

The following paper is a response from the UK Local Government Alliance for International Development to the following reports:

*Review of DFID's Building Support for Development Strategy – Impact of Strategy, Expenditure and Activities August 2009*

*Review of DFID's Work to Build Support for Development through the Development Awareness Fund and the Mini Grants Programme June 2009*

### Background on the LG Alliance

The UK Local Government Alliance for International Development brings together five of the principal local government bodies in the UK: Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF); Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA); Local Government Association (LGA); National Association of Local Councils (NALC); and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).

The Alliance partners together represent:

- 423 local authorities, with spend of around £114 billion pa on services for over 50m people
- Approx 10,000 community, parish & town councils made up of nearly 100,000 councillors
- 1700 chief executives & senior managers
- Approx 160 organisations representing ministries of local government, local government associations, and individual councils, in over 40 Commonwealth countries.

The Alliance partners together have specific expertise in:

- improvement & innovation in local government through networks, online communities of practice & web resources and peer support
- Democratic accountability & leadership
- Influencing policy & practice in public service
- Promoting local government & democracy across the Commonwealth

The UK Local Government Alliance for International Development was established in 2000, with the aim of providing a single voice for local government on international development issues. Local government (in the UK and overseas) has an important role to play in international development promotion because:

- **Local Government is at the front line of delivering services that reduce poverty.** Local councils provide basic services such as health, education & sanitation and encourage local enterprise - services essential to reducing poverty.
- **Local councils help to build communities.** Local councils have a wide reach across the local community and can bring together public, private and voluntary organisations to respond to the needs of the poorest & most marginalised people.
- **Local Government is the sphere of government closest to people.** Local councils are best placed to identify & respond to local needs.

Since its establishment, the UK Local Government Alliance for International Development has received the following funding from DFID:

- 2003 - 2006: Strategic Grant Agreement (SGA) £300k over 3 yrs
- 2008 - 2011: DAF funding (£300k over 3yrs)

In addition to funding focussed on development awareness, DFID also funds local government via the CLGF Good Practice Scheme, which focuses on sharing good practice between councils in the UK and overseas partners.

This support from DFID has enabled the Alliance partners to promote the importance and relevance of international development to local councils in the UK. In particular via:

- regular newsletter updates to a mailing list of over 1000 people
- targeted conferences/events on international development specifically for local councils
- promotion of international development at key local government conferences & events
- provision of international development support & resources specifically tailored to councils
- promotion of local government development stories in local govt and trade publications with a readership ranging from 8000 to 28 000.
- support to approx 70 local councils in the UK & overseas to share good practice

However there remains an opportunity for DFID to build a more strategic relationship with local government and work with them and across the community to improve the impact of these activities both in the UK and overseas. Particular recommendations are outlined below.

### **LG Alliance Response & Recommendations**

The UK Local Government Alliance for International Development is generally supportive of the outcomes and recommendations in the Building Support for Development Review. However, local government must be recognised as an important partner in building support for development in the UK. References to local government as a key stakeholder in the review have been inconsistent and leave some ambiguity as to the role that local government could play.

UK Local Government should be recognised as a central partner for the following reasons:

- UK Local Government, as the sphere of government closest to the people, has the potential to provide a legitimate and structured approach to reach local communities.
- UK Local Government already implements partnership models, such as the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Multi Area Agreements (MAAs) to ensure on the ground ownership, partnerships and local & regional coordination of projects.
- UK Local Government is already an active player in international development activity and development awareness - approximately 20% of UK local councils are engaged in some form of international development activity either at home or overseas.
- The role of local authorities in providing a structure for embedding the global dimension in schools on a regional level is already recognised by the review. However local government has much further reach across all sectors of the community and has the potential to play a coordinating role across local areas.
- Local Government is one of the largest employers in the UK. Local authorities in England alone employ over 2.2 million people with 18 500 elected councillors working across communities to provide a wide range of services.

#### **LG Alliance Recommendation**

DFID should consider establishing a more strategic long term relationship with the local government sector. This could be in the form of a PPA with LG-Alliance or a similar mechanism – along the same lines as VSO, TUC and other partners – to tap into this sector more strategically.

#### **1. Building Support for Development Strategy Objectives: Inclusion of Local Government as a key stakeholder**

1.1 We support the recommendation that the Building support for Development Strategy be reframed to be brought up to date with the 2009 White Paper priorities with a more

equitable balance between supporting initiatives focussed on children & young people and the adult population.

- 1.2 We agree with the review observations that a wide range of bodies including, local government and professional bodies have been increasingly engaged in development education, awareness and action, but are excluded from the objectives set in the BSDS.
- 1.3 We are supportive of the proposal to gradually phase out the DAF and replace it with longer term grant funding available to key target groups central to the BSD strategy, in order to provide the opportunity for more strategic longer term planning and consistency in messaging.
- 1.4 We note that although local government is referred to as an important stakeholder in many parts of the report, the reference to local government as a key stakeholder is not consistent. In many sections of the review, Local Government is referred to alongside civil society organisations.

#### **LG Alliance Recommendations**

- 1.5 Local government should be recognised as a democratically elected formal sphere of government and not as a civil society body.
- 1.6 UK local government should be identified in the reframed strategy as a target stakeholder group for engagement alongside faith, trades union, business, BME and Diaspora groups.

### 2. Working across government to build support for development

- 2.1 We support the view that more attention is needed to be given to links with other government departments and setting support for development within the broader policy context. In particular with regard to agendas such as community cohesion – a priority of DCLG and the local government sector- we support the view that “DFID could work more closely with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to connect the global and domestic agendas for involvement and ensure more coherence in the provision of support and information.”

#### **LG Alliance Recommendation**

- 2.2 We recommend that in addition DFID should work more closely across spheres of government to reach all sectors of community. DFID should engage with councils via a more strategic partnership with the UK Local Government Alliance for International Development - to ensure that support for development is set within a local policy context.

### 3. Relationship building with key stakeholders

- 3.3 We note that although DAF is aimed at ‘new organisations/projects’, ‘new projects’ receive little support to understand DFID priorities as the fund is managed by an external contractor. We also note that it is extremely difficult to access DFID to check project and policy direction. It currently tends to be a one-way conversation and DFID needs to open-up to a more on-going dialogue.
- 3.4 We support the recommendation that DFID target their resources towards engaging with key stakeholder groups and support the view that “more investment in relationship building, especially with the non development and new actors within civil society, would have been more relevant. ”
- 3.5 We welcome the recommendation that a member of Outreach and Stakeholder Relations Team (OSRT) should be the link for each stakeholder or stakeholder network (faith, trade unions, business/private sector, local government). In particular we welcome the proposal that focus should be given to mutual partnership, shared objectives and coordination across other DFID divisions & departments.

#### **LG Alliance Recommendation**

- 3.6 We recommend that a stakeholder link within the OSRT should also include a focus on agendas of other relevant central government departments, for example in the case of local government DCLG.

#### 4 Progression from awareness through involvement to action

4.3 We agree that there is a “natural progression from *awareness* through *involvement* to *action*” and that support for development should be measured in terms of involvement and action.

4.4 We recognise the support from DFID for the CLGF Good Practice Scheme as a good mechanism for maintaining interest and support, but note that the scheme is available to specific projects with a relatively small number of councils.

##### **LG Alliance Recommendation**

4.5 We recommend that a more structured approach to the ways in which local councils can get involved (and get their local communities involved) needs to be developed jointly between DFID and the LG Alliance.

#### 5 Messaging and Support for actors new to development

5.3 We agree with the view that much of “the media work done by Communications Division on the messages DFID wished to communicate was not linked to the funding schemes” and that a better link between media work and the funding schemes could improve resources available to the DAF projects. This would also help to ‘bring development closer to home’ by creating stories more relevant to local people about activities that are happening in their area.

5.4 We support the recommendation to develop “a common set of communications messages shared by all committed stakeholders” as this will ensure clarity of messaging in particular for actors new to development.

5.5 We note that sectors new to the development agenda who do not traditionally work on development issues, find it hard to access resources relevant to their sector e.g. the local government sector.

##### **LG Alliance Recommendation**

5.6 That DFID communications & media teams work more closely with the LG Alliance to ensure that stories, case studies and information relevant to the local government sector is effectively distributed via the LG alliance.

#### 6 Facilitating contact between DAF recipients

6.3 We note that there are several DAF recipients, who are working with the local government sector, for example the EES scheme works with local education authorities to encourage the global dimension in education. This is potentially a missed opportunity to share resources and improve impact.

##### **LG Alliance Recommendation**

6.4 We recommend that DFID provides the opportunity for linkages between DAF programmes (where relevant), in order that potential benefits from joint working are able to be realised or at least a greater awareness and coordination of activities.

#### 7 Improvement in Monitoring & Evaluation

7.1 We support the recommendation for a monitoring framework and a budget for regular programme and strategy level evaluation. We welcome the new improvement in monitoring & evaluation forms, which have already provided useful guidance on DFID requirements.