

New strategy on Good Governance – comments from UNDPs Nordic Office

The strategy is a very good document. It is quite sensitive to issues of politics in development and points poignantly to some key challenges on the ground. The strategy is very well, clearly and concisely written.

Given the indication in the strategy that another and indeed more relevant strategic paper focusing on design of support to improve governance is still forthcoming, specific comments relating to those aspects of governance cannot be made at this point. Reference: "Obviously, the governance agenda is much wider than this (public sector management), the other major parts of it being concerned with issues of human rights and democratisation, the media, the judicial sector and more generally rule of law. For reasons related to practical issues in the design of support to improving governance, this latter part of the governance agenda will be the subject of a separate, forthcoming strategic paper". The strategy states that the splitting of the two will not neglect the links (p. 5). The challenge here will be to secure that the analytical split does not lead to a split between the institutional infrastructure and the funding instrumentalities. Should that happen the good intentions would be jeopardised by structural disincentives against linkages.

While international efforts at improving development aid effectiveness such as the Paris Declaration are very convincingly prominent, conspicuously missing in the strategy is any reference to the MDG's and the UN System. The strategy could do well to highlight its interaction with these key issues given that the strategy mentions poverty reduction as its basic stated objective albeit only focused on public sector management, anti - corruption, local service delivery and PFM.

Further to the issue of aid effectiveness (p. 7), the document could benefit from a linkage between harmonization of standards and ownership and alignment. The assessments that the strategy intends to rely on (stated under footnote 3) are external assessments. In the name and spirit of alignment, it might be useful to rely on nationally owned assessments, a la Oslo Governance Centre's governance assessment processes. It could be an idea worthwhile exploring for Danida to pilot the Centre's governance assessment in Danida program countries – see link to Oslo Governance Centre's governance indicators project:

http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/governance_indicators_project.html

The same goes for the anti corruption work that Danida intends to do. It is important that anti corruption assessments not only be based on external assessments but be part of nationally owned assessment processes. Though Oslo Governance Centre's "indicators project" does not deal directly with corruption, there is also room for application in that area, probably in cooperation with UNDPs regional bureau for Asia, if Danida would be interested.

In general, the recognition in the strategy of the limitations placed by tying development aid to aggregate governance indicators is consistent with the work of the UNDPs Oslo Governance Centre and Democratic Governance Group in supporting UNDP Programme countries to develop **nationally- owned governance indicators** and undertake governance assessments.

Under political will and leadership (p. 8), it might be useful to go beyond the easy “will” concept and mention straight out that “will” is a function of dynamics of elite capture that reflect themselves in public sector institutions penetrated by political interests. “Will” is also a function of dynamics of exclusion that find themselves in blindness to minorities, poor, gender, vulnerable and marginalized. Here again, the Oslo Governance Centre framework of rights based, gender sensitive and pro poor governance may help Danida in certain contexts unpack this concept of “will”.

The strategy's emphasis on capacity development is consistent with the international consensus around its importance.