

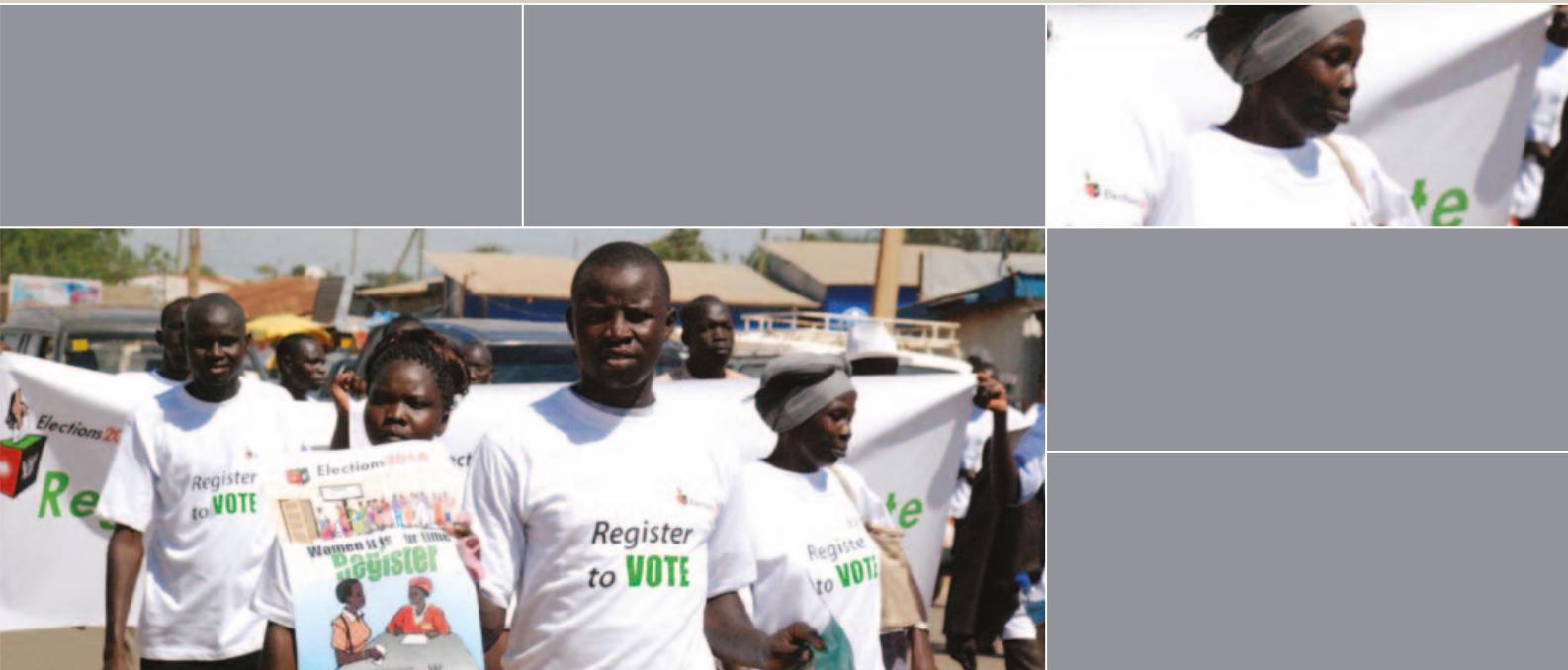


## Democracy Support through the United Nations



Literature review:  
What have we learnt about donors' support  
for democratic development?

Report 10/2010 - Evaluation



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Photos: Sudanese march through the streets of the Southern capital Juba to mark the launch of voter

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**February 2011**

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## List of acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAR	Capabilities, Accountability and Responsiveness
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIMA	Center for International Media Assistance
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CV&A	Citizens' Voice and Accountability
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
Danida	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	UK Department for International Development
EC	European Commission
ECG	Evaluation Core Group
EU	European Union
GSDRC	Governance and Social Development Research Centre
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICHRP	International Council for Human Rights Policy
IDS	Institute for Development Studies
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMS	International Media Support
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy Electoral Assistance
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
Norad EVAL	Norad's Evaluation Department
OAS	Organization of American States
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
R2P	Responsibility to Protect

RBE	Results-Based Evaluation
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
ToR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	UN Democracy Fund
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNIFEM	UN Development Fund for Women
US	United States
USAID	US Agency for International Development
V&A	Voice and Accountability

# Executive Summary





# Executive Summary

This literature review is a key output of an overall evaluation of the results of Norwegian support to democratic development through the United Nations (UN). Its purpose is to provide an overview of the knowledge base in order to generate the foundations for the analytical framework and methodology to be applied in the field, based on seven dimensions of democratic development support: human rights; justice and the rule of law; parliaments and watchdog organisations; electoral assistance; gender and democracy; promotion of democracy; and the media and access to information. It also represents a key reference document for the evaluation team regarding current knowledge on ‘what works, what doesn’t and why’.

## **Evolution of Donor Support to Democracy**

The idea that donor countries might explicitly seek to drive or facilitate democratic transitions began to gain support during the 1970s. By the early 1990s, democracy assistance was a key element of foreign and development policy in a number of countries. Assistance has evolved over time, from initial support to electoral processes to a focus on institutional reform (from the early 1990s), civil society and the media (mid-1990s), engaging with parliaments and political parties and, most recently, work on voice and accountability (V&A) and state–society relations.

Democracy promotion today is only one aspect of a much broader international agenda to support ‘good governance’, one which often tends to assume that ‘all good things go together’, in particular that today’s democratic transitions are being built on the foundations of coherent, functioning states and that state building and democracy are one and the same. This is far from being a reality in many developing countries (Rakner et al., 2007).

As a result, experiences of donor support have often been disappointing, with most countries that began their democratic transition in the 1990s now mired in ‘gray zones’ (Carothers, 2002). Donors have begun to reassess the impact of their interventions and to accept the need to be realistic about what can be achieved. Efforts to impose democracy without strong domestic support are now seen as unlikely to succeed in the long run. Meanwhile, there is a need to place goals and timeframes into context in places that are often defined by weak state and professional capacities.

A first key step is the realisation that democracy assistance is fundamentally a political activity, and that donors themselves are political actors. Second, an understanding of democratisation based on the universal application of a single

blueprint is unlikely to lead to progress. Third, assistance must be harmonised if it is to avoid needless duplication and the placing of undue burdens on countries. Finally, given that donors are only now starting to build a more systematic understanding of what works, there is a need for additional research and evaluation on democracy support.

### **UN and Norwegian Approaches to Promoting Democracy**

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action in 1993 was a watershed in the development of the UN's work on human rights and democracy, leading to the establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and representing the basis for wider democracy assistance through the UN system as an aspect of its overall development aid.

Since then, the overall evolution of assistance to democracy has been reflected in a number of important UN documents and declarations. The Secretary-General's 2009 Guidance Note on Democracy is now seen as the authoritative source with regard to UN principles in the area of democracy support. This tries to strike a balance between a call for proactive vigilance with regard to threats to democracy and rejecting any single model, stressing that democracy export has never been a UN policy. Local ownership is seen as crucial, as is engagement with traditionally marginalised and excluded groups.

The Guidance Note also represents the main response of the UN system with regard to the recognised need for improved consistency and coherence, although endemic rivalry among UN agencies and between UN agencies and other international actors in the field has continued to create tensions and competition between approaches.

In Norway in 1992-1999, democracy support was a stated priority, with a strategic document in place. The focus shifted in 2002-2005 towards poverty reduction, although democratisation was still prominent within policy documents. In 2008-2009, democracy strengthening became much less central. Norway currently lacks an up-to-date and coherent policy on democracy promotion, although important dimensions of democratic development do have policies or guidelines in place.

The UN since its foundation has been a cornerstone of Norway's foreign policy. Evolving UN principles and priorities are clearly reflected in official policy, although surprisingly little is said about principles for democracy support in general (much more is said about e.g. human rights). Over the years, Norway has consistently used several UN agencies as channels for development cooperation. Norway has also been a strong proponent of UN reform.

### **Analytical Frameworks to Evaluate and Assess Democracy Support**

It is increasingly recognised that democracy support outcomes are highly context-dependent, that available measures are often insufficient in determining which factors lead to different results and that rigorous evaluations in this field are scarce. Such limitations suggest that a variety of methodologies can play an important role in evaluation processes. Indeed, one of the clearest lessons derived from previous

experiences in evaluation is that no single methodology is likely to capture all aspects of a given intervention.

Theory-based evaluations, which place significantly more emphasis on the underlying assumptions and logic of implementation and programmatic theories, are potentially useful for evaluating democracy interventions, as they can help identify whether a given donor approach is or is not grounded in ‘robust theories of how states and societies are transformed’ (O’Neil et al., 2007a). The use of theory as an entry point does not preclude discussion of results, but rather offers a potential explanation of performance or lack thereof.

In recent years, a number of donors and other agencies have developed analytical frameworks for evaluating and assessing support to democratic development.

### **Recent Evidence on Donor Support to Democratic Development**

Despite the challenges of evaluating democratic development programmes, there is an increasing body of evidence on the effectiveness of donor support to democracy promotion.

In the main, findings suggest that donors have limited impact on democratic development. Above all, they need to be more realistic about what they can achieve in supporting what are essentially domestically driven political processes.

On the seven areas of democratic development included in this literature review, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **Human rights** projects can contribute to the governance agenda, enhance aid design and impact and strengthen aid effectiveness, provided that strategies are grounded in states’ domestic responsibilities and thus promote capacity building rather than service provision.
- Although there is a conviction that **justice and rule of law** is good for development and governance, the evidence on this is mixed. The specific impacts of donor-supported interventions are likely to be limited, even though their objectives tend to be far reaching.
- On **gender and democracy**, increased representation of women does not guarantee a substantive impact on politics or a reduction in structural and gender inequalities in the short run. Success is seen to be driven by long-term commitment, agenda ownership, having men on board and adaption to the local context.
- Several studies find that democracy promotion through **civil society** alone produces positive effects at micro level but, no clear recommendation is provided on how they could be scaled up.
- On **media**, donor support is more successful when it focuses on all key aspects: the regulatory framework ensuring media pluralism; the establishment of national agencies responsible for implementing and enforcing the regulatory framework; progressive liberalisation of media including an increasing number of

radio, print, TV and multimedia players; and the enforcement of the right to information and freedom of expression.

- As with other dimensions of democracy support, assistance to **parliaments and watchdog organisations** is inherently political – and therefore very difficult for outsiders to engage with. Technical approaches have not produced satisfactory results.

Up until the end of the 1990s, approaches to **electoral assistance** were mostly technical and overly optimistic about the effects of elections alone with regard to democratisation. In recent years, more holistic approaches have been tested which consider elections as one element of a broader cycle of electoral processes.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations for Next Steps**

This literature review points to a number of key features of donor support to democratic development which are particularly relevant to this evaluation. These include the following:

- Democracy has had increased importance in development discourse since the end of the Cold War.
- This is not unproblematic, and results of donor support to democratic development are, in the main, disappointing.
- Evidence is weak but a number of evaluations and studies have been commissioned in the past few years, and we now have a better picture of what works, what doesn't and why.
- In most areas, there are examples of good (or improved) practice and innovative initiatives that build on lessons learnt. However, these tend to be isolated examples, and we are still a long way from consistent success in democracy support.
- Measuring results in democratic development is a complex endeavour. Not only is it not easy to quantify meaningfully or attribute the effects of donor action, but also, crucially, donor objectives have tended to be unrealistic and programmes insufficiently tailored to the contexts in which they operate.
- Exposing and understanding the often implicit assumptions and consequent programme logics that underpin donor support to democratic development should be a key component of democratic development evaluation.
- Finally, democratisation is a deeply political process, contested mostly at the national and local level, where external actors like donors can play only a limited role.

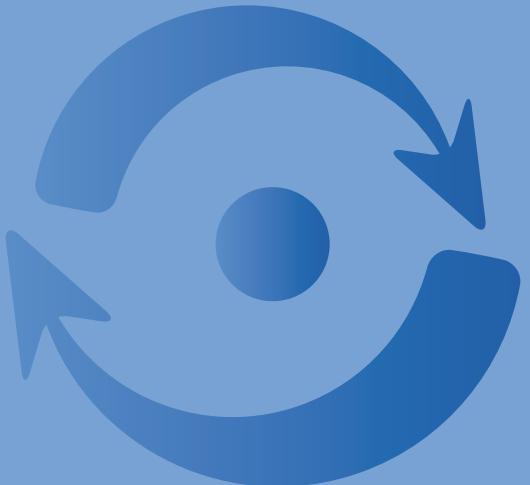
All of these points have important consequences for the evaluation of Norad support to democratic development through the UN. In particular, in line with international good practice and recent experience of evaluation in related fields, the following principles should be taken into account in the analytical framework for the evaluation (based on Foresti et al., 2007):

- *Flexibility:* The framework needs to be applied to different types of programmes in different country contexts

- *Theory based:* In line with a theory-driven approach to evaluation, the framework should aim at eliciting and analysing the implicit programme logic of democratic development programmes, with a view to better defining the assumptions, choices and theories held by those responsible for design and implementation. This will allow a more realistic assessment of results, including the reasons why objectives are being met or not.
- *Outcome focused:* The framework needs to clearly define and assess outputs, direct and intermediate outcomes and, when possible, pathways to impact and long-term change.
- *Evidence based:* The key findings of this literature review and the mapping of Norwegian support to democratic development through the UN will provide an important evidence base as well as analytical pointers to guide the evaluation framework.



# Main Report





# **1. Background and Introduction**

As stated in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the main purpose of this overall evaluation is to provide information on the results of Norwegian support to democratic development through the United Nations (UN). The focus is on bilateral funds disbursed by embassies to UN agencies in-country and earmarked funds disbursed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), including (global/thematic) trust funds.

This literature review is a key output of the evaluation. It covers recent research and evaluations that analyse the effectiveness of development support to the promotion of democracy in different contexts. It includes an overview of reference documents in this area from relevant UN agencies and the Norwegian aid administration. In addition, it provides an overview of methodological approaches and frameworks for evaluating democratic development. A detailed outline of the structure and content of the report is provided below.

The purpose of the review is to provide an overview of the knowledge base that is relevant to the evaluation exercise. In particular, the findings here will provide the foundations for the analytical framework and methodology to be applied in the field, which are also key parts of the inception report. In addition, the review represents an important reference document for the evaluation team regarding current knowledge on ‘what works, what doesn’t and why’ in the field. Finally, given that all members were involved, the processes leading to this report constituted a preparatory exercise for the team.

The evaluation ToR suggested the inclusion of a number of elements of importance in the development of democracy, such as support to: parliaments; watchdog institutions (e.g. national human rights commissions, law commissions, anti-corruption bureaus, ombudsman’s offices); election processes and institutions; media and access to information; access to justice and judicial development; human rights; and the strengthening of civil society linked to voice and accountability (V&A) issues, including women’s organisations and women’s empowerment. The literature review covers all these areas, as well as the broader debates on democracy and good governance that underpin policies and practices in all the above-mentioned dimensions.

## **1.1 Approach and Methodology**

This literature review covers a very broad terrain, and as such cannot be considered a comprehensive review of all the literature on democratic development or on the specific dimensions identified in the ToR. Rather, it aims to provide an overview of

selected documents, with a particular focus on donor experiences that are of particular relevance to the objectives and scope of the evaluation. It is also important to note that the boundaries between the selected dimensions of democratic development are sometimes blurred, with considerable overlap between them (for example between support to electoral processes and parliaments, or between human rights, gender and V&A).

The approach taken to select the key sources of the literature review entailed a three-step process. First, a general bibliographical search was conducted for all the relevant components of the review, namely, general literature on donors' support for democracy, literature on the specific dimensions of democracy supported suggested by the ToR (i.e. human rights, electoral assistance, etc.), Norway and UN policy documents, recent research on and evaluations of donors' effectiveness in supporting democracy and methodological and technical literature on approaches and frameworks to evaluate democracy support.

The resulting long list of sources was discussed with the entire evaluation team at a workshop on Oslo from 10 to 12 February. For each component of the literature review, the key sources to focus the literature review on were selected based on the following criteria: relevance to the evaluation task and evaluation period (i.e. 2000-2009); balance between empirical research, donor evaluations and more academic research; and quality of the research and balance between the seven democracy dimensions suggested by the ToR. The selected sources were discussed and agreed at the February workshop by the evaluation team and the results and proposed process for the literature review were discussed and agreed with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation's Evaluation Department (Norad EVAL).

Finally, each team member responsible for leading the review in a particular component, whether thematic or general, suggested additional relevant sources that emerged as relevant and useful during the review process itself. The final list of sources selected for the literature review is found at the end of this report.

The process of the review involved all evaluation team members, as it was considered to be a crucial exercise for the whole evaluation process and a very efficient way to ensure the review findings would directly inform the entire evaluation process. In order to ensure consistency and quality, the literature review coordinators at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) developed a set of guidelines and a format for the team to use in their analysis. Finally, ODI took overall responsibility for drafting and editing the synthesis report, taking into account the team's contributions and suggestions. The draft report was further discussed among team members at a second workshop in Oslo on 11 and 12 April.

Despite the challenges implicated in having several authors contribute to a literature review process of this breadth and complexity, the evaluation team has benefited significantly from the effort. The resulting product has been enriched by the collective contribution, which has not compromised the overall quality and consistency of the analysis.

## **1.2 Structure of the Report**

Section 2 gives an overview of the evolution of the democracy agenda in development policy and practice, the role played by donors and other external actors and the main lessons learnt to date. Section 3 covers the evolution of UN and Norwegian policies on democratic development promotion, analysing the extent to which the approaches are complementary and consistent. Section 4 looks at selected approaches, frameworks and methodologies for evaluating and assessing democratic development. Section 5 summarises the main findings of recent evaluations of and research on donor support to democratic development. The final section includes the key conclusions from the review and recommendations for the development of the analytical framework for the evaluation.

## 2. Evolution of Donor Support to Democracy: an Overview

This section looks at the evolution of the democracy agenda in development policy and practice, the role played by donors and other external actors and the main lessons learnt to date.

### 2.1 Evolution and Foundation of Donor Support to Democracy

The emergence of donor support to democracy should be considered in the context of a number of changes in the political landscape, beginning in the mid-1970s and continuing in the late 1980s and early 1990s, known as the ‘third wave of democratisation’ (Huntington, 1991).<sup>1</sup> Carothers (2002) identifies components of this trend in seven different regions of the world:

- The fall of rightwing authoritarian regimes in Portugal and Spain in the mid-1970s;
- The transition from military dictatorships to elected civilian governments in several Latin American countries from the late 1970s through the late 1980s;
- The decline of authoritarian rule in parts of East and Southeast Asia from the mid-1980s;
- The collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s;
- The breakup of the Soviet Union and the establishment of 15 post-Soviet republics in 1991;
- The decline of one-party regimes in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s;
- A weak but recognisable trend in some Middle Eastern countries in the 1990s (disputed by some authors, e.g. Stepan and Robertson, 2003, in Rakner et al., 2007).

Variations in the circumstances in which this trend played out cannot hide the widespread and often nearly simultaneous movement away from authoritarian rule towards more liberal democratic forms of governance. Indeed, the fact that transitions towards liberal democracy have taken place in such different country contexts has challenged structuralist approaches that pointed to certain prerequisite socio-economic conditions in the emergence of democracy (Rakner et al., 2007). It is perhaps unsurprising that, in this context, some observers began to see the transition to liberal democracy as inevitable in the long run (Fukuyama, 1992).

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<sup>1</sup> Huntington defines three waves of democratisation in history. The first, in the 19th century, brought democracy to Western Europe and Northern America and was followed by a rise in dictatorships in the interwar period. The second began after World War II but lost steam between 1962 and the mid-1970s. The latest wave began in 1974 and is still ongoing. The democratisation of Latin American and post-Communist Eastern European countries is part of this wave.

While attempts by governments of the first and second worlds to influence governments and governance in developing countries were a geopolitical reality for much of the Cold War era, the third wave provided a context in which the idea that donor countries might *explicitly* seek to drive or facilitate democratic transitions began to gain support in some quarters as a new norm. As early as the 1980s, a set of organisations emerged, including governments, multilaterals and national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), dedicated, at least in part, to international engagement in support of democracy. By the early 1990s, democracy assistance was a key element of foreign and development policy in the US, but also in Canada and much of Europe.

Democracy promotion has constituted a significant part of development assistance in the past two decades, although it remains only one aspect of a much broader international agenda to support ‘good governance’. Good governance remains relatively vague and difficult to define, but there lies at its core a concern about how states should govern – that is, the rules and practices according to which governments are chosen and state power and authority are exercised (Kjaer, 2004). This places issues of state capacity and functions at the heart of the debate (Rakner et al., 2007).

Current thinking and international discussions on democratisation in the developing world seem to be based on the assumption that today’s democratic transitions are being built on the foundations of coherent, functioning states. This is far from being a reality in many developing countries. Meanwhile, assuming that state building and democracy are one and the same thing is a mistake donors often make in their democracy assistance efforts (Carothers, 2002).

Thus, while the good governance agenda tends to assume that ‘all good things go together’, this glosses over some tensions. One of the central challenges for donors remains in bridging the divide between assistance programmes directed at fostering democracy and those focused on promoting social and economic development more broadly (Rakner et al., 2007).

Very recent research (IDS, 2010) confirms and reinforces some of the warnings and calls for realism by Carothers, Rakner and others. It suggests that development practitioners need to:

*‘close off their mental models about governance and development that are rooted in OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] experience. Instead of prioritising reform of formal institutions, they should look at the structures, relationships, interests and incentives that underpin them.’*

The authors suggest that an ‘upside down’ view of current governance thinking is needed, one which challenges traditional approaches to managing donor–recipient relationships, including by paying greater attention to donors’ own role in political and governance processes.

Some of the messages emerging from recent research on democracy support are especially challenging for the donor community as they dispute existing approaches and practices in this area. Although this evaluation will focus on a period of time when, in the main, this ‘new’ thinking was not yet embedded in donor practices, including those of Norway and the UN, it will be important to reflect on the consequences of this in trying to tease out the critical factors that explain success – or lack of it – in Norwegian support for democracy through the UN.

## **2.2 Key Features of Donor Support to Democracy**

### **2.2.1 Key Actors**

Contemporary democracy support continues to reflect these historical origins, with the US, Canada and Europe taking key roles, although these players have developed rather different focuses and models of operation. The US model of support relies largely on channelling support through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and a number of quasi- and NGOs such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). While nearly all European bilateral development agencies now have a democracy component as part of their operations, there are a number of alternative models, including specialist organisations such as the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, support to multilateral initiatives through the European Union (EU), the International Institute for Democracy Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and, more broadly, the UN system. In other cases, groups of like-minded actors have emerged around a single issue, as in the case of Canada, Scandinavian countries’ and the Netherlands’ work on human rights.

### **2.2.2 Principal Areas of Support**

In the early years of democracy support, donor assistance tended to focus largely on electoral processes, particularly election monitoring and, later, administrative support to electoral processes. The emphasis on ‘free and fair’ elections remains a significant source of government legitimacy and therefore a key goal of democracy assistance (Bjønlund, 2004, in Rakner et al., 2007). Nevertheless, since that period, the activities covered under democracy support have evolved significantly.

Beginning in Latin America in the early 1980s and spreading to sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe from the early 1990s onwards, donors have invested significantly in *institutional reforms*, including constitution building, support to watchdog organisations (i.e. anti-corruption commissions), judiciary reform and promotion of the rule of law. From the mid-1990s, attention has increasingly been paid to the role played by *civil society and the media* (Rakner et al., 2007). Most recently, donors have recognised the importance of engaging with parliaments and political parties (Hudson, 2009) and have deepened engagement on issues of V&A (O’Neil et al., 2007a; Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008; 2009).

In some cases, shifts in the principal areas of support over time can best be described as progression. For example, support to electoral commissions has contributed to significant reductions in the fraud and systemic rigging that were commonplace in a number of Latin American countries in the 1970s and early 1980s. However, such progress is region- and even country-specific, and is susceptible to reversal: diversification is a better descriptor where progress has been less

clear cut. Meanwhile, critics argue there has been a failure to target sufficiently and strategically the accumulation of diverse democracy support activities. Carothers (2002), for example, suggests that, for much of the period in question, donor support to democracy has taken place within a single analytical framework that assumes progression through key stages and that requires achievements in all dimensions of democracy, failing to capture context-specific nuances.

### **2.2.3 Lessons Learnt in Support to Democracy**

Set against the enthusiasm generated by the third wave and expectations of transitions to liberal democracy like those of Fukuyama's 'end of history', donor experiences in democracy support have often been disappointing, particularly around the consolidation of democratic structures. Cases of successful consolidation do exist (commonly cited examples include South Africa, Botswana and Mauritius in sub-Saharan Africa), and some countries, such as Ghana, can be categorised as in the process of consolidating progress on some fronts. However, on the whole, the number of such stories remains limited, with most of the countries that began the democratic transition in the 1990s mired in what have been referred to as 'gray zones' (Carothers, 2002) or 'hybrid regimes' (Rakner et al., 2007). These cases, which include a diversity of political structures, including deeply entrenched feckless pluralism and dominant power systems, may represent alternative trajectories, rather than merely delays or reversals of progress in the linear transition from authoritarian regimes to liberal democracies. How to move past the universal application of this 'transition paradigm' is now a key challenge for democracy assistance.

In response to this challenge and to the increasingly recognised complexity of democracy support, donors have begun to learn some important lessons and to reassess the impact and sustainability of external interventions. Above all, there is a growing acceptance of the need to be realistic about what external actors can achieve. Two points are particularly salient here. First, experience suggests 'the impetus for democratisation needs to come from within' (Rakner et al., 2007). Evidence from a number of countries indicates that efforts on the part of international actors to impose democracy without strong domestic support are unlikely to be successful in the long run. In many cases, such actions risk doing significant harm.

Moreover, expectations around democratic transitions in the third wave are extremely high with respect to the extent to which achievements across a number of dimensions of democratisation can be compressed into a very short timeframe. In the so-called consolidated democracies, transitional processes took centuries, and often occurred in isolation from pressures from below. Yet today's transitions are expected in decades, or even years, despite their taking place in parallel with discourses of participation and universal suffrage that add new layers of complexity to reform. Merilee Grindle's work on 'good enough governance' suggests donors can make intelligent choices about prioritisation and sequencing of reforms (Grindle, 2004). Nevertheless, there is a need to place donor goals and timeframes into context with domestic capacity for change in places that are often defined by weak state and professional capacities.

What, then, can donors do to maximise the likelihood of making a positive contribution to democratic development? A first key step is the realisation that democracy assistance is fundamentally a political activity, requiring engagement with a variety of actors, including those outside donors' comfort zones, and that donors themselves are political actors. Non-acceptance of these facts has been particularly problematic where support is provided under the auspices of development policy, yet in a sense this demands nothing more than recognition of the historical roots of democracy assistance in the geopolitical machinations of the Cold War era.

Second, apart from the challenge to structuralist prerequisites for democratisation embodied in the third wave, an understanding of democratisation based on the universal application of a single blueprint is unlikely to lead to progress. Rather, as Carothers (2002) argues, a nation's 'underlying economic, social, and institutional conditions and legacies' are likely to retain significant influence. This suggests the variation that helps define third wave countries, as well as those yet to enter democratic transitions, requires a context-specific approach that considers both formal and informal institutions (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2009).

Third, as in other areas of development assistance, a proliferation of actors and modalities of support means democratisation assistance must be harmonised if it is to avoid needless duplication and, worse, working at cross purposes and placing undue burdens on democratising countries.

Finally, there is a need for additional research and evaluation of democratisation assistance. Donors are only beginning to build a more systematic and robust understanding of what works in democracy support, and quality evaluations of donor support to democracy remain scarce in many areas. In this context, this evaluation represents a welcome opportunity to contribute to important learning processes.

Having established the evolution of donors' support for democracy and the key features that have characterised donors' approaches over the years, the next section focuses on the policy documents and frameworks Norway and the UN have adopted on democracy, governance and related issues.

### **3. UN and Norwegian Approaches to Promoting Democracy**

This section provides an overview of the evolution of UN and Norwegian policies on democratic development and promotion, and analyses the extent to which the approaches are complementary and consistent.

#### **3.1 Evolution of Democracy Promotion in the UN**

##### **3.1.1 Origin and Evolution**

The UN's essential understanding of democracy is laid down in the UN Charter (1945) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (particularly in Article 21): 'the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government' (UN Charter). There is a quite limited emphasis on free and fair elections from today's perspective. Democratic norms are also specified in core international human rights treaties, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), which lays down the conditions for the enjoyment of individual democratic freedoms.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), a product of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, was a watershed event in the development of the UN's work on human rights and democracy and led to the establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Reflecting the fall of the Communist bloc and also of military dictatorships in many third world countries, the international community is here invited to 'support the strengthening and promoting of democracy [...] particularly in new and emerging democracies and countries in transition to democracy'. This is, in reality, the basis for wider democracy assistance to be offered through the UN system as an aspect of its overall development aid.

In 2000, a first Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies was organised in Warsaw, leading to the Warsaw Declaration, eventually signed by 100 countries (2000). The declaration recognises that countries are at 'different stages' in their democratic development, and calls for exchange of experiences and best practices, with what seemed to be increased emphasis on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs (dialogue rather than 'finger pointing'). Probably because of democratic setbacks in some parts of the world during preceding decades (mostly overcome by the turn of the century), there is an emphasis on the principle of civilian and democratic control over the military and resistance to the overthrow of democratically elected governments. A second conference of the same group, held in Seoul in 2002, adopted a more concrete plan of action.

Another key document, adopted in 2000 by most heads of states and governments, is the Millennium Declaration. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have no concrete objectives in terms of democracy per se, the Millennium Declaration has much broader scope, emphasising the need to strengthen the capacity of all countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights. There is also a call for more inclusive political processes and genuine participation by all citizens, in recognition that a formal democratic system is insufficient on its own. Towards the end of 2000, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a specific resolution on Promoting and Consolidating Democracy, which referred to the role of civil society and local communities in bringing government closer to the people, as well as enhancing social cohesion and improving social protection systems. This was probably a response to the increasing number of crises of legitimacy in fragile democracies as a consequence of the deepening social costs of macroeconomic programmes (e.g. in Latin America). It also established a clearer link between democracy and the MDGs.

In terms of promoting UN reform, including in the areas of democracy and human rights, 2005 was a very active year. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched his reform programme, In Larger Freedom. This called for decisions during that year to help strengthen the rule of law internationally, and also for more direct support efforts to institutionalise and deepen democracy, by moving from an era of norm setting to one of implementation. The reform programme insisted that protecting democracy requires active vigilance.

Later that year, the most complete gathering ever of heads of state and government took place at the inauguration of the UNGA session to adopt a document called the World Summit Outcome. This was a proposal to follow up on the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits on economic, social and related issues held over the previous 15 years. This introduced a further relativism of the democracy concept, stating that, while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy, nor does it belong to any country or region. The more linear ‘stages’ approach from 2000 was thus abandoned, probably as a reaction to the so-called ‘Iraq backlash’ of attempted ‘democracy export’.

### **3.1.2 Current Features**

Reflecting on the need to build more consistency within the UN system, the Secretary-General has issued three Guidance Notes over the past couple of years: on rule of law assistance (2008), on constitution-making processes (2009) and on democracy in general (2009). This last document tries to strike a balance between calling for proactive vigilance with regard to threats to democracy and rejecting any single model, further stressing that democracy export has never been a UN policy. A relevant issue is the extent to which this is mere lip service to non-Western countries, and whether the UN has any examples of different ‘models’ being promoted in practice.

Linked to this call for caution, one of the principles of the Guidance Note on Democracy is to ‘do no harm’, and that the promotion of inappropriate foreign models could endanger democratic transition and lead to social violence. Furthermore,

local ownership of any democratisation process is seen as crucial: ‘local norms and practices’ must be ‘weaved into emerging democratic institutions and processes’. The note also emphasises the need to engage with traditionally marginalised and excluded groups.

### **3.1.3 Consistency and Coherence among UN Agencies**

One of the key features of Kofi Annan’s In Larger Freedom is an open complaint that ‘the impact of UN work for democracy is reduced due to being dispersed among different parts of bureaucracy’, and that it is ‘time to join up the dots’, improve coordination and mobilise resources more effectively. In particular, he requested better coordination between the democratic governance work of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the work of the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs. He also established the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF) in 2005, with the purpose of assisting countries seeking support. To date, UNDEF has experienced limited success owing to a lack of funds (a little over \$100 million) and a very small workforce. One proposal in the report that has been implemented is the significant strengthening of OHCHR.

The three Guidance Notes, in particular the more generic democracy one, represent the main response of the UN system with regard to the recognised need for improved consistency and coherence. It is natural that the various bodies within the system approach democracy promotion from different perspectives. As the Guidance Note on Democracy highlights, ‘democracy is indeed inextricably linked with the three pillars of the United Nations’, i.e. peace and security, development and human rights. From a peacekeeping perspective, democracy is a means to achieve stability, just as democracy promotion is seen by UNDP primarily as creating a ‘conducive environment’ to fight poverty. Similarly, the High Commissioner for Human Rights approaches democracy promotion from a human rights perspective. These perspectives could be mutually reinforcing, but endemic rivalry among UN agencies and between them and other international actors in the field has tended to create tensions and competition between the various approaches.

The extent to which the Guidance Note on Democracy achieves its objective to ‘provide a platform for working together on the basis of shared principles, joint analyses and demand-driven strategies to help ensure that our [the UN’s] work is not only coherent and synergistic but also effective and responsive’ remains to be seen.

### **3.1.4 UN Policies and Approaches in Specific Democratic Development Dimensions**

#### **Human Rights**

The Vienna Declaration states that the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms at national and international levels should be universal, with no conditionality attached. Every state was invited to formulate a national human rights action plan in order to provide an effective framework of remedies to redress human rights grievances or violations. The international community was called on to offer increased levels of both technical and financial assistance at the request of governments. Among the priority areas for assistance are: administration

of justice, including law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies; building and strengthening national human rights institutions; strengthening pluralistic civil society as well as the media; protection of groups that have been rendered vulnerable; and assistance in the conduct of free and fair elections, including human rights and public information aspects.

The Vienna Declaration was also the launching point of OHCHR, whose mandate includes: the right to development; increasing recognition of economic, social and cultural rights; improving monitoring of human rights treaties and ‘special procedures’ systems; helping states implement human rights plans of action at national level; designing preventive strategies; integrating rights of women and children into the UN system; developing effective measures to combat racism; and conducting education and public information programmes.

In Larger Freedom puts particular emphasis on the structural enhancement of the UN human rights machinery, in recognition of the strongly decreasing legitimacy of the Human Rights Commission, which was reorganised into the more effective but still fragile Human Rights Council one year later. The most important innovative aspect of the Council was the introduction of peer review on human rights performance (the Universal Periodic Review), by means of which all member countries will be scrutinised and tested in open hearings every four years.

The launch by the Secretary-General of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, endorsed in the World Summit Outcome, formally empowers the UN to protect victims of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes where their own government fails to do so, although there remains much to do before the concept can be operationalised.

Another key message of the World Summit Outcome is the centrality of protection and empowerment as overarching goals. The High Commissioner must protect the effective enjoyment by all of all human rights and coordinate human rights protection activities in the UN system. On empowerment, the role of international actors is to support national initiatives by means of three key strategies: engaging with countries (primarily governments), exercising proactive leadership (to meet challenges and prevent violations) and building partnerships (including with civil society).

On human rights, this document represents a shift from norm setting to practical implementation of standards on the ground, and holding governments accountable to ratified commitments. OHCHR is to help ‘bridge the gap between lofty rhetoric and sobering realities’. It has been given a more active role in Security Council deliberations and throughout the UN system, and has had its regular budget doubled. Field offices at country level have been strengthened significantly.

### **Gender and Democracy**

The UN is committed to addressing gender inequalities in all democracy assistance across agencies. The Guidance Note on Democracy says: ‘Empowering women and promoting women’s rights must form an integral part of any United Nations democracy assistance, including through explicitly addressing gender discrimination that

contributes to women's exclusion and the marginalization of their concerns'. UNDP and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in particular address gender and democracy issues.

UNDP promotes gender mainstreaming and addresses discrimination by strengthening the capacity of: electoral bodies, political parties and other duty-bearers; citizens (to participate in elections and electoral reform and hold parliament accountable); parliamentarians (to promote gender equality); justice sector personnel; and civil society (to perform oversight).

Democratic governance is a key issue for UNIFEM, which works to increase women's active participation in politics and other decision-making processes. UNIFEM supports the translation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) into legal guarantees of gender equality, as well as working to bring more women into decision-making positions, to build their capacities to engage effectively and be influential, to train women leaders and to promote their active participation in elections as candidates and voters. UNIFEM manages UNDEF projects focused on capacity building, network building, communications and advocacy and awareness raising (UNIFEM, 2008).

In relation to women, peace and security, UNIFEM works on: information on the impact of conflict on women and their role in preventing conflict and building peace; humanitarian protection and assistance for women affected by conflict; the contribution of women to conflict prevention, resolution and peace building at national, regional and international levels; and gender justice through administrative, constitutional, legislative, judicial and electoral reform in conflict-affected areas (UNIFEM, 2004).

### **Justice and the Rule of Law**

The UN plays a significant role in the justice sector. This includes the more top-down approach of reforming judicial institutions, better aligning laws and constitutions with principles of due process and human rights and improving judicial resources and capabilities. Specific attention is being given to access to justice, particularly the mobilisation capacity of justice users through legal empowerment and support to legal aid. There is also support to human rights commissions and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

Overall, despite a shift towards access to justice and justice reform in post-conflict settings, including in relation to transitional justice, forms of engagement vary, as does the extent of UN involvement. There is the sense that, despite the rhetoric, UN support continues to be top-down.

Both the UN and Norway embrace the need to support judicial reform that will improve access to justice. Both are motivated by a similar concern for democracy support and human rights. One difference may be that the UN is increasingly linking rule of law to achievement of the MDGs.

## **Civil Society and Democracy Promotion**

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are playing an increasingly influential role in setting and implementing development agendas across the globe. UNDP actively encourages all its offices to engage with a wide range of organisations and associations whose goals, values and development philosophies are in line with its own. UNDP takes a broad view of civil society, in which NGOs play an important part, recognising that in practice it is an arena of both collaboration and contention.

In 2005, UNDP published *A Guide to Civil Society Organizations Working on Democratic Governance* (UNDP, 2005a). This illustrates the range of democracy-building activities undertaken by CSOs across UNDP's priority democratic governance areas. The guide uses the following categories to describe the type of work CSOs may engage in within the seven areas: advocacy, funding, legal assistance, networking, policy formulation and development, research, technical assistance and training.

## **3.2 Evolution of Democracy Promotion in Norway's Development Policies**

### **3.2.1 Origin and Evolution**

From 1992, it is possible to distinguish three phases in Norwegian development policy, based on changes in focus, goals and priorities of successive governments. These reflect the evolution, discussion and relevance of issues at world level, often initiated by the UN, such as poverty and the MDGs, globalisation, HIV/AIDS, anti-corruption, human rights and democracy, good governance, gender equality, humanitarian assistance, peace building, environment and climate change, conflict prevention and mitigation, migration and trade.

#### **Phase 1: 1992-1999**

Between November 1990 and October 1997, the Labour Party was in power. This was succeeded by a Christian Democratic, Centre and Liberal coalition (October 1997 to March 2000).

The **Strategy Note on Support to Democratisation in Development Cooperation** (MFA, 1992) is, interestingly enough, the only Norwegian policy document during this entire period with a clearly defined policy on democracy support, with detailed guidelines on priority areas. It makes democratisation a priority and aims to promote,

*'development based on the principles of rule of law and internationally adopted human rights norms, where all layers of the population are given real opportunity to influence their own situation through free and open political participation'* (our italics).

Democratisation is linked closely to promotion of human rights and capacity building of public institutions in the recipient country.

A country's constitutional and political system must be at the centre of democratisation efforts. It is key to address *imbalances of power* between the main institutions of state:

*'Separation of powers between executive, legislative and judicial authorities is an important principle in relation to democracy. Most non-democratic societies are characterised by the executive power having penetrated the two others, and in reality acquired a monopoly on power.'*

Seven priorities are: 1) peace and stability; 2) elections and parliaments; 3) rule of law; 4) economic planning and control; 5) decentralisation; 6) CSOs; and 7) information, media.

Another document from this period is the 1995 **Norwegian South Policy for a Changing World** (MFA, 1995a). This suggests that Norway should contribute to: 1) fighting poverty; 2) peace and democratic development; 3) reduction of war and conflict; and 4) proper management of natural resources. It also stresses the key role of the UN in conflict resolution and emergency assistance and the importance of strengthening UN capacity in these areas.

**A Changing World** (MFA, 1995b) (Report to Parliament), has the following aims for development policy: 1) peace, human rights and democracy; 2) social and economic development of poor countries/groups; 3) sound management of the environment and biological diversity; 4) equal rights for women and men; 5) prevention of conflicts; and 6) emergency assistance in natural disasters.

**Focus on Human Dignity** (MFA, 1999) (Report to Parliament), despite focusing exclusively and comprehensively on Norwegian human rights policy and actions, is a reference document and one of the foundations for all Norwegian policy documents from 2000 on, for both foreign and development cooperation policies.

Of the documents reviewed, only the 1992 Strategy Note has a clear and specific focus on democratisation, anchored in the concept of state power (balance and separation). It identifies the principal institutions and processes of democracies and prioritises these for support. Later policy documents do not concentrate particularly on the tenets of democratic governance, but rather make some aspects of good governance part of a wider aid agenda.

### **Phase 2: 2002-2005**

A Conservative, Christian Democratic and Liberal parliamentary coalition governed Norway from October 2001 to October 2005. During this period, Norway's policy clearly reflected global issues on which the UN was leading: the MDGs, HIV/AIDS, globalisation, anti-corruption and peace building.

Poverty reduction became one of Norway's most important development policy goals in this period. **Action Plan 2015** declared war on poverty, calling for the promotion of human rights, education, health (including combating HIV/AIDS) and various democracy-relevant issues like anti-corruption, improved governance in general, strengthened partner responsibility and capacity development of 'watchdogs' such as auditors general, ombudsmen, civil society, political parties, free press, etc. Good governance was again declared 'a precondition for development' and human rights as 'inseparable from the development process' (MFA, 2002).

Similarly, **Fighting Poverty Together** (MFA, 2004a) advances the concept of a rights-based development policy and adoption of the MDGs and the UN's Global Partnership. It declares that governance reform, democracy and efficient administration are prerequisites for development, in addition to national responsibility for poverty reduction. It advocates for reform to donor assistance (more assistance and effective assistance).

Prior to this, in **A World of Possibilities: Globalisation's Age and Challenges** (MFA, 2003), the theme of democracy promotion becomes complementary to other issues, such as economic criminality and ethical challenges. In human rights, governance and the fight against corruption, the aims are: fight corruption; work for good governance and safeguard human rights; strengthen public financial administration; support free media and civil society; promote gender equality and women's rights; protect children's rights; and strengthen the UN role and resource base.

In this period, then, Norwegian foreign aid policy focused on poverty reduction. Documents reviewed reiterate good governance as a precondition for growth, but there was apparently no attempt to formulate a coherent, programmatic strategy for democratisation support, although some characteristic features of well-functioning democracies were stated as priorities. Interviews with MFA and Norad staff indicate that the 1992 Strategy Note was no longer widely known about or used during this period.

### **Phase 3: 2008-2009**

In October 2005, a coalition of the Labour, Socialist Left and Centre parties won the election. In October 2009, the same coalition won a second term.

#### **Four documents are important in this period. *Coherent for Development? How Coherent Norwegian Policies Can Assist Development in Poor Countries***

(MFA, 2008a) suggests a radical policy departure and change in objectives for Norwegian foreign and development aid policies, from fighting poverty and promoting human rights (e.g. 2004) to a variety of issues and themes ranging from trade, business sector investments, climate change and energy to migration, peace and security, etc. There is almost no mention of democracy promotion.

***On Equal Terms: Women's Rights and Gender Equality in International Development Policy*** (MFA, 2008b) focuses on the dimension of gender equality and women's rights, but is also of high relevance to future development aid policy in general and democracy promotion in particular.

***Climate, Conflict and Capital: Norwegian Development Policy Adapting to Change*** (MFA, 2009a) identifies three factors affecting the fight against poverty: climate change, violent conflicts and capital flows. Although it reinforces the foundations, principles and values of Norwegian foreign and development policy (solidarity, fight against poverty, commitment to the MDGs and a UN-led world order and rights-based development policy), it also stresses a clear policy shift towards countries emerging from armed conflict and countries facing challenges as a result of climate change, and that this applies to all Norwegian aid channels.

**Interests, Responsibilities and Possibilities** (MFA, 2009b) comes back to the issue of globalisation, highlighting Norwegian interests as well as responsibilities (fight against poverty, promotion of human rights through the UN, peace and reconciliation, humanitarian assistance, etc.). There is no clear mention of democracy promotion here.

### **3.2.2 Current Features of Norwegian Approaches to Democracy Support**

During the 18-year period looked at, the Norwegian authorities have presented almost a dozen policy documents addressing various aspects of Norwegian support to democratic development. In addition are more operational guidelines regarding specific aspects of support, such as the **Guidelines for Support to Free Media in Developing Countries (MFA, 2004b)**, the **Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (MFA, 2006)** and the **Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation 2007-2009** (MFA, 2007). These, of course, do not provide any further guidance as to priorities and policies, but lay out how certain democratic development ambitions can or are expected to be reached.

On the evolution of Norwegian development policy documents, certain points can be made:

- In 1992-1999, democracy support was a stated priority, as were human rights, gender equality, good governance and the fight against poverty. A strategic policy document was in place, focused on key constitutional components and oversight mechanisms.
- The focus shifted in 2002-2005 to poverty reduction, with good governance as a precondition for growth. No strategic document for democracy strengthening was created, but democratisation and the promotion of human rights, gender equality, good governance and the fight against poverty were still prominent in policy documents.
- From 2008-2009, democracy strengthening became much less prominent, as climate change, recovery from conflict and capital flows became key. There was a stated policy shift towards countries emerging from armed conflict or affected by natural disaster. Again, no strategic document for democracy strengthening was created.
- Norwegian development literature sometimes suggests unfamiliarity with concepts like democracy, human rights, rule of law, anti-corruption, gender equality and the relations between them, often treating them as separate from 'governance'.
- Regardless of who was in power, policy documents show consistency of Norwegian support to the UN system and its resource base, and to the concept and practice of a UN-led world order. Norway has been a leading proponent of UN reform since 1995, and the current government is a strong proponent of efforts to make the UN system and agencies more efficient and effective.
- Currently, Norway lacks an up-to-date and coherent policy on democracy promotion. The only *strategic* document dates from 1992. While important dimensions of democratic development (human rights, gender equality and women's rights, free media and access to information, support to civil society)

have policies or guidelines in place, they are often time-bound or now appear out of date. There is no clear process of updating these more practical guidance documents or of ensuring their relevance and coherence with policies.

### ***3.2.3 Norwegian Policies and Approaches in Specific Democratic Development Dimensions***

#### **Human Rights**

The main principles of Norway's human rights policy – domestic and international – were set by a White Paper (MFA, 1999), also serving as Norway's human rights plan of action under the Vienna Declaration. Its justification is the principle of universality: human rights apply to every individual in every country and this makes it ethically and legally imperative to strive for a regime of global protection. Until 2005, Norway had a Minister of International Development and Human Rights, working on rights-based approaches; good governance; strengthening the rule of law; freedom of expression and differentiated media; rights of women/children/disabled/indigenous people; labour standards; and the right to food. The position provided active support to human rights defenders and played a leading role in the elaboration of the mandate of the UN's Special Rapporteur. Norway also took an early interest in the human rights responsibility of business corporations.

Norway has been among the most outspoken critics of the 'implementation backlash', i.e. the increasing resistance of countries with significant human rights weaknesses to accepting international monitoring and criticism of their human rights record when the UN system moved from standard setting to vigilance of real implementation. But Norway has taken more care than some Western countries to balance its criticism and maintain an active and open human rights dialogue with problematic countries. The Foreign Minister has also commended the UN for playing an active role in narrowing the impunity of abusive governments, for reforming the 'undermined' Human Rights Commission, for endorsing the principle of R2P and for the commitment to doubling OHCHR's budget and enhancing the focus on human rights across the UN system.

#### **Gender and Democracy**

Education, awareness raising and mobilisation are key elements of Norwegian policy on gender and democracy support (MFA, 2007). The main aim is for good representation of both sexes in elected bodies and equitable distribution of public resources. The government aims to support women's participation in politics through elections and other democratic processes, including voter registration, quota systems, training and networks of women parliamentarians and election candidates. Policies highlight support to awareness raising and political parties' initiatives to increase the political influence and participation of women at all levels as well as to support networks between women in politics, public administration and NGOs. Norway has a separate action plan related to women, peace and security and advocates for the 'recognition of women as equal participants in all phases of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace building, and involvement of women in these efforts' (MFA, 2006).

### **Justice and the Rule of Law**

Norway has been involved in judicial reform mainly from the mid-1990s, and since then has increased aid to the sector significantly. The share of aid to the sector in 2003 amounted to 1% of the aid budget. Norway remains a relatively minor player overall in the field.

The main focus of Norwegian aid to justice has been Africa, on legal training and access to justice, although it has also contributed to reform efforts across a range of issues. It has also been involved in Guatemala, concretely in support of the implementation of the peace accords but also in justice sector reform.

Norway's concern with the justice system is linked to experiences in police sector reform that highlighted the need for functioning justice mechanisms. Increasingly, the realisation that human rights, good governance and democratic accountability and anti-corruption measures are most likely to develop in conditions of rule of law have prompted increasing support to legal and judicial reform. Finally, the move towards international engagement in post-conflict settings has led to international support to some transitional justice processes to address violent legacies and to prevent armed conflict from recurring (Skaar et al., 2004).

### **Civil Society and Democracy Support**

The Principles for Norad's Support to Civil Society in the South (Norad, 2009) are underpinned by a realisation that international organisations, including Norwegian ones, tend to dominate Southern CSOs and their agendas. Norad aims to encourage CSOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) to direct their attention towards the interests of their target groups in order to reach out to new recipients. Norad will support reciprocal partnerships but also explore alternative support forms. Attention is drawn to the changing pattern in international aid, with new actors, including China, India, South Africa and Brazil, playing more important roles, together with private funds. Current patterns of conflict also require new approaches, for example on combining civil and military means. A concern is that restrictive NGO legislation is on the rise in several countries, limiting room for manoeuvre for voluntary actors.

Norad will strengthen cooperation with voluntary actors that have demonstrated capacity to achieve results or, through innovative action, are likely to bring about change. Cooperation will occur through three channels: Norwegian NGOs with South-based partners; international NGOs and networks; and direct support to national institutions that distribute resources to civilian actors. Results will be measured in relation to development goals, including social and political indicators, rather than measuring only Norwegian assistance. It is the total impact and sustainability of social structures that will be part of a broader perspective on development effectiveness.

### **3.3 Consistency and Coherence between UN and Norwegian Approaches**

The UN, since its foundation, has been a cornerstone of Norway's foreign policy. This was further strengthened by the current 'red-green' Cabinet coalition in its 2005 Declaration of Principles: 'It is in Norway's best interests that we have a UN-led world order'. Through different White Papers and senior Cabinet member declarations, evolving UN principles and priorities on democracy, good governance and human rights are clearly reflected in Norway's official policy, although surprisingly little is said about principles for democracy support in general (much more is said about, e.g., human rights).

Over the years, Norway has supported the UN system consistently, and has used several UN agencies as channels for development cooperation in many regions of the world. Norway has been a strong proponent of UN reform, aiming at a more efficient and effective UN system, demonstrating awareness of its significant and well-known weaknesses. While the Norwegian government has been critical at times of the UN system, it also recognises that it has improved on three areas of high priority for Norway: democracy, human rights and international rule of law

#### **Box 1: Consistency and coherence between UN and Norway – gender and democracy**

The UN's many specialised agencies are operating in a wider context than the Norwegian government. However, there are clear similarities in approach and scope:

- Both Norwegian and UN policies build on CEDAW (the most ratified UN convention, with 182 member state signatories); the Beijing Platform for Action; Security Council Resolution 1325; and the MDGs.
- Both argue that democracy support requires both gender mainstreaming and a focus on women's specific concerns and that gender concerns should be integrated in all areas of democratic support.
- Both argue that gender mainstreaming in democracy support implies not only increasing the numbers of women participating in elections as voters and candidates but also changing the way politics are defined so gender equality becomes integral to institutions and practices.

There is little doubt that Norway and UN policy and approaches are highly consistent (see, e.g., the case of gender and democracy in Box 1 above), especially in relation to their roots in the international human rights framework and the importance of collaborative efforts between bilateral donors and multilaterals like the UN with a specific mandate to promote democracy. However, this evaluation needs to further two challenges investigate. First, whether the partnership between Norway and the UN has worked well in practice as well as in theory, in particular whether channelling Norwegian aid through the UN constitutes an effective operational option. Second, and in light of the findings of this review which challenge traditional approaches to donors' democracy support, it will be important to assess the extent to which the approaches adopted by Norway and the UN are evolving towards more realistic ways of supporting democracy in development practice.

The next section of the report focuses on existing approaches, frameworks and methods that donors and others have applied to evaluating and assessing democracy support interventions and programmes.

## 4. Analytical Approaches to Evaluate and Assess Democracy Support

This section provides an overview of selected approaches, frameworks and methodologies for evaluating democratic development. Without aiming to cover all aspects of the debate, the analysis points to the importance of understanding the assumptions underpinning many donor programmes in this area, with a view to designing more realistic interventions and avoiding the disappointing results that evaluations often point to.

It is often assumed that donor support to democratic development (whether providing resources or building capacity/networks) will lead to improvements in the capacity of citizens and other rights-holders to engage with government. Such assumptions may fail to capture the consequences of donor interventions accurately or to ground donor support for democratic development in robust theories of change.

Two points follow from this assertion. First, there is a need to determine the actual outputs, outcomes and impacts of donor support to democratic development. Second, there is a need to ‘uncover and explain the implicit assumptions, programme logic and mechanism behind complex development interventions’ (O’Neil et al., 2007a). Here, we present some of the methodological issues and choices facing organisations that seek to address these two points through the process of evaluation. This review is not exhaustive, but attempts to capture the variety of different frameworks and methodologies designed (and/or applied) for evaluating democracy support.

One key objective of any evaluation is the assessment of actual change resulting from the given intervention or set of interventions under examination (O’Neil et al., 2007a). In recent years, donors have demonstrated an increased interest in capturing this information, particularly where the goals of evaluation include some measure of cost effectiveness. Pressure to carry out results-based evaluations (RBEs) has increased in recent years, as donors have renewed attention to achieving ‘value for money’ in development work (e.g. the UK Department for International Development (DFID) 2009 White Paper). RBEs have been identified as a key tool in the measurement and analysis of both effectiveness (performance against stated goals) and impact (direct and indirect, negative and positive, intended and unintended consequences) of interventions.

However, democracy support outcomes are highly context-dependent and available measures are often insufficient in determining which factors lead to different results

(Raworth, 2001, in O'Neil et al., 2007a). The relatively scarcity of systematic RBEs carried out to date reflects a number of key challenges facing evaluators, specifically those around measurement and attribution. Measurement, of both baseline levels of democracy and post-intervention levels, remains problematic in large part because of a lack of a clear definition of what democratic development entails (Burnell, 2007) and of suitable indicators (O'Neil et al., 2007a). Measurement is likely to be further complicated by the lagged nature of effects, which means that many impacts of democracy assistance may be evident only in the long run and thus cannot be captured within the narrow time perspective used in most logframe analyses (Lund Madsen, 2007). RBEs may incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, but the lack of agreed-on indicators is particularly apparent where they rely on quantitative methods, as in the case of a major 2006 USAID portfolio-wide evaluation that uses data from Freedom House and Polity IV to assess the impact and effectiveness of US democracy and governance programmes (Box 2).

Where observed changes in levels of democracy (whether measured qualitatively or quantitatively) do occur over time, it remains difficult to establish a clear causal link that attributes specific changes to a given intervention owing to the complexity of change processes and the occasional presence of a number of concurrent interventions (Burnell, 2007; O'Neil et al., 2007a; Uggla, 2007). As a result, RBEs have often led to 'inconclusive findings, typically calling for higher quality data and analysis in order to reach more definitive conclusions' (O'Neil et al., 2007a).

#### **Box 2: Quantitative methods to assess the effectiveness of democracy support interventions – the USAID experience**

In 2005, USAID commissioned a study to assess the effect of its programmes on democracy building around the world. The authors conducted a cross-national quantitative study based on the entire USAID democracy portfolio from 1990-2003. To deal with the problem of attribution, the study tried to determine what a country's normal 'growth' in or 'decline' of democracy would have been in the period studied. This posed significant challenges: these are complex dynamics that are likely to differ from one context to another. Findings suggested that, although it is possible to conclude that foreign assistance has a positive impact on democratisation, it is difficult to determine 'how large' such an impact is, because 1) there is a lagged effect of such interventions, which tend to take several years to mature, and 2) although the USAID impact is potentially significant, this has to be set against the actual outlay for USAID democracy assistance, which in the period amounted to \$2.07 million per year. Finally, one specific finding was that, although such statistical analysis is complemented by other methods, its explanatory power remains limited. The results on the impact of assistance in human rights show a strong negative effect, i.e. that interventions apparently had a detrimental effect on human rights conditions. The authors suggest that this could be the result of an increase in reporting of human rights abuses in the countries affected, although the evidence available does not support this hypothesis, nor does it explain the reason why this could have occurred.

Source: Finkel et al. (2006).

As Lund Madsen (in Burnell, 2007) notes, attempts to develop meaningful indicators that can be used consistently have been problematic. As democracy is about power, so democracy support is very much driven by different interests; the level of

agreement on common frameworks is, as on many other matters, itself a product of politics. Previous attempts to achieve multi-donor consensus on a single set of indicators have not met with much success. For example, within the human rights field it is hard to reach agreement on a common framework, because of technical difficulties and because of variations in the institutional perspectives of different actors.

Rather than pursue a standardised set of indicators, in some cases individual donors have been able to map indicators onto existing agency frameworks. Holland et al. (2009) provide an example of how attempts to measure change and results in V&A work can be applied to DFID's Capabilities, Accountability and Responsiveness (CAR) framework, allowing indicators to be read across a results chain. While such work does not necessarily answer questions about the meaning or comparability of the indicators used, this strategy can facilitate attempts to bridge the gap between results-based and theory-based evaluations, linking specific results to specific steps in a theory of change.

While it is clearly important to understand the outputs, outcomes and impacts of donor support, the limitations of RBE suggest other methodologies can play an important role in evaluation processes. Indeed, one of the clearest lessons derived from previous experiences in evaluation is that no single methodology is likely to capture all aspects of a given intervention. It is therefore vital to combine approaches that can help paint a more accurate picture not only of whether or not donors' support to democracy works, but also, and crucially, of how and why.

Theory-based evaluation can potentially be useful to better understand how and why democracy interventions work in practice (e.g. Foresti et al., 2007; Uggla, 2007). Theory-based approaches tend not to rely on the availability of suitable measurable indicators, placing significantly more emphasis on the underlying assumptions and logic of implementation and programmatic theories.

By making explicit the often implicit theories of change underpinning democracy support, theory-based evaluations can help identify whether a given donor approach to democratic development is or is not grounded in 'robust theories of how states and societies are transformed' (O'Neil et al., 2007a). Often they are not, yet the presence or absence of a theory of change to demonstrate the causal relationship between democratic development interventions and expected impacts can be a critical determinant of results. As Uggla (2006, in O'Neil et al., 2007a) notes: 'The success or failure of an intervention can be as much as result of the robustness of the underlying theory as other factors, such as weaknesses during implementation'.

Such an approach could be considered defeatist because it turns attention away from the challenges of identifying and assessing results (Foresti et al., 2007; O'Neil et al., 2007a). However, as Uggla (2007) argues, while theory-based evaluation 'cannot substitute for results-based enquiries, such an approach can provide a *useful complement*' (our italics). The use of theory as an entry point does not preclude discussion of results, but rather offers a potential explanation of perform-

ance or lack thereof. Where evaluations go beyond cost effectiveness to facilitate learning processes, this can play a valuable role, turning donor attention inwards in the search for explanations for why interventions may or may not achieve the expected outcomes. Such evaluations can also be carried out ex ante, something that would be impossible in a purely results-based approach, enabling organisations to analyse the robustness of the various programme logics to be employed prior to implementation.

### **Box 3: Programme theory evaluations – reviewing Sida support to democracy**

As a part of an exploration of new methods for evaluating projects and programmes in the area of support to democracy and human rights, Uggla (2007) carried out an analysis of 52 Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) projects in four different country contexts (Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, South Africa and Vietnam). The purpose of the analysis was to circumvent the problems of measurement and attribution by focusing on establishing and analysing the underlying programme logic. The use of a fixed model allows the author to systematically evaluate and compare intervention theories across a set of projects, including the identification and analysis of patterns. The analysis demonstrates the ways in which the choice of mechanisms in different projects reflects (potentially mistaken) assumptions in the project design. For example, the effectiveness of ‘twinning’ of Swedish organisations with local bodies relies on a number of assumptions regarding the transferability of experiences and ideas across contexts. Within the sample, the twinning approach was more prevalent in the contexts furthest removed from the conditions of Swedish bureaucracy. The findings ‘resonate with a previous study of a sample of Sida projects in the area of democracy and human rights, which found that “the projects reviewed were very weak in specifying assumptions that would allow the activities to be convincingly linked to the goal”’.

Source: Uggla (2007).

In conclusion, no one single approach has been applied successfully to evaluating democracy support. It is indeed desirable that a combination of approaches and measures be considered to investigate such a complex and multifaceted area of international assistance. A key priority should be assessing the feasibility and realism of democracy programmes, particularly in light of the generally disappointing findings to date (see Section 3).

The next section focuses on recent research and evaluations of actual donors’ programmes in some key areas of democracy support.

## **5. Donor Support to Democratic Development: Recent Evidence from Research and Evaluation**

This section provides an overview of existing evidence on the effectiveness of and lessons learnt from donor support to democratic development, with particular reference to the seven areas identified by the ToRs: human rights; justice and the rule of law; parliaments and watchdog organisations; electoral assistance; gender and democracy; democracy support through civil society and media.

### **5.1 Nature and Availability of Evidence**

The quality and quantity of evidence on donor support to democratic development varies significantly across the different domains. In some areas, such as human rights and justice and the rule of law, donors have been supporting programmes and projects for several years. In the case of electoral assistance, donor engagement is a relatively recent trend and it is perhaps not surprising that the evidence base is still underdeveloped. Despite this, a number of similarities have been identified, across most sectors.

First, where evidence does exist, it tends to focus on the technical aspects of donor support, for example in relation to electoral assistance, or on the problems or blockages that donors are trying to address, and less on how effective are donors at tackling them. For example, while there is a vast literature on the barriers to women's political participation, much less information is available on how donors have engaged with and addressed these through their programmes. Similarly, there do not appear to be any systematic lessons learnt studies covering this broad area in its entirety (McLoughlin, 2009). In the case of rule of law, there is a body of academic reflection on the agenda that reviews experiences so far, but evaluations of donor support are mainly patchy and do not reflect the scale of resources spent in this area.

However, more studies and evaluations have recently started to emerge in a number of areas. In 2007/08, a group of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors, including DFID, Sida, Norad and the Danish International Development Agency (Danida), commissioned a joint evaluation of donor support to citizens' voice and accountability (CV&A). This is the most comprehensive attempt to document donor activities in this area (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008). In relation to gender and democracy, a broader understanding of the obstacles, challenges, missed opportunities and possible strategies has started to emerge (Khan, 2008). More information on donor interventions and lessons learnt is also available when the thematic area is broken down into specific areas, such as support to women in parliament, women's organisations, experiences with the use of gender quotas, etc.

Second, the fact that measuring results and impact of democratic development support is a complex task partly explains the relative lack of evaluation studies in this area. Challenges in evaluating democracy development include:

- Conceptual/methodological challenges in measuring results, and even more in attributing results to donor effort (see Section 3);
- Lack of agreed standards and indicators, even at the sectoral level;
- Widespread aspirational or overly optimistic expectations, which lead to unrealistic expected results (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008);
- Difficulties in agreeing common definitions on what constitutes democratic development. This can be particularly hard in multi-donor evaluation and other forms of joint assessment.

For example, indicator systems to design and measure progress of human rights projects or human rights dimensions of development programmes are still underdeveloped. Evaluators have therefore often pointed to insufficient linkages between activities and overarching goals in the inception phase. A study of Swedish experiences in human rights and democratic governance support found that many projects had imprecisely defined objectives, unrealistic relationships between strategies and goals, insufficient context analysis and deficiencies in the types of partnership used to achieve the objectives (Dahl-Ostergaard et al., 2007; Uggla et al., 2007).

A general conclusion drawn by evaluators is that it is often very difficult to measure impact of human rights projects (as with democracy projects in general). It has therefore been suggested that results analyses focus on the extent to which programmes and projects contribute to the overall objectives, rather than on direct attribution of changes to individual projects. It has also been suggested that more attention be given to the outcome level: 'There is great potential for learning about how to develop capacity and support processes while looking at outcomes' (Dahl-Ostergaard et al., 2007).

Overall, the evidence base on donor support to democratic development is rather patchy, and several studies point to the need to expand and improve it, especially in terms of much more context-specific diagnostic and analysis of what is possible and what might be achieved.

## **5.2 What Donors do: Donor Approaches to Supporting Democratic Development**

The past two decades have seen a considerable increase in donor support to democratic development, in a number of areas. This is partly a result of the new geopolitical environment, which has provided space for donors to integrate activities related to political liberalisation and democratisation into their political dialogue and programmes in developing and transitional countries. However, three other shifts in the development and aid paradigms have further consolidated the importance of strengthening democratic development (O'Neil et al., 2007a):

- *New poverty agenda*: The international consensus around poverty reduction is based on a multidimensional understanding of poverty, which recognises that the lack of power, voice and accountable and responsive public institutions is as much a part of the experience of poverty as the lack of material assets. The Millennium Declaration and MDGs provide a focal point for international action on poverty based on this agenda.
- *Good governance agenda*: This diverse agenda incorporates a number of concerns and goals. While there has always been a stream around democratisation and human rights, in many agencies this agenda has been dominated by technical concerns about the management of public finances and corruption. Since the end of the 1990s, political and institutional issues have become more prominent.
- *Aid effectiveness debate*: The principles of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability emerged from donors' desire to increase the pro-poor impact of aid, and have produced new commitments and ways of working as reflected in the international consensus around poverty reduction strategy processes and the Paris Declaration, with implications for the perceived importance of V&A.

An overview of recent developments and donor approaches in the key democratic development dimensions is provided below.

### **5.2.1 Human Rights**

The past two decades have seen significant developments in donor approaches to human rights. There has also been a general development in international relations and increased operationalisation of international human rights law. Donor governments have increasingly focused on the promotion of human rights through development cooperation, both through projects where the promotion of human rights is an objective in its own right and as a contribution towards improving the quality and effectiveness of development assistance.

A DAC study from 2006 provides a systematic categorisation of donor and agency approaches to human rights in development cooperation (Piron, 2005). This found that the most commonly used approach involved direct human rights projects, targeting the realisation of specific rights. Most donors had also started to include human rights in their dialogue with partner countries, often including conditionalities. In terms of integrating human rights perspectives into general development cooperation frameworks, the study made a distinction between the human rights-based approach (HRBA), human rights mainstreaming and implicit human rights work. The HRBA calls for a complete transformation of the way in which development programmes are conceived, and often requires adjustments in institutional practices. The UN, as well as a significant number of bilateral donors (including Norway), has adopted a HRBA. Human rights mainstreaming is also about systematically integrating human rights perspectives in development programming (the approach can be very similar to a HRBA). The study also found that some agencies did not explicitly relate to human rights issues at policy level but still worked with issues such as protection or empowerment in a manner that was consistent with the HRBA or human rights mainstreaming – that is, implicit human rights work. On

a practical level, it is not always easy, or even meaningful, to distinguish between these different integration approaches. The main development to take note of is that most donors today are working broadly with human rights: supporting proper human rights projects, including human rights issues and conditionalities in dialogue with partner countries and systematically integrating human rights principles in development cooperation frameworks.

The DAC study also found two primary rationales for donors adopting human rights policies. The first, the intrinsic rationale, was traced to a sense of obligation under the international human rights framework. International human rights instruments oblige state parties to actively promote and protect human rights internationally, even though the limits on these obligations are not entirely clear. The instrumental rationale builds on the premise that all efforts to strengthen a peaceful, democratic and sustainable development are interconnected and that a human rights focus can strengthen development activities (Piron, 2005).

Another issue is the practical implementation of donor policies related to human rights. A Swiss study noted an ‘absence of consistent knowledge about the content of the human rights policy amongst SDC staff and a degree of complacency: “we know about human rights because we are Swiss”’ (Piron and Court, 2004). This is likely to be a problem in other donor administrations also.

### **5.2.2 Justice and the Rule of Law**

The rule of law agenda is an old one. Earlier versions include the ‘law and development version’ of the 1960s, which disappeared in the wake of authoritarian rule (Carothers, 2003). It remerged in the 1980s in Latin America and then spread to other regions to include Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

The scope of donor support to the rule of law has evolved over time. Previously, the agenda was more top-down and centred on formal institutional process of legal and judicial reform, with a broad focus on justice sector institutions. Objectives have included improved efficiency and administrative management capacity, as well as legal capacity of judicial personnel. The issues of judicial independence and courts’ constitutional review functions have also been addressed, but donors have been more reluctant to engage with this more political dimension of justice sector reform.

However, to some extent because of important mind-shifts within the donor community, there has been a move towards supporting bottom-up processes to achieve pro-poor social change through legal empowerment of vulnerable groups and, more recently, working with non-state forms of justice. In the past decade, issues of legal empowerment and access to justice, from the perspective of increased awareness of judicial processes and improved legal aid, have come to the fore (Golub, 2006a; ICHR, 2000). Donors that have made this shift at the discursive level include: DFID, through the Safety Security and Access to Justice lens, which focuses on justice for the poor; the World Bank, through the incorporation of an access to justice and legal empowerment dimension; and USAID (Carothers, 2006; Piron,

2006). In practice, however, there is still a strong focus on top-down institutional processes in much of justice sector reform.

There is also increasing recognition of the need to work with local actors, both within the justice sector and political community (to identify reformers) and within society. But this requires engaging with a diverse range of analytical tools that have not tended to feature in rule of law work, such as knowledge from legal sociology and legal anthropology (Sannerholm, 2007).

Legal change goals typically include improving due process, for instance in new criminal justice procedures. With regard to economic development, reform has covered commercial and trade laws, bankruptcy, corporate governance, financial markets and intellectual property. In line with international developments on different human rights and international law treaties, legal change has involved aligning national legislation and constitutional texts with international commitments. This has been critiqued as placing too many expectations on the effectiveness of externally imposed legal transplants.

Moreover, justice is now perceived as a sector that needs to be addressed in a more comprehensive manner, using an integrated approach to the range of actors and institutions involved. Currently (as in DFID), there is an intention to use more sophisticated sectoral analysis, with more attention paid to the political economics of the sector (DFID, 2007; Piron, 2006).

More recently, and in line with emerging international policy, donors are examining ways that the rule of law can be advanced in conditions of weak state presence, for example working more with non-state actors. As yet, though, there is insufficient knowledge in this field, particularly with regard to the impact of donor engagement. Finally, donors (especially in the context of fragile states) are in different ways turning their attention to the connection between transitional justice outcomes and rule of law development, on which there is also still limited knowledge (de Greiff et al., 2009).

Donor forms of engagement include: capacity development and training of judges and other judicial personnel; infrastructural support, such as construction and provision of equipment; setting up management and administrative systems; building up bar associations; supporting training institutions; technical assistance in law writing; (more recently) working with civil society and legal NGOs; working with alternative justice institutions; and supporting truth and justice initiatives.

### **5.2.3 Gender and Democracy**

The past 10 years have seen a shift in focus from women's practical needs to women's strategic needs and the relations between men and women. Linked to this, gender has gone beyond the 'soft' dimensions of health and education and has entered the development arenas of energy, economics and democratic governance, etc. There is a growing consensus that gender equality needs to be mainstreamed in all development institutions and programmes, and that gender experts need a stronger voice, greater authority and increased resources to enhance the account-

ability of their own organisations. At the same time, the new aid modalities and the trend of engaging at macro level through multi-donor forums run the risk of marginalising gender equality goals. Still, macro-level support has the potential to keep governments accountable to the gender equality goals to which they have committed themselves through international conventions.

Donors tend to address certain thematic areas related to women's political participation (McLoughlin, 2009):

- Support to capacity building of women leaders or women aspiring towards leadership positions. Such interventions aim to enable women to stand for election and to support elected women to create a favourable environment for strategic work to change gender relations and secure women's rights. Workshops aim to strengthen women's skills related to parliamentary procedures, formation of coalitions, leadership and mainstreaming gender and women's needs and priorities in national agendas.
- Building of and support to networks of women parliamentarians and cross-party women's groups, in order to give support and mentoring to women in politics.
- Strengthening the capacity of women's organisations and other women's groups to monitor government commitment to gender equality and women's rights. These efforts are meant to help in the monitoring of women's political participation and decision making and increase women's participation in governance and political processes.
- Communications and advocacy, often through the media, to raise awareness and understanding of gender equality and democracy, change attitudes and lobby for women's equal participation. These interventions aim to eliminate obstacles to women's participation in politics; strengthen the implementation of commitments to gender equality; keep gender issues on the agenda in relevant governmental forums, in civil society and among the general public; and support women's participation, decision making and leadership in public spheres. Promoting women's ability and right to vote is a central issue.
- Supporting parliamentary quotas, increasingly seen as a necessary short-term strategy for women to access male-dominated decision-making spheres.

#### **5.2.4 Promotion of Democracy through Civil Society**

Donor support to democracy building has evolved in the past two decades. The donors most active in this type of direct support are the EU, the US, Germany, the UK, the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Canada, as well as a number of private donors such as the Soros Foundation and the Ford Foundation (both US). Another large actor is the US-funded NED. All of these have activities directed at civil society as part of their portfolio. Japan is the only major provider of foreign economic aid that does not have a substantial democracy promotion component in its aid allocation (Perlin, 2004).

There is general agreement about the characteristics of 'civil society' as a sphere beyond the authority of the state, but there is disagreement over which groups should be included in the definition. From a CV&A and democratic development perspective, the classification by Salomon et al. (2004) of expressive rather than

service provider CSOs is relevant. Expressive CSOs include organised, private, self-governing, non-profit organisations such as policy think-tanks and universities, professional organisations, grassroots development organisations, community associations and human rights organisations.

In 2007/08, a group of DAC partners commissioned a joint evaluation of development aid for strengthening CV&A. This is the most comprehensive overview of donors support for V&A to date, documenting the effects of various donor initiatives, including that of strengthening civil society. The CV&A literature review (O'Neil et al., 2007a) points to a striking commonality of approach among the six donors, regarding how they work with actors, organisation and agencies. The liberal democratic model is the shared conceptual framework, which is generally left implicit.

There is a steady move away from service providers to CSOs with an explicit political or advocacy role. The governance and accountability agenda has further diversified the types of CSOs donors work with. The Nordic donors in particular emphasise the normative role of CSOs in the development of social capital and solidarity to make collective action possible. Nevertheless, donors recognise that not all CSOs promote democratic values and that there may be negative effects in donor (external) support to 'professional' NGOs and an environment conducive to CSOs with grassroots legitimacy.

Donors have been accused of failing to understand the context in which their aid is being delivered. A statement issued by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2002) reads:

*'Donors have often failed to perceive the particular nature of civil societies in developing countries and the differences that exist between them. They have simplified, Westernised and idealised the concept, projecting the concepts that apply in their own societies. The aid system—initially at least—equated civil society with NGOs, and failed to perceive traditional or informal structures because they were less easy to recognise or because they bore no resemblance to the structures they knew ... In some instances, excessive use of the project approach—the approach taken by donors—has alienated NGOs from their grass roots, resulting in disorientation and public distrust, and jeopardising continuity.'*

As a result, the statement claims, the activity of donors has often been counterproductive, obstructing rather than fostering 'the autonomous development of civil societies' (Perlin, 2004).

#### **Box 4: Donor support to civil society – the role of social capital**

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP, with support from the Netherlands, carried out a comprehensive analysis of social capital<sup>2</sup> and its links to human development, making recommendations for government, municipal authorities, CSOs and the media to *strengthen associational life and civil society*. One finding was the ‘absolute weakness of social bonds of trust, reciprocity and solidarity’. The National Human Development Report for 2009 explored this lack of trust in more detail. Social trust was linked to the broader concept of social capital. In analysing social ties, a key distinction was made between those networks that provide the basis for greater *social inclusion* and those that contribute to forms of discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion. The report describes positive and negative effects of social capital for broader processes of democratisation and *social cohesion*. On the positive side, civil society is observed as providing the basis for more *bridging and diverse social ties* and, as such, is more inclusive. In contrast, the report also looks at the downside of a society so strongly based on family networks and the potential for those networks to produce and reproduce *inequalities through nepotism, clientelism and cronyism*.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) implements programmes on *social dialogue*, which is defined to include all types of *negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information* between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. The main goal of social dialogue itself is to promote *consensus building* and democratic involvement among the main stakeholders in the world of work. Successful social dialogue structures and processes have the potential to resolve important economic and social issues, encourage good governance, advance social and industrial peace and stability and boost economic progress.

Source: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/ifpdial/areas/social.htm>.

#### **5.2.5 Media and Access to Information**

Key donors in the field of free media and access to information are northern European countries, the EU, the US<sup>3</sup> and Japan. The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNDP are important fundraisers, standard setters and implementers (Myers, 2009). Many of the donors that have formal media policies base these on Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers’.

Early support was to strengthening traditional media – radio, newspapers and magazines – through investments in infrastructure and equipment and upgrading skills, including in investigative journalism but also in issues related to the role of the media in development, democratic governance and ethics. Most resources went to public/state media to strengthen their informational role: a survey of US media funding noted that most support was ‘to transmit public information campaigns that address issues such as health, environment and poverty’ (CIMA, 2008).

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the rapid transformation of Central Europe accelerated a trend towards more support for independent and private media,

2 The concept of social capital is widely used in the academic literature on the sustainability of democracy. Robert Putnam, who introduced the concept in his work on Italian and American politics, defines it as both ‘social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them’ (2000).

3 Important NGOs and private foundations are also involved, e.g. the Soros Foundation/Open Society Institute, US-based foundations and bodies like the International Federation of Journalists, International Research and Exchanges Board, International Media Support, Media Institute of Southern Africa, Africa Media Development Initiative and others.

especially by the US and US-based organisations like the Soros Foundation. There was also increasing attention to the financial viability/sustainability of independent media, partly to strengthen the role of commercial media (especially in countries like the transition economies in Central Europe and the Balkans) but also to ensure that public affairs and development message media in poor countries could maintain editorial independence through more predictable and non-partisan funders. The shift was thus towards more financial/commercial/viability concerns, but also towards democratic governance and the role of independent media as critical to the improved accountability of the public sector.

Norway's Guidelines for Support to Free Media in Developing Countries (MFA, 2004b) show that the aim is 'to achieve greater transparency, democracy and good governance, including the fight against corruption'. This is to be achieved through funding to promote the media's legal position, professional standards, diversity, relevance, availability and access to information.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) does not have a specific media strategy but instead links media directly to the issue of governance, as key to realising its overall objective of 'participation, gender balanced development, transparency, respect for the rule of law and the emergence of a civil society' (SDC, 2004).

Sida, with one of the largest and most proactive media programmes, links culture and media, based on the somewhat different focus on 'contributing to an environment supportive of poor people's own efforts to improve their quality of life'. That is, based on the wider concept of poverty reduction, it puts the attention on the poor rather than on governance structures (although the latter are also addressed) (Sida, 2006).

The US underlines 'empowering independent media' through stronger professional development, a more supportive legal environment, sustainability, new media and quality assurance (better monitoring and evaluation (M&E)). This is to be done through: a holistic approach to framework conditions, management and ownership; developing media as a sector; expanded funding; taking a long-term approach but thinking locally; integrating specific communication for development issues; improving professional development; emphasising more legal issues; developing better resources and networking; building stronger media management; integrating new technology; improving M&E; and coordinating better with other donors and implementers (CIMA, 2008).

### **5.2.6 Parliaments and Watchdog Organisations**

Donors are increasingly concerned with boosting public sector accountability, particularly given that many developing countries have inefficient parliaments and/or do not always show the will or capacity to address any imbalances (Hudson and Wren, 2007). Donor assistance to parliaments comes in different forms and sizes, from multiyear capacity development programmes to minor bilateral exchanges.

Here, we refer to capacity strengthening programmes and projects – sequenced provision of advice, training, infrastructure and equipment for parliaments. Two overarching goals in this field are longer-term poverty reduction and democracy. It is often assumed that a representative and competent legislature will contribute to these by making good laws, allocating resources, conducting oversight and holding the public sector to account. The reviewed literature deals with donor efforts to boost parliaments' capacities to perform their constitutional functions: lawmaking; state budget approval; oversight and representation. Efforts target both the elected body (Members of Parliament (MPs)) and in-house staff (secretariats). Activities aim to improve systems and processes, skills and knowledge, as well as attitudes and behaviours.

Donors also support related efforts, such as arranging free elections and building electoral authorities, supporting political parties and building various parliament-anchored watchdog institutions (like auditors general, ombudsmen or anti-corruption agencies) that complement parliaments' own oversight work.

With regard to other state branches, donors are traditionally engaged with governments (e.g. civil service and security sector reforms). Donors also support judiciaries and prosecutors general in strengthening the administration of justice.

Outside the state sector, donors support media- and advocacy-oriented civil society, which are also considered essential to oversight.

The literature agrees that parliaments have traditionally received little institutional strengthening (e.g. Africa All Party Parliamentary Group, 2008; DFID et al., 2008). Parliament-related efforts have often boiled down to holding elections, which can give legitimacy, but these have not necessarily been followed up by institutional strengthening (DFID et al., 2008). Capacity building has been concentrated on the executive and CSOs, with judicial and police reform as separate interventions.

Today, prominent actors in the area include the World Bank, UNDP, USAID, DFID and Sida. Key actors have analysed their objectives, strategies and agency-, programme- and project-level interventions, and there is an increasing body of literature on lessons learnt. In 2007, UNDP, the World Bank and DFID set up a Donor Coordination Group on Parliamentary Development.

### **5.2.7 *Electoral Support***

Article 21<sup>4</sup> of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constitutes the legal basis for support to elections and electoral assistance. Electoral assistance has been framed, at least since the end of World War II, under wider programmes of 'democracy assistance' or 'democracy support'. Main actors since the 1960s are the UN, the US and, from the 1990s, the European Commission (EC).

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4 (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country. (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

UNDP has been the lead UN agency on electoral assistance through the years. UN support provided in the 1980s and 1990s was criticised as focusing on maximum immediate results, but the agency has learned from past mistakes and continues to be a leading actor in this field.

The US has been very active in this field since the end of the 1980s through USAID, particularly under the Carter and Reagan administrations, with a focus on election observation missions and political party support. The Carter Center has focused on electoral observation and the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute on political party development. The International Foundation for Election Systems, an international NGO initiated by USAID, has provided technical assistance on electoral processes for more than 20 years all over the world.

The EC funded electoral support missions in Russia (1993) and South Africa (1994) and provided significant support to the legislative and presidential elections in Mozambique (1994), the first elections after the civil war and the signing of the peace agreement. The EC is a leading global actor in terms of providing electoral assistance and observation, including in post-conflict settings.

The Organization of American States (OAS) has been involved in electoral assistance for many years in Latin America and the Caribbean, by means of electoral observation missions, technical cooperation and electoral studies. Its credibility in this field is accepted by member countries.

Other donors are DFID (support to electoral commissions, civic education, CSOs, etc) and Sida (through, among others, the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa).

Norway does not have a specific policy guideline on electoral assistance as it has on support to the media and gender equality, for example. It is mentioned in key Norwegian international and development policy documents as part of support to democratic governance and human rights (MFA, 2002; 2004c; 2008a; 2009a). Electoral assistance is channelled through the UN, especially UNDP, and also through the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights and the Norwegian Resource Bank to Democracy and Human Rights, the latter focusing on electoral observation missions. Norway has also contributed to electoral assistance to electoral management bodies in the Americas through the OAS (e.g. Guatemala).

Donors have provided electoral assistance, either directly or through the UN, in the following areas: support to first-time elections; assistance in constitutional and legal reforms; assistance to electoral management bodies; civic and voter registration programmes; international monitoring and observation; and strengthening of political parties.

### **5.3 How Effective is Donor Support to Democratic Development?**

Despite the challenges of evaluating democratic development programmes and the relative scarcity of evaluation studies on several of the dimensions, there is an increasing body of evidence on the effectiveness of donor support to democracy promotion. However, it is important to bear in mind that this evidence is not neces-

sarily systematic: caution must be paid when generalising findings which, while still relevant, may relate only to specific contexts, donors or programmes.

In the main, evaluation findings suggest that donors have limited impact on democratic development (see Section 2). However, what is perhaps most interesting is that evaluation findings are increasingly revealing *why* donor impact is limited and *how* support could be more effective. Above all, donors need to be more realistic about what they can achieve in supporting what are essentially domestically driven political processes (see Section 2 and Rakner et al., 2007).

The recent joint evaluation of CV&A (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008) provides a useful overview of donors' experiences in supporting demand-led democratic development.

#### **Box 5: Donor effectiveness at supporting V&A interventions**

Significantly, some *examples of positive effects resulting from CV&A interventions* have emerged. This is mostly the case at the level of *positive changes in behaviour and practice*, especially in terms of raising citizen awareness and encouraging state officials (especially at the local/sub-national level) to become more accountable. Participatory processes such as public hearings, multi-stakeholder forums, public audits and planning and budgeting processes are good examples of this.

When interventions have been *targeted explicitly towards marginalised, socially excluded and otherwise discriminated against groups*, such as women and ethnic minorities, there is some limited evidence to suggest that interventions have been useful in empowering such groups. However, this focus was the exception rather than the rule in the interventions included in the CV&A evaluation.

The same can be said of the work that donors have undertaken with *non-traditional civil society groups* like social movements and trade unions (again, exceptions rather than the rule).

There are some instances of *effect at the level of policy change*, in which CV&A work contributed to the passing of certain legislation.

The *media* in particular emerged as a positive mechanism for CV&A engagement in almost all of the countries studied in the CV&A evaluation – although, clearly, building up a regulatory framework and the passing of access to information laws are only a first, if very important, step in strengthening CV&A. Rules and regulations mean little if there is no capacity, power or will to enforce them.

However, these *examples of the kinds of changes that CV&A interventions have helped to bring about remain limited and relatively isolated at the micro level, and it is not clear whether and how they can be scaled up*. The message that comes across more often than not is that they cannot.

Again, based on the limited evidence that the CV&A evaluation draws upon, changes in power relations have proved much more difficult to identify or come by.

The same holds for *broader developmental outcomes*. The effect on development of CV&A in particular, and democracy more generally (in terms of leading to poverty alleviation and the achievement of other MDGs, for example), is neither direct nor obvious, and *no evidence can be found of a direct contribution of CV&A interventions to poverty alleviation or the meeting of the MDGs*.

Source: Adapted from Menocal and Sharma (2008).

### **5.3.1 Human Rights**

The evidence suggests that human rights projects have the potential to contribute to the governance agenda, enhance the design and impact of aid in terms of poverty reduction and contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of aid – provided that support strategies are grounded in domestic responsibilities of states and thus promote capacity building rather than service provision (Piron, 2005). An end-review of Norwegian support to the UN Office for Human Rights in Angola concluded that, in addition to achieving most of its planned outputs, it had contributed significantly to the development of a system to promote and protect human rights in the country – e.g. the establishment of an ombudsman and a coordination structure for CSOs working with human rights, legal acceptance of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms, etc (Bezerra and Figueiredo, 2009).

A recent study on Swedish experiences and lessons on human rights and democratic governance concluded that there were six primary drivers of success: capacity for change and development; ownership and partnership; comprehensive design; system approach (linking efforts to promote human rights with efforts promoting other aspects of democratic governance and development); flexibility and timing (e.g. through confidence building by starting with a non-controversial or technical issue); and effective monitoring (Dahl-Ostergaard et al., 2008). The literature stresses the need to adapt interventions to the context in which they are implemented, particularly in periods of transition from violent conflict. One positive example can be drawn from Danish human rights support in Guatemala in the 1990s, primarily through Denmark's Regional Human Rights Programme for Central America, which was found to have made a 'crucial contribution to the promotion of human rights and consolidation of the peace process' (Sørbo et al., 1999). The main explanation for the success of the programme was its flexibility and its ability to adapt to a changing reality. The study also points to the difficulties experienced in balancing a strategic long-term approach with the need for short-term flexibility. A dual approach was suggested.

In mid-2009, the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a study on the efficiency of the implementation of the mandate of OHCHR, concluding that it had 'potential for global impact as the authoritative source of advice and assistance to governments, civil society and other UN entities concerning compliance with those standards and on the human rights-based approach'. However, three major weaknesses were identified: a lack of strategic focus; a lack of overarching field strategy; and a need for more systematic follow-up on recommendations from human rights bodies and enhancement of linkages. OIOS also recommended strengthened partnerships with other UN agencies involved in human rights-related work.

### **5.3.2 Justice and the Rule of Law**

Notably, the rule of law agenda has expanded to cover a very wide range of objectives, and involves diverse forms of engagement and funding. Analyses of the agenda signal the following features in relation to evaluation efforts. First, despite the scale of support, there are comparatively few formal assessments of concrete donor engagement. Second, there is nonetheless a body of accumulated knowl-

edge now in place about what works and what does not in rule of law support, although the uptake of lessons into practice seems minimal. More recent work on legal empowerment is more positive on the impact of donor support to legal aid and access to justice.

There is a strong conviction that rule of law is good for development and governance, although the evidence is mixed. Especially on the degree to which rule of law is necessary for economic development, a number of studies signal the counterfactual examples of high levels of economic growth with weak rule of law (Carothers, 2006; Messick, 1999; Upham, 2006). On democracy and human rights, the conceptual argument is more convincing, but critics of the rule of law agenda have rightly pointed to the uneven character of rule of law, even in the more established democracies, in terms of access to justice, levels of judicial independence, etc (Upham, 2006).

The specific impacts of international intervention are likely to be limited, but the objectives of the agenda tend to be far reaching. Critics signal a mismatch between the scale of the ambition and how much donors can actually do (Channell, 2006; Golub, 2006a; Upham, 2006).

The question of ‘realism’ is especially important, given that, as Carothers (2006) signals, indicators of progress that might be found in evaluation reports (e.g. number of computers bought) pale in comparison with enduring realities, such as those of overwhelming barriers access to justice, persistent levels of corruption, including within judiciaries and the resistance of vested interests in defending the status quo.

Quantitative evaluation criteria have typically involved such indicators as time reduction for court decisions, number of convictions, reduction in pre-trial detentions (Bhanshali and Biebesheymer, 2006), change in percentage of budgets devoted to the judiciary, etc. The Vera Institute (2005) has collated a wide range of quantitative and survey indicators that can guide both diagnostics and assessments of the justice sector. But quantitative analyses tell you only so much and inevitably leave out much of the texture on the quality and legitimacy of rule of law processes (Elena and Chayer, 2007).

Qualitative analyses include in some cases an assessment of the quality and consistency of court rulings or of training institutions (Pasara, 2004). But these are few in relation to the institutional reform projects. Qualitative and survey-based analysis is more frequent in relation to legal empowerment work, such as in the assessment of the work of the Ford Foundation (McClymont and Golub, 2000), which presents findings from different case studies (see also Golub, 2006b; ICHRP, 2000). There are now numerous guidelines on how to assess needs for justice sector reform and increasingly on justice sector support (Hammergren, 1999; Toomey, 2005).

### **5.3.3 Gender and Democracy**

Research suggests that increased representation of women in political spheres does not guarantee a substantive impact on parliamentary politics or a reduction in structural and gender inequalities in the short run. The little work that has been conducted outside the Western context confirms the mixed nature of these findings. A study of the Rwandan Parliament showed that an increase in the number of female representatives had led to changes in the social and political culture but no significant impact in the area of policy so far (Devlin and Elgie, 2008, in Khan, 2008).

The findings point to two conclusions: 1) having financial and political resources, the executive is able to deliver immediate and short-term results through political commitment and will; and 2) there is no quick way to achieve gender equality and change parliamentary politics, which requires long-term donor commitment. Increased female representation does not necessarily lead to immediate changes but is a necessary step towards fostering the desired changes. Gender quotas have proved an effective measure in speeding up the process.

Many argue that support mainly benefits already powerful women, adding to the marginalisation of non-elite women (e.g. Waterhouse and Neville, 2005). Capacity building of women needs to be long term, continuous and include not only women who are already actively involved in politics but also young women and non-elite women who have the potential to be future political leaders.

CSOs are viewed as important vehicles for women's leadership. Facilitating dialogue and supportive links between women with political power and women's organisations can be of mutual interest and help achieve policy and legal changes that promote gender equality. It is important to ensure the inclusion of those that represent women facing multiple forms of exclusion, in particular women with disabilities, older women, girls and women living with HIV/AIDS (McLoughlin, 2009).

Involving men is increasingly seen as crucial to achieving gender equality in democracy building. Gender is often perceived as a women's issue and is often not addressed in political spheres in the absence of women. There is a need to get men on board and increase their awareness of and responsiveness to issues of gender equality. Interventions such as training sessions that include both women and men are seen to build confidence and foster a sense of equality (e.g. NDI, 2008). Both women only and mixed trainings are considered critical for long-term success.

Voter education does not necessarily ensure voting. DFID contributed to women's increased awareness of their voting rights and found that there was not necessarily a strong link between voter education and voter turnout. Women's disproportionate household and family-related responsibilities may inhibit them from participating (Waterhouse and Neville, 2005). If voter education is to be effective, these issues need to be addressed.

Political parties are often seen as bottlenecks for women (McLoughlin, 2009), and it is argued that, in working with political parties on gender mainstreaming, women's leadership and internal reform initiatives are equally important as training. There is a need to address the party culture, including continued resistance to women's leadership within political parties. Enabling re-election and ensuring increased responsibilities for women are critical elements, and support should be given before and between elections, not only at the time of elections (NDI, 2008).

The importance of adapting to the local context is highlighted through experiences in support to capacity building of women leaders. Training is frequently conducted by international experts, often leading to frustration among participants with regard to a lack of cultural sensitivity and knowledge of the local context (e.g. NDI, 2008). Culturally specific training material and models should be incorporated into training sessions to ensure relevance. This may also mean recruiting trainers and drawing lessons from countries with political structures similar to that of the host country.

In sum, success is seen to be driven by long-term commitments, ownership of the agenda, having men on board and adaption to the local context.

#### **5.3.4 Promotion of Democracy through Civil Society**

The CV&A literature review (O'Neil et al., 2007a) states that in some areas the six Evaluation Core Group (ECG) donors' conceptual frameworks and strategies are too weak on the causes of poor governance and on theories of how societies and states are transformed. There is a tendency to underplay the incentives and constraints that shape individual and institutional behaviour, and the donors' toolbox is therefore deemed 'aspirational'. It is also stated that critical voices within donor agencies struggle to make themselves heard. Informal relations and practices are often not factored into the assessment. Informal social movements generally lack the administrative structures necessary to receive funding. Examples of donor aspirational assumptions for civil society and democratic development are:

- That there is an automatic relationship between enhanced citizens' voice and improved government accountability;
- That the 'voice' is representative of a homogeneous 'people';
- That more effective institutions will be more transparent, responsive and accountable; and That a traditional focus on capacity building of formal institutions is sufficient.

The CV&A evaluation (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008) found that donors in many countries focus more on voice interventions than on accountability. There has been a mushrooming of CSOs over the past 15 years. A recurring issue is the need for institutional, organisational and political capacity of these non-state actors if citizen voices are to be heard. One limitation with regard to donor bias towards civil society is that, without a balanced approach, interventions may have adverse effects, as expectations about influence are raised but capacity for state responsiveness is not simultaneously built. It is also stated that a proliferation of CSOs is not in itself testimony to the strength and health of civil society – groups may simply be personal enterprises and vehicles for donor funds. Donors face difficulties

engaging with local organisations and CBOs directly, and there are problems associated with the legitimacy, representativeness, independence, credibility and sustainability of the groups that the donors do reach with funds. At the same time, a number of non-traditional CSOs have proven to be effective and/or innovative partners in CV&A interventions.

Donors channel much of their assistance through international NGOs, and documentation of results has taken place mostly through isolated project evaluations and is not compiled in synthesis reports. The most comprehensive (recent) evaluation in this field, the ECG evaluation on CV&A interventions (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008), shows that one of the difficulties in measuring effectiveness is related to the high levels of expectation that donors have for their CV&A interventions, and that positive effects have been limited and isolated, although some examples related to behaviour change, empowerment and policy change have been documented. The media is found to be a good mechanism for CV&A interventions. The general assessment is that positive effects are isolated at micro level and that there is no clear recommendation on how they could be scaled up. Changes in power relations have not been documented.

### **5.3.5 Media and Access to Information**

On the conceptual side, UNDP in 2003 produced a Practice Note on Access to Information, which provides an overview of some basic principles but no operational dimensions for either establishing a baseline or tracking progress. Three years later, it produced a Guide to Measuring the Impact of Right to Information Programmes, which is more specific and traces through the results chain but has a narrower substantive field of focus. The most useful methodology so far appears to be UNESCO's Media Development Indicators (2008), which provide both a comprehensive analytical framework and practical indicators for progress monitoring. The few evaluations referred to below rely much more on subjective qualitative assessments than on rigorous evaluative frameworks in reaching conclusions (Orgeret and Rønning, 2002; USAID, 2004).

One study on media in a particular country (Sudan) shows how important the specific country context is (IMS, 2007). Larger cross-country evaluations of the kind USAID carried out in 2004 may therefore be missing particular reasons for success.

The CV&A evaluation found that donors have been piloting a number of different approaches to media, some more effectively than others (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008):

- The media have been effective in advocating for and using the right to information, supported by donors in Nicaragua (via support to the government to implement a new access to information law) and Bangladesh (support to civil society's demand for this right).
- In Benin, donors have been working with the media for approximately 10 years and their programmes have evolved in line with the professionalisation and maturation of the sector. The Benin case highlights a number of key processes (supported by donors) that have led to the recognition of the media as a trusted

- and legitimate CV&A actor, namely, establishment of a regulatory framework ensuring media pluralism; establishment of a national agency responsible for implementing and enforcing the regulatory framework; progressive liberalisation of media including increasing numbers of radio, print, TV and multimedia players; and enforcement of the right to information and freedom of expression.
- This model is also being utilised in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where donors have supported the establishment of the Higher Media Authority (a state regulatory body) and are supporting the establishment of a number of radio stations, with the objective of providing balanced and accurate reporting while airing a range of voices and opinions. The evidence suggests that support to civil society and radio stations contributed to high participation in the referendum and subsequent elections, a relatively peaceful election process and acceptance of the results. However, these successes are more likely to be isolated events rather than representative of a general increase in accountability.

### **5.3.6 Parliaments and Watchdog Organisations**

Parliament-strengthening assistance implies a change in the balance of power in a country. It is inherently political – and therefore very difficult, not least for outsiders (Africa All Party Parliamentary Group, 2008). UNDP has the advantage of being seen as an ‘honest broker’ (GSDRC, 2008).

The literature stresses that it is crucial to acquire a deep understanding of a country’s politics from the planning stages. Parliaments mirror a country’s unique political reality. Accordingly, realistic ambitions and appropriate efforts must be tailored and sequenced carefully. A recurring theme is that donors should prepare for the long haul and not expect quick impacts. Programming should span across election cycles and needs flexibility to adapt to sudden political developments, new post-election membership and changes in government. There is no ‘best’ time for parliamentary-strengthening work; the most important thing is long-term commitment (DFID et al., 2007). Similarly, a UNDP review found a correlation between impact and longer-term commitment (Murphy and Alhada, 2007).

Capacity development support to parliaments should be planned and implemented from a holistic good governance perspective. Parliament may benefit from executive reforms, strengthened CSOs and judicial systems, and vice versa. With regard to CSOs, ‘donors have sometimes played an unhelpful role counterposing civil society development and parliamentary development. Instead, donors should help them work together in a synergistic relationship’ (DFID et al., 2007).

Programming should concentrate on ‘technical’ issues and avoid overtly ‘political’ lobbying that may invite accusations of interference, although efforts to mainstream gender and human rights into political discussion have shown good results in some projects in Africa. Walking the line between giving technical advice and taking a political side can be very difficult in practice. Political savvy is imperative not just for the project management but also for specialists and national staff. Wrong project staff can sink a programme. For specific tasks, use peers as much as possible (GDRSC, 2008).

Programmes should involve MPs of high personal standing who enjoy broad respect across party lines. UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) recommend projects to establish multi-partisan steering committees to set priorities, monitor and report.

Donors should encourage the government (executive) to respect parliamentary powers and prerogatives. Donors themselves, though used to dealing with governments and working over or around parliaments, should also respect the institution, or risk undermining it. This includes keeping parliaments well informed about aid (Africa All Party Parliamentary Group, 2008; Hudson and Wren, 2007). Assistance to a parliament, a body of sovereignty, should not necessarily go through a government. And where a programme aims at both the executive and the legislature, donors should make sure parliament is given control over its component.

A lack of internationally acknowledged standards for democratic parliaments makes it difficult to measure results (GDRSC, 2008). Donors struggle to develop indicators (DFID et al., 2007). During the past few years, there has been more thinking around this, and the literature recommends that this continue. The World Bank's Parliamentary Strengthening Program has developed a set of Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures (Johnston and von Trapp, 2008). The literature also recommends more M&E of parliamentary capacity-building projects and strategies.

### **5.3.7 *Electoral Support***

Although it may be difficult to assess the robustness of the evidence on donor effectiveness to electoral assistance, what emerges clearly from the literature reviewed is that, from the 1960s up until the end of the 1990s, UN and donor approaches to electoral support were overly optimistic about the effects of elections alone with regard to democratisation in post-conflict or 'fragile' states. The general approach was support to short-term, isolated events (e.g. de Tollenaere, 2006) that were disconnected from other processes and dimensions of democracy support (human rights, free media, legal reform, V&A, institution building, etc). The tendency to support the creation of electoral organisations (e.g. electoral commissions or electoral management bodies) without making sure that these functioned properly and were not subject to political manipulation (e.g. Nicaragua today) may also have prevented the achievement of desired successes. The creation of electoral organisations does not mean the creation of democratic institutions.

An et al. (2008) suggest the following key ingredients for effective electoral support:

*'First, it is vital to look beyond the "next" electoral event to the broader process of which it is part. Second, the international community should move away from a narrowly technical interpretation of electoral assistance towards a broader concern with fair political environments – of which elections are only one, albeit important, part – from the very beginning. Third, it is crucial to develop more flexible approaches to electoral assistance, which can anticipate and adapt to the changing domestic environment for elections. In particular, there is a need to develop a strategy for the first post-conflict*

*elections that looks ahead both to the potential challenges of subsequent elections and to the future sources of the international community's leverage (An et al., 2008, p.7).'*

Since the early 2000s and through the creation and adoption by the EC, International IDEA and UNDP of a new approach to electoral assistance (the Electoral Cyclical Approach), endorsed by some donors, electoral assistance to post-conflict societies seems to have had the potential to set a new course towards more effective contribution to democratic development.

Through many decades of electoral assistance by the UN and other actors, a number of lessons have been learnt. The key lesson is that support to technical aspects of electoral processes is not sufficient to ensure sustained good governance and democratisation. Attention must be paid to longer-term institutional and capacity development, particularly in the following areas (GSDRC, 2008; Reilly, 2003):

- Building the capacity of electoral administrative and management structures to ensure that, once established, they function independently and transparently;
- Strengthening political parties and fostering viable opposition parties;
- Translating the use of domestic election observers and civil society monitors in elections into the development of a strong civil society and broader human rights culture;
- Targeting women, minorities and disadvantaged groups in civic and campaign-related educational programmes, as they are often neglected in the tight timeframes of one-off voter education;
- Timing of elections; appropriateness of electoral systems; independence of election administration; voter registration mechanisms; civic and voter education programmes; international to local electoral observation; political party development.

A few key messages emerge from recent research and evaluations on donors' support to democracy. First, there are significant differences in the ways in which programmes and interventions have been designed and implemented in the different components of democracy support. Some, like those related to human rights and electoral assistance, tend to have very distinct profiles and operational approaches. Others, like those focused on democracy through civil society support and gender and democracy, are more likely also to be embedded in broader democracy programmes. Despite these differences, the evidence base on the effectiveness of donors' support is rather weak, and there is a need for more and better research and evaluation in all areas. A key implication for the evaluation is therefore to consider the linkages between these various components, and in particular how they, combined, contribute or not to advancing the democracy agenda.

The final section of this report draws on the findings of all previous sections, summarises the main implications for this evaluation and provides recommendations for the way forward.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusions

This literature review points to a number of key features of donor support to democratic development which are particularly relevant for the purposes of this evaluation. These include the following:

- Democracy has had increased importance in development discourse since the end of the Cold War.
- This is not unproblematic, and results of donor support to democratic development are, in the main, disappointing.
- Evidence is rather weak but a number of evaluations and studies have been commissioned in the past few years, and we now have a better picture of what works, what doesn't and why.
- In most areas, there are examples of good (or improved) practice and innovative initiatives that build on lessons learnt. However, these tend to be isolated examples (Rocha Menocal and Sharma, 2008), and we are still a long way from consistent success in democracy support.
- Measuring results in democratic development is a complex endeavour. Not only is it not easy to quantify meaningfully or attribute the effects of donor action, but also, crucially, donor objectives have tended to be unrealistic and programmes insufficiently tailored to the contexts in which they operate.
- Exposing and understanding the often implicit assumptions and consequent programme logics that underpin donor support to democratic development should be a key component of democratic development evaluation (Foresti et al., 2007).
- Finally, democratisation is a deeply political process, contested mostly at the national and local level, where external actors like donors can play only a limited role.

### 6.2 Implications for the Evaluation

These general findings should provide the context and overall direction for the evaluation on Norwegian support to democracy through the UN. However, a number of potentially key implications emerging from this review should be taken into account in the design and implementation phase of the evaluation.

First, there is a growing consensus in policy, academic and lately donor circles that the primarily normative-based ‘good governance agenda’ has been pursuing over-ambitious goals and has not taken into account the political reality of many developing countries (IDS, 2010). It will be important for the evaluation not only to

take these views into account but also to test them through empirical research in different countries. Recommendations on how to move forward on a more realistic governance agenda would be particularly useful to inform very current policy and programming debates.

Second, the review points to some substantial weaknesses of existing approaches to evaluating democracy support. This is related partly to the endemic lack of realism in the democracy and good governance agendas over the past 20 years. However, there is also a need to innovate the ways in which we approach democracy and governance evaluation, by combining results-oriented with theory-based methods and tools.

Third, while the UN and Norway have very consistent policy frameworks and overall orientation for democracy support, questions arise in relation to how effective the UN system is as a channel of aid in this area, the comparative advantage of different UN agencies, the possible alternatives or complementarities to supporting the UN and, finally but crucially, what can be done to improve Norwegian and UN collaboration.

Fourth, while it is understandable that the ToR sought to find the specific dimension of democracy support the evaluation should focus on, the findings of this review suggest that it will be important to consider these components as part of the overall democracy or good governance agenda, and that there are potential risks in treating these components as separate silos.

Finally, and very importantly, this evaluation should not shy away from recognising that promoting democracy is an intensely political endeavour. This implies that, just as technical solutions alone will not work when supporting democracy and good governance programmes, technical approaches to evaluating them will not work either. It is therefore important that the evaluation framework and methodology addresses the political relevance, viability and sustainability of Norwegian support through the UN.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Next Steps**

All of the above points have important consequences for the evaluation of Norad support to democratic development through the UN and provide recommendations for the evaluation approach and implementation. It goes beyond the scope of a literature review to suggest the key features of an evaluation framework (which will be developed in the inception report that follows this evaluation). Nevertheless, the following key principles, based on international good practice and recent experience of evaluation in related fields, should be taken into account in the analytical framework for the evaluation:

- *Flexibility:* The framework needs to be applied to different types of programmes in different country contexts. In addition, although the main objects of the evaluation are individual UN programmes funded by Norway, the overall scope of the framework goes beyond these programmes to assess the suitability of the UN as a channel for Norwegian aid. Hence, the various components of the

framework should be understood as flexible and should be adapted to the specific circumstances of a given context (e.g. the country, political landscape, level or type of programme or project, etc).

- *Theory based:* In line with a theory-driven approach to evaluation, the evaluation framework should aim at eliciting and analysing the implicit programme logic of democratic development programmes, with a view to better defining the assumptions, choices and theories held by those responsible for design and implementation. In turn, this will allow a more realistic assessment of results and outcomes, including the reasons why objectives are being met or not.
- *Outcome focused:* The framework needs to clearly define and assess outputs, direct and intermediate outcomes and, when possible, pathways to impact and long-term change.
- *Evidence based:* The framework will be based on the key findings of this literature review and the mapping of Norad's support to democratic development through the UN. These will provide an important evidence base as well as analytical pointers to guide the evaluation framework.

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## EVALUATION REPORTS

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- 2.98 Institutional Cooperation between Sokoine and Norwegian Agricultural Universities
- 3.98 Development through Institutions? Institutional Development Promoted by Norwegian Private Companies and Consulting Firms
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