

Using Drivers of Change to improve aid effectiveness

1. This note records the considerable progress made within DFID on Drivers of Change (DOC). It notes the work being undertaken to mainstream the approach further and to ensure the knowledge produced is used regularly by country offices and headquarters alike.

What have Drivers of Change studies found?

2. Twenty DFID country offices have engaged with the Drivers of Change approach; the majority by commissioning a study undertaken by external consultants.¹ Sixteen of these offices have produced study reports and a large number of sub-study reports. Other countries considering a study include DRC and Ethiopia.
3. A review of the completed reports reveals a wide array of drivers which have been identified as driving or inhibiting change in different countries. Overall 26 such drivers have been identified. Some describe the prevailing state of affairs, such as corruption. While others point to the underlying causes, including the presence of exploitable natural resources. Common themes have emerged however, with the same nine identified in over two-thirds of the studies. The three most frequently cited include: corruption; elite capture (of power and resources); and jointly the role of civil society and of external actors (including the actions of donors). Details are provided in attachment 1.

What has DFID done with these findings?

4. A review of the uptake and use of DOC finds there are many examples of how the studies have had a positive effect on the way DFID works at a country level (for examples see attachment 2). Country offices report that they are increasingly using the process of undertaking the study, as well as its findings to:
 - Inform the planning process, i.e. to feed into Country Assistance Plan or Joint Assistance Strategy processes.
 - Improve the quality of engagement and influencing with partner governments.
 - Analyse the risk of interventions and to suggest ways of mitigating these.
 - Strengthen harmonisation processes with other donors.
 - Promote cross-Whitehall and joint working, particularly with the FCO.

¹ Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Georgia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine, Yemen, & Zambia.

5. There are fewer instances however, of the way in which DOC studies have altered the shape and nature of our programmes. The reasons for this include: the newness of the DOC approach; the scale, range and complexity of the issues to be considered (the number of factors highlighted as key in each country ranges from 9 to 18); and on-going contractual obligations, underlined by DFID's commitment to greater predictability.
6. In addition, the majority of the reports have focused on the headline issues and/or symptoms such as corruption or elite capture, and thus tend to reiterate much of what is already known. There are fewer references to the underlying causes in terms of the motivations of the individuals and groups involved. And although the reports frequently refer to "the lack of incentives" for individuals or groups to change, they contain fewer details about these. Consequently the reports offer fewer suggestions about the potential and practical 'levers of change', or the need to better understand how behavioural change could be brought about.
7. And in contrast to the number of factors identified, DOC study reports point to a smaller number of operational or programme recommendations; although all indicate the need to focus on issues with political support. Instead most contain suggestions about how DFID (and other donors) needs to alter the way it works to make greater use of DOC findings. A number of these mirror suggestions made in a review of DFID's incentives to undertaking and using DOC analysis, and in a number of other DOC and non-DOC pieces of work. They include:
 - Ensuring teams have country knowledge. Suggestions to improve this include longer-term postings for UK-based staff, and making greater use of staff appointed in country.
 - Tailoring ambitions to the situation, including adopting longer-term strategies and setting realistic time frames.
 - Working with non-traditional partners and through non-traditional channels, including the private sector and the media.
 - Recognising DFID has a political role, and that it and other donors are not perceived as neutral and apolitical, and play a role in shaping the context.
 - Modifying incentives in DFID, both informal and formal, to alter behaviour in favour of using DOC findings.
8. Reviewed together, the studies also point to the need to:
 - Be flexible, as politics are unpredictable, and recognise that crises and sudden change may offer an opportunity.
 - Recognise that power does not only lie with partner governments, especially where the line with business is blurred.
 - Find ways of stimulating demand from citizens, as well as looking at the supply side from government.
 - Recognise that as an external actor DFID's influence is limited, suggesting it focuses on areas within its control.
 - Ensure interventions do not undermine successful approaches.
 - Encourage staff to adopt approaches that are technically good enough, but which are also politically astute.

Where next?

9. The DOC studies have produced much of value, stimulated considerable debate, and led to the uses noted above. They have also yielded a number of lessons about how to conduct DOC studies to maximise their benefits. These are derived from points throughout the process and from the final products. A detailed note highlighting these lessons is available.²

10. A number of gaps are suggested by the work to date and indicate studies would benefit from:
 - Focusing in depth on a sector in which DFID is operating.
 - Ensuring TORs direct DOC team members to investigate potential levers of change, and teams are configured to do this.
 - Including DOC team members with operational experience, particularly where programming recommendations are required.
 - Greater focus on non-traditional channels and potential partners to provide greater detail about for example the private sector and the media.
 - Peer review by other DFID offices to facilitate lesson learning and joint problem solving.
 - Greater emphasis on regional or global factors.

11. A number of issues remain unresolved; these include whether to:
 - Undertake studies jointly with other donors. Pros include harmonisation principles and limiting the potential for donor duplication and attendant demands on partner country resources. Cons include differing purposes for undertaking the studies, particularly where other donors may be unwilling or unable to share the findings. This suggests the need to clarify aspirations and expectations before proceeding.
 - Undertake studies jointly with partner governments. Pros include alignment principles and potential for increased ownership of the issues by partners. Cons include possible bias and suppression of findings. Again this suggests the need to clarify aspirations and expectations before proceeding.
 - Publish the full main study report. Although it is clear that sharing the knowledge generated has multiple benefits, country offices are concerned that publishing the full study report immediately may have negative consequences. This suggests they should find other ways of sharing the findings and consider allowing the study team to publish the report independently. It also suggests that no one product can suit all needs.

12. A further emerging issue is how to ensure DOC findings are regularly and efficiently updated. The greater challenge however, is to move beyond refining how DOC findings are generated, to ensuring the knowledge produced is used regularly and systematically by country offices. In addition there is a need to stimulate greater use beyond the commissioning country team to inform policy

² See the DFID How to note *Lessons learned – planning and undertaking a Drivers of Change study*, November 2005.

and programming development at a headquarters level, as well as inform responses to international initiatives.

13. The Effective States team in DFID's Policy Division is working on these issues:

- Offering support to country offices undertaking a study for the first time.
- Partnering with country offices where DOC is well established to capture the increasing examples of use, and to facilitate knowledge sharing on DOC.
- Investigating mechanisms to update and disseminate DOC findings, focusing on how to foster national in-country expertise to do this.
- Working with other parts of DFID to promote use of DOC findings.
- Working with DAC and other external partners to promote the uptake of DOC and facilitate lessons learning.

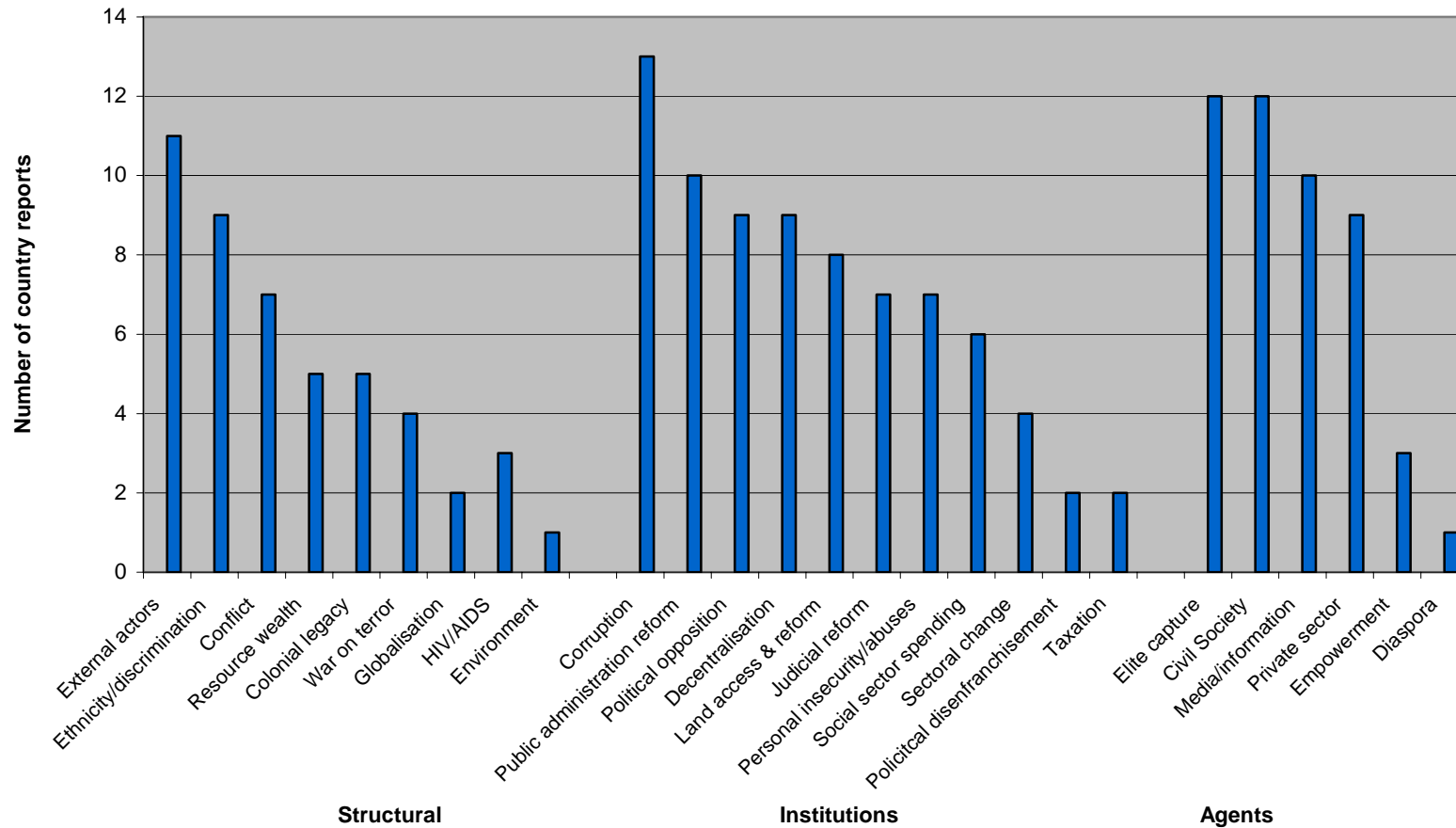
Comments and further information

14. If you would like to provide comments or discuss this note, please contact Ann Freckleton on a-freckleton@dfid.gov.uk.

15. Drivers of Change documents can be found at: http://www.grc-exchange.org/g_themes/politicalsystems_drivers.html or by contacting Aislin Baker on a-baker@dfid.gov.uk.

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Attachment 1 Number of DoC country study reports citing different Drivers (n=13)



Attachment 2

Examples of use of Drivers of Change by DFID country offices

Informing the planning process – DOC studies have been commissioned to feed into the formulation of Country Assistance Plans, for example:

- The Central Asia, Caucasus and Moldova team used DOC to define the first Regional Assistance Plan.
- Nigeria used DOC to define its plan when the office's budget tripled.
- In Bangladesh DOC provided a focus for debate between DFID, donors partners, government and civil society during the CAP process.

Improving the quality of engagement – DOC promotes understanding of political and institutional dynamics, for example:

- In Malawi DOC highlighted the inaccuracies in policy documents and allowed debate.
- In Ghana DOC findings indicated where to exercise more caution and where to push ahead.

Influencing government – DOC analysis has proved a useful tool for developing better influencing strategies with partner governments. It has helped country teams identify entry points for initiating dialogue on pro-poor policy. DOC analysis has been shared with government, in order to create a platform for raising sensitive issues.

Analysing and mitigating risk – Country teams have used DOC analysis to gain a better understanding of the risks to their programme, for example:

- DOC has been used to complement fiduciary risk assessments.
- Zambia has used it to assess the risks of Budget Support. In Uganda the findings emphasised decisions on altering Budget Support would have to be taken with care.

Strengthening harmonisation with donors – DOC analysis has been shared with other donors and has helped generate a common understanding of a country's political context. It has been used with multilaterals in middle-income countries where DFID has a limited presence.

Promoting joint work across Whitehall – DOC has strengthened collaboration with other government departments at country level by building a common understanding of the context.

Informing programming – Country teams have used DOC to suggest alterations to programmes and programme portfolios, for example:

- The Kenya office postponed a public sector reform programme until they had refined it in line with DOC findings.
- The Pakistan team instituted a programme of work with the diaspora in the UK.
- Georgia and Kyrgyzstan used DOC to refocus their programme.