

Governance and Transparency Fund

Mid-Term Review

Report

July 2012

Contents

1. Executive Summary	4
2. Introduction and Background	6
3. Brief Overview of the Governance and Transparency Fund: Context and Approach.....	6
4. Findings from the sample analysis.....	7
4.1 Areas of strength	8
4.1.1 Evidence of innovation at project level	8
4.1.2 Project resonance and public engagement	8
4.1.3 Engagement with local partners	8
4.1.4 Evidence of sustainable results	8
4.2 Areas for further consideration and development	9
4.2.1 Issues with project scope	9
4.2.2 Project design and linkages between inputs and desired results	9
4.2.3 Issues with the attribution of results.....	10
4.2.4 Issues with reporting on the results achieved.....	10
4.2.5 Issues with baselining.....	11
4.2.6 Issues around demonstrating value for money at project level.....	11
4.2.7 Issues with project management	11
4.2.8 Issues with project evaluation.....	12
5. Programme-Level Review.....	12
5.1 GTF direction, structure and scope.....	13
5.1.1 Portfolio design and positioning for results	13
5.1.2 Overall status of the GTF logframe and design	17
5.1.3 Linkages between the GTF projects and the overall programme logframe .	18
5.1.4 GTF spread	19
5.2 GTF programme management arrangements	19
5.2.1 External support to portfolio management and contractual implications.....	19
5.2.2 Management inputs to build the capacity of GTF grant holders	20
5.2.3 Internal DFID resource for GTF portfolio management	21
5.2.4 Further issues identified with current management arrangements	22
Risk management practices.....	22
Financial management and authorisations	22
Programme-level reporting	23
5.2.5 Value for money with current management arrangements	23
5.3 Partner/stakeholder engagement and communications.....	24
5.3.1 Engagement and communications within and between programmes.....	24
5.3.2 Engagement and communications between KPMG and DFID	25
5.4 Evaluation approach and design.....	25

5.5	Lesson learning approach and arrangements.....	26
5.6	Sustainability considerations.....	29
6.	Key lessons from the GTF mid-term review	30
7.	Recommendations	31
7.1	Short-term measures through to the end of the GTF	31
7.2	Longer-term recommendations for future similar programmes	33

1. Executive Summary

The ability of citizens to make their voices heard and hold their governments to account is fundamental. Its absence fosters an environment in which corruption can flourish, and citizens are unable to assess the decisions of their leaders or make informed choices about who they elect to serve as their representatives. In 2007 DFID launched a £130 million Governance and Transparency Fund to directly address these issues. Designed to help citizens hold their governments to account through strengthening the wide range of groups that can empower and support them, the fund became fully operational in 2008 under the auspices of DFID's Civil Society Department (CSD). It is a five-year fund which supports 38 leading civil society and media organisations, linked to over 1000 local partner organisations in more than 100 countries. The fund's activities cover a wide range of governance issues - from basic literacy for women in Afghanistan to human rights in Zimbabwe. It empowers citizens to get involved in the delivery of higher quality services and improved core state functions, and to have a say in national policies on a plethora of issues such as maternal health, political institutions, effective public authority, and access to security and justice.

The mid-term review of the GTF was designed to analyse the fund's progress to date against its impact, effectiveness and efficiency. The findings are intended to inform the final phase of the programme, as well as provide insights for future funds and programmes.

The review has revealed a number of positive and remarkable achievements and some equally striking issues and challenges. There is evidence of **significant innovation** in both to project management structures and staffing, and to the use of innovative tools – including indicators and baselines – to measure results. The GTF has the potential to be very strong in the area of **evidence and results**. A wealth of evidence has emerged around the GTF's outputs. Indeed, some of the projects are demonstrating significant results. However, a weakness of the Fund at present is the inability of many programmes to accurately and consistently measure and monitor their results. Systematically analysing and synthesising the evidence has also been weak. The problems around results include: weak evaluation designs which have meant that some programmes failed to adopt a rigorous results-based approach to programme structuring; tenuous linkages between results at the individual project level and those results outlined in the overarching GTF programme logical framework; very few examples of attribution of results to GTF funding and activities, and an incredibly ambitious Fund which has spread the portfolio very thinly, making it difficult to manage and aggregate results across thematic areas and geographic regions.

- **Recommendation:** It is crucial to improve upon these processes if a much more coherent, impressive story on impact is to be told.

Many of these problems are rooted in the **original design of the individual programmes** and their logical framework: logical frameworks with vague outcomes, inputs and activities out of sync with outputs, significant problems with baselines, and, indicators more focused on measuring processes and activities than results.

- **Recommendation:** The Fund Manager should carry out a stock-take of GTF programmes and constituent projects to:
 - a) identify achievable results during the remainder of the Fund's life; and
 - b) clarify linkages between inputs – outputs - outcomes - impact.

- **Recommendation:** There is a need for more specific and substantiated reporting on results against stated logical framework targets across the programme. Quantitative approaches to measurement currently dominates GTF programmes and needs to be balanced with more qualitative evaluation.

Lessons learnt will be useful for future similar programmes highlighting the importance of establishing clear design parameters, results chains, logical frameworks, evaluation strategies and plans for long term sustainability during the early stages of the programme. Initial ambitions with regard to programme scope, thematic/sector coverage and geographic spread are carefully defined (and possibly curbed) at the earliest stages of programme design. The level of effort that was initially allocated to learning was inadequate and led to missed learning opportunities. This has been addressed to a certain extent: a number of effective learning activities and tools are now in place and learning is being carried out more systematically.

- **Recommendation:** More evidence is needed on whether and how lessons are being shared across projects and being fed back into on-going projects to reshape and improve them.
- **Recommendation:** Time also needs to be spent drawing out what exactly is working well, what is not, why, and whether successes are context-specific and/or scalable.
- **Recommendation:** Experience of how this engagement and empowerment was brought about – and the positive results it has induced – should be shared more broadly across other programmes to facilitate positive learning.

Risk management and mitigation and capacity building are areas for improvement.

- **Recommendation:** A more proactive approach to risk management across all programmes should be adopted which moves away from purely documenting risks and mitigation measures towards actively analysing evolving contexts and resolving emerging risks. Lessons should be drawn out analysing where risk management has and has not worked. The stock-take could help build a more accurate picture of the current risks status and appropriate mitigation measures of each programme.
- **Recommendation:** A much more targeted approach to capacity building – which focuses extra support towards poorly-performing programmes – during the remaining life of the GTF is needed.
- **Recommendation:** A survey of local partners to gauge the degree to which their experience with the GTF has helped increase their capacity should be carried out.

At present the **management costs** of the GTF are not being measured in enough detail, causing challenges when it comes to assessing the Value for Money (VFM) of the Fund Manager. The existing contracting mechanism has been set up to remunerate the Fund Manager for their inputs and person/days used instead of a fixed-price payment arrangement that remunerates against agreed deliverables, milestones and results.

- **Recommendation:** Management costs need to be much more accurately quantified and measured during the last part of the GTF.
- **Recommendation:** Costs should be compared against benchmarks from other similar organisations to further inform VFM from a results perspective.

- **Recommendation:** For similar future initiatives an alternative contracting mechanism should be considered where management costs are apportioned to the outcomes and results achieved.

Resourcing constraints within DFID have driven down the level of **internal resources allocated** to managing this large initiative. The GTF has not always been entirely in line and up-to-speed with DFID's governance policies and thinking, with strategic priorities, and with business requirements. This has also resulted in an over-reliance on the Fund Manager (an external supplier) to manage the programme, track results and provide information to DFID.

- **Recommendation:** extra internal resources should be allocated to the programme.

2. Introduction and Background

The purpose of the mid-term review of DFID's Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF) is to determine the status of the fund with regard to its impact, effectiveness and efficiency as at the time of the review. The review would thus inform decisions regarding any necessary changes in the remaining 18 months of the GTF programme, as well as providing insights to inform the design of future similar programmes.

The objectives of the GTF mid-term review are to:

- Identify the main achievements and progress of the GTF;
- Determine the programme's progress against the impact, outcomes and outputs outlined in the GTF logical framework;
- Review the performance of the fund manager, project partners and DFID, and evaluate the overall management arrangements in place for the GTF;
- Make recommendations to improve the management and effectiveness of the fund in its second phase, and to inform the design and management structures of future similar programmes.

The following section of this report provides an overview of the GTF. The report then proceeds to outline key findings from the review at both sample project and overall programme levels, and key lessons which could be learned from the GTF thus far. The report ends with recommendations for the short term which could enhance GTF practices and management arrangements, and for the longer term in terms of considerations for the design and structure of future similar initiatives. A summary of the approach and methodology adopted for the mid-term review can be found at **Annex A**.

3. Brief Overview of the Governance and Transparency Fund: Context and Approach

DFID's approach to instilling better governance recognises the need for states and citizens to work together to build effective state institutions. It also recognises that state building often entails a long process of bargaining between groups in society, and that effective,

accountable formal institutions can evolve through complex, long-term interactions between individuals and institutions.

As part of its approach to building effective states, DFID recognises the need to strengthen the capability, accountability and responsiveness of state institutions in developing countries. To support this, DFID's approach encompasses strengthening the voice, agency, and capacities of citizens on the one hand, while also strengthening the legal frameworks, state institutions, and champions of change on the other. Putting citizens at the centre lays the groundwork for moving beyond the traditional state-civil society divide that has characterised much donor funding and policy. DFID's governance work therefore seeks to support the building of peaceful states through strong state-society relations.

The ability of citizens to make their voices heard and hold their governments to account is fundamental to good governance. Its absence fosters an environment in which corruption can flourish, and citizens are unable to assess the decisions of their leaders, or make informed choices about who they elect to serve as their representatives.

To address some of these issues, DFID launched a £130 million Governance and Transparency Fund in February 2007. The fund has been designed to help citizens hold their governments to account through strengthening the wide range of groups that can empower and support them.

The GTF became fully operational in 2008, under the auspices of DFID's Civil Society Department (CSD). It is a five-year fund which supports 38 leading civil society and media organisations, linked to over 1000 local partner organisations in more than 100 countries. The fund's activities cover a wide range of governance issues - from basic literacy for women in Afghanistan to human rights in Zimbabwe. It helps citizens get involved in the delivery of better quality services, and to have a say in national policies on issues such as maternal health and access to justice and security. It promotes international standards in public financial management, gender equality and the environment, and it operates in fragile and conflict-affected states.

A table summarising all the GTF projects is provided at **Annex B**. The final projects are scheduled to finish by the end of 2013.

4. Findings from the sample analysis

The GTF review included an analysis of a representative sample of 11 GTF projects. Findings from this analysis, given the nature and coverage of the sample, are meant to be indicative of progress, successes and areas for development with the overall GTF portfolio. This section of the report summarises some key findings from the sample analysis, both in terms of strengths and positive practices on one hand, and issues or areas for development on the other.

4.1 Areas of strength

4.1.1 Evidence of innovation at project level

There is some evidence of innovative approaches being used by some of the GTF projects to good effect. This is true of approximately 27% of the review sample (three out of the eleven projects reviewed), and extends to both innovation in project management structures and staffing, and in applying effective methods from various disciplines in new contexts or to new governance themes to achieve desired results.

There is further scope to learn from what has worked from innovation across all GTF projects, and why some innovations have worked well in some contexts and not others. This would greatly inform future similar projects.

4.1.2 Project resonance and public engagement

The sample analysis found that projects which tackle issues that are directly relevant to people's lives and livelihoods, including public services, poverty reduction and/or food security are able to demonstrate more traction in their initiatives. Projects that seem to tackle genuine citizen concerns, and are of higher relevance to the local context, gain more credibility and are able to demonstrate more results at the local level.

The trends/pattern indicate that there may be some value in the GTF undertaking a detailed stakeholder analysis in order to clearly identify the balance of projects within the GTF in terms of target groups, and inform where the overall portfolio should expect to see direct engagement from various groups of stakeholders.

4.1.3 Engagement with local partners

The sample analysis clearly points to the importance of early engagement with and empowerment of local partners in order to enable a higher degree of ownership, and to promote partner commitment to adapt project approaches and activities to their local context. This is clearly seen in the approach adopted by one of the organisations from the sample, where their engagement with local partners through all stages of project design and development meant more effective adaptation of approaches to the local context. This was also supported by a high degree of decentralisation in project activity to maximise partner ownership.

It is worth noting that this positive approach to partner engagement was only identified in one project out of the eleven reviewed in this sample analysis. It is worth considering how to disseminate such best practices across the GTF in order for all projects to be able to assess what of these practices would equally apply to their work and partner relations.

4.1.4 Evidence of sustainable results

There is a growing body of tangible evidence which points to sustainable results and impact through some of the GTF's project activities. It would not be possible to quantify or aggregate these results to portfolio level at this stage of the programme, given some

continuing issues with monitoring and documenting impact across the GTF. The examples from the sample point to the wealth of available evidence around the GTF's results. It may be worth considering whether systematising and synthesising this evidence would enable the GTF to tell a better story of the impact it has had, and to make the evidence for this more directly accessible to interested parties.

It is worth noting that the examples identified point to an increased potential for sustainability of achieved results when these extend to tangible changes in policy or legislation, the establishment of improved structures or institutions, or the national adoption of best practices. Such embedding of change means that the results achieved can continue beyond any direct funding from the GTF, and until such time as local or national circumstances necessitate further change.

4.2 Areas for further consideration and development

4.2.1 Issues with project scope

The sample analysis indicates that some of the GTF projects seem to have an overly ambitious scope, spread of activity, geographic spread and/or goals. This has meant that several projects have had to de-scope their original plans. It has also meant that some projects have found it difficult to demonstrate results against their ambitious plans.

Several examples of overly ambitious project design and coverage can be seen across the sample. Some projects seem to have targeted too wide a spread of countries for their results, with the project mid-term reviews later recommending de-scoping of project activity in order to enable a better and deeper focus on evidenced impact. Even with such geographic de-scoping, some projects continue to attempt to tackle issues in too broad a spread of service sectors, or to target overly broad and encompassing changes in government accountability in their spread of countries and with relatively limited funding.

In the case of some geographically ambitious projects, successful progress has resulted in a degree of scope creep, with the project extending its activities beyond the originally planned spread of countries. While this has been possible in the context of some such projects, it does make it difficult to identify deeper tangible results from the projects' activities, or to ensure that these are directly attributable to GTF funding alone.

It may be worth considering a "stock take" activity for GTF projects to establish what of their scope is feasible given funding and timeframe constraints, in the interest of re-focusing some of these projects on areas where they will be able to demonstrate the highest impact and most tangible results.

4.2.2 Project design and linkages between inputs and desired results

Some of the sample projects' planned inputs/activities do not seem to fully support their goal, purpose or outputs, as captured in the project logical frameworks, or to enable the achievement of targeted results. In the case of one sample project, it is unclear from the documentation available what specific project activities support the project's stated purpose. In another example, the main project activity utilising report cards partly

enables the planned output, but does not fully support access to data regarding budgets, revenue and community rights.

This is also exacerbated by the fact that some projects seem to focus solely on the demand side of governance, with citizen awareness raising and developing a culture of demand for transparency and accountability. However, there is little balance on the supply side to support more responsiveness on the part of governments and public bodies. Such balance may be achieved within project activities, or through coordinating with other projects and initiatives that work on the demand side. The latter would necessitate clear attribution of results to each project's initiatives.

Several examples of the potential imbalance between demand-side and supply-side activity can be seen across the review sample. In one instance, the project's focus on capacity building of CSOs, while positive, is not clearly linked to how behaviour change on the part of governments, and reduced corruption targets, will be achieved. In another example, the project's focus on an international index, while worthwhile, does not fully link to some of the project's targeted results in terms of government practices and behaviours. A further example of this issue may be seen in another programme, where project activities seem to be mainly research orientated, with documented concerns over delivery of targeted results.

If the "stock take" activity suggested above is pursued, it may be worth considering integrating a review of the projects' logframes to ensure a clear and direct link between inputs/activities on one hand, and outputs, outcomes and impact on the other, to support targeted results.

4.2.3 Issues with the attribution of results

In some of the sample projects reviewed, it is occasionally difficult to evidence the attribution of results to GTF funding and activity. It may be possible, as part of the recommended "stock take" and logframe review above, to separate out what results are directly attributable to GTF funding and inputs, and include those only in the updated logframes and associated reporting.

4.2.4 Issues with reporting on the results achieved

Some of the results reported by the GTF projects reviewed do not seem to fully match their planned or targeted results. It is possible that evidence against targeted results is available, but there is a need to report more specifically on such evidence to demonstrate the achievement of these results. A further issue with reporting on results is that some of the expected outcomes and impacts from the GTF projects are weakly or broadly stated. There also seems to be a tendency in some of the projects' logframes and associated reporting towards numerical targets that are difficult to report against, or, where reporting is possible, indicate more around project inputs than results. Some of the numerical targets reported against indicate impact, but with little supporting evidence to substantiate this quantitative impact. Further, some of the numerical targets are more focused on process than results or uptake.

It may be possible to rectify this trend by introducing a balanced approach to evaluating qualitative results into the GTF logframes in order to better demonstrate and evidence

tangible results. It may also be possible to review numerical targets to make them more specific in terms of the benefits or impacts achieved.

4.2.5 Issues with base-lining

Base-lining in some GTF projects seems to be an area of concern, with some projects reporting against dated baselines, and some finding it difficult to establish valid baselines. Where there are issues identified with base lining, the GTF projects in question may wish to consider an impact analysis approach to evaluating and reporting results, as opposed to reporting against baselines where those have not been established in a sufficiently robust manner.

4.2.6 Issues around demonstrating value for money at project level

During the course of the sample analysis, the reviewers have found it difficult to quantify project inputs in monetary terms, and proportion of this to the results achieved, in order to establish the degree to which the projects represent good value for money.

One issue is that some projects' documentation does not always capture specific information on the distribution of the funds allocated to these projects over the number of sub-projects they support, and/or the countries they operate in.

A further issue is that, in the case of some projects, the percentage of funding used to support project management and operations, including overheads, seems to be disproportionate to the projects' spend on substantive activity and delivery. Management/ operational spend seems to range from 19% to 27% or 28%, with one agency peaking at 62.5%. In addition, management costs at sub-partner or sub-project level do not seem to be fully documented.

For future similar programmes, there may be a need to establish standards for the proportion of funding allowable for management and administration purposes to ensure that funding is effectively channelled towards substantive activity and delivery.

4.2.7 Issues with project management

Some of the sample projects reviewed seem to have been hindered by weak work planning, monitoring and evaluation systems. Issues with work planning and internal monitoring and evaluation systems seem to have made it difficult for some projects to track and report on their results. Some projects seem to have encountered delays in start-up for the first years of activity, with much of their work pushed into the third year.

This may also be exacerbated by disproportionate mobilisation periods on some projects. There may be some benefit in future similar initiatives to establish standards for project inception and mobilisation, and to profile funding approval post mobilisation based on viable inputs and demonstrable results.

A further management weakness in the reviewers' opinion has been with risk identification and management in some of the projects reviewed. In one instance, risks and associated mitigation measures seem to have been consistently documented; however, there is little documentation regarding active risk management over the

project's life cycle to close some open risks or address others. In another example, some risks seem to have been weakly identified, if at all. On this project, the planned increase in project scope did not trigger the identification of risks around the adequacy of the project's virtual management structure and volunteer network to sustain delivery. This is now being addressed as a result of recommendations from the project's mid-term review.

Where issues are adequately identified, the documentation does not clarify if and how these have been addressed. In one instance, issues were documented prior to project start-up with regard to internal governance and financial management. The documentation available does not clarify if/how these were addressed. Final external evaluation of this project again recommends improvements in internal governance and financial management.

It may be appropriate to undertake a review of project risks at this stage, and generate from this clear plans to mitigate against those risks that are most critical to project delivery and/or achievement of results. These plans then need to be monitored for successful implementation of the mitigation measures identified, and evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in addressing the risks or issues identified.

4.2.8 Issues with project evaluation

The review of sample project documentation indicates that some projects may have been granted overly generous evaluation ratings that are not fully representative of continuing issues on these projects.

It may be beneficial to the GTF to move away from "traffic light" evaluation and reporting, and to consider establishing a "profile of effective projects", based on clear descriptors which can be rated, and then undertaking a fresh evaluation of its projects in order to establish where intervention is required.

5. Programme-Level Review

At overall programme/portfolio level, the GTF mid-term review focused on three main areas:

- Review of the overall programme design, structure and linkages, and strategic positioning for maximum impact, as evidenced by the updated GTF logical framework and progress against that;
- Review of management arrangements currently in place for the GTF, with particular reference to resourcing, portfolio management practices and value for money considerations; and
- Review of the GTF approach to engagement, learning, evaluation and capacity building.

5.1 GTF direction, structure and scope

5.1.1 Portfolio design and positioning for results

As mentioned in Section 3 above, the GTF portfolio comprises of 38 projects run by grant-holders, spanning more than 100 countries and with a network of over 1000 civil society and media organisations. The main design parameters and positioning of the GTF for maximum impact, based on the theory of change underlying the programme, are captured in the GTF logframe.

The logframe for the GTF was established in 2009, after funding decisions had been made. This was intended to enable constituent projects to show innovation in identifying the approaches and methodologies that best suited their local contexts, and best served the thematic areas they were focused on, rather than creating a prescriptive programme design within which all constituent projects had to operate. Observations on this approach are discussed later on in this report (see Section 5.2 below for details).

The GTF logframe underwent a number of revisions, culminating in the most recent version referenced and reported against in the GTF Third Annual Report. **Annex H** provides a copy of this most current version of the logframe for ease of reference. A review of this version raises a number of issues which are worthy of further consideration during the second phase of the programme.

Main impact statement

The logframe defines the main impact of the GTF as follows: “Governments are more capable, accountable and responsive to meet the needs of poor people”.

The above impact statement assumes that GTF initiatives to strengthen civil society and the voice of the people in demanding improved accountability, transparency and governance from their governments will trigger increased responsiveness by those governments to public demand.

The impact statement, however, also assumes that government capability should increase in order to be able to respond to increased demand. While some of the GTF grant-holders are implementing some activities on the supply-side of governance in order to increase officials’ skills and awareness, and governments’ capability to meet demand, the main focus of the GTF projects is more on the demand-side of governance. At a minimum, this could increase the risk of increased demand being met with inadequate response on the part of governments, with this in turn resulting in disillusionment, loss of credibility, and de-motivation on the part of those “making” the demands to sustain their efforts. This issue has been raised by a number of GTF grant-holders over the course of their demand-side programming work. An additional risk could be that increased demand could trigger parallel structures, for example for service provision, with these not being aligned to national structures, competing for the same resources and/or capitalising on the increased demand for their own benefit.

It is of course assumed within the GTF approach that other DFID funded initiatives on the supply side of governance will naturally complement GTF activity on the demand

side, with such complementation contributing to the achievement of the desired GTF impact as captured in the impact statement above. However, programme level documentation suggests there may be a need to better define such complementation of initiatives at strategic level to ensure a more cohesive and targeted approach to achieving desired impact.

Within the GTF, there may be some benefit in considering the following:

- Identifying those initiatives that focus on the supply side, and analysing these to determine the extent to which their outputs will contribute to the above overall GTF impact statement. This in turn may make it possible to refocus some of these initiatives to ensure more direct linkages to the desired impact.
- Identifying non-GTF initiatives that are working on the supply side of governance, and determining how these are also indirectly supporting the GTF impact statement. This will inevitably lead to issues with attribution which will need to be ironed out, but will enable a clearer view of how this impact is being achieved. It may also enable increased synergies in the future to ensure that both the demand and supply side of governance are being addressed in a strategic manner.

In terms of evidence and measurement, the GTF impact statement is associated with three main indicators, all of which are reliant on international indices (the World Bank's "Government Effectiveness" index, IBP's "Open Budget Index" and Transparency International's "Corruption Perceptions Index"). Support to the latter two is provided by the GTF.

While the logframe includes baseline data against these three indicators as at 2009, it does not provide any milestone targets. GTF documentation indicates that measurement against these indices will be undertaken at the end of the five-year fund. It is worth considering the following in this area:

- Whether measurement against international indices is a **sufficient** indicator of the desired impact as stated in the logframe, or whether this might be complemented by other qualitative evidence from the GTF to demonstrate how governments have changed or increased their response to public demand, how they have become more transparent, and what effect this has had on the lives of the poor. There are numerous examples of this across the GTF, captured both through the sample project analysis forming part of this review, and in the Fund Manager's annual reporting and compilation of case studies. It may be possible to better synthesise and systematise this evidence in order to tell a stronger story against the GTF's impact statement.
- Whether it is **prudent** to have no interim milestone targets against these indicators, leaving measurement to the end of the programme, or whether it might be advisable to at least take a stock-take view at this stage to establish what progress has been made. Such an interim measurement, if pursued, may point to areas or target countries where efforts need to be increased if sufficient progress has not been made.
- Whether progress against the three international indices listed is directly **attributable** to the GTF, as it is invariably the case that external factors and other donor-led and national initiatives will also contribute to such progress. It may be

that, if qualitative evidence and mapping of GTF initiatives are considered, the portfolio will be able to report a stronger story on how it has contributed to governments' progress.

Outcome statement

The logframe defines the main outcome expected from the GTF as follows: "Strengthened civil society to help citizens effectively represent their views and interests and hold governments to account for their actions at different levels in the governmental system".

The outcome statement is again associated with three main indicators. The first centres around the international index of "Voice and Accountability". This presents the same issues and may merit from the same considerations as those outlined with regard to measurement of the programme's impact above.

The second indicator of the GTF outcome is defined as "number of communities, civil society organisations (CSOs) and civil society coalitions with significant and sustainable improvements in their capacity to demand improved governance and transparency" The GTF Third Annual Report states that progress against this indicator is beyond target, with the GTF reaching over 1000 CSOs. A number of examples to support this statement are provided throughout the latest annual report and its annexes.

In order to further substantiate this progress, it may be worth considering the following:

- Whether, in reporting against this indicator at this stage, aggregated figures should be provided against the milestones per year (as opposed to only stating that progress is beyond target). Current annual reporting seems to only include per-project details and examples. The review team is unsighted, given available programme documentation, as to whether related project sub-figures are being gathered and aggregated across GTF projects to enable interim reporting at milestone level.
- Whether a numerical target is sufficient to demonstrate a strengthened civil society, or whether the numerical measures should be supplemented with qualitative evidence to show how CSO capacity has been strengthened, how they have worked with citizens to gauge their concerns and demands, and how this in turn has resulted in tangible instances of CSOs representing citizens' views and demands.
- How "significant and sustainable improvements in capacity" will be evaluated/ demonstrated and against what baseline CSO capacity evaluations (if those were undertaken). Alternatively, it may be possible to establish criteria/descriptors as to how "significant" and "sustainable" should be defined in the context of this indicator, and then base the evaluation on a sample of key CSOs participating in the programme. A further alternative may be to undertake a survey of participating CSOs, or at least a significant sub-set of the 1000 CSOs cited, and gather information from them as to how participating in the GTF has increased their capacity.

The third outcome indicator in the GTF logframe targets the number of case studies that demonstrate civil society's contribution to sustainable improvements in key aspects of good governance. Again, it is worth considering whether it would be beneficial to supplement the numerical nature of this indicator with qualitative evidence of CSO contributions, and what of these contributions or improvements is sustainable beyond the life of the GTF.

Output statements and indicators

The GTF logframe states six key outputs, as follows:

- Output 1: Capability - Leaders and governments are better able to perform such functions as providing stability and personal security, setting rules, putting policies into practice, delivering social services and controlling corruption
- Output 2: Accountability - Increased access by citizens to the decision making processes of government, parliaments or assemblies and increased impact of citizens on said processes
- Output 3: Accountability: Increased respect for human rights, the rule of law and a free media by governments at different levels
- Output 4: Accountability: Strengthened CSO engagement in the fight against corruption
- Output 5: Responsiveness - Increased opportunities for people to influence and determine policy and legislation
- Output 6: Responsiveness - Improved implementation of the policies that are designed to meet the articulated needs and provision of services and public goods for vulnerable and excluded groups

Each of the above outputs is associated with a number of indicators. The following are some observations on this section of the GTF logframe:

- Some of the indicators, though understandably output based, seem to be more focused on process rather than result. Examples of this may be seen with output 1, indicator 2 – number of officials trained for better management and provision of services; output 2 indicator 1 – number of key information documents available to the media and public ...”; output 3 indicators 2 – media coverage of governance issues (number targeted), and 3 – “number of strengthened media organisations and trained journalists”; and output 4 indicator 1 “number of corruption cases recorded ...”.

If we accept that training is not an end in itself but rather a means of providing recipients with the skills and knowledge they require to do things differently or better, then recording the number of officials or journalists trained, though valuable, is not sufficient to demonstrate increased capability among officials and in governments to improve the provision of services. It may be worth considering supplementing this with qualitative evidence of how this training was used, what was done differently or better as a result, and how others benefited from this. Similarly, making information documents available or publishing media articles on governance issues, while worthwhile, is not sufficient in that it does not

demonstrate uptake of this information by its recipients, how they responded to it, how the information was used, and what changes were achieved as a result. It may therefore be beneficial to consider supplementing the numerical targets sought under these indicators with systematised qualitative evidence showing the results achieved.

- Some of the output indicators, while including milestone targets, have no baselines (recorded as zero). This has been interpreted by the reviewers to mean that baseline information was not gathered when the indicators and milestones were established. Examples of this may be seen with output 1, indicator 2; output 3, all indicators (1 through 4), and output 5 indicator 1. If baseline information has not been gathered to date for these indicators, this may present difficulties in measurement and attribution. It could increase the risk that some of the instances measured against milestones may not be directly attributable to the GTF, if these were not previously documented during base-lining. It is also not advisable to attempt to baseline these indicators retrospectively. The GTF may wish to consider whether one solution would be to pursue traditional measurement approaches against those indicators that have been base-lined, while complementing this with impact analysis approaches for indicators with no baseline data in order to provide a more rounded and evidenced view of GTF results.
- Some indicators have no milestone targets documented, and reporting against them, as at the point of the third annual report, seems a little vague, only indicating that they are “in progress” and without a clear rationale as to how this was established. This is particularly evident with output 6, indicator 1, which in the reviewers’ opinion is a key indicator around vulnerable and excluded people accessing more appropriate services and goods. It is strongly recommended that current status be established against this output indicator. This will entail the systematic gathering and analysis of numerical as well as qualitative information against the baselines established for the indicator in question. However, determining current status will enable the GTF portfolio to refocus its activities where needed to enable more evidenced progress against this output.

5.1.2 Overall status of the GTF logframe and design

In light of the above analysis, it has been difficult for the reviewers to substantiate statements made in the GTF Third Annual Report that “the fund is making good progress against all indicators, with all interim milestones having been met or exceeded”.

Main recommendations to address this position are:

- Reviewing the GTF logframe (not so much the document but as a whole portfolio design), and possibly scaling back ambition in some areas, specifically with regard to the fund’s impact and outcome statements. This would be with a view to better and more accurately reflecting the results which will be achievable from the sum of the GTF project inputs;
- Supplementing the quantitative focus of the logframe (specifically in terms of indicators) with a systematic approach to qualitative evaluation and mapping of

qualitative evidence available to the numerical indicators recorded. It is worth noting that there is considerable documentation of qualitative evidence across the GTF, but this seems to be “buried” in multiple documents and sources and requires systematising in order to enable a strong story on results.

One option for this could have been to adopt an approach of peer reviews among groups of grant holders working in the same country/region and/or on similar governance themes or service sectors. This would again introduce an element of objectivity, instead of relying solely on results as reported by the grant holders themselves. However, the need to focus all GTF projects on delivery at this stage of the portfolio, in order to boost the achievement of targeted results, may preclude this option as grant holders would need to invest additional time to conduct peer reviews.

- Considering the viability of making an interim assessment against those indicators which have no milestones associated with them, in order to establish current status and inform/re-focus activity in the remaining part of the programme;
- Obtaining evidence from the wide CSO network participating in the GTF in terms of their capacity building, how this has benefitted their work and the citizens in their regions of operation, and how sustainable this is beyond the GTF;
- Considering the viability of supplementing traditional measurement against baselines with a more diverse impact analysis approach to enable a more rounded view of GTF results. It would be advisable, if this were pursued, to consider an independent third party undertaking the impact analyses to ensure objectivity and enable fresh insights. This may be achieved partly by utilising in-country governance advisors if/where this is feasible, and/or experts from DFID’s Evaluation Department.

5.1.3 Linkages between the GTF projects and the overall programme logframe

Programme documentation indicates that, as the logframe for the GTF was established after funding decisions had been made, it was difficult to use the logframe as a true framework to drive the work of all constituent projects. A decision was made in favour of allowing projects to undertake their planned activities and approaches which particularly suited their context, rather than adhering to a restrictive programme design.

While this type of flexibility is important to ensure that activities undertaken reflect the needs of the local or regional context within which each project operates, there is still a need to clarify the linkages between the GTF projects on one hand the main programme logframe on the other. This would also reduce duplication of activity if/where it exists, ensure that the initiatives implemented support the desired results of the GTF, and better enable the gathering of information around these results. If the overall GTF logframe is reviewed as suggested in Section 5.1.2 above, then it may be possible at that stage to map the various projects/initiatives within the portfolio to various results and indicators as captured in the logframe. It may then be possible to assign/apportion the various indicators to the relevant projects for them to ensure that they gather information consistently to evidence the GTF results sought.

For future similar initiatives, learning from the GTF indicates that it is very important to determine a portfolio's higher level logframe during the early design stage, in order to inform how best to identify partners and constituent projects to support specific results.

It is also worth noting that the GTF logframe has been reviewed and updated to reflect DFID's current model and guidance. However, the logframes of the constituent projects (at least some of those reviewed within the sample), seem to still follow older formats. More than just a formatting issue, discrepancies in logical structuring of the logframes make it more difficult to map across and make the required linkages between overall portfolio and constituent parts. It may be worth considering whether undertaking a review and refresh of all project-level logframes, in order to establish better and more direct linkages with the overall portfolio design, would enable the fund to better track and report its results.

5.1.4 GTF spread

As noted above, the GTF operates through 38 main grant holders, with over 1000 CSOs participating in more than 100 countries. This inevitably has meant that the GTF has been trying to address a vast array of issues, in many governance themes/areas, in too many countries, thus spreading the portfolio too thin. This also makes it very difficult to manage, coordinate, learn from and amass results from such a wide portfolio.

For future similar initiatives, it is worth considering a more focal spread of countries and areas of work in order to ensure better coordination across and among the constituent parts of the programme.

A further observation is that GTF multi-country programmes seem to have struggled to get their work off the ground as a result of protracted negotiations with new in-country partners whom they had no experience of working with, and/or the need for long periods of consultation when logframes and activities needed to be reviewed. Conversely, multi-country programmes seem to have been more effective when they have capitalised on existing partnerships and implementation mechanisms they had experience with. There is a lesson to be learned here regarding multi-country programmes, and ensuring that, at funding decision stage, the capacity of a grant holder to implement a multi-country programme is factored into proposal evaluations and funding decisions.

5.2 GTF programme management arrangements

5.2.1 External support to portfolio management and contractual implications

Civil Society Department put in place a contract with KPMG as the main Fund Manager for the GTF. The main contract spanned the period from June 2007 to June 2010. The Fund Manager's Terms of Reference (TORs) at that stage focused mainly on core programme management responsibilities, with very limited level of effort allocated to monitoring and evaluation (approximately 650 person/days per year for overall core management functions, in comparison with only 61 person/days per year for monitoring and evaluation). This split in level of effort reflected the initial focus on required management functions at programme start-up in order to make grant arrangements and establish programme management frameworks.

However, the above split in level of effort also points to the significantly low level of resourcing allowed for monitoring and evaluation functions. Best practice indicates that monitoring and evaluation should be considered and designed during the very first phases of a programme (and all its constituent parts) in order to enable a results-based approach to programme design, subsequent implementation and management. This may also explain why GTF logframes have required a significant degree of review and amendment over the course of the programme, and why monitoring, evaluation and results work have proved quite problematic.

KPMG's contract was extended in November 2010, for a further period ending in June 2012, with additional focus on learning activity, capacity building of grant holders, and evaluation of results/impact. The total value of the contract was amended to reflect this additional scope and focus. KPMG's contract is now due for renewal for an additional 12-18 months through to the end of the GTF.

The distribution of KPMG resource and level of effort between what is classed as "core" management tasks vs. "monitoring and evaluation" continues to be slightly imbalanced. While a portfolio on the scale of the GTF would require significant core management inputs, it is worth considering whether resource should not be increased for monitoring, evaluation and learning purposes to better support these functions in the latter part of the programme.

5.2.2 Management inputs to build the capacity of GTF grant holders

The TORs for KPMG's contract amendment in Nov 2010 highlight the importance of strengthening grant holders' capacity and focus on results. In practice, management inputs to support such capacity building seem to have translated into a number of country visits and one to two days of "technical assistance" with the 38 main grant holders (as reported by KPMG).

It is worth considering the following in this area:

- Whether an equivalent level of effort is required for capacity building and technical assistance for all 38 grant holders, or whether a more targeted approach would be more beneficial to address specific capacity issues with the sub-set of grant holders whose performance and project delivery have indicated capacity limitations;
- Whether capacity building and technical assistance activity with the main grant holders has extended to action planning for sharing this increased capacity and best practice with their respective partners;
- If grant holders were originally selected for funding based on demonstrable capacity to manage and implement their projects, then was that initial assessment sufficiently detailed/thorough? Are capacity building/technical assistance efforts being correctly targeted, or would they benefit in-country partners more directly?
- A further point to note is providing more specific details around the types of technical assistance offered by KPMG, how technical assistance interventions were tailored to suit the specific needs of the grant holders, and how this can be shared across the portfolio. Available GTF documentation and reports do not

seem to provide sufficient information as to the scope and nature of capacity building work undertaken thus far on the programme.

It is recommended that the next GTF Annual Report provide tangible examples of where capacity has been built, how this was achieved, the consequential improvements to the projects as a result of the capacity building, and the key challenges that were faced and overcome (or not overcome). This might include specific examples of where and how KPMG has aided a programme to:

- develop its logframe, specific baselines, performance indicators and theories of change;
- helped partners with the development of their design, appraisal and monitoring templates to ensure greater focus on value for money and measurable outcomes and impact;
- address specific performance issues; identify activities that are yielding significant results and help them identify key underlying issues;
- manage finances, sub-grants and/or write up adequate reports.

Specific examples would enable CSD to compile a picture of the different challenges faced across different projects and different contexts, and the most effective methods and forms of support being used to address these challenges. Further, building an accurate picture of high, medium and low performers and the types of support required by each will help inform make decisions about where to focus efforts going forward.

The above points may also inform the negotiations around the renewal of KPMG's contract. It is also worth considering whether to continue with the current arrangements of billing and paying against level of effort/number of person days utilised for the various tasks in the TORs, or whether to evolve the contract to allow for billing against milestone deliverables, and payment on approval of these deliverables based on criteria relating to coverage, quality, meeting agreed standards, and fitness for purpose.

5.2.3 Internal DFID resource for GTF portfolio management

Within Civil Society Department, resource seems to have been allocated to the management of the GTF to allow for one A2 estimated at 40%, one B1 estimated at 45%, one B2 estimated at 20%, and strategic oversight from one A1 estimated at 5% and the Head of Department, estimated at 5%. In the reviewers' opinion, a portfolio of the scale of the GTF would require more dedicated internal resource to allow for a more hands-on approach to managing this programme, monitoring the fund manager's performance, and directing activity to ensure a close fit with DFID's business requirements.

Given internal resourcing constraints, the reviewers have observed that CSD are quite dependent on KPMG to obtain any detailed information on the GTF, and to gauge developments and changes on the programme. It is worth considering whether dedicating additional internal resource, particularly a senior internal member of staff, to this initiative through to the end of the programme, would enable improved control and quality assurance of programme deliverables, and more strategic inputs to programme repositioning.

5.2.4 Further issues identified with current management arrangements

The GTF review at programme level has highlighted a number of issues that are worthy of attention in the latter part of the programme in order to strengthen management practices. The following is a summary of the key issues identified at this level.

Risk management practices

Risk management requires strengthening across the portfolio. At grant-holder/project level, risk management seems to be confined to the identification of risks and mitigation measures. There is no analysis, rating or prioritisation of risks on the basis of probability, proximity and impact. There is also no documentation around action planning to implement the mitigating actions, how these actions, where implemented, have addressed the risks identified, how some risks may have been closed or reduced, while other risks may have emerged and been added to the risk register (assuming each project maintains one). As such, risk management seems limited to documentation of risks rather than acting to address them.

At overall GTF programme level, the documentation available does not clarify if/how portfolio level risks have been identified, if/how these have been assessed, what the most critical risks are, and what actions have been assigned and/or implemented to mitigate against those risks. At a minimum with a portfolio working on sensitive governance issues, more often than not in fragile environments, one would expect a classification of external/environmental risks, as well as internal programme-specific risks. The current review of the GTF indicates some key risks around attribution of results, evidencing and validation of results, sustainability and value for money. At contextual level, there may be risks around resistance to change, unsettling power balances in certain local contexts, or negatively impacting relations with host country governments; there are also risks involved in strengthening civil society players in fragile and conflict affected states. It may be worth pursuing a more detailed analysis of the current risk status of the GTF, in order for programme management efforts to be channelled towards mitigating against those risks during the latter part of the programme.

Financial management and authorisations

Budgeting and financial disbursements are closely monitored and reported on across the GTF, with rigorous financial management and auditing practices in place. While this aspect of the programme seems to be effectively managed and scrutinised, one area may be worthy of further rigour. This is with specific reference to the authorisation of no cost extensions for projects when circumstances necessitate such extensions. The reviewers have observed that no cost extensions seem to be authorised by DFID, when a request for extension is received and reviewed by the fund manager, in order for the projects requesting the extension to complete their activities in a slightly longer timeframe than originally planned.

In the reviewers' opinion, the implications of such no cost extensions do not seem to be fully analysed in order to identify the impact they may have on the desired results of the projects in question. If activities are delayed and require a longer timeframe to complete,

then KPMG and CSD should ask why this was not identified earlier by the projects, whether alternative action could include scaling back some of the activities so that they still complete within their original timeframe, or whether, if an extension is granted, a review of targeted results is required to identify if those are still valid on a longer timeframe or whether results need to be tweaked to reflect new contextual needs and requirements within the longer timeframe.

Programme-level reporting

Reporting on the programme seems to have greatly improved from one annual report to the next, with more attention being given to evidencing the findings reported, and more focus on impact, learning and value for money. However, there is still a need to streamline reporting in favour of quality rather than quantity, and in order to exemplify, substantiate and validate many of the assessments made in the reports. It is also worth considering bringing forward the cycle of reporting so that each annual report is submitted as closely after the end of the reporting period and not a good few months after. This would enable issues identified to be addressed in a timely manner.

5.2.5 Value for money with current management arrangements

At first glance, the GTF appears to yield good value for money with regard to management arrangements. Based on a brief analysis of programme-level management costs to date, including external fund manager costs and internal staff, and estimating total management costs through to the end of the GTF based on current trends, it is estimated that costs incurred for management functions would total at approximately 4% of the total value of the fund. While this would seem like good value, it could be countered by the following factors:

- Under-resourcing of the management function, and imbalanced distribution of tasks between DFID and KPMG, and within KPMG resource, may have led to quality issues with portfolio management (see above sections for details).
- While central management of the GTF could stand at approximately 4% of the total value of the fund, the project sample analysis has indicated that some grant-holders' management costs range between 19 and 62% of the value of their grants spent on project management. This obviously points to an imbalance between central and project-specific management costs, and points to a need to rethink what exactly is required in the management function, and how much it should cost/be capped at.
- The above issue is compounded by the fact that main grant holders are also, more often than not, operating through a number of regional and local partners and sub-partners, with no direct visibility in programme documentation of the costs of these partnership arrangements in terms of management.
- It is also worth noting that some of the grant-holders seem to be operating as funders for multiple projects, with funding arrangements being made directly by the main grant holder or through a sub-partner located regionally. Again, grant management costs do not seem to be fully documented in such instances.

The above factors make it difficult to make an informed assessment of whether current GTF management arrangements represent good value for money. As indicated above, the different levels of management cost do not seem to be fully quantified or documented in order to enable a comparison between the total proportion of the fund spent on management functions in comparison with funds spent on substantive governance initiatives. As such, it is difficult to estimate what it has cost DFID to generate the various results achieved by the GTF. Once costs of management at the various levels of the programme are better clarified, it may be possible to then quantify cost of substantive inputs, apportion management costs to them, value the results achieved through these inputs (or compare cost-result ratios to those achieved by other similar organisations/programmes) in order to establish GTF value for money parameters and return on investment.

5.3 Partner/stakeholder engagement and communications

5.3.1 Engagement and communications within and between programmes

When analysing engagement and communications, the review team was interested in seeing what kind of activities were taking place at a number of different levels, including:

- a) Between partners from the same projects/programmes;
- b) Between partners from different projects but working on the same thematic areas;
- c) Between partners from different projects but working in the same countries.

From the outset one of the Fund Managers' roles was to improve coordination at country and thematic level and facilitate communication and the sharing of ideas and lessons across relevant stakeholders. Workshops, country visits and learning events were identified as the most effective ways of facilitating this, and improved communities of practice were identified as an output of this enhanced collaboration. Although these aims are clearly outlined in KPMG's 2009 and 2010/11 Annual Review, strong evidence and examples of where communication and engagement have been built through these activities at each of the above levels are not forthcoming.

Building communication and engagement is crucial, a point which was highlighted during the recent country visit to South Africa. Here there are certain partners belonging to one programme who are achieving impressive results in terms of their results monitoring, logframes and evaluation systems. Conversely, partners from other programmes but working on similar thematic areas are struggling greatly with these issues. Ideally, these organisations should be engaging with and learning from one another, yet there seems to be little evidence of this. It is not clear whether communication just isn't taking place, or whether it *is* taking place but the positive benefits of such engagement are not being recorded and reported.

On a broader scale, country visits have shown that local GTF partners belonging to different overarching programmes often do not realise that they are funded by and operating within the same overall fund.

Going forward, it is recommended that the following be considered in order to promote improved communications and engagement across GTF projects and partners:

- If and where communication and engagement are taking place between partners within the same – and from different – projects, it is important for KPMG to capture this and analyse the positive (or negative) effects of such practices. This will hopefully facilitate cross-learning.
- Local partners from different programmes should be made much more aware of other GTF partners in their region, what they are working on, and of opportunities for sharing resources and experiences. The reviewers recommend tools such as open forums, the use of websites and networking media to build this process. Indeed, these methods were proposed during the GTF workshop entitled ‘Applying tools and methods to achieve results in governance’, held in Brighton in 2010, and it was agreed that KPMG would coordinate and track the use of such methods over the following months. Unfortunately it doesn’t appear that KPMG have tracked and reported back on the extent to which any of these have so far been implemented or acted upon. It is worth considering whether various media and mechanisms can be capitalised on to foster cross-partner engagement during the latter part of the programme.

5.3.2 Engagement and communications between KPMG and DFID

Engagement and interaction between KPMG and advisers in DFID country offices appears to be a particular area of concern, with minimal levels of interaction between KPMG and DFID advisers, and minimal input from DFID governance advisers in many cases. Improving this is important as DFID advisers could provide valuable analysis on performance of partners due to their proximity to the local projects. Further, greater access to in-country advisers could allow KPMG to draw on advisers’ expertise of local contexts, local analyses, and the changing political-economic-social-governance environments. It is worth considering how CSD and KPMG could practically increase the level of engagement between DFID advisers and the GTF projects on the ground.

5.4 Evaluation approach and design

In Oct 2010 revised Terms of Reference were issued for KPMG, outlining an additional scope of work focused specifically on monitoring, evaluation, results and learning. These changes responded to weaknesses recognised by KPMG and DFID in grant holder planning systems, logframes and impact measurement capacity during the first years of the GTF. They also responded to the increasing interest that was emerging within DFID with regard to results, value for money, evaluation, and capturing and disseminating lessons from the GTF. It is worth considering, however, whether the overall GTF approach to evaluation can be strengthened further during the second phase of the programme.

As noted in earlier sections, one key observation is that many of the GTF projects do not appear to have thought about evaluation at the early intervention design stage, with evaluations being designed much later on. DFID’s recently released Evaluation Handbook emphasises that evaluation must start during the early stages of programme design. Best practice would see a given programme articulating its results chain from the start, outlining the stages along the chain when deliverables are expected to be

achieved, and outlining when evaluations will be carried out. The causal links that join up inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact should also be established up front, as should any assumptions, so that these can be assessed during the evaluation. Unfortunately this does not appear to be the case for the majority of the GTF projects.

Effective evaluation should uncover which parts of a project's or programme's results chain we know less about or have less evidence for (areas where logic is weak); and good evaluations, if effectively designed and utilised, can sometimes address these evidence gaps. Because limited emphasis seems to have been placed on evaluation in the GTF, and there are not always clear results chains for individual projects, it is hard to uncover the evidence underpinning each project, and in turn the overall portfolio.

In order to strengthen evaluation practices across the GTF, it may be worth considering one or more of the following:

- KPMG should work with the GTF projects to clearly articulate the individual theories of change that each of the projects is based on, and the evidence used to develop these theories. It is also recommended that future reports examine whether the evidence emerging supports the assumptions made in the original logframes and results chains that underpin each of the projects.
- Going a step further, it may be possible to analyse the areas where evidence emerging from the GTF bridges current evidence gaps, where emerging evidence supports and builds on the existing body of knowledge on improving governance, and where the emerging evidence challenges existing knowledge. Each of these processes will deepen our evidence base around the role and impact of CSOs in improving governance. Further, it will highlight areas where knowledge and evidence remain weak and where future research is required.
- Recognition of the particular evaluation challenges faced by projects working in fragile and conflict-affected states would also be useful.

The experience of the GTF with evaluation highlights the importance of integrating evaluation design into the early design phases of future projects and programmes in order to enable a more results-based approach to both design and implementation.

5.5 Lesson learning approach and arrangements

Over the life of the GTF, a diverse approach to learning has been adopted, whereby a number of complementary methods have been used to promote lesson learning and sharing of experiences. Learning has been recognised as a key aspect of the GTF, where the scale and coverage of the portfolio had the potential to generate important learning points which could both enrich the body of knowledge of current GTF stakeholders, and feed into the future design of governance initiatives.

In support of this, a number of key learning activities and tools have been utilised on the GTF to enable and document effective learning, most notably of which are:

- two international workshops in the UK in 2009 (London) and 2010 (Brighton);

- two thematic learning events on the areas of *media, civil society and governance* and *civil society and governance in conflict environments*;
- two thematic learning papers and one overall learning report;
- ten country visits, including country-level roundtable meetings;
- 50 case studies and 25 short articles on results from the GTF, also capturing lessons from the cases documented;
- assessment and feedback by the Fund Manager of the 38 projects' first, second and third annual reports, as well as 33 project-level mid-term review reports, including advice on learning;
- GTF Annual Reports submitted by the Fund Manager for the first three years of the programme, with specific learning sections.

The following are some key observations and findings with regard to the GTF learning activities and tools:

- Of the two international workshops, the second – held in Brighton – catered more specifically to learning across the GTF projects and produced some positive results. The workshop brought representatives from all 38 GTF projects together, allowing them to share experiences and learn from one another. Specific attention was paid to the tools and methods being used in different GTF contexts, and how these tools enabled the projects to demonstrate results and impact. Lessons were also shared on ways in which risks and key challenges could be managed. While such international events seem to have been well received by the main grant holders who attended them, there is little documentation of how the lessons discussed during these events have been shared across the GTF and with the grant-holders' partners regionally or locally to enrich their body of knowledge and enhance their practices. Going forward, it would be useful if KPMG could produce a set of examples detailing not only the learning activities that took place, but examples of the positive effects of this cross-learning.
- The same is true of the two thematic learning events held, which seem to have provided positive opportunities for lessons to be drawn out and learned. However, as above, it would be useful if KPMG could articulate what the key lessons are, and whether and how these lessons are feeding back into ongoing projects to reshape and improve them. There is a scattering of examples which indicates this may be happening: the learning section of the third Annual Report, for example, outlines that the GTF has been helping to create networks and partnerships and it acknowledges that this approach needs to be promoted so that other actors can replicate it. However, far more specific examples of learning and its impacts are required.
- The fund manager states that the two thematic learning papers produced over the course of the GTF thus far were “designed to forge better links between academic research and the practical experience gained by GTF programmes”. These papers are recognised as a positive contribution, however, it would also be useful if forthcoming reports also make links between the practical experiences of the GTF and evolving policy, especially DFID governance policy.
- Country visits have provided another opportunity for learning, with the fund manager reviewing specific projects in context and spending time with local

partners and intended beneficiaries. Country-level roundtable meetings have brought together local partners, sector specialists and DFID governance advisers, and have provided an opportunity for local GTF partners to meet and share experiences and challenges, and to explore how ideas and methodologies which have worked in one context or sector could be modified and adapted to work in a new environment. In some cases communities of practice have developed as a result of such engagement opportunities. The GTF third Annual Report argues that in-country roundtables and workshops have been the most effective method for generating innovation across the GTF because, although some evidence has been captured in the learning papers, discussion about how innovation works has been much more useful. As outlined above, it is important that future learning documentation, visit reports and annual reports not only describe the learning activities which have taken place, but also to detail what specific lessons have been shared across the GTF, what of this learning has been acted on, and how learning has led to improvements on the ground.

- In terms of lesson learning documentation, the learning sections in the annual reports seem to focus more on examples of activities undertaken by the various grantees, and occasionally what these activities have resulted in. More is needed to draw out what has been learned from these examples in terms of what has worked well, what hasn't, why or why not, whether some successes are context-specific and/or scalable within that context, and whether some activities are adaptable to other contexts or sectors. Such analysis of lessons would go a long way towards (a) enriching the body of knowledge and experience from the GTF, and (b) informing future programme design. Similarly, the case studies and short articles on results from the GTF have the potential to be a helpful learning product. However, those articles and studies submitted so far are often too anecdotal and do not provide enough relevant information for their audiences. Further analysis from such documentation could help draw out valuable lessons from the GTF. A stakeholder analysis would help inform this analytical approach by identifying the key stakeholders' information needs from case studies and related articles.
- A further observation is that, although the intention originally was for KPMG to develop a GTF website to support lesson learning and sharing of experience and this was reiterated in the contract TORs dated September 2010, this has not been undertaken to date. The reviewers' understanding is that this is because of a shift in DFID's direction whereby multiple websites were no longer encouraged and existing websites were rationalised. This seems to be an opportunity missed for an effective learning tool. With current constraints on multiple websites, it may be worth considering alternative tools for sharing lessons and experiences. This might include a virtual user group and forum, with a portal for posting comments and lessons, asking questions across the GTF, assessing ideas and their feasibility, and sharing good practice and experiences. This would not only support lesson learning, but would contribute to CSO capacity building through cross-fertilisation across GTF participants.

In addition to the observations and suggestions above, it may be worth considering the following in order to enhance lesson learning work on the GTF:

- Future country visits and other in-country learning activities would benefit from closer collaborative planning with Civil Society Department and in-country advisers in order to ensure that areas being reviewed and lessons being drawn out represent the those areas that key stakeholders are aiming to learn more about.
- Lesson learning documentation in general needs to be more analytical, and focus on the end-to-end learning cycle, capturing not only the learning activities implemented, but also those key lessons identified, what has worked well, what has not, what the underlying reasons and contextual implications are, what the key drivers for success have been across projects, what seems to thwart progress, what is scalable and applicable to other projects or sectors, and how best to address emerging issues.
- There is currently very little in the learning documentation about the constraints and limitations on individual projects. It is recommended that more information is provided around what might limit a given project's impact, and the specific challenges facing different programmes.
- Lessons identified could also be more linked up to DFID and international thinking on and approaches to governance. It would be useful if references were made to DFID policy and practice documents and to academic debates around governance. It is important that DFID ensures the fund manager is kept up to speed and abreast of new thinking and evidence emerging within DFID, for example the new guidance on evaluation or on results in fragile and conflict affected states.

5.6 Sustainability considerations

In the GTF Third Annual Report, KPMG has identified that “sustainability is emerging as an important issue as programmes mature”. As the GTF projects enter the latter phase of the programme, issues of sustainability of activity and associated results are starting to come to the fore of the grant holders’ thinking.

Best practice indicates, however, that sustainability should be considered and planned for from a programme’s outset in order to ensure that activities are timed and inputs provided in such a way to enable sustainability beyond the programme. For example, programmes which consider sustainability issues typically plan for structured skills transfer during the programme, options for local revenue-generating activity to sustain certain inputs or services beyond the programme, and appropriate exit strategies. In the context of the GTF, there is little evidence that such an approach to sustainability was undertaken. As a result, grant holders seem to be considering sustainability only at this stage, and seem to be more focused on how to sustain their own activity/operations than on the sustainability of the results they have achieved. In much of the documentation reviewed at both project sample and overall portfolio level, a key consideration for grant holders at this stage seems to be that of raising further funding to sustain their project activities.

In light of the above, it may be beneficial to consider clearly defining what CSD’s priorities are for sustainability. Those may be two-fold: where continuing inputs are required to enable continuing demand for better governance and citizen action (e.g.

continuing media reporting on governance issues), then supporting such inputs should be considered. Where the focus is more on policy and legislative change, as one example, then sustainability should be more associated with the longevity of these policies and their implementation beyond the GTF.

A further point worth mentioning is that some programmes are reported to have “leveraged” additional funding to sustain their activities or results. This in some instances is additional funding through other CSD schemes such as the Programme Partnership Arrangements (PPAs). It is worth considering what implications this might have for the attribution of results to the respective funding schemes.

At a more strategic level, sustainable change, especially in areas such as governance and associated institutional change, can take long periods of 30+ years to become embedded. It is evident that some of the outcomes and impacts articulated in various GTF project logframes, as well as the overarching programme logframe, will not occur fully during the GTF life cycle. It is not evident from the documentation reviewed, however, that a systematic approach to defining and planning for sustainability has been adopted by the GTF projects.

It is important to consider the value of short-term results as well as longer term change. Indeed, in the context of fragile and conflict affected states, it is often the case that an emphasis is placed on attaining results quickly in order to build the confidence of the population. Although short-term impacts and achievements are important, it is also important to think carefully about long-term sustainability. It is equally important to identify what of the GTF outcomes and impacts is sustainable in the short-term, and what will become embedded over a longer period, and how best to support this embedding of change in the future.

6. Key lessons from the GTF mid-term review

The mid-term review of the GTF has pointed to a number of lessons which may inform both the latter part of this programme and the design and positioning of future similar initiatives. Some of these key lessons are summarised in this section.

- It is important to consider the strategic positioning of programmes like the GTF within the demand-side and supply-side of the governance landscape, in order to ensure effective balance and enabling of change. In support of this, it may be worth considering the benefit of articulating a cohesive strategy for improving governance, accountability and transparency in a given context, determining the specific goals sought with regard to change, the current inhibitors of such change, what of these relate to the demand or supply side, and what initiatives can best address these inhibitors in order to effect change. Such an articulated strategy would enable the positioning of programmes like the GTF in complementation with various other initiatives to collectively address the issues identified and effect the desired changes in a cohesive and strategic manner, and with clear attribution to each of the initiatives implemented.
- It is also important to curb initial ambitions with regard to programme scope, thematic and/or sector coverage and geographic spread in order to avoid spreading funding and activities too thinly, and to be able to better manage,

monitor and demonstrate results from programmes like the GTF. Such “curbing” of ambition may result from rigorous scrutiny at the programme design stage to ensure that only the most viable interventions are pursued, with a select group of strategic partners, in the contexts and locations that are most likely to benefit from those interventions and to demonstrate change, and in direct alignment with the strategic goals of change identified up front.

- Early engagement with and empowerment of partners is of critical importance to the success of programmes like the GTF, especially where those partners have been carefully selected for their demonstrable capacity to adapt approaches and activities to suit the needs and requirements of the various contexts within which projects will operate. Examples of this can be seen with a number of GTF projects. It is equally important to capitalise on and foster strong partnerships in order to avoid scenarios where some projects experience significant delays while they attempt to forge partnerships with players they are not familiar with and in locations they have no experience in.
- Current economic and resourcing constraints tend to drive down the level of internal resource allocated to managing large-scale initiatives such as the GTF. It is worth balancing this against the value that internal resource can bring to directing such programmes in line with DFID’s policies, strategic priorities and business requirements. Limited internal resource can also occasionally result in over-reliance on external suppliers to manage the programme, track results and provide information to DFID. In such a business model, it may be worth considering alternative contracting mechanisms with external suppliers to derive maximum value. Such alternative contracting mechanisms may move away from remunerating suppliers for their inputs and person/days used, to fixed-price payments against agreed deliverables, milestones, outputs or results.
- Programmes such as the GTF have the potential to promote and foster innovation in both the methodologies applied and the management models used, and various examples of this have been provided in the body of this report. However, it is important to balance the pursuit of innovation, and define it clearly, to avoid risks with some partners attempting to work in areas they have no experience with just in order to demonstrate that they are being innovative, and then encountering difficulties due to inexperience.

7. Recommendations

This final section of the report summarises some key recommendations for consideration during the latter part of the GTF, as well as some recommendations for future similar initiatives.

7.1 Short-term measures through to the end of the GTF

Undertake a full stakeholder analysis to identify key internal and external GTF stakeholders, what they contribute to the programme, and what levels of engagement and information they require. Such a stakeholder analysis could help inform the development of an updated GTF engagement and communication plan, outlining not just the information which should be disseminated to the various stakeholders, but also the

types of engagement and inputs expected of them. This would engender increased engagement across the programme, improve information sharing and promote lesson learning.

Explore the possible utilisation of more interactive information sharing and lesson learning tools, such as the proposed virtual forum for GTF participants.

Move lesson learning from the level of activity documentation and internal reporting to that of action planning for the implementation of key lessons learned, and tracking the improvements realised as a result of lessons learned.

Consider undertaking a stock-take of the GTF at both programme and constituent project levels in order to identify feasible scope, achievable results, current risk status and appropriate mitigation measures, and clear linkages of inputs to outputs, outcomes and impacts. This could drive the improved articulation and alignment of logframes across the programme. Consolidate the work implemented by the various projects to date to maximise impact.

Pursue more specific and substantiated reporting on results against stated logframe targets across the programme. This could possibly be coupled with quarterly status updates as an early warning system where issues arise, and as a mechanism for tracking continuous progress towards results in a timely manner.

Consider balancing the quantitative approach to measurement currently adopted across the GTF with qualitative evaluation and reporting on impacts in order to provide a stronger and more meaningful story on the programmes' results. Explore the viability of supplementing traditional approaches to measuring results with more rounded impact analyses.

Promote a more proactive approach to risk management across the programme, moving away from solely documenting risks and mitigation measures to actively taking action to resolve emerging risks and issues, and reporting on the effectiveness of these actions to enrich lesson learning.

Pursue a more targeted approach to capacity building with partners whose performance indicates a need for such capacity building, and with clear plans for disseminating increased capacity and transferring acquired skills to local partners. Undertake a survey of local partners participating in the GTF to gauge the degree to which their experience with the GTF has helped increase their capacity.

Quantify the management costs of the GTF in a more accurate and detailed manner across the various management levels of the programme in order to be better able to assess the value for money of current management practices. Apportion such management costs, once fully identified, to the outcomes and results achieved and compare against benchmarks from other similar organisations to further inform value for money assessments from a results perspective.

7.2 Longer-term recommendations for future similar programmes

Consider the value of establishing clear design parameters, results chains and logical frameworks for future programmes during their very early stages. Integrate evaluation design and sustainability planning into early programme designs to enable a results-based approach to programme structuring. Such a thorough design exercise, if pursued, would greatly inform subsequent processes for selecting viable partners, structuring sub-projects and interventions, and aligning activity across to support the overarching results sought at programme level.

Consider the positioning of future programmes at international, regional and local levels, where they can have the maximum degree of impact, and where they can complement existing country strategies and local interventions. Explore whether a more focal geographic spread for future programmes would enable more targeted and deeper levels of activity to achieve desired change. Pursue an approach whereby the implementation of a critical mass of projects in a particular region or location, or in relation to a particular governance theme, maximises impact.

Establish a clear inception and mobilisation period for participating projects, during which they have to complete all required design and start-up activity. Profile funding beyond this period based on clearly articulated project designs, results frameworks and implementation mechanisms.

Articulate clear standards for management inputs and costs, and cap management costs at an agreed level across all participating projects to maximise value for money and ensure that the majority of programme funding is channelled towards substantive implementation.