

Working together to ensure governance reforms remain effective

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) works with State Governments to help them improve the way resources are used to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. A key component of this support is SPARC, a programme that supports governance improvements in a number of areas. For example, SPARC is helping improve the way public funds are managed and used to deliver basic services such as health and education.

SPARC began working with five State Governments in late 2008 and helped them conduct a self-assessment of the way finances, the civil service and development planning were managed. This process brought together senior State Government officers and political office holders and included a critical reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of current systems. Following on from these assessments, each State Government developed its own strategy and plans (known as Change Programmes) for improving governance. These Change Programmes emerged in mid-late 2009 and implementation began immediately.



Government officials come together to review progress in implementing governance reforms in their state.

Limited evidence-based decision making

A key challenge faced by many State Governments in implementing governance improvements is that systems for managing performance are often inadequate. During self-assessment, State Governments identified the need to reflect on performance over the previous year and make necessary adjustments.

An annual performance review can play an important role in helping government organisations achieve their goals. The review can also help the organisations become more accountable and transparent, especially through reporting achievements to the general public and other interested parties.

"... The good thing about our relationship with SPARC is that, in discussions, we're equal partners ..." Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Enugu

Enabling results-based management

In response to this challenge, SPARC helped implement annual performance reviews of Change Programmes in the states where it works. These reviews took place during 2010 and were the first since the 2009 baseline assessments.

The main feature of the 2010 reviews was a high-level meeting held over a number of days in each state. People or groups with an interest or involvement in governance reforms were invited to attend these meetings.

Levels of State Government representation varied between states, but they generally included the Head of Service, Commissioners, Accountants General, Permanent Secretaries and Directors. On average, between 40 and 50 government officials took part in the meetings. In Kaduna, as part of communicating the reforms, over 5,000 civil servants were given a brochure summarising the purpose and impact of the Change Programme.



An Enugu State House of Assembly member addresses participants in a budget seminar.

Before the high-level meetings, performance reports were prepared for the technical area of each Change Programme. These reports, jointly prepared by State Government officials and SPARC staff, documented the results achieved in the Change Programme technical areas over the previous year.

During the high-level meetings, participants identified the major challenges experienced during Change Programme implementation and developed recommendations for addressing them.

Helping to strengthen the impact of reforms

Recommendations agreed during the high-level meeting were documented in a report, which was then validated and approved. Examples of these recommendations include:

- State Government organisations and the political class should adhere strictly to ceilings and be guided by realistic revenue estimates.

- The budget calendar should be strictly adhered to, with sanctions for failure to comply.

- The alignment between strategies and annual and multi-year budgets should be strengthened.

There have been several important positive outcomes as a result of the annual performance reviews. For example, the reviews have taken place as an integral part of the planning

process, enabling plans to be informed by a shared and evidence-based understanding of progress and challenges. This process has engendered a widespread sense of ownership and understanding of the reform process and plans by senior and mid-level government officials.

Performance reviews have helped accelerate the implementation of reform. For example, inspired by its review, Kaduna launched a new health and education strategy. The result was that costed plans for reducing maternal mortality and increasing girl-child enrolment were being put in place by the end of the year.

"... DFID has also assisted us to develop a Kaduna State Change Programme ... This programme marked its first anniversary last week with a befitting retreat by the DFID/SPARC team and senior government officials."
H.E. The Governor of Kaduna; 2010 civil service week speech

SPARC is continuing its work with State Governments to implement performance reviews in 2011 and beyond. As the quality of these reviews improves over time, it is hoped that participation will broaden to include civil society, development partners and NGOs.

What is the Change Programme?

The Kaduna State Change Programme began in early 2009 when State Government embarked on a self-assessment process to clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses of its public service and of its policy & strategy process (P&S, PSM, M&E). A similar assessment had already been done in public financial management.

For each self-assessment, a high powered team of officers and external office holders gathered for two full days to conduct a holistic and comprehensive assessment of the current situation.

Each team then used the self-assessment results to describe reform areas, define a long-term vision for the reform and set intermediate goals and objectives. These, together with detailed implementation plans, form the basis of the Change Programme.

Kaduna State Government is committed to implementing Change Programme reforms, which are helping Government to better understand its business of delivering the eleven Point Agenda for the development of the State.

Where Can I Find Out More?

Bureau of Public Service Reform
Office of the Head of Service
Kaduna State Government

As part of communicating reforms in Kaduna, a brochure was prepared after the review and distributed to all State Government officials attending Civil Service Week.

For more information

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The opinions expressed in this leaflet are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department for International Development.