

## **IBIS comments on Danida Strategy: Danish Support to Good Governance – Effective and Accountable Public Sector Management**

In general it is a good and comprehensive analysis and strategy. IBIS' comments relate mainly to the role of civil society in promotion of good governance. The comments are from IBIS HO, though we could have wished that the deadline for commenting on the strategy had permitted time for comments and input to the strategy from IBIS staff in partner countries.

### **1. Approach and focus of the strategy:**

The focus of the strategy is public sector *management* leaving important aspects of the GG agenda related to democratisation, social and political accountability and human rights to a forthcoming strategy paper. IBIS would like to stress the necessity of approaching governance problems holistically. The strategy rightly underscores that the management of the public sector is political in nature. However, the focus in the strategy on management and the split of the governance agenda in two separate papers (and two separate approaches?) could severely undermine a holistic approach to the governance agenda leaving aside democratic and demand-side aspects. It will be important to: asap develop the strategy paper on the remaining elements of the GG agenda; and in the implementation of the strategy systematically include the social and political accountability elements in the approach in order to avoid a pure managerial approach to public sector management and reform.

### **2. External and domestic accountability**

The strategy paper is developed in the context of the Paris Declaration and an increased focus on aid effectiveness through harmonisation and alignment of aid. Donor harmonization tends to strengthen the bargaining power of the donor group vis-à-vis the recipient governments, therefore, emphasising the external accountability and running the risk of undermining democratic decision making structures, the role of the parliament and social accountability. This trend, in combination with the above mentioned emphasis on technical/management approaches to governance, could tend to undermine domestic accountability relations, which are crucial for a sustained improvement in governance.

### **3. The diversity of civil**

The strategy underscores the critical role of civil society in holding governments accountable, expressing priorities of the society and having a watch-dog function. Though, it is important to keep in mind that civil society is as diverse as the society in large and play different roles in exacting good governance. In Bolivia strong indigenous organisation could play an important role in influencing and monitoring local governments, but more often denounces the decentralisation law and demands self determination and acceptance of their own territorial management. In Ghana at local and national level organised civil society organisations – though often weak - play a crucial role in demanding accountability and monitoring government. The HIPC-Watch Project being a show-case example of civil society monitoring of government budget lines. But traditional authorities in Ghana are an equal important factor in civil society that should be taken into consideration in promotion of good governance, although they definitely not are good examples of transparent governance. The point made is that civil society plays an important role in demanding

good governance but the specific character and political role of each civil society organisation and movement must be taken into account.

#### **4. The importance of the demand side of accountability in good governance.**

The strategy acknowledges the importance of the demand side of the accountability equation but in most Danida partner countries the organised expressions of civil society only have a limited capacity to monitor and hold governments and public sector to account. The three focus areas of the strategy (the fight against corruption, local service delivery and governance, and public financial management) can only achieve success if complemented by a systematic strengthening of the domestic accountability mechanisms and especially social accountability. It will therefore be important that Danida substantially increase and enhance support to civil society organisations at national, regional and local level with regard to capacity building, organisational development, watch-dog activities, budget monitoring, etc.

#### **5. Cooperation with NGOs and division of roles**

While bilateral donors often will have governments (the supply side) as natural partners, NGO's have civil society organisations (the demand side) as their natural partners. This division of roles should be reflected when supporting civil society's capacity to exacting accountability. We urge Danida to at the country level cooperate and coordinate with Danish and other international NGOs when supporting civil society organisations in exacting accountability.

#### **6. The value of analysing the political and economical context**

In order avoid a "technical fix" approach to good governance IBIS welcomes the initiative to strengthen analysis of the economic and political context of governance reforms, including the political will and leadership behind reforms. Experience show that regardless of donor conditionalities and pressure the political will behind reforms is crucial as recently demonstrated in Mozambique. (Renzio & Hanlon, 2007: Contested Sovereignty in Mozambique: The Dilemmas of Aid Dependence). This again underlines the necessity of supporting domestic accountability mechanisms to put pressure on governments for reforms.