

## Evaluation of DFID's Southern Africa country programme 2004-2009

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### Introduction

S1. The Southern Africa Programme Evaluation (SAPE) is a five year evaluation of the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) programme in Southern Africa from 2004 to 2009 with a focus on the period since 2006. It assesses the relevance, effectiveness and impact of DFID's aid programme and added value as a development partner.

S2. The Southern Africa region is one of the poorest and faces considerable inequalities between and within national boundaries. HIV/AIDS is a significant health-related problem that aggravates social and economic difficulties. Political and social constraints hamper economic development including efforts towards economic integration. Peace and security, and issues of governance present additional challenges across the region.

S3. Southern Africa, defined by the boundaries of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), forms a well defined and coherent geopolitical region. Despite its dominance in the region and stronger outward facing economy, South Africa still faces development challenges that can benefit from appropriate bilateral support, based on partnerships that respond to its specific context.

### Development Strategy

S4. To respond more appropriately to South Africa's engagement regionally, across Africa and globally, DFID adopted a comprehensive approach through the 2006 Regional Plan. This was innovative and demanding. However, in practice, it did not effectively differentiate

between the Southern Africa regional programme and the South Africa bilateral programme. Since 2008 however, a more integrated view of the regional approach has begun to emerge.

S5. A large proportion of the programme pre-dates the Regional Plan with projects that had been designed to address other strategic aims. As a result the first generation of Regional Plan delivery activities are only just coming on stream.

S6. Many of the programmes made positive contributions, often at a country or multi-country level. This ran counter to the regional thrust and contributed to ongoing debate within DFIDSA over how best to intervene in addressing poverty at a regional level. Thus, whilst there were some excellent examples of good practice they did not effectively deliver synergies at theme or programme-wide levels, and the programme became disconnected at output level, both vertically and horizontally.

### Development Results

S7. While performance against the specific output targets in the Regional Plan does not appear to be very good, due mainly to inappropriate outputs and hard to measure indicators, in practice, results have been more positive.

S8. Under the Growth Theme, support for regional level growth, a reduction in transport costs and an opening up of the region for trade have all been achieved. Within South Africa, employment opportunities and the employment promotion policy have seen significant attributable results. Financial markets have also been effectively supported by DFIDSA.

S9. Under the Resilient Livelihoods Theme, regional and national AIDS policy and services have made a significant contribution, although institutional support in the water and food security sectors has yet to yield measureable results. Institutional development, in relation to social policy in South Africa and civil society engagement regionally were major results not covered in the Regional Plan.

S10. Peace and Security was dropped as a theme on the inappropriate assumption that the Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP) would deliver against the Regional Plan. Consequently, governance and human security is one of the areas where DFIDSA engagement could have been more substantial.

S11. The Regional Plan lacked a monitoring framework until the Mid Term Review (MTR) in 2008, when a Results Framework (2009) was developed, which fed into the preparation of the next regional plan. While the Results Framework has too much detail for a working tool, the groundwork has been done and an appropriate model and management reporting system is in place.

### **Development Process**

S12. The change process was relatively well planned; however the complexity and long term impact of the changes was not anticipated or addressed. Whilst a lot was achieved, a traditional approach to project management continued which has limited opportunities for a deeper strategic appreciation of context and the full realisation of the new regional approach.

S13. The programme has been well aligned to national and regional needs and policies but partner ownership has not been cultivated and the reliance on consultants, special purpose delivery mechanisms and DFID programme management has weakened mutual accountability.

S14. Middle Income Countries and regional institutions need less focus on investment and project support and more direct attention and space for policy engagement. In the case of Southern Africa the approach to influencing and

policy engagement by DFIDSA was often confused and under developed. A new paradigm for engagement is required that focuses on levels of intervention not just the degree of regional integration.

### **Conclusions**

S15. The period under evaluation saw a dramatic transformation from a large, traditional, bilateral, programme to a more focused, dynamic, regional approach. The strategy in the 2006 Regional Plan was bold and ambitious but the original three years was not long enough for full implementation.

S16. The programme has been well aligned to national and regional needs and policies but partner ownership has not been cultivated, weakening mutual accountability. The extension to a full five years and the reflective process that began with the MTR has seen a growing refinement of the strategy that has begun to address some of the weaknesses identified in this evaluation.

S17. Although strong on vision, the plan was not worked through below output level and lacked realistic targets for portfolio delivery. This weakened results-based management and the attention to policy engagement, and reinforced some more traditional aspects of project management.

S18. The strategy overemphasised the regional dimension in order to drive the change. The unintended consequence was to present a division between national level engagement and regional integration, rather than building synergies. In the process, multi-country working was undervalued rather than seen as an opportunity to extend experience and work towards regional change.

S19. The growing pressure for impact and attribution is at odds with the complex processes of regional change and the principles of ownership and alignment. A relationship based on partnership and mutual accountability centred on policy dialogue is more appropriate here. This requires deeper and quieter engagement, long-term processes and more open discourse.

## Lessons Learnt

S20. DFIDSA has achieved a significant transformation and established a new basis for engagement in Southern Africa.

S21. Regional impact can be achieved through a mix of interventions at different levels without weakening the integrity of the concept of a regional approach.

S22. The next phase of regional planning needs to complement the focus on regional trade and economic integration with an understanding and approach to region-wide social policy and poverty engagement.

S23. Multi-country activity requires linked practice at country level, together with cross-country and regional 'institutional' connections, to ensure synergies are achieved.

S24. Working with South Africa in the region is complex and requires deep analysis and nuanced engagement at political levels in South Africa and within the region.

S25. Working with an emerging economy requires more intensive, quality interaction with key interlocutors that can replace more traditional project investment approaches.

S26. Working in Southern Africa requires DFID to be joined up across the region, and with a shared analysis of the region.

## Recommendations

### For DFID Southern Africa

S27. There is a clear rationale for a continuing, focused, bilateral programme in South Africa as part of the regional approach as there are significant governance and equity challenges. DFIDSA should develop a clearer implementation strategy for engaging regionally and with South Africa, with strongly linked but differentiated approaches.

S28. DFIDSA should develop a stronger culture of learning in order to build on its successes and identify new entry points and appropriate ways of

working that strengthen building synergies across the programme and region.

S29. DFIDSA should deepen analysis across the programme with dedicated resources (financial and staffing) to support monitoring, learning and information exchange including the commissioning of:

- i A study on the dynamics supporting growth, trade and investment patterns in the region;*
- ii A deeper political and institutional analysis across the region to inform the process of policy engagement.*

S30. DFIDSA should give priority to deepening the relationship with SADC, with a formal presence in Gaborone.

S31. DFIDSA should review the organisation of each theme portfolio, linking related interventions at different levels of engagement and building on the synergies between regional and national engagement.

S32. DFIDSA should undertake a review of its organisation and staffing, including adviser numbers, workload, skills and experience linked to the preparation of the next regional plan and the particular demands of a regional approach. The evaluation would recommend:

- i increasing the number of senior advisers by 1-2;*
- ii a rebalancing of the range of skills and expertise;*
- iii the development of a plan to increase skills in team working, political analysis and policy engagement across the office, and;*
- iv identifying leadership roles for engagement with South Africa and at the regional level.*

### For DFID across Southern Africa

S33. Heads of Office across Southern Africa should co-operate in improving communications and building a common regional platform across DFID in Southern Africa with a dedicated lead person in each office, and regular Heads of Office information exchange meetings.

S34. Heads of Office across Southern Africa should all sign off on the Southern Africa Regional Plan with a commitment to sharing resources and developing a common set of priorities for work across the region.

## For Africa Division

S35. Africa Division Directors should give a stronger coordinated lead on regional approaches confirming DFIDSA's leadership role with respect to Southern Africa and encouraging cross country and region wide working, supported by more joint planning and shared resources.

## For the Management Board

S36. The experience in Southern Africa has shown that taking a regional approach is an ambitious yet highly relevant model in situations where regional identity and the political and economic context are conducive. Other

opportunities should be identified to develop the approach further.

S37. DFID should ensure that when a regional approach is being taken, areas of engagement are clearly defined with appropriate targets; there is a monitoring framework related to the plan; and resources, especially staffing, reflect the aspirations of the approach.

S38. The timeframe for change and engagement for regional approaches is significantly greater than for individual country based approaches. Plans, resource envelopes and senior staff appointments should all reflect this and be adjusted accordingly.

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