impacts. The original identification report dates from October 2002, a period where Danish bilateral aid to Afghanistan was entirely in its infancy. At the time, the government of Denmark was more concerned about taking part in military confrontations than about elaborating a clear policy framework for aid activities in Afghanistan. Thus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs probably enjoyed significant freedom to develop the education support according to contemporary ideas about good development cooperation.

Throughout the evaluation report, reference is made to the great *flexibility* inherent in the design and management of the programme. Mention was made of Danida's approach in dialogue with the MoE, which was conducive to generating rapid responses, despite the uncertainties of Afghanistan. In addition, the flexibility in budgetary management was seen as an important element that contributed to the successful outcomes of the programmes as a whole. Making use of built-in flexibility in the disbursement of the programme budget eased the reallocation of funds when necessary and/or desirable. In this regard, the flexibility was closely linked to the high level of policy liberty. The combination of flexibility in budget allocations and policy liberty in the ability to guide the project through outputs and impacts seems to have favoured positive programme outcomes on the whole.

In relation to *responsiveness*, the evaluation report notes that the Draft Identification Report is based on the view that the priorities (teacher development, physical infrastructure, curriculum development and the provision of educational materials) of the

Government of Afghanistan should be supported. In the final programme, these four priorities were adopted and only supplemented with a component on management and human resources development. In a footnote (Taylor, Jespersen et al. 2012: 43), the evaluation report informs the reader that it has not been possible to clarify why it was decided to support the education sector. An indication of responsiveness is also reflected in the fact that construction of infrastructure (schools) was not a preference of Danish aid in the beginning of the 2000s. By contrast, strengthening sector policies and institutions was a major Danish concern at the time. Infrastructure was believed to be partly beyond the means of Danish assistance and was partly seen as only an instrument to facilitate institutional development.

The programme's *context dependence*, on the one hand, is recognized by the fact that the evaluation report does not question the importance of the different components of the programme. On the contrary, these are described as responding to 'the huge problems of the education sector' (ibid.: 56), which were partly due to the total collapse of the sector prior to 2001 and were partly a consequence of 'the flood of children returning to schools' (ibid.: 53) in 2002. On the other hand, the significant reallocation of funds towards the printing of school books due to under-spending on the other components indicates that capacity constraints were underestimated in the early phase. There is no reason to believe that school books were much more needed than teacher development, school buildings, etc. The evaluation provides the reader with the impression that Danish support in the early 2000s was not based on a thorough understanding of both needs and possibilities. It targeted the needs and assumed that the possibilities could be created through support to management and capacity-building.

*Political sensitivity* is implicitly discussed in the evaluation report (ibid.: 65-69) in relation to management and human resources development. The support to this component in 2003-2006 seemed to reflect a lack of sensitivity to different actors. Notably, the Grant Management Unit, which was proposed in the Danish programme document, seems to have suffered from a lack of political support. It was expected 'to be responsible for the management of education grants, development of management capacity, the preparation of the Ministry's Development Budget and coordination of all donor assistance to the Ministry' (ibid.: 66).. However, it never managed to carry out this significant range of functions in that period. An annual report from 2005 notes that the Unit represented 'a vision without MoE support, without general donor support and out-dated and non-adherent TOR' (quoted from Taylor, Jespersen et al. 2012: 67). What worked seems to have been a Steering Committee for the Dan-

ish-supported programme assisted by a Danish-funded technical advisor, and when this advisor left in April 2006, '[Steering] Committee Meetings ceased and annual planning, reporting and reviews for PEPS were discontinued' (ibid.). Moreover, discussing the creation of management capacity in the Ministry of Education, the evaluation bluntly states: 'Support at a strategic level requires a different, greater and arguably more politically experienced expertise than was provided' (ibid.: 98). Thus, it does not seem that Denmark's support was characterised by sufficient political sensitivity to contribute significantly to the management capacity of the Ministry.

#### **4.4 Concluding remarks**

The evaluation report is careful to emphasise the lack of data and documentation that made it difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding both the results of the Danish support and the causes of whatever success the programme has achieved. Despite such important qualifications, it appears that the Danish support to education in Afghanistan was developed in line with how Danish sector programme support was supposed to be organised in other countries at the time: ideally, a national sector policy was to be supported through national institutions. What is striking is the consequent application of that approach, regardless of the Afghan context. Given the infancy of the discussions over fragile states in the early 2000s, it is perhaps not a surprise that an approach dominating Danish development assistance was also used in Afghanistan.

The evaluation attributes the relative success of the programme to the 'on-budget' modality and the involvement of national institutions, despite their embryonic nature. In 2002, ahead of the Rome and Paris High Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness, this approach was quite innovative and applied in a context of high risk. As such, its relative success supports current thinking expressed in the New Deal for engagement in fragile states (International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding 2011) where country-owned and -led policies are seen to be central. However, the results of the Danish support should probably also be attributed to a competent technical advisor, as well as to management support by the Danish embassy in Kabul.

The management of the programme was characterised by a high degree of policy liberty, flexibility and responsiveness. On these parameters, it is hard to ask for more. The context dependence of the programme is more doubtful, basically because the challenges in Afghanistan were underestimated, and the political sensitivity of aid management was rather weak not least due to a lack of staff continuity at the embassy. The most important reason for success, however, seems to be the willingness of the

Danish support, in a very fragile situation, to align itself with Afghan policies and priorities, to supply resources through Afghan channels and to work through Afghan national institutions.

## **5. Security-sector reform in Sierra Leone**

### **5.1 Context**

This section focuses on the British engagement in security-sector reform in Sierra Leone from the late 1990s onwards. It pays particular attention to the reform of Sierra Leone's police, but includes information on other initiatives to build peace, justice and security in the country. The section is based on independent analyses, programme reviews and a country programme evaluation. Both in terms of institution building and better security, many observers agree that the changes that took place the first five years after the ceasefire in 2002 were remarkable.

From an initial ad-hoc focus on the military, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID) broadened and changed its approach so that by the mid-2000s, when the open conflict was over, it had adopted a relatively comprehensive sector-wide approach covering the police, intelligence, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, parliament and civil society. Reflecting this, in 2005 the original Security Sector Reform Programme (SILSEP) and other more specific initiatives and projects were supplemented by a Justice Sector Development Programme (JSDP).

Started in 1997, during the war, SILSEP originally focussed on securing peace and building 'the security of the state through demobilisation, army integration and building a disciplined armed force at the service of the state' (SILSEP 2008: 8). As the context changed and became less insecure, the objective of SILSEP also changed into assisting 'in the creation of an enabling environment within the security sector to ensure the successful and sustainable implementation of the Sierra Leone Security Sector Reform Implementation Plan (SSRIP), as articulated within Pillar 1 of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the new National Security Policy (NSP)' (Biesheuvel, Hamilton-Baillie et al. 2007: 5). Supplementing this, the purpose of the JSDP was to 'support the development of an effective and accountable justice sector that is capable of meeting the needs and interests of the people of Sierra Leone, particularly the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised' (Bredemear and Lewis 2008: 8).



### *Objectives of the engagement*

SILSEP's original mission statement dating from 1999 focused on national security:

To work with the Government, national and local institutions of Sierra Leone to design and implement a sustainable policy, institutional and legal framework for the creation of acceptable National Security and Defence Strategies enshrining the principles of civilian control, accountability and transparency. (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 48)

A major element of the original efforts was to establish public control over the national army, as it had staged two coups since 1992. Neither the Office of the President nor the National Security Council was informed about the army's actions (ibid: 78). However, the government's fight against the rebels was also supported, and intelligence and police capacities were strengthened. At the time, there was no common understanding of the scope of security-sector reform, and individual programmes were undertaken in relative isolation from one another (Albrecht 2010: 16).

Central objectives related to security in the early 2000s included: (i) the creation of an Office of National Security to prepare joint intelligence assessments and to provide strategic security advice to the President; (ii) the establishment of National, Provincial and District Security Committees to facilitate conflict resolution; (iii) capacity-building of the Ministry of Defence to enhance political control over the army; (iv) reconstruction of the police to provide internal security; and (v) supporting Parliament, civil society and the media to exercise civil oversight of security actors.

In the early days, the immediate challenges of insecurity set the agenda, and a reform of the police to enable it to provide internal security was a major concern of both President Kabbah and DfID. The first attempt to do this was supported through the Commonwealth Police Development Task Force, which from mid-1998 sought to 'develop an efficient, effective and accountable police service in order to maintain a politically stable, peaceful and relatively crime-free environment conducive to economic development' (ibid.: 20). In October 2000, the Task Force was replaced by the Commonwealth Community Safety and Security Project (CCSSP), with more or less the same objective and organised around three phases: (i) support for basic policing, partly through the procurement of equipment, (ii) longer-term capacity building and (iii) institutional consolidation and handing over of leadership. The project was intended to rebuild Sierra Leone's police force from the ground up, and the ambition was not just to organise it and develop its capacities, but also to change

its culture. This was done under the heading of ‘local needs policing’, which was aimed at building a ‘system of policing that meets the needs and expectations of the local community, delivered within a national framework of standards and guidelines’ (Adrian Horn in Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 32). A central organisational structure within this system was the Local Command Unit, which, through devolved authority, was expected to deliver solutions to the policing needs of local communities. With a very strong input from DfID, the ambition was accordingly to make Sierra Leone’s new police force much more downwardly accountable than hitherto.

In 2005 SILSEP and other security-related initiatives were accompanied by a Justice Sector Development Programme aimed at the development of an effective and accountable justice sector that is capable of meeting the needs and interests of poor people (Biesheuvel, Anthony-Williams et al. 2009). It consisted of seventeen individual projects and included an investment plan to reduce crime, increase public satisfaction with the courts and speed up the disposal of criminal cases, etc., as well as create a Justice Sector Co-ordination Office and an Anti-Corruption Commission in addition to support to parliamentarians and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

#### *Framework of engagement*

DfID’s support to security-sector reform in Sierra Leone developed on an ad hoc basis. Prior to 2002, ‘collaborative UK–Government of Sierra Leone programmes were very much shaped as responses to consecutive crises’ (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 81). Moreover, the initiatives took place somewhat in a policy vacuum, but with political support at the highest levels in both Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom (Albrecht 2010: 17). The President of Sierra Leone issued a one-page Policing Charter in 1998 (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 30), which largely constituted the policy frame for rebuilding the police, but at the same time he was very concerned to complete this rebuilding process. Out of mistrust of the army and certain political strongmen, the President saw the police as the major instrument that would re-establish the state’s monopoly over violence and its legitimacy as a provider of security (Albrecht 2010: 26-27).

Given that the experience in Sierra Leone was the first instance when DfID became strongly involved in security-sector reform, a lot of effort was put into conceptualising the activity. It was complicated by the fact that DfID had never before been involved in reorganising a Ministry of Defence and building national sovereignty as part of its development work. From the late 1990s, the assistance included, on the British side, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence in addition to

DfID, and this served to some extent as a justification for engaging in non-conventional development issues. Early on, SILSEP distinguished between security and defence issues, which, it seems, complicated cooperation and implementation rather than the opposite (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 78-80).

However, in 2003-2004 a Security Sector Review was undertaken with the purpose of identifying potential and actual security threats, the institutions that would address them and the capacity required to do so (ibid.: 118-125). The comprehensive review was led by the Office of National Security and attracted public attention through a large number of workshops held all over the country. It produced four important results: (i) security was integrated into the PRSP and, accordingly, seen as a major aspect of development and economic change; (ii) the methodology of the Review strengthened the downwards accountability of the security sector; (iii) the management of the review documented that the Office of National Security was able to coordinate the security sector; and (iv) the review 'gave much needed conceptual clarity about the institutions comprising the security system, and thus who had a stake in defining what security meant in Sierra Leone' (ibid.: 124).

It appears that a significant principle, namely advising and stimulating Sierra Leonean ownership of the reform process, cut across most of the British support. Though the capacity in the security sector was almost non-existent in the early years, it seems that a deliberate attempt to avoid taking over characterized most activities, even though British and international advisers were numerous and key to the process: 'One of the most positive elements of the UK intervention was evolution of the role of most UK staff as advisers, not as implementers' (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 7). For instance, a British Military Advisory Training Team could not be provided for more than three years in order to avoid making the Sierra Leonean army dependent on it, and a civilian adviser in the Ministry of Defence opposed the Commander of the International Military Training Advisory Team when he wanted the Sierra Leonean Director of Policy in the Ministry to change his view regarding the need for a defence review (ibid.: 103). A reason for this may have been DfID's fundamental uneasiness with the engagement in matters of defence, intelligence and state sovereignty (Albrecht 2010: 17).

An important element of the framework seems to have been the lack of other donor organisations involved in the security sector. Apart from certain UN organisations, DfID was the only development partner to the Sierra Leonean government, which,

on top of the long historical relationship between Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom, enabled the cooperation to become intimate: ‘citizens as well as leaders bought into the overall idea of UK engagement in the country’ (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 182). Indeed, had this not been the case, the security system transformation in Sierra Leone ‘would not necessarily be the success story that it has become’ (Adrian Freer, 18 December 2007, London, quoted in *ibid.*: 182). In combination with the deliberate efforts to create conceptual and political clarity about security-sector reform, the set-up of the cooperation managed to establish a rather clear understanding and organisation of security in Sierra Leone surprisingly rapidly.

### *Actors and management*

However, this does not mean that programme management went smoothly. Coordination between the UK institutions was and remained poor right through the 2000s (Biesheuvel, Hamilton-Baillie et al. 2007). Even though the British High Commission in Sierra Leone was supposed to take the lead, DfID had the resources and was not prepared to take orders. Moreover, DfID had no office in the country until 2005, so many operational decisions were taken in London, and formally representatives of the different UK institutions reported back to London rather than to each other in Sierra Leone. Actual coordination on the ground was very much a matter of how individuals were able to cooperate. This worked well in some cases, but turf wars among international advisers were also prevalent (Albrecht 2010: 24).

In the early years, UK-funded activities were therefore managed by advisers posted in different institutions. The management of SILSEP was undertaken by two advisers in the Ministry of Defence, but was later taken over by the DfID office. This was criticised in 2007 because ‘there is no overall programme steering committee. Current ownership and direction of the programme remains with DFID’ (Biesheuvel, Hamilton-Baillie et al. 2007: 19).

Generally, it seems that individuals had a decisive influence on the results achieved in the security sector: ‘The experience of Sierra Leone shows how dedicated, capable people who are provided political and professional space to restructure and reform their security institutions and foster informed public discourse can achieve a great deal under challenging circumstances’ (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 8). This goes for UK staff as well as Sierra Leoneans. The first post-war head of the Sierra Leone police was a retired British police officer, Keith Biddle, who was appointed at the request of President Kabbah, to whom he had direct access. This was evidently a remarkable arrangement, but it helped set in motion the fundamental transformation of the police.

Biddle's leadership and direction proved vital in a difficult environment. He played a crucial role developing confidence in the rebuilding of the SLP [Sierra Leonean Police], since all parties viewed him as not subject to political interference and loyalties, which a Sierra Leonean candidate inevitably would have been. This role as an external catalyst helped develop confidence amongst younger officers and was undoubtedly aided by Biddle's own strong personality and willingness to be both visible and to make decisions on the ground. (ibid.: 36)

Biddle was head of the police between 1999 and 2003, but it was not only in this early period that expatriates were needed to build legitimacy. Despite the central position won by the Office of National Security in the first half of the 2000s, 'there remains a need for a UK adviser to protect the organisation from accusations of political bias (which appear almost on a weekly basis in the media)' (ibid.: 183-84), including after the relatively peaceful elections in 2007.

At the same time, capable and committed Sierra Leoneans have come to staff the central security institutions in the country. Although there are worries that these people could have misused their influence and that they are too few to ensure sustainable management of the security sector should instability re-emerge, some observers believe that 'the key to this security transformation has been and continues to be the leadership provided by a core of Sierra Leonean Government officials' (ibid.: 1).

### *Documents used*

The transformation of the security sector in Sierra Leone has been documented in a report authored by two scholars, funded by the UK Government's Global Conflict Prevention Pool and supported by the Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform and International Alert (see Albrecht and Jackson 2009). Moreover, the rebuilding of the Sierra Leonean Police has been described in detail in a scholarly report (see Albrecht 2010). These two documents provide a detailed and relatively independent account of the support to the security-sector reform and its development in Sierra Leone. Both reports seek to document and explain the changes that have taken place, and they enable the present analysis to cover both results and aid management issues more thoroughly than has been possible in the analysis of the other aid activities studied in this report.

In addition to the two scholarly reports, a number of reviews, completion reports and project documents have been included (see Thompson, Morris et al. 2005; Biesheuvel, Hamilton-Baillie et al. 2007; Bredemear and Lewis 2008; SILSEP 2008; Biesheuvel,

Anthony-Williams et al. 2009). These reports have not been drafted by independent consultants, and they are primarily used to supplement the scholarly reports.

## 5.2 Results

A study of people's perceptions of the state of security in the country was conducted in the first half of 2008. It took place in six districts in different parts of the country, and though it does not intend to be representative of the entire population, it does cover different situations within the country (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 189-198). Based on a semi-structured questionnaire, information was collected from 250 respondents through individual interviews, group discussions and focus-group interviews. The general conclusions of the study were that people perceived their security to have improved and that they generally view the police and the army much more positively than ten years earlier. These security forces 'are now clearly embedded into local communities and are no longer seen as "above" them' (ibid.: 195). The latter conclusion is more interesting than the former, as one may expect security to improve in a post-war situation, but it is not evident that the security forces are viewed in a more positive light. Moreover, security threats have changed completely: 'threats of political violence or abduction from rebels have almost entirely disappeared, only to be replaced by domestic threats supplemented by external criminal networks' (ibid.: 193).

These results correspond partly with the conclusions of the Security Sector Review carried out in 2003-2004. On the basis of this review, a former programme manager of SILSEP, Mark White, noted:

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the threats identified by the population were not of the traditional 'national security' variety. In effect, little reference was made to Guinean border disputes or Charles Taylor-backed rebel incursions from Liberia. Instead, threats covered topics from youth unemployment and bad governance to corruption and lack of economic opportunities. (quoted in ibid.: 121-22)

This supports the perception that security threats have changed, but it is unclear whether this has contributed to poverty reduction. On the one hand, youth unemployment and the lack of economic opportunities are perceived to be significant security threats. On the other hand, the significance of security as a basis for economic development was recognized in the first PRSP, whose Pillar One was entitled 'Promoting good governance, peace and security'. Furthermore, improved overall security is likely

to reduce poverty if it is assumed that rich people more easily can defend themselves against physical insecurity than poor people can. However, the various sources do not discuss how the overall improved security level or the changing security threats influence different social groups.

The relationship between improved overall security and democracy was highlighted by the elections in 2007. According to international observers, these elections were free, fair and credible, which is quite an achievement:

Seen within the context of the levels of violence experienced by the people of Sierra Leone in the previous twenty years, the fact that Sierra Leone conducted this generally violence-free election only seven years after the end of a civil war is a remarkable transformation. (ibid.: 1)

To the extent that poverty is viewed as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, freedom of expression through democratic elections is part of poverty reduction. In this sense, the improved security levels have had a marked effect on poverty.

The most significant results of the support to security-sector reform have been in the field of state-building and capacity development. As indicated above, the police and the army have become more legitimate, and this has been described as a transformation:

Comprehensive transformation of security structures in Sierra Leone during the past 10 years spread across a breadth of institutions. It reached deep into internal and external security institutions, altered command structures, provided top-to-bottom training and established staffing policies, procedures and behaviour. It created agencies to coordinate security information and facilitated a two-way flow of that security information from the community level up to the President. It also reached out to the people of Sierra Leone, who had experienced horrific violence at the hands of their own security forces during the war, and began the difficult task of reversing public suspicion of security forces and involving citizens in their own security. (ibid.: 3)

Prior to the war, the Sierra Leonean police were described as a 'rank-conscious military style force' (Albrecht 2010: 47). During the early 2000s, however, accountability and transparency were strengthened through basic and simple procedures, teamwork and individual initiatives were stimulated, hierarchies were simplified, decision-making was devolved to lower levels, and a policy of local needs policing was disseminated

throughout the organisation. Given the earlier complete disarray of the police, these initiatives have produced a relatively effective security enforcer enjoying a much better reputation (ibid.: 30-32).

Also the support to the Office of National Security (ONS) appears to have been successful:

The ONS has established itself as one of the most effective Government agencies in Sierra Leone and is now fully capable of performing the core requirements originally envisaged for it: preparing joint intelligence assessments; acting as a secretariat for national, provincial and district security committees; and providing strategic security advice to the President. (Bieshevel, Hamilton-Baillie et al. 2007: 6)

Likewise, there are positive assessments of a number of other institutions, such as the Ministry of Defence, the Central Intelligence and Security Unit, the Provincial and District Security Committees and the National Security Council Coordination Group, etc. (Bieshevel, Hamilton-Baillie et al. 2007; SILSEP 2008).

Taking a broader perspective, the project completion report for SILSEP opens with a very positive assertion:

In 1999 at the inception of the Sierra Leone Security Sector Reform Project (SILSEP), almost all of Sierra Leone's government infrastructure, records and human capacity had been destroyed. The country had to start virtually from scratch with unstable borders and neighbours, lack of security infrastructure and collapsed institutions. By 2008, a complex security architecture is in place to maintain effective coordination of the sector. While neither civil society nor parliament fully hold the security sector to account, the sector is a-political, no longer a threat, well coordinated and arguably the best managed and led sector in the Government of Sierra Leone. (SILSEP 2008: 1)

This view is partly supported by an independent evaluation of DfID's country programme in Sierra Leone, which states that the '[e]stablishment of the State's security apparatus is a significant success' (Poate, Balogun et al. 2008: 35). However, the evaluation goes on to note that significant challenges exist, including '(i) the lack of robust and effective parliamentary oversight and sustained civil society engagement with the reform process; (ii) ensuring that systems for transparency and auditing



are consistently used; (iii) that the police and army are unaffordable within current domestic resourcing levels; and (iv) DfID does not have an exit strategy which would also ensure the prospect of sustainability of the institutions established' (ibid.). Despite these reservations, and despite the lack of quantitative data, there is little doubt that the support to security-sector reform has been a success with respect to state-building and capacity development.

In relation to the aid effectiveness principles, the British support to security in Sierra Leone has produced mixed results. Harmonisation and coordination with other donors have not been an issue due to the relative absence of the latter, but coordination between the relevant British institutions has been poor. Alignment with Sierra Leonean policies has been good in the sense that the relationship between British advisers and Sierra Leonean policy-makers was intimate in the early phase of the support. Later on the British advisers increasingly withdrew from policy-making, and it seems that, given the circumstances, Sierra Leonean ownership has been significant.

The different review reports indicate that planned outputs have largely been achieved. Notably, the support to central security institutions has fulfilled its objectives to a high degree ('DfID support to the ONS [Office of National Security] has been highly effective' (Thompson, Morris et al. 2005: 12)). Partly due to weak attention, at least in the early 2000s, outputs in relation to accountability linkages have been fewer and the involvement of Parliament and civil society has been rare.

### **5.3 Reasons for results**

The different analyses indicate that the close relationship between Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom, the lack of other donors, the principle of supporting Sierra Leonean decision-making, and the capabilities of a number of centrally placed individuals significantly helped the processes of stabilisation and of building legitimacy within the security sector. At a more concrete level, it is also considered that challenging inexpedient customs and cultures in the sector was a condition for success (Albrecht 2010: 9). Basic capacity-building and unlearning practices rooted in rigid hierarchies were both important.

The *policy liberty* of DfID's aid management was on the one hand large, notably in the early days. No general policy framework for support to security-sector reform existed, and like all other donor agencies DfID had no experience in this field. Actually, it entered very virgin territory, as the 1980 Overseas Development Act had to be modified

to allow it to engage in the diverse security-related activities (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 27). Moreover, British support to the security-sector reform in Sierra Leone has to some extent set a fashion for the international community when engaging in this sector elsewhere. On the other hand, the support had a lot of high-level political attention. The then Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, visited Sierra Leone as early as 2000, and she was keen to develop the security-sector reform (ibid.: 49-50, 170-171). British involvement in Sierra Leone was a litmus test of the UK's ability to contribute to conflict prevention and stabilisation. Thus, aid management had to balance between unsuitable legislation, the interests of a very committed Secretary of State and a rather unknown thematic territory.

*Flexibility* was an important characteristic of the early support for stabilisation and security. Initiatives were largely taken in response to changing circumstances, and advisers and commanders on the ground took decisions that were subsequently endorsed by the British government. Moreover, in 2002 a ten-year Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between the UK and Sierra Leone, creating a stable framework for cooperation over an unusually long period (ibid.: 85-86). Where relations of cooperation were strong – as, for instance, between Keith Biddle and Adrian Horn, Manager of the CCSSP (Albrecht 2010: 26) –, aid was managed very flexibly. Yet, turf wars between advisers, a lack of coordination between DfID, the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence, and the lack of a DfID office in Sierra Leone until 2005 probably did not make for effective flexibility.

The *responsiveness* of aid management was of a peculiar nature, given the many British individuals in key decision-making positions in the early 2000s. The different Military Training Advisory Teams had British commanders, one of whom was officially appointed Military Adviser to the Government of Sierra Leone, though not Chief of the Defence Staff, as President Kabbah suggested at a certain point (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 48). The different advisory teams had clear implementing roles in terms of institution-building. Also, Biddle, who headed the Sierra Leonean police from 1999 to 2003, completely reorganized the force largely according to his own ideas and those of the manager of CCSSP. At that time, it was 'the reality that external advisers – those in CCSSP and the IGP [Inspector-General of Police] – were in charge of the SLP. In the end, resistance to their decisions to clear the organisation of obstructive elements was futile, and the SLP was effectively run by the UK' (Albrecht 2010: 29-30). In the military camp too, Kellie Conteh, a former National Security Coordinator, noted: 'Quite a number of consultants wanted to design the wheel from scratch. [...] In the army and the MoD [Ministry of Defence] they categorized

all above Lieutenant Colonel as bad, and below as right. I saw clearly that senior officers were pushed aside; that didn't go down well' (here quoted from Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 54). Thus, needs and concerns expressed by Sierra Leoneans did not always influence aid management by any means.

On the other hand, it seems that there was a basic understanding among many consultants and in the British institutions involved that responsibilities and decision-making authority should be transferred to or left with Sierra Leoneans to the greatest extent possible. For instance, it was felt that a British Military Training Advisory Team should not be deployed for more than three years to avoid Sierra Leonean dependence on it: 'to propose anything of a longer duration would cause "flutters" back in London' (ibid.: 47). Also, Biddle, despite his sometimes controversial leadership, did make an effort to stimulate decision-making at all levels of the police, to disseminate a corporate culture of 'local needs policing' responding to community concerns, and to ensure a smooth transition when he left the force. Moreover, the nationwide Security Sector Review carried out in 2003-2004 represented a significant effort to make sure that the initiatives in the security sector responded to the needs of the population.

The degree of *context dependence* in aid management appears to have been high, but again this was not always the case. Given the large number of short-term advisers, some of whom were being posted abroad for the first time, it is no surprise that a British officer noted in relation to the reforming of the Ministry of Defence that 'You have to be careful not to take the blueprint that was written in London, change the date and time and reproduce the model. You've actually got to design the model for what they require, and we had an MoD where we made exactly that mistake' (ibid.: 58). In the police too, training in techniques that Sierra Leone could not afford took place (Albrecht 2010: 22). Still, much support was conceptualized on the basis of a thorough understanding of the needs and possibilities in Sierra Leone. For instance, the idea of local needs policing conceived and strongly promulgated by the British was very suitable for Sierra Leonean conditions, where policing necessarily has to include paramount chiefs and rather informal local authorities (ibid.: 47, 54-58). The Provincial and District Security Committees were another initiative specifically developed to address the circumstance that security threats in Sierra Leone sometimes originate in banal local grievances which have not been addressed early on (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 76-78). Despite some evidence to the contrary, British support to the security sector in Sierra Leone must generally be characterised as highly context-dependent.

*Political sensitivity* is perhaps the most notable feature of the British aid. Biddle made it a condition of his acceptance of the post as head of the police that he would have direct access to the President, and he arrested certain political leaders who did not support the security-sector reforms the way that the President did (Albrecht 2010: 25-26). Orienting actions in line with the interests of President Kabbah appear to have been a rather deliberate strategy: 'One UK adviser close to the events noted that, in fact Kabbah in particular had a tendency to go back to the colonial era when things were perceived to have worked. I suppose that we quite unashamedly capitalized on that' (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 76). The historical ties, the large number of high-placed British advisers and the strong commitment of the UK Secretary of State for International Development undoubtedly all contributed to the high degree of political sensitivity characterising British aid management.

#### **5.4 Concluding remarks**

The story of British support to the security-sector reform in Sierra Leone is a rather particular one. In few fragile situations are foreigners likely to be invited into the very heart of the bureaucracy and even the political decision-making of a country. And this seems to have happened even with widespread popular consent. Despite the somewhat suboptimal coordination within the British government itself, it is also rare to have a fragile situation with basically one well-endowed external actor supporting conflict prevention and stabilisation. Two more points stand out from the above. Political support at the highest level in both Sierra Leone and the UK was strong: stabilisation and security-sector reform had to succeed. Moreover, a number of very competent and dedicated individuals among both the Sierra Leoneans and the British advisers took part in the work, and they clearly focused on making security institutions function.

The British support was managed in a rather pragmatic way, as defined in this study. It was characterised by a high degree of policy liberty, flexibility, context dependence and political sensitivity. Only in relation to responsiveness were concrete actions on the ground in the early 2000s driven less by Sierra Leoneans than by foreign advisers, possibly due to the weakness and illegitimacy of many security-sector institutions at the time. While pragmatic aid management has probably contributed to the relative success of the support, the other factors mentioned above seem to have been equally, if not more important. In addition, one gets the impression that, if it were not for a number of lucky circumstances not discussed here (e.g. the repulsing of the rebel offensive in May 2000), the support may not have produced the results that it did.

The really significant question raised, but not answered, by the analysis in this section is how British aid managed to maintain a strong focus on Sierra Leonean ownership while becoming deeply involved in policy and implementation processes.

## **6. The Office of Transition Initiatives Programme in East Timor financed by USAID**

### **6.1 Context**

The analysis in this section is based upon the final report evaluating USAID's three-year Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) programme in East Timor (Clark, von Briesen Lewis et al. 2003). The evaluation was concerned with assessing the extent to which the programme achieved its objectives of promoting economic recovery and strengthening the democratic development of East Timor. It focused on impacts and especially on the programme's efforts to establish democratic governance and rule of law. The management of the programme was examined as well. The purpose of the evaluation was to highlight key aspects of the overall programme and not to track the specific outcomes of each programme component.

USAID's OTI programme began in East Timor in November 1999 and continued there through October 2002. Thus the engagement occurred in tandem with the East Timorese crisis, which began in 1999 with attacks by anti-independence militants on civilians and expanded into general violence throughout the country centred in the capital, Dili. The violence erupted after a majority of the electorate chose independence from Indonesia in the referendum. A UN force consisting mainly of Australian Defence Force personnel was deployed to East Timor to establish and maintain peace.

With the escalation of violence around the referendum and the weakening of political stability in the late 1990s, the United States recognized a foreign-policy interest in East Timor due to its strategic location on Japan's oil supply routes. Moreover, US attention on East Timor was stimulated by increasing terrorist activity in the region due to the economic and political turmoil in Indonesia and the need to counter the legacy of Indonesian institutions in the territory. Other US foreign-policy interests included the desire to deflect East Timor from dependence on an economy centred on the smuggling of narcotics and people or money-laundering, as well as the symbolic value of successfully promoting democracy and freedom of choice in the country.

#### *Objectives of the engagement*

The evaluation report focuses on the main components of OTI programming in East Timor and the various projects which aimed to achieve the overall objectives of promoting economic recovery and strengthening the democratic development of

the country. Specifically, then, the report assessed whether the following programme objectives were met: 1) increasing public access to information pertinent to the establishment of a government; 2) the strengthening of political institutions; 3) increasing citizen participation in the country's governance; and 4) solidifying the rule of law and strengthening the justice sector.

The specific areas of interest and activity that were intended to achieve these objectives included efforts to: 1) strengthen the NGO and media sectors; 2) cooperate with United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) administrators in East Timor and with international donors to facilitate the transition to self-rule; 3) work directly with the nascent East Timorese government to orient officials and bureaucratic structures to the demands of democratic governance and public policy formulation and implementation; and 4) facilitate the politically sensitive reintegration of resistance fighters into society and the related consideration of the overall civilian/military relationship in the new country's orientation.

#### *Framework of the engagement*

The evaluation report highlighted that, while OTI operations in East Timor were under the purview of USAID/Jakarta, programme representatives in Dili were able to function with a high degree of autonomy. Nevertheless, the report stated that the managers of the OTI operations in East Timor portrayed their work as that of the US government and of USAID.

The framework of the engagement appeared to be one of urgency, with a broad state-building goal and strong, but not very detailed political support from the US government. OTI staff enjoyed considerable autonomy to carry out their work within a framework of both economic and democratic development.

#### *Actors and management*

Initial contact for the programme was made in late 1999, when a political officer from the US embassy in Jakarta and an OFDA (Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance) representative first came to Dili in the aftermath of the post-referendum violence. There was no receiving capacity in the country, and conditions for operations were very difficult due to the lack of facilities for accommodation or working. The first skeleton OTI staff arrived two months later. No USAID Mission was ever established in the country to support the OTI programme, nor was there initially a US embassy.

Political officers, including the American ambassador to the United Nations, visited Dili periodically. However, it was the OTI representative in East Timor who served for a significant period of time as the senior in-country representative of the United States Government. This was considered quite a unique arrangement and highly unorthodox.

According to the evaluation report, the relationship between USAID in Jakarta and the OTI office in Dili was cooperative and supportive. Moreover, the senior officer at the USAID mission in Jakarta tasked with overseeing the operations in East Timor considered the OTI team to be highly skilled.

The specific roles and nature of authority between the various principal actors of OTI/East Timor, OTI/Washington and USAID Jakarta were not elaborated on in the evaluation report. However, the report states that there appeared to be a lack of clarity on the functionality of lines between these three organisations even among staff on the ground.

### *The evaluation*

The report assessed several programme areas it deemed to be of particular interest, as mentioned above. The evaluation adopted 'a big picture approach', and its primary concern was to assess whether there was evidence that OTI's interventions in East Timor had had any impact and whether they had delivered on their stated objectives. Furthermore the evaluation sought to conclude whether OTI's presence in East Timor supported overarching U.S. foreign policy priorities of promoting democratization and freedom of choice.

There is, however, a question mark as to whether the evaluation is an unbiased piece of work. While it presents itself as building on 'an independent examination and analysis of OTI's program' (Clark, von Briesen Lewis et al. 2003: iv) carried out by 'a three-person team of independent evaluators with broad and diverse backgrounds' (ibid.: 6), institutional responsibility for the evaluation lay with Development Associates Incorporated (DAI), which was also the main implementer of OTI to the extent that the 'OTI representatives in East Timor [...] and the DAI staff members assigned to East Timor forged a united team that presented a seamless front to external actors' (ibid.: 10). Though the evaluators appear to have been hired for the evaluation, the arrangement questions the independence of the evaluation.



## 6.2 Results

The overall conclusion regarding the OTI programme is that its contribution was extremely positive. The impacts achieved through OTI programme interventions were substantial and impressive, and the interventions pursued were valid and appropriate. The report attributes this positive evaluation to the considerable evidence that the OTI had a significant impact, but also to the point that the operations supported and promoted the larger foreign-policy goals of the United States government. This is evidently not in line with contemporary ideas about ownership and alignment.

In terms of meeting specific programme objectives, OTI's impact in promoting economic recovery was inconsistent. Specifically, while early phase activities were considered to be well timed and organised, producing economic and political results which justified their use of resources, later phase activities were deemed less convincing in terms of their limited economic impact and the questionable integrity of their overall conception and implementation. Some of the interventions were considered to be inappropriate or ineffective. Nevertheless, the evaluation report concludes that the OTI programme did encourage economic recovery to a certain extent and that it is a virtue of the programme to have placed an early emphasis on economic recovery as a core objective.

The parallel objective of the programme was to promote the democratic evolution of the newly independent state. In this regard, the evaluation outlined how senior USAID officials regarded the OTI programme in East Timor to be one of encouraging broad U.S. foreign-policy goals relating to democratization and freedom of choice. The interventions around this objective were considered to be well-orchestrated and to have delivered measurable impact in sectors central to strengthening democracy such as engaging with NGOs and enabling them to be viewed as valuable and legitimate actors in the process of rehabilitation, supporting the nascent media sector, providing working examples of grassroots advocacy in relation to the formulation of public policy, and strengthening the ability of members of the new parliament to deal with administrative matters and to engage constituents in an on-going dialogue on policy priorities.

The evaluation report found the cumulative effects of OTI activities across the four focus areas to be considerable, which it characterised as a demonstrable foreign-policy achievement. The report outlines how various political institutions achieved some

measure of viability. For instance, a popularly elected parliament and president are in place. Another measure of success offered by the evaluation report was the provision of human-rights training for police officers.

In relation to the results being emphasised in this study, the interventions undertaken by OTI seem to have made contributions across all dimensions. First, in terms of poverty alleviation, the evaluation notes the contribution of the OTI intervention in improving the plight and prospects for survival of East Timorese citizens. Nevertheless, it does raise concerns about its long-term sustainability, while praising the ability underlying the programme's promotion of this core objective. Secondly, the contribution to improving democratic governance was considered a primary achievement of the intervention. The impact was specifically measured in terms of increasing the public's access to information and citizen participation in government, the strengthening of political institutions, improvements in justice and the rule of law by addressing the dysfunctional justice system in East Timor, and establishing community-based mechanisms to deal with less serious crimes. Thirdly, the evaluation notes that 'OTI's ability to coordinate and work with other donors in East Timor [...] somewhat enhanced overall donor effectiveness there' (Clark, von Briesen Lewis et al. 2003: 47). OTI was much praised by other donors and seems to have facilitated their work on different occasions. Although the United Nations Transitional Authority for East Timor was the formal and real government of the country from 1999 to 2002, the evaluation also states that OTI was concerned to facilitate and respond to the policies of the embryonic state institutions. Certain activities that were first supported through UN institutions were later financed through the East Timor Transitional Authority, which constituted the skeleton of a new civil service.

### **6.3 Reasons for results**

According to the evaluation, the OTI intervention demonstrated that concrete steps can be taken to address escalating tensions and turmoil by sending representatives to the field who have the appropriate political knowledge to be able to seize opportunities. Moreover, the management of the OTI programme generally worked well due more to the trust and mutual respect of a committed core of individuals who had long-standing involvement in the situation than to the existence of a coherent administrative structure. Specifically, the report concluded that management practices contributed directly to the success of the programme. The report found that hiring competent staff prepared to endure the hardships, as well as their skill in crafting high-risk interventions, were important reasons for the programme's success.

Other significant aspects of the management practices include OTI's emphasis on transparency and accountability as it promoted a form of professionalism of the local grantees, and the proficient and vigilant utilization of a flexible procurement mechanism, which allowed for the delivery of products with an immediate impact.

While the report was critical of the lack of clarity of the managerial arrangements between the offices of OTI/East Timor, OTI/Washington and UDAID Jakarta, it also stated that there was a sense that, since the managerial arrangements were working well, there was no perceived need to change them.

In the activities of procurement, the main framework of engagement was set at the institutional level. OTI refined several basic procurement mechanisms that it felt offered the flexibility, speed and bureaucratic agility required to deliver the inputs of the programme. Thus, the OTI operations in East Timor were coordinated with the USAID Office of Procurement. The main USAID procurement mechanism, Support Which Implements Fast Transition (SWIFT), was implemented for the programme in East Timor.

The *policy liberty* of OTI aid managers in East Timor appears to have been significant. The evaluation report highlighted that, while OTI operations in East Timor were under the purview of USAID/Jakarta, programme representatives in Dili were able to function with an unusual degree of autonomy, and 'OTI representatives [...] underscored the support and confidence from the Jakarta Mission that characterized their relationship' (Clark, von Briesen Lewis et al. 2003: 10). This trustful relationship had its historical background in the close and productive cooperation between the USAID mission and OTI in Indonesia. However, in following guiding principles for different aspects of its programming, such as procurement, the OTI programme followed USAID-established mechanisms. That said, these mechanisms, though centrally planned, allowed the programme to respond quickly and efficiently to urgent needs in East Timor.

The *flexibility* of the support was strongly emphasised by the evaluation. OTI was assessed to have responded to unanticipated needs and problems with speed and flexibility. This was achieved not least through its contracting mechanisms, both in relation to procurement and in hiring staff to implement the activities. These mechanisms, which were developed centrally within USAID, proved expedient. Moreover, in about 2000 it was decided to concentrate on in-kind support in the devastated institutional landscape of East Timor, something which speeded up the

support considerably, as institutional analyses of partners were not required. Also, the integration of staff of OTI and Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI) helped obtain rapid feedback from the field.

The evaluation report does not deal with the issue of *responsiveness* at the management level. This is partly because, in the early period of the support, there was no East Timorese authority to respond to. However, it seems that OTI has been very proactive throughout the three years in engaging in numerous different activities, not least in relation to democratisation. The mission seems to have aimed to promote democracy and democratic institutions rather than to respond to locally voiced needs. In many of these concrete activities, OTI and DAI are likely to have engaged in dialogue with local, national and international partners, and it is difficult to believe that the many positive results could have been achieved without such dialogue and a concomitant responsiveness. Nevertheless, responsive aid management as such does not seem to have been a major concern.

On the other hand, *context dependence* has characterised the support to a large extent. The evaluation report mentions that one important challenge was determining what efforts would have an impact in the midst of the chaos and confusion on the ground and pointed to the need for a staff comprised of individuals willing to take risks with grantees and to be proactive in initiating project components. Numerous activities document how the support was adapted to the specificities of the context. For instance, simple videos of the thirteen districts were produced for distribution in the refugee camps in West Timor to facilitate the return of the refugees, and meetings between authorities from East and West Timor were organised to reduce tensions in the camps. Also, the Transitional Employment Program was a most appropriate job-creation programme renovating public infrastructure in the immediate aftermath of the violence.

The evaluation report is particularly appreciative of the *political sensitivity* of the intervention:

The early phase of OTI's operations in East Timor sharply profiled its capabilities as an organization. OTI filled gaps, bought time, arguably averted an escalation of communal tensions, provided the means for the engagement of a host of players, bolstered fragile new structures. The attitude demonstrated by OTI representatives in East Timor was right on the mark and demonstrated that

concrete steps could be taken to address the chaos and turmoil. Sending people to the field with the political savvy required to see and seize such opportunities is central to operations likely to see early impact. (ibid.: v)

This general conclusion is supported by the report's analysis of OTI support to the justice sector and to the reintegration of former combatants. OTI initiated a variety of activities which stimulated development in these two difficult areas.

#### **6.4 Concluding remarks**

To the extent that one can trust the evaluation report, OTI support to East Timor 1999-2002 was a rather significant success overall. A wide range of activities in relation to economic recovery and, notably, democratisation were carried out, stimulating much progress. The report highlights three factors explaining the positive results. First, the quality of the staff is praised several times: 'The OTI operation in East Timor benefited immeasurably from having the right people in the right place at the right time' (Clark, von Briesen Lewis et al. 2003: 17). They were able to identify opportunities and rapidly exploit them. Secondly, the speed and flexibility with which OTI reacted significantly strengthened the results. This had to do with the rapid deployment of staff on the ground, as well as the procurement and other administrative mechanisms which enabled quick and appropriate responses to be made to the changing circumstances. OTI was particularly skilled in moving goods, services and money quickly into critical sectors, directly contributing to the achievements of the programme. Thirdly, staff on the ground sensed clear political support of their work. Both within USAID and in relation to US foreign policy objectives, OTI support to East Timor was seen as being both important and successful.

In terms of pragmatism, OTI support stands out in relation to policy liberty, flexibility, context dependence and political sensitivity. Responsiveness to locally expressed concerns is not mentioned much in the report, although the many well-adapted and sometimes sensitive activities must have required an ability to respond to different actors and their concerns. Thus, to some extent it can be argued that this case supports well the need for pragmatic aid management. Yet, it is evident that this pragmatism has been coupled with the very strong ambition to produce change rapidly and in a very comprehensive way. Pragmatism does not mean cautious, hesitant aid management.

## **7. UNDP-supported reintegration of ex-combatants in Tajikistan, 1999-2003**

### **7.1 Context**

The brief analysis in this section is based on an examination of a report (Kannangara, Solijonov et al. 2003/2004) commissioned by the UNDP Country Office in Tajikistan evaluating the outcomes of attempts to reintegrate ex-combatants as one of UNDP's peace- and stability-building activities from 1999 to 2003. The report seeks to address the effectiveness of the reintegration activities, the nature of donor support and participation in the programme, and the ensuing outcomes for peace and stability in Tajikistan.

After independence in 1991 following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the country experienced an extended civil war between regional factions from 1992 to 1997. In 1997, a peace agreement between the rival factions was successfully concluded, which began to create a relatively stable environment that would allow a process of rehabilitation and development to begin. Nonetheless, Tajikistan remained the poorest of the former Soviet republics. Unemployment was rampant, and a significant source of revenue was remittance payments earned by migrants working abroad (mostly in Russia). Economic infrastructure was weak and human resources devastated by the civil war. It was within this context that UNDP drew up the Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Program (RRDP) a year prior to the signing of the peace agreement. With the priority of reconstruction and poverty alleviation within the country, it became clear to the government, the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), the Council for National Reconciliation (CNR), the UN and members of the donor community that the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life was a high priority in this regard. The evaluation report concentrates on this issue so as to provide insight into a reintegration operation in a country emerging from a very destructive civil war.

#### *Framework of the engagement and its objectives*

The programme to reintegrate ex-combatants in Tajikistan was executed under the umbrella of UNDP's RRDP and the UNDP/ILO-organised Dushanbe Vocational Training Centre. Other activities under the RRDP focused on the restoration of basic

conditions for economic growth, the promotion of stability and the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable human development. A second phase of the programme began in 2002. It focused on the promotion of peace and stability in the country by supporting conflict-prevention activities and strengthening community cohesion. Moreover, the second phase sought to contribute to the alleviation of poverty through the promotion of economic revival, as well as support to local governance and the strengthening of transparent decision-making mechanisms.

The reintegration of ex-combatants programme was framed by the overall RRDP project. The RRDP employed a methodology developed by UNDP/UNOPS staff in other countries (Afghanistan, Bosnia, Cambodia, Croatia and Somalia) working towards a return to normality after devastating civil conflict. The RRDP was established as an area-based development programme which sought to provide a mechanism for the UN and the wider donor community to support the peace-building process in Tajikistan. Since it was an area-based programme, attention was given especially to areas of the country that had been damaged by the war and to which large numbers of refugees were expected to return. As part of the RRDP programme implementation, UNDP/RRDP Area Offices were opened in each of the four regions in which interventions were operational.

The specific objectives of the reintegration programme included creating temporary jobs for ex-combatants as part of the larger effort at the reconstruction of social and economic infrastructure and, in turn, emphasising the conversion of temporary jobs into permanent employment for ex-combatants.

The two phases of the programme succeeded in drawing additional funding from the wider donor community, including agencies and countries such as Norway, USAID, CIDA, Japan and Belgium.

### *The evaluation*

The evaluation of the reintegration of ex-combatants programme broadly followed the methodology outlined in the UNDP Evaluation Office (*Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators*). However, the report states that this evaluation deliberately omits the first two steps concerning inputs and outputs and focuses rather on outcomes, which it seeks to evaluate as potential impacts.

The four assessment criteria employed in the evaluation are:

- 1 The extent to which the reintegration process had a positive impact on the population and institutions in Tajikistan;
- 2 The degree to which the UNDP managed the process effectively;
- 3 The level of the international community support to the endeavour; and,
- 4 The extent to which the reintegration process in itself was a primary contributory factor towards peace and stability in the country.

The evaluation was carried out by an international consultant as team leader, a national consultant and a UNDP staff member. A weakness of the evaluation in the present context is that the report does not address aid management issues to any significant degree, despite its stated ambition to evaluate the effectiveness of how the UNDP managed the process.

## **7.2 Results**

The evaluation deemed the reintegration of ex-combatants in Tajikistan to be a definite success. This was due to the fact that four thousand ex-combatants directly benefited from the reintegration mechanisms established within the two programmes and were enabled to return to civilian life. Of these, more than half found permanent employment, with many of them setting up business as small entrepreneurs. Furthermore, those who participated in vocational training were also able to find employment, contributing to the creation of a sense of normality in the communities to which ex-combatants were returning. The programme ensured the adaptation of individuals as former human military assets, or combatants, into productive members of society within their home communities. Another indicator leading to the positive evaluation is that, at the time of the assessment, the country was entering into its second year of continuous peace and stability. While results were uneven across the four geographical areas in which the programme was operational, it was concluded that the return to civilian life of ex-combatants did contribute to economic and social recovery in each region. An additional success of the programme, though perhaps unintentional, was its contribution to the development of local government structures in the areas where the programme was operational.

With regard to the four criteria of successful aid results set out by this study, the UNDP intervention in Tajikistan can be considered a success in terms of it achiev-



ing its planned outputs and specifically its contributions to poverty alleviation. In terms of the former, the UNDP programme saw the successful reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life. Moreover, they were seen to contribute productively to the communities, to which they returned, thus supporting the criteria of poverty alleviation. Achieving the planned outputs and their success can be gauged by the emergence of a relatively stable environment, free from conflict, which has been sustained over two years. In terms of poverty alleviation, short-term job opportunities coupled with on-the-job vocational training have led to the employment of several ex-combatants. The report states that approximately 60% of ex-combatants have found permanent employment, which has contributed to the establishment of a sense of normality in the communities. Furthermore, some of the ex-combatants have sought employment opportunities in other former Soviet republics, mainly Russia enabling a flow of remittances back to communities in Tajikistan, where they have produced a surge of investments. Moreover, it seems that women are increasingly becoming economically and politically active. Finally, and partly outside the criteria used in this report, the evaluation argues that the reintegration has significantly contributed to the stabilisation of the country – something which is evidently of great importance in fragile situations.

### **7.3 Reasons for results**

At a general level, the report attributes the success of the process of reintegration to four factors, none of which had to do with pragmatic aid management. The report underscores ‘the staunch commitment and financial support on the part of the donor community’ as well as emphasizing how ‘the government and the opposition UTO, despite lingering suspicion of each other, worked in conjunction with each other, in a flexible and corporative manner, to ensure that the goals of reintegration were carried out in the wider interest of the country as a whole’ (ibid.: 10). These two issues are linked with the clear political support for the programme. In addition, the report notes ‘the energy and vision of the extraordinary people (national and international) who shaped, supported and worked’ (ibid.) on the programme, and it points to the strong interest in local communities in moving on from the conflict.

The success of the programme is also attributed to the methodology applied to it in Tajikistan, which largely rested on the UNDP’s extensive experience in other post-conflict situations. According to the report, this points to the efficacy and efficiency of the methodology framing the intervention. The report also points out

that, while the programme used a methodology developed elsewhere, it nevertheless forged some new approaches in its own right, thereby pointing to the importance of *context dependence*.

Also related to context dependence, the report strongly emphasises the usefulness of integrating economic recovery with political change. In relation to the rebuilding of infrastructure, community-based organisations were set up and ‘became the mechanism for the regeneration of local government’ (ibid.: 28). Thus, the report emphasises the importance of strengthening both the economic opportunities and the political influence of the communities, as well as restructuring the political system from below.

Somewhat related to the issue of *political sensitivity*, the report gives credit to the UNDP’s ability to account for and recognise the political complexities and intricacies involved in establishing a successful reintegration programme, as activities strongly focused on those having committed atrocities could easily be taken up negatively by the victims of the violence. Thus, for instance, the programme gave special attention to local decision-making structures and ensured that ex-combatant reintegration activities were perceived as benefiting the communities at large.

Based on the evaluation report, it is difficult to say anything conclusive about the other dimensions of pragmatic aid management in this case.

#### **7.4 Concluding remarks**

Essentially, it seems that a very important factor contributing to the successful reintegration of ex-combatants in Tajikistan was the general political climate in the country. The report attributes to both government and opposition a readiness for ‘compromise, flexibility and maturity’ and argues that these characteristics on the part of the central political actors ‘were the corner stone of the reintegration process in the country.’ The report goes on to state: ‘In any post-conflict recovery arena, in whichever part of the globe it may be, the display of such characteristics “guarantees” the end-goal of successful reintegration’ (ibid.: 27). This indicates that, no matter how the aid was managed, positive results were certain. While this may be an exaggeration, especially in fragile and volatile contexts, there is little doubt that a strongly enabling environment helps achieve results.

It is also worth noting that the quality of the staff and the usefulness of the reintegration methodologies developed in other countries are highlighted. Not everything has to be developed in the actual context, but it is important to have suitable personnel adapting approaches to the specific circumstances. Thus, this case supports the significance of context dependence and political sensitivity, but the evaluation does not report on the other aspects of pragmatic aid management.

## **8. GTZ-supported reintegration of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone, 2000-2005**

### **8.1 Overview of the project and its evaluation**

The brief report evaluating the GTZ-supported reintegration of ex-combatants (RECOM) in Sierra Leone in 2000-2005 summarises an ex-post evaluation undertaken in 2010 (Trentmann, Mando et al. 2011). The rationale for the reintegration project was that stabilisation of the peace-building process in Sierra Leone depended on the successful social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants, especially of young people.

The RECOM project was active for a period of four years and two months and was designed and applied according to a multi-sectoral approach in which different funds were managed in order to attend to the different community needs. The primary foci of the project were vocational training and infrastructure reconstruction with community support. RECOM was integrated into the broader management and coordination of ReAct (Rehabilitation, Reconciliation, and Reintegration), a GTZ programme specifically designed for post-war contexts and based on successful experience in other West African countries.

The RECOM project sought to contribute to the securitization of the internal peace process, including reconciliation among the various social groups, and to ensure the reconstruction of infrastructure in those areas that had been most greatly affected by the war. The specific project objective was thus to aid ex-combatants to reintegrate into civilian life and coexist peacefully with the population in the respective settlement areas.

The brief six-page report summarizes the ex-post evaluation, which itself has proved impossible to obtain. The evaluation broadly followed the DAC/OECD criteria, and the summary of the evaluation does not include much information on aid management.

### **8.2 Results**

Overall, the RECOM project was rated as good. Specifically, the project was judged to be highly relevant and appropriate for the communities involved, and the project's objectives were in line with national policy approaches. Based on project outputs,

short- and medium-term results were achieved. This view was supported by the high rate of ex-combatants who have remained in the resettled village or who can be identified through public agencies, the decent rate of employment of individuals who followed training in income-generating activities and the decrease in conflict and friction reported to have been experienced at the community level. The report argues that 'the most positive results' are 'improved social reintegration and peace stabilisation at community level' (ibid.: 5).

Thus, it seems that the project had some impact on poverty reduction, it contributed to peace-building and stabilisation in particularly unstable districts, and it achieved its planned objectives to a large extent. Despite shortcomings in terms of monitoring, scaling up and assessments of market demands, the results are important.

### **8.3 Reasons for results and concluding remarks**

The evaluation report described a two-pronged approach for the RECOM project. The first was a *crisis-sensitive approach* targeting different social groups, including ex-combatants, women ex-combatants and ex-child soldiers, as well as non-combatants. It centred on local capacities and community orientation, as well as on reconciliation and peace-building activities in skills training. More importantly, it was widely accepted and appreciated by staff of both the national government and local authorities. The second was a *capacity development* approach aimed to strengthen capacities at the local, district and national levels. This approach and the ensuing concrete activities carried out by GTZ after the war took into account general community needs and preferences, and appropriately identified priority needs for reconstruction such as infrastructure.

This two-pronged approach, the consideration given to different social groups beyond those identified as ex-combatants and a broad thematic approach integrating economic, social and even psychological issues all seem to have been important in explaining the relatively positive results. The combination of these elements appears to have been inspired by experience from other post-crisis programmes in the region, indicating that there are some elements in this case that are useful to consider when addressing ex-combatants in post-crisis situations across contexts.

Among the evaluation criteria used, the report ranks relevance and appropriateness highest, indicating that *context dependence* and *responsiveness* to community needs in particular characterised the management of the project. On the other hand, this

brief report does not discuss *policy liberty*, *flexibility* or *political sensitivity*. In the context of the present study, the central message from the summary of the evaluation is that models developed elsewhere can be of great use, although they still have to be applied by giving due consideration to the specific context.

## 9. Conclusion

The overall conclusion of this study is that, while a high degree of pragmatic aid management as defined in this report is linked to relatively positive results of aid-supported activities, such aid management is not necessarily enough to attain the expected results. Other factors seem to be of importance as well.

However, a word of caution is needed before venturing conclusions regarding aid management. The evaluations and studies on which this report is based are not sufficiently directed towards answering the questions of the report to enable firm conclusions to be drawn. Aid management in fragile situations and its relationship to aid results are not issues that have been well documented and analysed in the literature. There are practical, political and conceptual reasons for this. Evaluations often undertaken 'after the fact' have difficulties in obtaining a thorough understanding of a soft issue like management, which ideally should be studied during aid implementation. Moreover, aid agencies are rarely interested in having their management procedures, which obviously complicates the whole objective of this report. Finally, the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, which totally dominate contemporary evaluation practices, are not useful in relation to fragile situations, where conditions change rapidly. The criteria focus on whether set objectives are achieved, and this may be quite irrelevant under changing circumstances. Accordingly, one conclusion of the present report is that it would be useful to review evaluation principles and practices in fragile situations in order to account better for the particularities of such situations.

Beginning with the five characteristics of pragmatic aid management (see Table 1), the *policy liberty* of aid managers seems to have been large in most cases. Only in the case of the Danish support to Somalia may this liberty not have been very extensive. Aid management in this case had to take a complex collection of guidelines and policy documents into account, and management responsibilities were shared between the Danish embassy in Nairobi and headquarters in Copenhagen, with a tendency towards centralisation in the latter part of the period being evaluated. On the other hand, the evaluation report notes a 'relative policy vacuum for much of the evaluation period'. Setting it aside from the other cases analysed in this study, a distinguishing characteristic of the Danish support to Somalia was that it had no official representation within Somalia.

The most pronounced aspect of pragmatic aid management in these case studies is *flexibility*. The ability to reallocate resources and to respond to unforeseen changes is frequently noted and much appreciated by partners and fellow agencies. This characteristic is highlighted as the major factor explaining success in several evaluation reports. In the Danish support to Mozambique and Somalia, a certain inflexibility is noted at the policy level and across instruments respectively, but this does not seem to have been a major stumbling block. Aid management practices and systems enabling easy reallocation of resources *within* programmes are strongly underlined.

*Responsiveness* to locally expressed concerns and needs is a less common characteristic of the aid management practices analysed in this study. An important distinction to be made here is between policies and implementation. In terms of the former, domestic constituencies seem to play an important role, while national partners have a stronger bearing on the latter. Given the lack of staff on the ground in the case of the Danish support to Somalia, it is not surprising that the level of responsiveness here seems limited. Notably in the early years, the British support to Sierra Leone was distinguished by the large number of British personnel in central decision-making positions within the Sierra Leonean state, and this made the issue of responsiveness somewhat redundant. Moreover, some of these personnel confronted vested interests, and some even got away with it in a relatively successful manner. Despite this uneven concern for responsiveness, aid management practices were very far from disregarding local views and policies (see below).

After flexibility, *context dependence* seems to be an important characteristic of successful aid management. Most of the aid-supported activities analysed here were developed in accordance with the specific nature of the society in which they were carried out. They clearly addressed appalling needs, to a large extent took capacities and structural constraints into account, and were sometimes developed on an ad hoc basis so as to adapt to rapidly evolving circumstances. Interestingly, successful aid management may be context-dependent without necessarily being responsive to locally expressed concerns. For instance, British advisers strongly promoted a police reform adapted to local realities, but challenged the customs and cultures in the force. One observer believes that this was a condition for the success of the security-sector reform.

The *political sensitivity* of the aid management analysed here proved rather uneven. From a sometimes extremely sensitive approach in Sierra Leone to a politically relatively insensitive approach in Afghanistan, aid was managed in clearly different ways.



Yet, it seems from the limited cases covered in the study that more politically sensitive management practices produce better results. The British support in Sierra Leone and the Danish support in Mozambique receive more praise than the Danish support to Afghanistan and Somalia, and this can be linked to the historical ties, trust and long-term cooperation established in the former cases. Under such circumstances, aid managers are likely to know more about politics and power configurations where aid-supported activities are carried out.

Pragmatism in aid management means a lot. Notably flexibility and context dependence appear to have characterised all the relatively successful aid-supported activities analysed in this report. Policy liberty and political sensibility are also important features which help aid management to achieve results. Responsiveness is interestingly a feature which is sometimes useful, sometimes less so. A possible reason for this is that vested interests and spoilers may seek to divert efforts to carry through necessary reforms which, given the fragility, it may actually be possible to implement. In post-conflict situations, windows of opportunity may be open, and responding to concerns of vested interests could close them again. Thus, responsiveness in a politically tense situation should not always be pursued.

Though pragmatic aid management seems to help produce positive results, these case studies indicate that other factors have also been conducive to the relative success of the aid-supported activities. First, *political support* from above is likely to be important. This was most clear in Sierra Leone, where both national and foreign political support was very strong. The president of Sierra Leone saw the security-sector reform and the revamping of the police force as crucial conditions for his own political survival, and the British development secretary made these activities a pivotal issue in her development policies. This strong support enabled aid managers to carry through activities that were daring and challenging, as they enjoyed a lot of policy liberty at the same time. In Mozambique, political support in Denmark was also strong in the 1990s, albeit of a slightly different kind, as it was more broadly based, including development organizations and trade unions. In East Timor, aid managers had a clear sense that what they were doing contributed strongly to contemporary US foreign policies in the area. Moreover, they had the trust and support of their immediate superior, the Senior Mission Officer in USAID/Jakarta. Political attention also characterized Danish support to Afghanistan and Somalia, but the concern in these two cases was less development-focused and more security-related. This creates a different context for aid managers.

Second, the *quality of staff* has been highlighted repeatedly in the reports. The ability of competent aid managers to act under extremely difficult circumstances seems to have been crucial. A former political officer in the US State Department described the aid team in East Timor as follows: ‘OTI team members were totally appropriate for East Timor. These independent types were just what was required. Career officers would not have been nearly as effective’ (Clark, von Briesen Lewis et al. 2003: 10). In Afghanistan, it seems that the relative success of the Danish support to the education sector in the early 2000s hinged on a technical advisor posted to the Ministry of Education. In Sierra Leone, the British head of the police in 1999-2003 appointed by the President introduced ‘local needs policing,’ out-maneuvred opponents within the police and even arrested political leaders accused of being war criminals. Qualified staff in the right place at the right time AND equipped with the policy liberty to manage aid according to context undoubtedly helps bring about success.

Third, *coordination* with other donors and *partnership* with national and local institutions, embryonic though they may be, were emphasised in a number of reports. In Somalia, aid managers were praised for stimulating international coordination, and in relation to Mozambique the evaluation report argues: ‘The Danish financial support operations were valuable in themselves, but their wider benefits in setting a pattern for other donors were probably even greater’ (Lister et al. 2008: 16). Danish aid managers in Mozambique also challenged WB and IMF policies for not being sufficiently adapted to the context. In East Timor, aid managers were commended for facilitating the engagement of both domestic and international actors. Such coordination and cooperation help build an aid environment that is conducive to results, and more human and financial resources are mobilized for similar goals.

Fourth, aid has not been managed in a pragmatic way to the extent that there have been no principles guiding it. The principles of ownership, alignment and the on-budget management of aid have to an important degree characterised the cases analysed in this study. Most striking is the British support to security-sector reform in Sierra Leone because, on the one hand, it involved the deployment of foreigners in key decision-making positions in the state and, on the other hand, it was managed with strong recognition of Sierra Leonean ownership of the changes. As national institutions and actors stepped up their performance, foreigners were gradually withdrawn from the central positions. In Afghanistan, it was decided right from the beginning to provide on-budget support to the education sector, something which preceded other donors with several years. In Mozambique, alignment with national policies characterised Danish aid management from the early 1990s.

Principles evidently help aid managers to navigate in very volatile surroundings, but the nature of those principles is hardly irrelevant. A strong sense of the temporary nature of the support stimulates a focus on making institutions perform. Yet it is a difficult balance to strike because short-term cooperation may not produce the desired results. Sierra Leone is again a case in point because the British and Sierra Leonean governments agreed to a ten-year memorandum of understanding as a framework for their cooperation. Yet, London would not agree to a British Military Training Advisory Team being deployed for more than three years due to concerns that Sierra Leone would become dependent on it, although it was obvious to people in the country that more than three years were needed. Thus, the conclusion may be that a strong focus on ownership and a gradual handing over responsibility is required and helps build capacity, but the precise moment for pulling out should be determined along the road – in a pragmatic way.

Fifth, the evaluations of the reintegration of ex-combatants in Tajikistan and Sierra Leone indicate that a particular approach to this issue has been developed on the basis of the experience of many different contexts and that this approach is conducive to success. While it must be adapted to the specifics of the context, it nevertheless has a number of characteristics, including comprehensiveness in terms of economic, political and social issues, a combination of short- and long-term perspectives, and the inclusion of many different actors in addition to the ex-combatants.

All this indicates that *pragmatic and principled aid management with political support and qualified staff in coordination with relevant domestic and international actors and characterised by a focus on transferring ownership is conducive to the success of aid-supported activities in fragile situations*. In addition, luck is probably also needed to avoid spoilers succeeding in their endeavours and closing the windows of opportunity in fragile situations. Nevertheless, this study tentatively documents that a great deal can be done to provide optimal working conditions for aid management in order to achieve positive results. Though the study is based on a limited number of evaluations and analyses – which, moreover, are only partly focused on the study's objectives – the diversity of the cases presented here strengthens those conclusions that cut across the activities analysed. Thus, it appears reasonable for donor agencies to review whether they have established optimal conditions for the management of the activities they support.

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