



Review of international assistance to political party and party system development

Case study report: Uganda

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Contents

	Contents	v
	Tables, figures & boxes	vi
	Executive summary	vii
1	Introduction	1
2	The political context in Uganda	1
3	What problem does support to political parties address?	2
3.1	Political party development	2
3.2	Parties in Uganda today	3
3.3	Aims and objectives of international assistance	6
4	How have external actors supported political parties?	8
4.1	Main models of party assistance	8
4.2	The approach to results	13
5	What are the emerging lessons from Uganda?	16
	References	18
	Annex 1: List of interviews	19

Tables, figures & boxes

Tables

Table 1: Presidential elections 2006	4
Table 2: Parliamentary elections 2006	4
Table 3: Summary typologies of models of support	13

Boxes

Box 1: The NIMD approach	12
Box 2: Key indicators under the political parties' component of the DDP	15

Executive summary

Ugandan party politics remains heavily shaped by the country's history of periods of enforced party inactivity interspersed with shifts towards multi-party politics. Over the last five years, there has been a move towards the re-establishment of multi-party politics, but political parties in general remain weak, with poor internal organisation, few effective links to citizens and, for opposition parties, a lack of access to funding. The ruling party has struggled to transition from an all-encompassing movement to a functioning political party, and its fusion with the state remains a key governance issue. Arguably for support to political parties to effectively strengthen the party system (and support wider governance reforms), it needs to engage with these core challenges.

In this context, external actors have engaged in a range of forms of party assistance; this has increased since the 2005 shift towards multi-party politics. There is a wide variety in the types of support provided, but they can be loosely categorised as involving party to party support, technical assistance and newer forms of support involving direct grant-making and inter-party dialogue.

Party to party support links parties in European countries with those in Uganda. These programmes seek ideologically similar parties in the Ugandan context and use many of the standard methods of support, including training, workshops and exchange visits.

Programmes focused on technical assistance to parties, in contrast, commonly work in a cross-party, nonpartisan way, focused on specific areas such as internal procedures, or aspects of communication and public relations. Common methods include the use of training, external consultants and workshops.

A newer model of support has been developed by the Deepening Democracy Programme (DDP) in Uganda. The political parties' component of the DDP has established a grant-making facility open to all parties provided they meet certain criteria, and a forum for inter-party dialogue (run by the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, NIMD). While grant-making has been commonly used in other areas of governance support, such as civil society, it is rare in support to political parties, making this a relatively new approach.

Overall, there appears to be a wide variety in terms of the assumptions and objectives of these programmes of support to political parties in Uganda today – and variety in terms of how adequately they seem to address the key political realities. The party to party model, for example, was commonly praised by Ugandan parties for its focus on peer learning, but it was seen as disconnected from the context in its focus on ideological 'sister' parties for support. Models which rely on technical assistance, on the other hand, work across all (or most) parties and respond to some clearly defined capacity needs of parties. However, they appear to struggle to engage with the broader political challenges inherent in political party development in Uganda, such as the fusion between ruling party and state.

The basket fund approach of the DDP and the grant-making mechanism in particular seem to go furthest in attempting to respond to the context in Uganda and to engage with parties' incentives and power dynamics. Other implementers, who did not provide direct support and would not normally support it, suggested that it may be an appropriate response in the current climate and participating parties themselves welcomed the flexibility it gave to determine how to use support (albeit within defined guidelines).

All models of support to political parties in Uganda seem to struggle to measure and analyse the impacts and results of their work effectively. Party to party support appears to offer the most under-developed approaches to monitoring and evaluation, and some implementing organisations (particularly those engaged in technical assistance) recognise that they are under increasing pressure, including from their funders, to demonstrate results in more robust ways. The most effective approaches combined a variety of methodologies, including the use of citizens' surveys and polling data, as well as analysis of key milestones such as national

delegates' conferences. Across different models, there was a strong call for greater realism in setting objectives for support, in recognition of the influence of the wider context.

A number of key findings emerge from our analysis, relevant to support to political parties and to political engagement more broadly. These include:

- Direct support may be appropriate in this context, but what is key is the process of design. While it may not be appropriate in all (or many) contexts, grant-making to parties appears to better 'fit' the context in Uganda than some of the other models of support studied. The key lesson here is not necessarily that grant-making *per se* is significant but rather that it highlights the importance of an effective process of design, including in-depth assessments of parties themselves, to inform programming.
- Greater political intelligence and engagement is crucial. This will include maintaining adequate 'political intelligence' on the changing power dynamics and incentives of parties as well as the maintenance of formal and informal networks so that assumptions and analysis can be continuously tested. Greater reflection on the range of roles possible for those supporting or engaging with political parties, including a stronger emphasis on brokering, facilitating and negotiating could also strengthen political engagement.
- Strategies are needed for engagement with the ruling party and for risk mitigation. In light of the nature of state and party fusion in Uganda, much clearer strategies are needed for how to engage with the ruling party and how to manage associated political risks. This seems to be particularly lacking in the Ugandan context.

1 Introduction

In theory, political parties play a central role within well-functioning democracies, aggregating and representing citizens' interests and formulating policy agendas that can respond to citizens' concerns. In practice, in many countries – especially developing countries – political parties are weak and disconnected from the policy process, and struggle to connect with or represent citizens and their interests. Despite understandable sensitivities about intervening in processes that are clearly political, donors are increasingly aware that political parties need to be part of the jigsaw of effective governance, and are in the process of working out how best to provide support for, and engage with, political parties and party systems.

This case study is part of a research project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The overall objectives were to explore the experience of international support to, and engagement with, political parties in four countries and one regional context, to identify country-specific examples of good, bad or 'better' practice and draw out lessons going forward. This case study is based on fieldwork conducted in Kampala in March 2010, involving interviews with a range of relevant stakeholders including representatives from political parties, donor agencies, implementing organisations, the media and academia. A full list of interviews is available in Annex 1.

2 The political context in Uganda

The National Resistance Movement (NRM), led by Yoweri Museveni, assumed power in 1986 following five years of civil war and more than two decades of conflict and political instability after independence in 1962. The NRM government attracted high levels of donor support in the 1990s and was recognised as having achieved relative stability across Uganda and as championing much-needed reform in the economic sphere.¹

In recent years, however, there have been growing signs of the 'slipping back' of democratic and political gains. According to a recent report, despite the shift to multi-party politics, the "political culture of the no-party movement lingers on" (APRM, 2009). Parliament is seen as lacking the ability to act as an effective check on the Executive, despite increasing activism by some parliamentary committees, such as the Public Accounts Committee (chaired by an opposition party member). There are some independent media, including a number of newspapers, magazines and radio stations. However, there has also been a weakening of the legal protections for journalists, with some tried in court for 'sedition' following criticism of the government. A number of state institutions should play roles in oversight over government actions, such as the Auditor General, the Inspector General of Government and the Ministry of Ethics and Integrity, but they are largely seen as lacking in capacity or political will to act as effective checks.

Part of the explanation for growing concern about possible slippage is the dominance of the President who, under the 1995 Constitution, is Head of State, Head of Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF). Commenting on this dominance, Booth and Golooba-Mutebi (2009) argue that: "It endows the President with significant scope to override opposition and impose his views when he considers it important to do so ... In other words, there are no actors, within the executive or legislative branches of government or elsewhere within the state (e.g. the army or judiciary), with the power to veto a presidential policy decision."

Alongside these internal political processes, the presence and level of influence of external actors is evident in Uganda, which is a highly aid dependent country. On-budget donor aid averaged 9.6% of gross domestic product (GDP) between 1999/00 and 2008/09; during the

¹ The economy grew at an average rate of 6% in the 1990s (Moncrieffe, 2004).

same period, on-budget donor aid as a percentage of total government expenditure averaged about 45.4% (Handley et al., 2010). Moreover, it has received some of the highest sustained flows of direct budget support (both general and sector) of any developing country, alongside substantial levels of project aid (Ibid.). As indicated above, until relatively recently, the donor community as a whole has been very supportive of Museveni and the NRM government, not least because of its economic and security achievements. But, in recent years, a number of donors have given greater prominence to governance support.

3 What problem does support to political parties address?

This section analyses the nature of the context for political parties in Uganda, and the extent to which the stated aims and objectives of international assistance seem to respond to this context. It firstly examines the historical development of political parties, in light of the country's history of periods of enforced party inactivity interspersed with shifts to multi-party politics, and draws out some of the key features, and weaknesses, of parties today. It then looks at the aims of international assistance. A key finding is that many forms of assistance to political parties do not seem to adequately engage with the wider political and governance challenges of the party system at the level of their aims and objectives.

3.1 Political party development

Today, nearly five years since the re-establishment of multi-party politics, political parties remain weak. In addition to a lack of internal organisation, they have few committed members and, perhaps most importantly, lack the resources needed to organise and (in many cases) the capacity to raise funds in the amounts required. The NRM has struggled to transition from an all-encompassing 'Movement' to a functioning political party, and its fusion with the state remains a key governance challenge, as well as a major obstacle to the development of effective political parties in Uganda. Below we outline some of these historical factors, and the dominant features and weaknesses of political parties in Uganda today, before we turn to look at some specific models of support to parties.

Independent Uganda was born in 1962 as a multi-party democracy, with three political parties represented in Parliament, the Democratic Party (DP), the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and Kabaka Yekka (KY). Seven years later, the UPC government, led by Milton Obote, proscribed all rival parties, effectively turning Uganda into a one-party state.

Following a coup in 1971, which toppled the Obote-led government and led to Idi Amin's military government, political parties went underground. They reappeared following the 1979 war which overthrew Idi Amin. Multi-party politics were re-introduced in the run-up to the 1980 general elections, which were controversially won by Milton Obote's UPC. Conducted amidst state-instigated violence and the intimidation of opponents of the UPC, these elections were widely perceived within Uganda as fraudulent. Two new parties emerged during this time, the Conservative Party (CP) and the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM), the predecessor of today's ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM).

Controversy over the elections led to renewed civil war. With only the DP and UPC having representation in Parliament and with the ongoing harassment of UPC opponents, the CP and UPM went into hibernation. During this period, the DP's capacity to operate as an effective political party was constrained by its harassment by state agents and the UPC government. In 1986, after the civil war, and once Museveni and the NRM had gained power, political party activities were again suspended, leaving parties unable to operate and compete for power.

Following the suspension of party activity, the NRM formed a broad-based government which included members of other political groups, a decision seen as driven by the stated desire to re-unite the country after years of political upheaval. A provisional Parliament, the National

Resistance Council (NRC), was established, comprising appointed and indirectly elected members. Country-wide public consultations led to an elected Constituent Assembly (CA) replacing the NRC, which subsequently established a new Constitution in 1995. The Constitution entrenched the NRM and maintained the suspension of political party activity. Political parties could maintain offices in the capital city, Kampala, but could not sponsor or campaign for candidates for public office, hold public meetings or recruit members. The promulgation of the new Constitution paved the way for the first general elections in a decade and a half, and for the election of Museveni to President.

The proscription of multi-party politics was widely perceived as necessary during this period, with many endorsing the NRM leadership's argument that Ugandan society was unable to function within a multi-party system without reference to ethnic and religious differences in light of the recent conflict. According to this argument, Ugandan society needed to be nurtured into maturity, for example by cultivating a large middle class shorn of tribal and religious bigotry, before a multi-party system could be re-introduced. The prolonged turmoil the country had hitherto experienced under one-party and military dictatorships, and the extent to which this had undermined economic and social structures validated this argument in the eyes of a large cross-section of Ugandans and the broader international community.

It was against this background that the 1996 and 2001 elections were conducted. Although preceded by violent campaigns, the 1996 elections were perceived inside Uganda and by external observers as generally reflective of popular opinion. By the 2001 elections, however, opposition to restrictions on political parties appeared to be at its highest since 1986, as shown in the coalescing of supporters of political parties and some disillusioned Movement members behind a loose grouping known as Reform Agenda (RA) (Golooba-Mutebi 2005). The intimidation of opposition candidates competing in these elections, by military, security and civilian agents of the state revealed the extent to which the ruling party had fused with the state.

Therefore, while suppression of political activity was initially viewed by many Ugandans and a number of international observers as justified, over the last decade there have been increasing signs of a lack of tolerance for these forms of suppression (Ibid.). At the same time, despite restrictions imposed on parties, known members and supporters of opposition parties have continued to be elected to Parliament, even under a 'no-party' platform (see Oloka-Onyango 2000).

The decision to revert to multi-party politics stemmed from a number of considerations within the NRM itself, alongside external pressures from a number of donors and external actors. Within the NRM, a key source of pressure was a group of dissenters from the mainstream including prominent politicians such as the former Minister for Local Government, Jaberi Bidandi Ssali. President Museveni and his inner-circle of supporters, although ideologically opposed to the restoration of multi-party politics, came to see it as a chance to amend the Constitution, including lifting limits on presidential terms of office. In 2000, Museveni pushed for the re-establishment of political parties and was in turn able to secure unlimited Presidential terms under a parliamentary vote in 2005. However, President Museveni made no secret of his continuing distaste for multi-party politics, attributing the restoration of party politics to 'donor pressure' (Golooba-Mutebi 2005). Since the restoration of multi-party politics, parties have continued to face harassment from the police, security agencies and other agents of the state (Ibid.).

3.2 Parties in Uganda today

There are currently 36 registered political parties in Uganda. Of these, six are represented in Parliament, although a number of these parties have only one Member of Parliament (see Table 2, below). Museveni was re-elected as President in 2006, although Kizza Besigye, the

candidate for the Forum for Democratic Change also received around a third of votes, a result which surprised many considering the relative youth of his party (see Table 1).²

Table 1: Presidential elections 2006

Candidates and nominating party	Votes	%
Yoweri Museveni - National Resistance Movement	4,109,449	59.26
Kizza Besigye - Forum for Democratic Change	2,592,954	37.39
John Ssebaana Kizito - Democratic Party	109,583	1.58
Abed Bwanika - Independent	65,874	0.95
Miria Obote - Uganda People's Congress	57,071	0.82
Total votes	6,934,931	

Table 2: Parliamentary elections 2006

Political parties	Constituency seats	District woman reps.	Indirect seats	Total seats
National Resistance Movement	142	49	14	205
Forum for Democratic Change	27	10	-	37
Uganda People's Congress	9	-	-	9
Democratic Party	8	-	-	8
Conservative Party	1	-	-	1
Justice Forum	1	-	-	1
Independents	26	10	1	37
Vacant	1	-	-	1
Uganda People's Defence Force Representatives	10			
Ex-officio members	10			
Total (turnout 72%)	215	69	15	319

Source: <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2329.htm>

The National Resistance Movement (NRM) dates as a formal political party from 2003 when it transformed itself from what was formerly dubbed a 'Movement' into a party. As a political organisation it was founded in the early 1980s after the Popular Resistance Army (PRA), the

² Presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2010.

original grouping that declared war on the UPC government, merged with another exiled political group, the Uganda Freedom Fighters (UFF) in 1981. During the 19 years political parties spent under restrictions, the NRM took advantage of the absence of competition to build and consolidate its position. It benefitted a great deal from the absorption into the government, and eventually into its own ranks, of prominent and experienced members and leaders of political parties (including from the DP, UP, KY and CP). It currently does not operate as a coherent party with functioning organs, but as a loose and fractious grouping heavily dominated by its leader, President Yoweri Museveni.

As a result, the NRM remains fused with the state in significant ways, to the extent that some party officials double as ministers and have their salaries and allowances paid by the state rather than the party. These officials can use state resources for party purposes, including campaigning for the NRM's candidates and there have been reports of funds taken from the accounts of Ministries and spent on party activities.³ State House, the President's official residence, is routinely used to host large party meetings and members of the armed forces dedicate army resources and time to activities linked to party campaigning.⁴

The Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) was established in 2002, with the coming together by members of two groups: the Young Parliamentarians Association (YPA) and Reform Agenda (RA). The YPA was a pressure group of Parliamentarians in the 6th Parliament (1996-2001) who sought to check the excesses of the NRM government, which most of them supported at the time; Reform Agenda was a group of former NRM supporters who had left the Movement in light of what they saw as its deviation from its original goals. Later on, members of the DP and UPC in particular joined, reflecting increasing disillusionment with the stagnation and personalisation of those parties.

Today the FDC is the largest opposition party and despite continuing challenges, including harassment by state agents and related difficulties in recruiting members⁵, it is arguably the most advanced opposition party in terms of its institutionalisation, capacity to mobilise resources and efforts to build and entrench internal democracy. This was reflected in its relative good performance, particularly as a new party, in the 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections. The FDC's key sources of funding include member contributions (through membership cards which cost UGX1000, although many do not have cards), voluntary contributions and donor support. The FDC reportedly has national fundraising structures (and a committee) and conducts training for members on how to raise funds locally.

The Uganda People's Congress (UPC) was founded in 1954 when its predecessor, the Uganda National Congress (UNC), merged with the Uganda People's Union (UPU). Its founders were members of the African elite, namely landowners and sons of chiefs. Until recently, the UPC had been led by two people: Milton Obote who died in 2005, and his wife Miria who succeeded him. Since the overthrow of Milton Obote in 1985, the party has been in disarray and is only now beginning to unite around a new leader, Dr. Olara Otunnu. The main sources of funding come from the Milton Obote Foundation, however there are reported tensions where the Foundation seeks to have undue influence over the agenda and activities of the UPC as a party. The UPC is also thought to receive contributions from members (including from the Diaspora) and it is able to mobilise some funds, including from the business community, around particular events (such as Obote Memorial day).

The Democratic Party (DP) was founded in October 1954 and began as an anti-Communist party with strong backing from the Catholic Church, in part in reaction to the UPC's association with Communist China. Its leaders have described the party as centre-right and it is associated with the Christian Democrat International. Popular lore has labelled it a Catholic Party because of its close relationship with the Catholic Church and identification with Catholics who in the

³ Interview by Golooba-Mutebi with a former cabinet minister and member of the NRM National Campaign Task Force in 2001 (June 2005).

⁴ The holding of NRM meetings at State House has been repeatedly debated and condemned in print and broadcast media. However, the debates have been roundly ignored by the ruling party which has continued to use this public facility for partisan purposes.

⁵ For example, see recent news report of attacks on the FDC including Bareebe 10/06/10.

past were marginalised by the Buganda monarchy. While these issues were important, religion was not as central to its establishment and development as popular opinion would have it. In common with other Ugandan parties, the DP has been dominated by its leaders and today the party is highly factionalised and undermined by conflict about different visions of its future, pitting young members against the old guard. The election of Norbert Mao in February 2010, linked mainly to younger members, may further reinforce these divisions, although he has promised to unite the party going forward. The DP's main sources of funding are concentrated in a small number of backers (including those within the party leadership) and donor support.

The Justice Forum (JEEMA) was founded in June 1996 by mainly Muslim elites. Its leaders describe it as "socially conservative". Unlike others, it has not experienced debilitating internal conflict and has remained relatively cohesive. It is also not known for being under the dominance of any one individual. However, like other parties, it possesses limited organisational capacity and the resources necessary to further develop, with its main sources of funding being small monthly contributions from a limited number of members (including parts of the Diaspora).

The Conservative Party (CP) was founded in the run up to the 1980 elections. The party stands for the preservation of the cultures and traditions of Uganda's different nationalities and has been at the forefront of advocating federalism. Having failed to win seats in Parliament and because of the harassment of opposition politicians by the Obote government, it went into hibernation following the 1980 general elections. After the NRM seized power, its leader at the time, Jehoash Mayanja-Nkangi joined the broad-based government. Subsequent power struggles led to several changes in leadership and the further dwindling of its membership. Today the CP's public faces are the Party President and his daughter, who is the sole Member of Parliament. They have limited access to funds, and are reliant on contributions from a small number of backers.

The People's Progressive Party (PPP) traces its existence to a merger of several small parties which registered following the lifting of restrictions on party activity but were unable to participate in the 2006 elections. As a result, they decided to merge and pool their collective strengths. Since its emergence and appointment of a new leader, former Minister of Local Government, Jaberu Bidandi Ssali, the PPP has focused on building grassroots structures and recruiting members. In 2008 it surprised sceptics by holding an annual delegates conference which brought members together from across the country. Until now it has assumed a low profile, largely out of view of the media. Apart from the NRM, which uses state resources, the PPP boasts arguably the most elaborate grassroots network of branches across the country. Therefore its lack of representation in Parliament belies a growing presence on the ground and the potential for greater influence in the future.

3.3 Aims and objectives of international assistance

As the above analysis sets out, there are a number of historical features of the political system which need to be borne in mind for any programme of support to, or engagement with, political parties in Uganda. These include the fragility of the multi-party system itself and the fact that the political playing field remains heavily skewed in favour of the NRM, to the extent that its continued fusion with the state remains a defining feature of the political context. This is increasingly recognised as impacting on aspects of Uganda's development policy as, for example, some aid resources (particularly in the context of budget support) are thought to be used by the NRM for their political activities, including in the run-up to the 2006 elections. Today, nearly five years since the re-establishment of multi-party politics, opposition parties remain weak. In addition to a lack of internal organisation, they have few committed members and, perhaps most importantly, lack the resources needed to organise and (in many cases) the capacity to raise funds in the amounts required. Understanding the implications of this, for the ruling party and for opposition parties, and the resulting incentives and power dynamics are therefore some of the key issues external actors operating in Uganda need to engage with.

There are a wide number of actors providing assistance to political parties, and this has increased significantly since 2005 with the opening up of the multi-party system. Three broad categories can be identified, although within these there is still wide variety: firstly, the 'sister model' which links parties from developed countries to parties in Uganda, usually through a party institute which operates relatively independently from its funder; secondly, the 'technical assistance model' implemented by cross-party institutes and funded by a range of external actors; and thirdly the 'basket fund model', a newer mode of support which involves pooled funding and includes direct grant making to parties.

These categories reveal diversity in approaches to assistance in Uganda and this is reflected in the stated objectives and motivations for the provision of international assistance. For the sister model, the key stated objectives commonly focus on strengthening ideologically similar parties, either to support the overall multi-party system or, more explicitly, to improve the electoral performance of the party in question. The technical assistance model offers a different set of objectives. Broadly speaking, it focuses on providing cross party, non-partisan support aimed at building the capacity and technical capability of political parties in a number of core areas. Finally, the basket fund model's stated aims are to strengthen the institutionalisation of parties, and their organisational capacity, as well as to build greater dialogue between parties, in order to achieve a more institutionalised multi-party system with more competitive – and more 'rooted' – political parties.

To what extent do these aims and objectives seem to engage effectively with the contextual factors set out above? Again, there is a variety within as well as between these broad categories, but interviews and analysis reveal some key points of disjuncture between the assumptions and aspirations of assistance to political parties and the realities and challenges in Uganda.

To start with the sister to sister model, our analysis finds that the presumed ideological link between parties remains weak. The role of ideology was emphasised in interviews, in terms of the objective to build and support ideologically similar political parties and those with which there are perceived shared values. However, interviews with party representatives revealed that they do not perceive this form of support to be about ideology (or influenced by ideology). The nature of the political spectrum in Uganda remains fundamentally shaped by the recent history of internal conflict, ethnic and regional divisions, and the 'no party' Movement system. This means that in practice, political parties in Uganda are not divided along ideological lines (in terms of the 'left/right' spectrum). Instead, some distinctions are made along ethnic, religious and regional lines and overwhelmingly parties are seen as vehicles for the election of leaders or individuals rather than as instruments for advancing the interests of different constituencies. The leading opposition party (the FDC) is itself formed by ex-members of the NRM, disillusioned with the power concentration in the President and it is more easily identified with a critique of the ruling regime than an opposing ideology.

In practice, therefore, there are no *de facto* 'counterparts' to political parties from European or other Western contexts. This can render party identification ad hoc and selective, effectively creating a lottery as to which parties are promoted or supported. Thus, the key assumption of the sister model, that there are ideologically similar parties and that they should be supported as such, seems flawed in the Ugandan context. Moreover, the potential for this to do harm – for example where it disproportionately favours a party which is not politically relevant in Uganda, remains a significant challenge.

Secondly, the technical assistance approach usefully moves away from ideological preferences to working on a cross party basis (and arguably is more concerned with the overall 'party system'). However, this highly technical approach appeared to be struggling in the face of the political challenges parties faced in Uganda, including the high levels of state/party fusion and the dominance of the NRM.

These challenges suggest the need to go beyond purely technical objectives, whereas this model seems to get stuck at the level of building parties' technical capabilities without – at least in its aims and objectives – recognising the incentives and power dynamics at play. In

part, this may be because this is viewed as beyond the mandates of those who principally fund this work, such as USAID.

Yet in a context where it is widely acknowledged that opposition parties face harassment, and that they are deterred from raising funds, providing a range of technical assistance open to all parties – including the NRM – and focusing on issues around party constitutions, campaigning and so on did not seem to be sufficient. Moreover, a large focus of this more technical approach is on internal democracy measures. These are undoubtedly important, but experience from a range of other contexts (including in more developed countries) suggests that progress on strengthening internal democracy for political parties is often difficult, not least because parties are inherently competitive and seek to gain access to power. Through interviews, it was difficult to ascertain that more technical approaches to capacity building were able to engage with the realities of some of these incentives and power dynamics. At the same time, some of the party institutes involved in implementing this type of assistance commonly felt that their political backgrounds (most were party activists or had long experience in party development) enabled them to informally address or acknowledge these issues, but that the mandates of funders imposed limitations on their ability to act on this.

Thirdly, the basket fund model appears to offer the best ‘fit’ between its aims and assumptions and the realities of parties in Uganda, as it recognises the need to gradually support the growing institutionalisation of political parties (to make them more ‘rooted’) and the need to improve the competitiveness of parties – thus it seems to be more concerned with the party system as a whole than with individual party capacity. While the stated aims remain quite general, there is a clearer commitment to impact on the wider governance environment rather than just the capabilities of individual parties.

What is interesting looking across the different models of assistance to political parties is that overall, they are presented as assistance to build parties and to support the multi-party system. This appears to be rooted within international commitments to democratisation and governance reforms, with little mention made of the wider development impacts or how these reforms might link to strengthening both governance and wider development outcomes (despite high levels of development assistance to Uganda, and roles played by donor agencies in some of the models of support).

4 How have external actors supported political parties?

The previous section sought to illustrate the key challenges for and of political parties in Uganda, and the aims and motivations of external actors in seeking to support them. It revealed a number of assumptions made by external actors, some of which seemed not to reflect a number of the core contextual features in Uganda today. This section looks at the main methods and approaches under each of the models of assistance identified, and reveals how the assumptions and motivations described above influence the design and implementation of programmes of support.

4.1 Main models of party assistance

As indicated above, three models of party assistance appear to be present in Uganda. While there are varieties within these models as well as between them, this seems to be a useful categorisation to allow for comparisons between different approaches. These models involve ‘sister support’; ‘technical assistance’; and ‘basket funding’ and their methods of implementation and financing are discussed in more detail below.

Firstly, a number of programmes of support link political parties in a donor country to those in the recipient country, characterised as the ‘sister support’ model. This takes different forms in Uganda, ranging from party to party linkages to more indirect use of intermediaries or working

with party groupings. The British Conservative Party, for example, receives funds from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, which supports its work with the FDC (and previously, some support to the DP). This follows the most conventional party to party support model.

Some of the German party institutes, known as *Stiftungen*, support individual parties with which they have built up long term relationships. The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) is linked to the German Christian Democratic Union and while KAS' overall mandate is a developmental one, in practice its work with political parties is thought to amount to around 70 per cent of the budget of the Ugandan office. This approach retains the party to party linkage, but with a preference for using intermediaries to implement support. The primary party for KAS to date has been the DP, although KAS' preferred way of working is through intermediary civil society organisations, such as the Foundation for African Development or Women for Development, both of which are Ugandan based NGOs which feed heavily into the DP's agenda.

The Swedish Christian Democrats have recently begun to broaden their party to party work, to support a grouping known as the Inter-Party Cooperation (IPC) which brings together a group of opposition parties (FDC, UPC, JEEMA, CP) seeking to contest for power as a united front. This is an example of party to party support which seeks to engage with parties collectively rather than selecting one in particular (SADEV 2009).

The parties involved in this form of support have a number of ways of working. The German *Stiftungen* are separate institutions with a long-term in-country presence. In contrast, the party to party support offered by the British Conservative Party and by the Swedish Christian Democrats does not work through a local office, but rather through periodic visits and exchanges between respective party members.

Despite these differences, there are a number of common areas of activity, including a common focus on training, often linked to particular themes or issues such as leadership and women's empowerment. Some providers feel more able to engage explicitly with the political development of parties, particularly around elections, including through support in developing manifestos and policy platforms, and campaign training (for party agents and activists). Usually trainers are brought from the providers' own political parties or countries, although some use trainers and facilitators from other contexts. There were more notable differences in terms of the level at which training occurs, with some working more at sub-national levels (e.g. KAS) whereas others remain focused on building the capacity of the party leadership and head-quarters in Kampala (e.g. British Conservative Party). Most of these providers commonly used exchange visits to facilitate links between the parties involved.

In interviews, these forms of support were commonly welcomed by political parties in Uganda, as they were seen as more flexible and well-suited to the needs of the parties involved, largely because of the emphasis on peer to peer support and learning. The value of working with those experienced in political party formation and development was seen as a real asset. Moreover, this form of support was perceived as being able to be more openly 'political' than the other models of support.

However, interviews also revealed the common view that the methods employed, particularly in relation to exchange visits, had very limited impact on the development of the political parties involved. Regarding visits from the developed country in question, there was some recognition that exchanges were at times superficial, for example reflecting that the parliamentarians 'want to visit Uganda' and that this provides a useful platform to do so. For Ugandan politicians and party members, exchange visits appear to be viewed differently, and linked to capacity building and skills development with the sense of 'shadowing' or observing how developed country political parties operate. There was less sense of a genuine two way exchange of experiences and learning, and more of a focus on upward learning (by Ugandan parties from more 'developed' parties). The use of short term one-off training was not seen as a particularly useful method, as it did not contribute to long term shifts for the parties involved.

One interesting feature of this model is that all of the implementers involved maintain relative independence from their home governments and their programmes do not need to align to their home government's country strategies. Interviews revealed some potential tensions where this model clashed with other models of support, suggesting the need to perhaps better coordinate or at least acknowledge these tensions.

Secondly, the technical assistance model focuses on cross-party technical assistance in key identified areas. The two lead implementers in this area are the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI). These institutes receive funding in the form of grants from USAID. While this is commonly within the framework of the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), in the Ugandan context a different arrangement has evolved which works outside of CEPPS and links NDI and IRI within one grant, with NDI as the lead grantee and IRI as the lead implementer. NDI and IRI are mandated to work cross-party, and where possible to work with all political parties (or all major parties). In practice, there seems to be some level of self-selection by parties, and also some limits in the capacity for reach of these institutes, as the four main political parties are those where support is principally targeted.

The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) displays some of the characteristics of the 'technical assistance' model, although this is combined with elements of party to party support. FES is affiliated to the Social Democratic Party in Germany, and it has an established presence in Kampala. It has worked predominantly with the NRM's youth wing and with UPC, but has also contributed to broader cross party discussions and debates regarding the establishment of the multi-party system. It does not easily fit into either category, but seems closest to the technical assistance model because of its focus on assistance to strengthen internal party workings, combined with broader awareness raising and sensitisation activities.

The capacity development activities commonly delivered by these implementers are wide ranging, reflecting the perceived 'consultancy' and reactive nature of their interventions. NDI, for example, plays the lead role in oversight and quality control of IRI's activities but has also undertaken some limited work on party caucus strengthening, mainly with the NRM but also with FDC. Activities across these implementers commonly include work with party leaderships to develop strategic and corporate plans, strengthen constitutions and guiding documents, training on communication, resource mobilisation, campaigning, and so on. Some support is particularly targeted at female party members. FES has also engaged in awareness raising and sensitisation activities around the multi-party system.

In recent years, some institutes such as IRI have increased their work at district level, to support district structures to become more organised and more active, reportedly in response to requests from parties themselves. This has involved activities targeted more at the 'party system' level, including support for dialogue between the Electoral Commission and parties at district and national levels (although the latter is recognised as particularly difficult in light of the lack of credibility of the current Electoral Commissioners).

In interviews, this form of support was commonly described as 'practical, consultancy orientated', with a focus on strengthening the internal organisation of political parties. In Uganda, this was generally limited to political parties in Parliament, with some exceptions (e.g. some engagement with the PPP). The cross party nature of support means that this model is less open to criticism as ideologically selective. There is evidence of a long term presence in-country of a number of the leading implementers, establishing political relationships over time and allowing a wide range of capacity development activities to be available. The staff involved in implementing this form of assistance commonly had backgrounds as political activists or long experience in party development in a number of contexts, and felt well equipped to engage with political actors, albeit from a technical perspective. Moreover, the relative youth of many of the political parties' active in Uganda (including the NRM and the FDC) means that there are clear capacity needs which this model is able to respond to.

However, while the majority of the parties interviewed identified a lack of capacity and technical skills as major challenges, they also felt that implementers involved in this form of

support maintained fixed ideas of what form assistance should take, reinforced by the use of external consultants. There was a common view that they 'came with their proposals and parties have to fit within them' or that they 'develop what they think parties need'. In part, this seems to reflect the assumptions behind the stated aims for this support, which focus on technical inputs to build capacities of parties in key areas, leading to an approach in implementation which tends towards technical, and at times blueprint, methods.

A third model has emerged for party support in Uganda, under the Deepening Democracy Programme (DDP), labelled the 'basket fund' model. The DDP was established for an initial period of April 2008 to December 2011, and it is a basket fund, with the overall objective to contribute towards strengthening democratic governance in Uganda. With a total budget of £11 million, the programme includes components on Parliament, civil society, media, the Electoral Commission and political parties (of which £1.2 million goes to the latter). The donors contributing to this fund are the UK, Ireland, Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway. Donors can opt not to support specific components within the Programme (for example, Norway is not supporting the political parties' component). This Programme is implemented through a Programme Management Unit (PMU), located in the premises of the Danida Human Rights and Good Governance Office (HUGGO) in Kampala, but directly answerable to the Programme Steering Committee.

The political parties' component of the DDP has two key dimensions. Firstly, it has established a grant-making facility. Under Ugandan law, political parties are allowed to receive grants, donations and gifts in kind from foreign governments up to 20,000 currency points (UGX 400,000,000) in a twelve month period. The DDP grants are, in theory, available to all political parties but certain eligibility criteria have been set. For example, parties must be registered with the Electoral Commission, and must meet their electoral law obligations, such as filing regular audited accounts with the Electoral Commission. There are also requirements that parties do not have convictions or legal proceedings underway, and that they do not have senior members (in their executive committee or board) convicted of violence and racial hatred or incitement thereof (DDP PMU 2008)

There is a lengthy self-assessment process, which includes a review of formal documents (such as Party Constitutions), financial information and semi structured phone interviews with key informants (including randomly selected party members) to identify a given party's strengths and weaknesses. A confidential report is produced by the PMU, discussed with the party but not made public. This is seen as providing a 'baseline' for party support and, if a party is approved as eligible for support, grant applications reportedly must refer to the findings of this assessment (and must be aimed at strengthening the organisational capacity of the party, including internal democracy and building links with constituents).

The level of the grant that political parties are entitled to is linked to party income. Grants cannot be higher than the amount raised in the previous year (and cannot exceed the legal limit for external funds). This is seen as necessary to prevent a perception of undue influence, to ensure parties have the capacity to absorb funds, and to incentivise further fundraising. To date, grants have been awarded to the FDC (UGX 400 million), the UPC (UGX 157 million) and to the PPP (UGX 53 million) (New Vision, 19/1/10). A number of other parties, including DP and the SDP are thought to have received some in-kind assistance, for example towards the organisation of their annual delegates' conference or national council meetings.

This grant making component is a potentially innovative feature of this approach. It seems to recognise (even if implicitly) the dominance of the ruling party and the challenges for opposition parties to access funds. Opposition parties in Uganda in particular reportedly struggle to raise funds, as membership of opposition parties can lead to state harassment or because the prevailing system of patronage incentivises some actors to provide support (such as business and so on) to the ruling party alone. This approach appears to engage with this key blockage – commonly cited by opposition parties – in order to help support party institutionalisation.

These grants, however, have been heavily criticised for delays between the self-assessment process, approval of grants and the actual disbursement of funds (The Daily Monitor 5/2/10). The grant-making component was reportedly developed in 2008, rolled out in 2009, but grants only released in early 2010. In part, this was linked to some of the perceived risks of grant-making, particularly as the NRM opted not to take part in the process.

The second element to this component is an inter-party dialogue dimension, which was developed later, and partly in response to some of these perceived risks. The Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (NIMD) has begun, since September 2009, to facilitate an inclusive process of inter-party dialogue involving the six political parties represented in Parliament (see Box 1). This has involved an exchange visit to Ghana, to learn from experiences of party dialogue and the transfer of power between parties, and the creation of a forum for dialogue where representatives from the six parties meet regularly to discuss a range of issues related to the party system, such as electoral law reforms, election procedures and so on (Luyten 2010).⁶

Box 1: The NIMD approach

The NIMD was established in 2000, by seven political parties across the political spectrum in the Netherlands. According to its recent Annual Report, NIMD “works with the political elite to induce them to invest in the development of democratic rule” (NIMD 2010). In Uganda, it is still in the process of establishing a forum for inter-party dialogue involving the ruling party and five opposition parties. Interviews revealed a divergence in views of the inter-party dialogue process. For some, it was seen as important step forward in achieving greater cooperation between parties, but others voiced concerns that in reality the ruling party would not meaningfully engage with the process, undermining its long term utility.

The grant making component is a distinctive feature of this form of support. Other implementers, who do not provide direct support, stated in interviews that direct grants might be particularly helpful in Uganda because of the challenges of the dominance of the ruling party and restricted access to funds, even though they would not usually support direct grants of this kind. And Ugandan political parties welcomed the grant-making component as allowing for greater ownership and capacity to determine how to use support (although frustration was expressed with the level of delay in disbursing grants). Therefore, the initial assumptions and objectives – namely that access to funding is a significant blockage to be addressed – have led to new developments in approaches to implementation and funding.

This seemingly better link between objectives and implementation may reflect the fact that the DDP PMU staff involved in the political parties’ component seem to have a good understanding of the power dynamics and challenges for parties in Uganda, and maintained regular formal and informal contacts with most parties. The political parties’ component grew out of a scoping period and review of other work in Uganda. This reportedly led to the analysis that political parties in Uganda were ‘work-shopped out’ and that current support was too prescriptive (DDP PMU 2008). Thus the grant-making mechanism was proposed as an alternative (Ibid.). This suggests the importance of investing (in time and capacity) in understanding context and the incentives and dynamics of different actors.

Despite these strengths, interviews revealed a lack of coherent strategy for how to relate to the dominant party (the NRM) in Uganda. The NRM has not applied for a grant, and it may not meet all of the requirements. The programme was reportedly heavily delayed in part because of the political risks around this. But it is unclear what would happen if the NRM did decide to apply for a grant or if the Ugandan Government were to question the existence of the programme.⁷

⁶ A political parties’ forum is provided for in the Constitution and under party legislation but has, until now, not been successfully established.

⁷ Since the fieldwork was conducted, the Government of Uganda has reportedly launched a review of legality of the political parties component of the DDP, suggesting another form of political risk for this work.

Some of those interviewed viewed the inter-party dialogue component as part of a 'twin track approach' to secure the NRM's buy-in alongside the grant-making component. However, others (particularly from other political parties) felt that the NRM's involvement in the inter-party dialogue process, without a strong intermediary to ensure their adherence to the process, could undermine the usefulness of this forum. Overall, it was difficult to identify a clear strategy for how to engage with the NRM in Uganda within this programme.

Table 3 summarises the main types of party assistance present in Uganda.

Table 3: Summary typologies of models of support

Models of support	Objectives	Expected results	Main donors and implementers
Sister model	To strengthen ideologically similar parties	Improved ideological links between participating parties; Improved ability to compete effectively in elections	UK Conservative Party Swedish (WFD) Christian Democrats KAS
Technical assistance model	To build technical skills and capacities of all political parties	Strengthened multi-party system and democracy	NDI (USAID) IRI (USAID) FES
Basket fund model	To support the institutionalisation of parties and build greater dialogue among them	More institutionalised multi-party system and greater competition among parties	DDP (Political parties component supported by UK, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Ireland)

4.2 The approach to results

A common criticism of support to political parties is that it has not gone hand in hand with robust measurement of the results of that support, echoing Power's contention that "...what is most striking about the field of party assistance is the almost complete absence of monitoring and evaluation" (Power 2008: 18). Other evaluations have criticised the lack of frameworks and appropriate methodologies in this area (see Erdmann 2005; Öhman et al 2004). With this in mind, this study sought to analyse some of the approaches to results taken by different donors and implementing organisations.

A common response to questions about results frameworks for party to party models of support was that measuring impact was inherently 'hard to do' and remained one of the biggest challenges. There was general consensus in interviews that measurements of electoral performance were not sufficient but despite this acknowledgement, the overwhelming focus of evaluations and monitoring continue to be grounded in measuring activities (such as feedback from training) and on some qualitative measures (including manifesto development and use). This suggests that little progress is yet being made to strengthen monitoring and evaluation approaches in this field, and during this research it was difficult to access evaluations and assessments, as funders and implementers maintain a preference for not making these publicly available.

A number of implementers of party to party support put forward the measurement of training courses run (including numbers attending, feedback) or of the use of resources (for example, bicycles for activists purchased, resources used to hold national delegates conferences). It was acknowledged in interviews that the impact of exchange visits was particularly hard to capture; some reference was made to collating feedback from these visits but little analysis seems to have been done to ascertain whether exchange visits make any concrete contributions to party development in the longer term. Overall, party to party support tends to focus more on outputs than on trying to measure the longer term impacts. Again, this may reflect the rather

narrow assumptions and objectives of support but it appears as though this model of support to date had paid the least attention to consideration of how to demonstrate impact to date.

The prevalence of party activists and members who lead on implementing this work may contribute to the lack of capacity in evaluation; there was some sense of an inherent belief in the positive contributions that party members can make to other parties, which allowed for approaches to evaluation to be de-prioritised. Finally, the definition of what 'results' providers of this model hope to see draw heavily on their own experiences of political parties (for example, the aspiration to mass membership, policy based, institutionalised parties) at times without recognition of the specific contextual constraints and weaknesses present in Uganda.

Under the programmes defined as technical assistance, approaches to results and evaluation vary, but seem to take a more multi-layered approach. This involves, on the one hand, reviews of outputs such as training activities, but also some broader impact tracking to measure the level of party institutionalisation, for example through the use of polling to measure party support and measures such as the number of candidates which stand for each party. Where work is implemented at district level, there are attempts to verify that district activities have taken place.

A commonly cited challenge was that of attribution, as broader level impact analysis did not appear to easily allow for measurement of the contribution of an individual programme of support. Moreover, implementers of technical assistance felt under pressure from their funders to demonstrate concrete results and 'step changes' in terms of party development, with funders seen as less amenable to the notion of gradual support and longer time frames. At the same time, implementers themselves may have to conform to quite narrow reporting, particular in terms of financial spend⁸.

In interviews, there was some acknowledgement of the limited impact that this form of technical assistance may be able to have on the wider (macro) challenges. In part, this is because support was not always systematic⁹ but also because the wider context, including the dominance of the ruling NRM party, cannot be easily addressed by a technical approach focused on micro level inputs. Implementers themselves do not seem to particularly focus on how they can best demonstrate their impact – although there are some attempts to address the problem with, for example, the IRI and NDI undertaking reviews of their monitoring and evaluation approach at the global level. Moreover, it was commonly cited that wider challenges in governance and for parties had undermined particular projects – such as party factionalism and internal power struggles – but few examples were given where projects were adjusted in response to these challenges, suggesting that evaluation still occurs predominantly at the end of the project cycle rather than throughout, and that it is not used to inform ongoing project design and implementation.

In terms of the approach to results, the DDP PMU has a detailed logframe structured around the institutionalisation of the multi-party system and levels of competition between political parties. This is broken down into measurement of the 'rootedness' of parties in society (using citizen surveys, and proportions of votes to parties and to independents), of parties' internal democracy (measured principally through the holding of national delegates conferences, measurement of the organisational apparatus and through the existence of mechanisms to manage intra-party conflict); and of inclusive inter-party dialogue (through the establishment of a forum) (see Box 2).

⁸ For example, Congressional oversight of USAID sets particular measures which implementers will need to conform to (including benchmarks); USAID is currently reviewing its approach to monitoring and evaluation in this area.

⁹ For example, it often did not cover all parties, or all aspects of parties, and remained ad hoc.

Box 2: Key indicators under the political parties' component of the DDP

Goal: The multiparty system is better institutionalised and enables greater competition among parties

Key indicators include:

- The proportion of inter party competition increases in 2011 elections (and gap between top two parties narrows);
- Total votes cast for Independents reduces by 50%;
- More women party candidates compete for seats;
- All DDP supported parties hold a minimum of quarterly executive committee meetings at district and national levels;
- All DDP supported parties increase the depth of organisational presence in target areas (numbers of party agents, events, candidates);
- There is a reduction in party splits and fewer new parties in 2011 elections;
- 50% of citizens think parties listen to them 'always' or 'often';
- Inter-party dialogue has served as a mechanism for conflict resolution in run-up to 2011 elections.

Overall this represents a more robust approach to measuring realistic results, and one better grounded in the realities of the context. It provides detail on baseline indicators under each target and seems to have set realistic targets which reflect the starting position in Uganda. While it provides a comprehensive listing, and aims to capture the impact of the programme from a number of dimensions, there remains a danger, however, that this logframe becomes rather unwieldy, which could undermine its ability to act as a 'working document' which can be continuously monitored, something which will be key to ensure risks are measured through the programme cycle. At the same time, to varying levels, some of these measures appear to rely on counting activities more than observable behaviour change, and the 'assumptions' column of the logframe did not always articulate all of the risks involved and how they will be mitigated.

The inter-party dialogue component, run by NIMD, seeks to measure results in a number of ways, aligned to key milestones. This includes measuring whether parties begin to talk to each other (for example, whether the inter-party dialogue can actually be established) and then measuring what types of compromises are achieved through dialogue (for example around electoral law) and monitoring how the forum impacts on the overall political situation (in terms of strengthening democracy, building relationships between parties and citizens and so on). These involve some measure of subjective evaluation as well as ongoing monitoring; this study was not able to determine the extent to which this is currently taking place (and the dialogue component is itself still in the set-up phase).

Where assumptions do not seem to adequately reflect the realities of the political context, this clearly poses challenges for the measurement of results. Most of the current models of results studied focus on activities, but where these are disconnected from the wider political reality, they are not able to meet larger changes which are the stated aims of support (such as a stronger multi-party system). Setting more realistic objectives but also those which reflect the political context in which support will be delivered still appears to be lacking in many of the models of support studied. The political parties' component of the DDP appears to have benefitted from a longer design period in which analysis of options for support and of the context in Uganda was conducted, and this may have strengthened the design of the logframe and the overall approach, but improvements could still be made to ensure that monitoring and evaluation can easily happen through the programme cycle.

Finally, the lack of coordination across different models of support seems to present particular challenges, including for isolating or examining results. In practice, programmes of support appear to be highly separate from each other. There was a common refrain during interviews that there is simply a plurality of models in Uganda and that this needs to be accepted. However, while there is some information sharing between implementers and donors, there was no evidence of strategic coordination between different models. This brings with it risks, in terms of the likelihood for duplication in activities and funding but also where different models

may clash or work against each other. It was not clear that these risks were currently being adequately monitored. Moreover, where political parties receive assistance from a number of sources, it may make it more difficult to isolate the individual impacts at project level. Greater information sharing among funders and implementers could help to address these blockages; but conducting evaluations which can look across a number of projects or forms of assistance may also be a helpful way of discerning overall impacts of party assistance. This may be more meaningful than a focus only on project level inputs and impacts.

5 What are the emerging lessons from Uganda?

The analysis above confirms some of the findings of others that 'standard methods' alone are unlikely to be effective in the field of party assistance (Carothers 2006; Power 2008). Technical assistance or party to party support with a weak ideological base does not seem to adequately engage with the wider structural challenges and constraints which shape political parties and their development in Uganda. Moreover, Ugandan political parties remain fundamentally shaped by domestic processes and actors, placing defined limits on what external actors can really do to shape their incentives and dynamics in the short term. This does not mean, however, that there is nothing that external actors can do. Looking forward, there seem to be three key areas to build on.

Direct support may be appropriate, but process is everything

Firstly, our analysis suggests that in the Ugandan context and in light of the specific opening of the multi-party system and heavy resource constraints for opposition parties, the grant-making component of the DDP appears to be a better 'fit' to the context than some of the other models examined.

This does not necessarily mean that grant-making of this kind would be appropriate to other contexts – or even that grant-making will always be appropriate in the Ugandan context. Rather it seems to reflect the importance of the process involved in designing this component, with its emphasis on research, analysis and assessment processes with all parties, as well as the importance of ensuring that adequate staffing and resources are in place. This process needs to identify and seek to engage with the incentives, power dynamics and wider structures which shape political parties in any given context.

Political intelligence and engagement is crucial

Secondly, ensuring that the aims and modes of support adequately address the context requires strong understanding of that context. This means ensuring that adequate levels of 'political intelligence' are in place and monitored. Political economy analysis can help to understand the dynamics in a given context, and can be usefully integrated into the design phase of a programme of assistance. But, as political contexts and relationships are often fluid, there also needs to be a continuous testing of assumptions and analysis throughout implementation phases too.

This requires the maintenance of both strong knowledge of the context but also formal and informal networks which allow for the ongoing feedback of information. For example, the level of 'fit' between the DDP design and the context in Uganda in large part seems to reflect the knowledge and networks of staff within the DDP PMU. This implies both a focus on the right skills and levels of expertise for staff – so that they are able to engage with the political context and dynamics effectively – but also the right institutional incentives, so that staff are allowed time to build up relationships of trust with different parties as well as wider networks. This was not always in evidence in other implementing organisations or for all donor agencies.

Alongside context analysis and the use of networks, ongoing political engagement might imply a differing emphasis on the roles external actors can play. To date, donor agencies are some of the key external actors in Uganda, which can lead to a default approach towards the creation of programmes of assistance and capacity development (as are already implemented in

relation to civil society and so on). However, the DDP appears to offer some interesting lessons in terms of an attempt to also play roles in brokering and negotiating with parties, for example through the assessment process for grants. It has also brought together diplomatic and development programming to a greater extent, with Ambassadors, for example, playing key roles in setting up the programme.

This suggests the potential for taking a broader view of party assistance and engagement, and to think not always in terms of funded programmes but also acknowledge the importance of networking, convening, facilitating and at times brokering with and between political parties. This does not mean 'picking sides' in the sense of supporting one party over another, but rather thinking more broadly of the range of roles external actors might play in seeking to support the party system and the wider political system in Uganda.

The need for strategies for engagement with dominant party and risk mitigation

Thirdly, the nature of the ruling party's relationship to the state is a defining feature of Ugandan politics at present. This requires strategies for engaging with the NRM but also for addressing state-party fusion – and for managing the associated risks this might entail. Support to political parties in Uganda will need to engage with these risks (explicitly or implicitly) to be effective.

One first step is the need to better refine the typologies used to describe contexts such as Uganda. Carothers distinguishes between two forms of dominant party system, one which is 'malign' and one which is 'benign' (Carothers 2006). Malign dominant party systems are those in which the "ruling party has a stranglehold on power and is bent on frustrating the efforts of other parties to gain any significant power"; Benign party systems are those where the dominant party remains strong but tolerates the existence of other parties (Ibid 2006: 222). In Uganda, elements of the system appear to be both benign and malign, with particular concerns around the dominance of the President in some key areas (see Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2009). This suggests that such clear cut distinctions cannot be easily made.

To varying degrees all of the models of support examined appear to struggle with determining how best to operate in this context. One common rebuttal put forward by implementers of support is that in relatively small programmes, it is very challenging to address issues at the heart of the overall political system. However the analysis here suggests that some models could do much more to address some of the core power conundrums, such as the fusion between the ruling party and the state in Uganda. The basket fund model appeared to best recognise this challenge and to seek to respond to it in more innovative ways (through grant-making and inter-party dialogue) but at its core, interviews identified a lack of clarity at the highest levels as to the strategy for engaging the ruling party and, potentially, for trying to achieve greater separation between party and state.

Overall, designing programmes of support to political parties poses a number of significant challenges, in light of the political sensitivities and risks involved and the incentives and power dynamics which shape party development. Learning from the Ugandan experience, the importance of ensuring a strong process for designing programmes (which is responsive to context) and building political intelligence and relationships of trust with political parties seems key. But some broader lessons also emerge which look beyond specific programmes of support to parties and suggest that external actors could be doing much more to engage more effectively with political actors and processes in contexts like Uganda.

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Annex 1: List of interviews

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- Phillipa Broom, Westminster Foundation for Democracy
- Andrew Colburn, USAID
- Peter Girke, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
- Jason Grimes, British Embassy
- Kikungwe Issa, Democratic Party
- John Baptist Kakooza, Democratic Party
- Henry Kascca, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
- Heather Kashner, National Democratic Institute
- Melle Leenstra, Minbuza
- Jeremy Liebowitz, International Republican Institute
- Ken Lukyamuzi, Conservative Party
- Shaun Mackay, Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy
- Gorild Mathisen, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Daudi Migereko, National Resistance Movement
- Joyce Ngaiza, Minbuza
- Omar Kalinge Ngago, JEEMA
- Mathias Nsubuga, Democratic Party
- Chris Opoka Okumu, United People's Congress
- Alfred Okello Oryem, Electoral Commission
- Simon Osborn, DDP PMU
- Robert Kabushenga, New Vision
- Augustine Ruzindana, Forum for Democratic Change
- Gjermund Sather, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Martin Shearman, British High Commissioner
- Bidandi Ssali, Peoples Progressive Party
- Nicholas de Torrente, DDP PMU
- Maja de Vibe, UK Department for International Development