

## Strategic Evaluation of Austrian Development Cooperation's Engagement on Good Governance (2007-2017)

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The concept of Good Governance (GG) has been prominent on the international agenda for decades and continuously evolved since. For the international community it has been a key to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development and human security. This was reflected in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) back in 2000 and is so now in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A universally accepted definition does, however not exist. As a result, terminology, measurements and related tools used differ. The promotion of good governance has also been a cornerstone of Austrian development cooperation ADC. The Federal Act on Development Cooperation (DCA) explicitly refers to it as a means to achieving peace and human security, one of the three primary objectives of Austria's development cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

### THE EVALUATION

This formative strategic evaluation took place between February 2019 and March 2020 and was conducted by an independent evaluation team. It is the first strategic evaluation of ADC's engagement on Good Governance and assesses its engagement at strategic, policy and operational level between 2007 and 2017.

The evaluation was commissioned to inform decision-making regarding ADC's future engagement. It aimed at developing a joint understanding around GG by reconstructing a Theory of Change (ToC); identifying learnings from ADC's experiences and assessing the engagement along the criteria relevance, effectiveness/impact, efficiency as well as coherence, complementarity and coordination.

### METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used a theory-based evaluation design focusing on understanding

how and under which conditions an intervention produces effects based on a theory of change (ToC). Within the theory-based design, the evaluation drew on contribution analysis (Mayne, 2012) as an analytical approach to investigate the effects of ADC's GG engagement along the reconstructed ToC. The evaluation adopted a mixed-method approach. In total, 170 stakeholders contributed to this evaluation. The qualitative data collection methods included desk research, interviews, focus group discussions and participatory workshops formats for developing the ToC, validating preliminary findings and refining recommendations. The quantitative data collection comprised an online survey with project implementers. Two country case studies were conducted to gain, to the extent possible, qualitative insights on the effectiveness of ADC's GG engagement in a particular country context. Uganda and Albania were selected for the case studies using a two-tiered purposeful sampling approach (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2013; Palmberger & Gingrich, 2013).

### KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

**The ADC GG policy approach is no longer fully up to date with international discourses and lacks internal consistency, limiting its relevance within and outside ADC.** It has not evolved significantly from 2007 and 2017 and has not been reviewed in the light of recent discourses, such as the SDGs on political economy or the terminology around the concept.

**The ADC GG policy approach and its engagement are broad in scope, rendering a specialization of ADC difficult. ADC's operational engagement reflects ADC strategies. The Policy Document and Handbook are seldom used in practice.** Country and regional strategies are important guideposts for designing and

---

<sup>1</sup> Federal Act on Development Cooperation (2002) including its Amendment (2003), Part 1, Section 1, (3).

implementing engagement. ADA's thematic Advisors on GG are key in ensuring adequate intervention design. The Policy Document is perceived as too abstract, lacking focus and prioritization. The Handbook only exists in German language and is therefore not accessible to many ADC stakeholders. It is perceived of limited use for practitioners in terms of content and format

**ADC's operational GG engagement in the Uganda and Albania is mostly effective.** ADC made contributions to all three identified outcome areas of the ToC: government effectiveness, rule of law, democratic participation. Capacity development of national or local authorities and non-state actors is a cornerstone to achieve objectives. Enabling factors for ADC's GG engagement are dedicated ADA staff on GG ensuring intervention design and follow-up, the creation of ownership for GG principles and the quality and duration of partnerships.

**Scarce staff capacities limit ADC's abilities to engage in strategic and policy discourse and to follow up on operational engagement.** ADC is understaffed for steering and implementation of the GG portfolio and for engagement at the policy, country and international levels. Despite limited human resources, the staff is perceived as highly competent and devoted by implementing and other development partners.

**The current quality of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of data and systems on the country and intervention level creates barriers for results-based steering and management and the evaluation of the portfolio.** At the level of country strategies and individual interventions, M&E data was found to be of heterogeneous quality. Not all country strategies employ logframes, where they exist, they do not always reflect the intervention logic, indicators are not consistently SMART, and the methodological quality of project evaluations and data collection project reports are not always adequate.

**The main added value and comparative advantage of ADC's engagement on GG lies in its partnership approach.** It is characterized by a willingness to engage in long-term partnerships with a diversity of partners. ADC staff's dedication and flexibility to take advantage of emerging

opportunities constitute another strength. This makes ADC highly relevant for the needs of partners and target groups and provides efficiency and effectiveness gains.

**The intentional and strategic use of modalities in GG interventions can increase the implementation efficiency as well as effectiveness at country level.** The evaluation found that ADC works through implementation modalities that leverage its resources as a small development partner. ADC resorts to pooled funding, sector budget support and other multi-donor initiatives out of strategic considerations.

## KEY STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. MFA and ADA should **jointly review ADC's GG approach to sharpen it and prioritize areas of engagement** based on a participatory discussion of the ToC involving coordination offices.
2. MFA and ADA should **revise the GG Policy Document to reflect an updated GG approach** and catch up on academic and international discourse.
3. ADA should **decide on whether a GG Handbook is needed** in future, in which case the current version should be revised.
4. MFA and ADA should **jointly devise a strategy for introducing and mainstreaming the revised approach** within ADC.
5. MFA and ADA should **strengthen synergies within country-level GG portfolios** by prioritizing this aspect in the formulation of future country strategies.
6. MFA and ADA should **undertake a capacity needs assessment for staff working on GG** at Headquarters and in selected coordination offices.
7. MFA and ADA should **strengthen results management for GG engagement** at country level and intervention level.
8. MFA and ADA should **make potential synergies, between modalities and types of implementing partners working towards GG, more explicit** in ADC strategic documents and at operational level.
9. ADA should **continue to engage in long-term partnerships on GG to harness the added value** of ADC's GG engagement.