

# WFD POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE LEARNING EVALUATION

## Management Response

Date: August 2018

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### Summary of Findings

The Theory of Change (TOC) behind WFD's party assistance can be summarised as follows. WFD's supports democratisation mostly by sharing experiences from the UK political system (with some south-south exchanges). PPOs provide capacity building support (in particular training and peer support from UK politicians and party staff) which is meant to generate improved skills. Political party networks are meant to support both individual and organisational objectives. Together, stronger, more accountable, representative and policy-based parties are assumed to offer more choice to citizens in elections. This should contribute to multi-party democracy.

This TOC is based on the belief that: training, peer-to-peer support and networks will develop capacities (input level); political parties will change in response to the training or technical advice received, which will make them more relevant to their electorate (outputs/outcomes); and political systems will allow more capable parties to operate (system-wide level). However, the academic evidence does not fully support these assumptions: capacity building rarely influences the behaviour of politicians. UK political experiences, based on the Westminster parliamentary model, often has little relevance in the countries where WFD operates.

At a strategic level, WFD's overall strategy and PPOs strategies for 2016-2020 are consistent. All PPOs are committed to WFD's overarching objective of multi-party democracy, constituted by representative, inclusive and accountable parties competing on a more level playing field.

Strategic alignment between the UK government and PPOs could be strengthened. PPOs are not required and do not often explicitly set out how they will contribute to specific objectives from the Department for International Development (DFID) or Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). There are no clear criteria to prioritise the countries in which PPO work. While the FCO values political party assistance to further foreign policy objectives, DFID remains less comfortable with ideological sister-party assistance than, for example, political participation for marginalised groups across political parties.

The quality of the context analysis in the design of political assistance projects was not always high. Joint visits between PPOs and WFD as part of integrated programme led to higher quality and broader analyses, drawing on independent experts. For example, the joint scoping mission for the design of the Ghana Integrated Programme produced a Political Economy Assessment, which carefully analysed the context.

Political competition in the UK seems to translate into competition in overseas projects and can limit collaboration between PPOs and with WFD. UK government officials are not always

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well informed nor engaged in PPOs projects, even though the case studies show how FCO posts or DFID advisers can improve PPOs projects (e.g. by facilitating contacts with relevant stakeholders in Argentina). While some PPOs coordinate projects with other democracy assistance organisations, there are opportunities for more systematic collaboration.

One of the main comparative advantages and perceived resources of PPOs is that they can draw on UK party politicians, staff or other party experts in order to provide peer-to-peer support. This assistance was appreciated and could lead to interesting two-way exchanges. However, the case studies show peer-to-peer support could only contribute to small improvements in parties' capacities. Supply is very limited, activities are small-scale and quality is not always guaranteed. Continuity over time is important to build trust.

Sister-party assistance (bilaterally or through networks) is the main approach used by PPOs. The most critical success factor was trust. However, the case studies could not provide concrete examples of how long-term trust was used to help parties overcome particularly challenging issues, such as to improve policy-making or internal democracy. One of the assumptions of the sister-party model is that trust is based on membership of ideological networks, but we did not find this was a necessary nor sufficient condition for good collaboration in the case studies.

Integrated programmes (combining WFD and PPO expertise) or multi-party projects (across PPOs) shared a number of benefits. At a substantive level, they could deliver a powerful demonstration effect to show UK politicians collaborating across the political spectrum in contexts where trust was limited (e.g. in Sierra Leone). Multi-party projects can also be less controversial and deliver visible benefits. In terms of processes, they could also improve collaboration between WFD and PPOs. However, integrated programmes do not at present appear to be delivering on their full potential. Some PPOs are naturally evolving towards multi-party projects which WFD could incentivise further.

The evaluation has confirmed many of WFD's strengths in the area of political party assistance, including the value sister-parties place on learning from the UK's long democratic tradition. However, strategic choices are not always made about when and how to deploy party assistance. The weaknesses of the overall theory of change limits the contribution of UK political parties to democratisation, in particular the assumptions that capacity building (training, networking) and sharing the UK model will contribute to transforming political parties and thereby strengthen democracy.

Peer organisations and well-informed experts in the field of party assistance considered that the 'Westminster brand' was known, associated with the British political system. WFD was still most well-known for its parliamentary assistance, not its party assistance. Its growing research and evidence capacity was appreciated and may therefore play an important knowledge production and information sharing role, regardless of its size.

WFD is becoming a professional democracy organisation which means that the share and influence of its direct political party assistance may be reducing. It faces the same challenge that some of its peers have not fully resolved: how to manage both sister-party and multi-party assistance, associated with different relationships. WFD does not appear to have seriously tried a characteristic of some of its peers: greater geographical concentration of WFD and PPOs party assistance projects which would be a potentially more efficient and effective use of public resources.

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## WFD Response

Recommendation	Accept/ Partially Accept/ Reject	Response	Action
<b>R1. Improve strategic focus:</b> Continue efforts towards closer strategic alignment between the UK government (FCO and DFID), WFD and individual PPOs. For example, improve geographic criteria for political party assistance.	Partially Accept	WFD PPOs align their programme with WFD's organisational strategic framework. It is up to WFD as a NDPB to determine in how far it will replicate the UK government's strategic priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFD is reviewing the programme approval process for all its programmes to ensure that all its work aligns with the organisation's strategic framework; the PPO projects will be covered during that review.</li> </ul>
<b>R2. Manage risks:</b> Manage differently some of the corporate risks associated with political party assistance, with more explicit criteria to select sister-parties to manage reputational risks; deeper collaboration between WFD and PPOs on the effective monitoring of projects to manage governance risks; and better stories of what UK party assistance is achieving to manage accountability and transparency.	Accept	<p>In terms of reputational risk, it is difficult to set out explicit criteria for the parties that WFD works with.</p> <p>In terms conflict risks, this does not just apply to party programmes but all of WFD's programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFD agrees to jointly establish with the PPOs red lines for when not to engage with a party. This will include rejection of parties that endorse any form of violence.</li> <li>WFD will develop guidelines to "do no harm" for all of its programmes. This will include adding questions around understanding and management of existing conflict dynamics to programme design processes.</li> <li>In terms of governance risks, WFD will establish a dedicated MEL liaison person for PPOs to ensure effective support on programme monitoring.</li> <li>In terms of transparency risks, the new organisational results</li> </ul>

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			and MEL framework places a stronger focus on story telling.
<p><b>R3. Develop more realistic interventions:</b> Improve the methodology for context analysis and needs assessments. Collaborate on an overall TOC for political party assistance for the next phase of FCO-DFID funding. This would provide the evidence base to test or challenge some of the assumptions made in current projects.</p>	Accept	<p>WFD is currently rolling out a new context – and learning – focused programming approach. As part of this, the organisation is currently using a new political economy analysis tool with some of the parties.</p> <p>The organisational ToC is based on existing evidence of what works, also with regard to political party assistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFD and PPO ToC will be tested and reviewed throughout the current funding cycle based on evidence, including from PPO programming.</li> <li>The new DFID grant brings with it funding for an independent MEL Support Unit that will help WFD to interrogate its evidence and ToC more thoroughly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>R4. Deepen internal collaborations:</b> WFD and PPOs should continue their efforts at improved collaboration, coordination and communication, including in-country collaboration (focusing on fewer countries to have more significant impacts overall); training for PPOs staff; and an improved SharePoint programme management tool.</p>	Partially Accept	<p>WFD and PPO staff already collaborate whenever the opportunity arises. Both sides will work further deepening this, when appropriate.</p> <p>However, the countries where deeper collaboration might take place cannot be pre-determined, as they are chosen based on strategic objectives and resources available.</p> <p>While WFD country representatives are a useful PoC in-country, they do not and should not represent the PPOs in those countries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFD will work on improving the induction process for PPO staff members. PPOs will ensure all their staff members are inducted properly on WFD systems and processes.</li> <li>WFD is reviewing its IT systems architecture to assess how best to improve its information management tools; the PPOs are part of this discussion.</li> </ul>
<p><b>R5. Continue to improve monitoring, evaluation and learning:</b> Undertake quality and proportionate M&amp;E of all PPOs projects. Simplify the WFD</p>	Accept	<p>WFD and the PPOs accept that MEL needs to be improved for the PPO projects. To facilitate this, WFD is currently rolling out a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFD will review the current PPO reporting format.</li> </ul>

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reporting format. Facilitate internal lesson learning on political party assistance.		new MEL framework, including a dedicated PoC to support PPO MEL.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An externally contracted MEL support provider will further facilitate improvement from fall 2018 onwards.</li> </ul>
<b>R6. Improve collaboration with government:</b> UK departments should interest in-country colleagues in PPOs activities and encourage feedback. In turn PPOs should always inform in-country DFID or FCO teams of their planned visits.	Accept	WFD welcomes any UK department to spend time with the PPOs.	None
<b>R7. Learn from other political party assistance organisations:</b> WFD should facilitate collaboration and lesson sharing between peer organisations and all PPOs.	Accept	Learning will be facilitated through WFD MERL team, linking the parties with relevant research and networking opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WFD PPOs will attend the Political Party Peer Network (a gathering of political party support organisations) conference next year.</li> <li>WFD Research will identify a topic over the next three years with clear relevance for the parties and work with the PPOs to deliver this research and integrate into PPO programming</li> </ul>
<b>R8. Obtain greater results from political party assistance projects:</b> Consider how to reward good project performance to improve value for money (e.g. accessing pooled resources against set criteria rather than pre-allocating all PPOs funds on the basis of UK election results). Test new ways of providing	Reject	<p>The funding to the PPOs is currently fixed by and subject to government review and as such, cannot be changed by WFD.</p> <p>While WFD is always interested in testing new and innovative ways of working, what is important is that the approach is suitable for obtaining the intended results. As such,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Tailored Review of WFD will be launched in September 2018; governance and funding issues are among the points to be addressed in the reviewers' TORs</li> <li>WFD MERL, along with the MEL Support Unit, will engage more</li> </ul>

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party assistance that combines sister-party, multi-party or integrated elements.		it is up to the PPOs to decide on what they deem the adequate approach for each of their programmes, based learning and evidence from previous interventions.	purposefully with the PPOs around learning from their projects, ensuring they are testing new approaches where relevant.
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## Addendum on Labour programming in Western Balkans

Nabila Sattar, August 2018

As part of its long-standing support for the Social Democratic (SD) left in the Western Balkans, the Labour Party has resumed its assistance to this network of political youth organisations from across the former Yugoslavia. The four-year £270,000 programme is managed by a Slovenia-based foundation associated with Slovenia’s SD party. It has re-established the network (with new statutes, elections, congresses and their preparatory meetings) and organises a number of conferences (on women, tackling youth unemployment or nationalism) as well as campaigns (e.g. in support of Macedonia at a time of crisis or on violence against women).

SD9 has re-established itself and is trying to register as an NGO to access EU funding, **Comment:** this is not correct so needs to be rephrased or removed but remains fully dependent on Labour for now. Its member organisations do not contribute financially. It was disbanded for a couple of years in part due to problems in Slovenia; . **Comment:** there weren’t problems in Slovenia but amongst the youth organisations following 10 years of civil war! It is not clear how lessons were learned when it was re-established SD9 had no financial support and leaders were not able to travel **Comment:** Parties were struggling to survive; youth leaderships were changing; in response they formalised structure of reporting; and planned issue based national campaigns like unemployment in the region on a agreed day and time; leaders now committed to action plan and part of feedback and next steps.

SD9 was re-established during the period, with new Statues and a first Congress. It met on a regular basis and organised campaigns, for example a resolution condemning violence against women in the region. However, while a number of SD9 youth network leaders were elected to office, it does not mean that this was a project achievement: they empowered them and gave the knowledge and gave them skills set to compete. Participants went from being youth leaders or activists to the highest level in parties. they probably participated in SD9 because they were already active in domestic politics. Interviews with SD9 members Interviews did not show an explicit objective to influence mother parties, and therefore progress towards strengthened social democratic parties in the region (regional programme objective). It has influence - where participant becomes a politician, then Minister; can have both influence on mother party; government; and society.

The SD9 network is managed by a social democrat Foundation based in Slovenia and coordinated by the Slovenia SD youth wing. Slovenia is both now a EU member state but also a former Yugoslav state. It supports regional events involving youth organisations linked to political parties across the former Yugoslavia. Not just support but also coordinate them; coordinate campaigns, share experiences, keeping network alive....a lot of work and energy. Regional exchanges and advice amongst Balkans-based participants enable more context-relevant solutions and joint actions than if these had been designed in the UK. Youth collaborate despite nationalistic tensions between member countries. Events includes SD9 leaders’ meetings, SD9 Congresses, conferences on women, migration and nationalism. There is no direct UK involvement in the activities. We assist SD9 to co-ordinate this; providing political support and best practise through various avenues which will not be exclusive to this project. Having said that developing local capacity skills and ability to lead on agenda’s is a good thing and moves reliance on us.

In the western Balkans, SD9 is a network of youth organisations. It faces an ongoing challenge as youth leaders move on regularly. It was also difficult to track how individual

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participants bring learnings and policies to their home organisations, beyond shared new tools or one-off crisis responses actions. They track the with individual growth in their youth, woman’s or party structure as was demonstrated with interviews with two of the beneficiaries and is also something we ask partners to report to us on.

Project	Assessment of relevance
<p><b>Western Balkans - Labour</b></p>	<p><b>Medium</b> - The SD9 network is relevant to the extent that it addresses the need for youth political participation in the region as well as the importance of building bridges across countries from the former Yugoslavia to counter nationalist tensions. The project was designed as a collaboration between the Slovenia-based Kalander Foundation and the Labour party, drawing on the experience of previous support. Youth leaders involved in the network valued it but it does not seem to be a capacity development project (more running costs for meetings, coordination and small campaigns). Given that the network stopped functioning for a few years without Labour funding, this raises doubts on ownership and sustainability. Network stopped functioning due to weak structures in organisations rather than lack of funding. Since then they regrouped and came up with this format.</p> <p>A lot of work has gone into getting the network to this place, trial and error along the way. They have collectively searched for the right model that can connect all youth organizations in the Balkans region. There have been challenges which are not referenced in the report such as the fragile political context; different stages of democratic transition; issues of reconciliation; nationalism and populism. They have much expertise and knowledge, first hand experiences of conflict; not to mention hours of work, discussions, negotiations, learning, empowering.... kilometres on the way; by car or by air.... they have persevered and established a good basis for the future development of the region; as social democrats they are working towards the common good, across borders.</p>

Project	Assessment of lessons learned, use of evidence, and adaptation
<p><b>Western Balkans - Labour</b></p>	<p><b>Limited use of lessons learned or evidence:</b> The proposal explains that the SD9 network was not active for a couple of years due to a lack of funding and reduced political will once the coordinator stepped down. The project re-established the network with the same lead organisation in Slovenia without explaining how these previous barriers to success would be addressed. It asserts the need for SD9 reactivation without looking at alternatives to achieve the stated objective. The review team did not see separate design documentation or lessons learned from other networks or youth projects. Sources of independent evidence are not quoted (e.g. to justify cost-effectiveness of networks).</p> <p>There is a similar party-political youth network. They did search to try to find such a model. Since 1999 the Slovenian Social Democrats have been developing different approaches to help youth and women through different thematic projects and SD9 is the most successful one. It is unique in the</p>

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	<p>region. In the period two to three years they will have a developed model; look at lessons learned that will be used also in other fields or regions (we are already exchanging best practise on an activist's network for Africa). They are proud that only the social democrats are well organised and working together because this is the best approach for the future of the fragile Balkan region.</p>
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Project	Assessment of sustainability
<b>Balkans - Labour</b>	<p><b><i>Does not yet appear sustainable.</i></b> The SD9 network was established with EU and then WFD funding and is entirely dependent on WFD funding. It does not receive funding from other sources and would not be able to continue if funding stopped (as was the case before Labour funding resumed in 2014). It is working towards Slovenia NGO registration, so it can access EU funding, but it is not receiving financial support from its member organisations. It has never received EU funding, nor can it access EU funding as a network of political parties and is not registering as an NGO. They are hosted by Social Democrats of Slovenia so is low cost and support is required for activities which gradually, once the parties develop their capacity, may be able to sustain.</p>

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Project	Outcome	Outputs	To what extent are the expected changes in the project's theory of change happening?  To what extent are unexpected changes taking place that can be plausibly linked to the project?	Contribution of outputs to the outcome and to changes in the party system
<b>Western Balkans SD9</b>	Regional programme "Strengthened social democratic parties across the Western Balkans which presents voters with a clear left wing choice, demonstrated through policy-based campaigns underpinned by strong organisational structures	1. Strengthened cooperation of social democratic youth organisations in the Western Balkans  2. Empower and increase the political participation of young women in politics  3. Simultaneous campaigns and crisis response action	<b>Limited</b> as the monitoring information is of insufficient quality. Activities are taking place and individual beneficiaries (youth leaders from different Balkans countries) are pleased to be meeting and exchanging views and learning new techniques (e.g. on women empowerment).  The SD9 network has been re-established with new statutes and a first Congress in 2017 but there were delays which required project extension after the 2014-2016 period. These were due to political crisis and elections in the region  Balkans youth organisations linked to social democratic parties are meeting on a regular basis, including a women's conference. Collaboration across Balkans countries is important for peacebuilding but this is not an explicit and monitored objective, future development of the region is progress, this is political; they are not an NGO but youth from political parties  Simultaneous campaigns (e.g. street actions) have been organised in different	<b>Insufficient data</b> – M&E reports were insufficient to assess the effects of SD9 meetings on the capacities of individuals or organisations. A number of SD9 members have been elected in their countries, but the contribution of SD9 is probably low (as by definition youth leaders will be attending events and are more likely to remain engaged in politics). Yet SD9 can argue strongly that without their support this may not have happened so this is authors opinion without evidence to support the statement Interviews did not show an explicit objective to influence mother parties, and therefore progress towards strengthened social democratic parties in the region. M&E does not explain the impact of the campaigns and crisis response actions on parties or the public in the region. They do not track the empowerment of women's political participation in the region. Interviews with stakeholders showed the network is not known beyond Labour, SD9 members and Slovenia coordinators. Its public social media is not active. SD9

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			<p>countries, for example on youth unemployment, in support of Macedonia or a resolution condemning violence against women. This demonstrates SD9 is making progress and can have impact. There is no systematic information on who was involved or how many persons were reached and influenced. These were covered in the local press but we would not be able to estimate how many people are reached through local media outlets. However we do have a record of who was involved from SD9 and the parties.</p> <p>No unexpected change identified what is the criteria for an 'unexpected change' and why in turn is the project judged on this when it is meeting its 'expect to see' and 'like to see'</p>	<p>network is developing in this way. The network is present in public social media. All activities around establishing of SD9 were presented to media and news. We have a clip about SD9 network presented on TV news.</p>
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