



**Project Report**  
**Assessing Democracy Assistance**

Co-financed by:



## *Assessing Democracy Assistance:*

# Ghana<sup>1</sup>

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*This report is FRIDE's contribution to a project entitled 'Assessing Democracy Assistance' that is being carried out by the World Movement for Democracy. The project aims to gather views on how democracy support can be improved and its impact enhanced. Other case studies and a synthesis report can be found at [www.fride.org](http://www.fride.org).*

Freedom and justice were two of the main goals of Ghana's independence movement in the 1950s. However, for much of Ghana's fifty-two years of nationhood, these goals have proved somewhat elusive. Challenges to Ghana's democracy began shortly after independence in 1957. The Kwame Nkrumah-led Convention People's Party (CPP) government abandoned the Westminster-style parliamentary constitution inherited from Britain after just three years, and introduced changes that ultimately broadened the president's constitutional authority to detain persons without trial, nullify court decisions and sack judges. Within a few years of nationhood, Ghana had officially become a one-party state, with life tenure effectively conferred on Nkrumah. After Nkrumah's removal by a military coup in 1966, Ghana laboured for the next thirty years under a succession of military juntas interspersed with short-lived civilian governments.

Ghana's current democratic path began in the early 1990s with the formulation of the liberal democratic 1992 Constitution. The Constitution provides a two term limit for the president, a Parliament elected through universal adult suffrage, the protection of a wide array of human rights, and an independent judiciary.

Ghana has made great strides in democratic governance in the seventeen years this Constitution has been in force. This is demonstrated by a substantial expansion in the enjoyment of civil liberties; the emergence of a robust civil society and a vibrant media, and the significant

<sup>1</sup> The project 'Assessing Democracy Assistance' is supported by the United Nations Democracy Fund, the UK Department for International Development, the Arab Democracy Foundation, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, the National Endowment for Democracy and the Smith Richardson Foundation. The research methodology for this report is explained in an appendix at the end of the main text. Responsibility for this report and the views expressed are solely those of the author(s), and do not necessarily represent the positions of either FRIDE, the World Movement for Democracy, or the funders.

democratisation of civil-military relations. Moreover, the five successive multi-party elections have been progressively more free and fair. The country's two main political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP) have alternated between government and opposition.

However, formidable gaps remain. The constitution is fraught with design flaws: it grants vast appointment powers to the president, leading to extreme weaknesses in the system of checks and balances, including parliamentary oversight. An excessively powerful presidency has left the capture of the executive branch/presidency the overwhelmingly dominant objective of multiparty competition, a situation intensified by the recent discovery of off-shore oil reserves in Ghana.

Levels of governmental accountability and transparency are highly inadequate. The salaries and other conditions of service for the president, ministers of state, and parliamentarians are largely shrouded in secrecy; public office-holder asset disclosure rules are weak, successive governments have stalled on the passage of a right to information legislation and political patronage and official corruption remain entrenched. Despite clear improvements after the disputed 1992 polls, election management and security remain feeble; the voters' register is over-subscribed; polls are dogged by abuse of incumbency and tension, threats, intimidation and sporadic violence, sometimes with ethno-regional undertones, are increasingly commonplace.

Ghana's democratic political culture is underdeveloped and formal democratic institutions and processes give inadequate voice to poor and marginalised groups. In addition, the constitutionally mandated program of decentralisation has stalled. Presidential appointments of local government functionaries are typically made on the basis of party loyalty rather than competence, further undermining local government efficiency, responsiveness and accountability. External support has been significant in Ghana's democratic growth. Continued democratic consolidation requires sustained and well-targeted external assistance.

Thus, while Ghana's democracy continues to grow under the Fourth Republic and her democracy has made significant strides; in comparison to other countries African countries, serious democratic deficits still remain. Although external support has been significant in Ghana's democratic growth, continued democratic progress and deepening would require sustained and well-targeted external assistance.

## Overview of donor activities

Donor activities in support of Ghana's democratisation have been extensive and varied. Carried out under the rubric of democracy and government assistance, they have covered a range of governance concerns including support for civil society, local government reform, parliamentary support, electoral reform, voter education campaigns and anti-corruption initiatives. This study focuses on donor democracy assistance to Ghana in three inter-related areas: election transparency, credibility and peacefulness; parliament strengthening; and governmental transparency, accountability and anti-corruption.

## Promoting peaceful and credible elections

External donors have been heavily involved in Ghanaian elections and electoral reforms from the beginning of the Fourth Republic following the disputed presidential polls, the ensuing boycott of the parliamentary elections by the main opposition parties and the near derailment of Ghana's early 1990s democratic transition. Ghana's steady progress from the flawed 1992 elections to reasonably successful elections has largely been funded by western donor agencies. USAID has provided critical leadership and assistance towards the electoral reform efforts in Ghana. In 1994 alone the US aid agency invested a total of USD 9 million towards Ghana's electoral reform efforts. USAID's assistance has included direct budgetary support to the Electoral Commission as well as support to civil society groups engaged in election-related activities. While concerns over the integrity of the voters' register have lingered, donor support in introducing and expanding the use of photo identification voter cards in Ghanaian polls beginning from 1996 and especially after 2000 has helped to reduce impersonation and improve election integrity. Donor support has also made possible the vast

expansion in international and local media as well as domestic group participation in election observation. Funding from USAID, the European Union (EU), the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and other external sources enabled the Center for Democratic Development (CDD)/Coalition of Domestic Elections Observers (CODEO) alone to send over 7000 observers.

The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the European Union (EU), the Dutch government-funded Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) are but a few of the other major donors to the Ghana electoral reform efforts. The UNDP's election support activities have included grants to the EC for the purchase of equipment and training of both EC staff and polling agents. The UNDP and others have supported efforts by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and various local civil society bodies to undertake civic and voter education and to create platforms for getting voters to interact with candidates. The UNDP and other external funders have enabled the NCCE, West African Network for Peace, the Forum for Religious Bodies and others to conduct campaigns for electoral peace. The UNDP-coordinated Peace Council played a key behind-the-scenes role in brokering peace in many delicate stages of the 2008 polls. German Embassy funding enabled the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)/ CODEO to systematically monitor election violence and undertake conflict prevention work in some parts of northern Ghana and other conflict-prone areas during the same elections.

The EU is fast becoming a major player in electoral reform assistance in Ghana. In 2004 alone the EU supported the Electoral Commission to the tune of about EUR 2 million. This grant was used for the procurement and printing of the ballot papers used on election-day; shortage of election ballots has been shown to cause election violence. A similar support package was offered during the 2008 national polls. The EU also supported the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and a coalition of NGOs, including the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), the Institute for Policy Analysis (IPA) and other community-based organisations in voter education exercises and the monitoring of the election process.

The Canadian government, through CIDA, has also been supportive of electoral processes in Ghana. CIDA gave a grant of CAD 2.5 million to support the Electoral Commission's 'Training of Candidates and Polling Agents' project. By the time of the elections in December 2008 the project had trained approximately 20 presidential candidates, their running mates, their campaign managers and national chairmen, around 1150 parliamentary candidates and an estimated 220,000 agents for 22,000 polling stations nationwide. A further 600 District Electoral Officers and Returning Officers were also trained. The effect of these efforts is of course not directly observable.

The Dutch government through the NIMD also provides key funding to the IEA's Ghana Political Parties Program (GPPP). Giving regular grants and technical support to the major political parties with representation in parliament under the NIMD/IEA's GPPP has not only helped to strengthen institutional capacities, but has also partially levelled the electoral playing field for Ghana's political parties. The successful presidential candidate debates held in Accra and Tamale in the 2008 polls also significantly helped to lower the overheated pre-election political temperature.

Under the Ghana Research and Advocacy Program (G-RAP), the UK Department of International and Foreign Development (DFID), DANIDA, CIDA, the EU and other Western donors have pooled resources and coordinated their efforts to provide institutional and programme support to a selection of local civil society bodies engaged research in and advocacy on election integrity.

While the above examples are by no means an exhaustive view of the plethora of electoral reform programmes in Ghana, they should nevertheless provide a sense of the variety of targeted assistance efforts on the ground.

## Strengthening Parliament

The donor community has offered varied forms of support aimed at shoring up the institutional capacity of Parliament since 1992. USAID's 'international visitors' programme has proven highly popular with Ghanaian MPs. As part of the programme, selected members have toured and learnt about the workings of the US Congress and other key US government institutions. In the words of the first speaker of Parliament, Hon. Doe Adjaho, 'those MPs who received this training are the most effective in Parliament'.

US government support has helped the US-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) to implement a number of programmes to build and strengthen the capacity of the Ghana's parliament. The NDI ran a series of workshops between June 1997 and October 2000 aimed at building the capacity of the legislature to draft and reviewing legislation independent of the executive branch, strengthening parliamentary committees, and increasing the capacity of Ghanaian NGOs to utilise available methods to improve the legislative process. With USAID funding, CDD-Ghana ran programmes from 2000–2008 to build the capacity of selected parliamentary committees (constitutional and legal affairs, subsidiary legislation, government assurances, judiciary, local government, social welfare and state enterprises), the library, research, and public affairs departments; to mobilise civil society/non-state inputs into their deliberations and enhance public access to them. Under the same USAID-funded programme, CDD-Ghana provided technical support to the Judiciary Committee to organise ground-breaking nationwide public hearings into perceptions of corruption in the administration of justice in Ghana. DANIDA has also supported the public hearings of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament. This exercise allows Parliament – in the public eye – to scrutinise the work of the executive branch and ask for answers regarding the appropriation of public funds.

CIDA support has enabled the Canadian Parliamentary Center (CPC) to maintain a long partnership with the Parliament of Ghana. From the mid to late 1990s onwards, CPC, the World Bank Institute and CIDA have collaborated with IEA and other local NGOs to undertake workshops and visits to relevant institutions in Canada to strengthen the capacity of the Public Accounts and Finance committees of Parliament. CIDA's Ghana Parliamentary Committee Support Project (GPCSP) has extended grant support to the five parliamentary committees that oversee the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS). The GPCSP also helps create opportunities for civil society dialogue and consultation on the implementation of the GPRS. The project is ultimately aimed at increasing the levels of accountability, transparency, and public participation in the parliamentary process. The GPCSP has so far overseen the training of about a dozen NGOs on monitoring poverty reduction projects, held a caucus on general challenges faced by female members of Parliament, and has helped to establish links between parliamentary committees and community-based organisations. CIDA also highlights as successes of the parliamentary support programme increased cooperation and bi-partisan work within key parliamentary committees, improvement of the capacity and understanding of committee members and their staff of Parliament's role in fostering accountability, and the advancement of gender equality in the work of key parliamentary committees in Ghana.

The World Bank in Ghana has offered support to Parliament through its 'Public Financial Management Assistance Project (PFMAP)'. The Bank's support is directed at the Public Accounts committee, the Finance committee and the Poverty Reduction select committee. The Bank's governance intervention efforts in Ghana are centred on the need to strengthen the capacity of state institutions so they can help to deliver the public goods necessary to bring about development. The PFMAP has supported the training of research officers and other technical support staff of parliament.

## Strengthening governmental transparency, accountability and anti-corruption

The aid community has sought to strengthen the processes and institutions for ensuring governmental transparency, accountability and integrity. DANIDA has provided fairly consistent support to the promotion of anti-corruption in Ghana's Fourth Republic. DANIDA funding to both state and non-state bodies in the late 1990s helped to lay the foundations for the emergence of a broad anti-corruption movement in Ghana. DANIDA funding and technical support from Transparency International (TI) was crucial to the convening of Ghana's first national integrity conference in 1998, which paved the way for the formation of the local chapter of TI (Ghana Integrity Initiative; GII). In addition to DANIDA, external support to GII has come through USAID, DFID, GTZ, TI and others, which has enabled GII to emerge as the leading non-state anti-corruption advocacy body. DANIDA grants to the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) have been pivotal to that body's anti-corruption programmes.

DANIDA, USAID, UNDP and German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) funding was crucial to the emergence and development of the capacities of cross-sectoral national anti-corruption coalitions such as GII and the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC). World Bank and UNDP funding supported the GACC study that formed the basis of the national anti-corruption plans of the early 2000s.

As in other areas of external democracy assistance, multi-donor basket funding approaches have increasingly come to dominate donor support to accountability transparency and anti-corruption activities in Ghana. G-RAP is perhaps the most successful of these efforts in recent years. The G-RAP involves pooled funding from the CIDA, the Netherlands Embassy, DANIDA, and Britain's DFID. The agencies have committed a total grant amount of USD 7 million to the project so far. G-RAP provides core grant support to Ghanaian NGOs. G-RAP's core grant is intended to strengthen the capacity and funding base of these institutions. The size of each grant is tailored to the needs and absorption capacity of each successful applicant and ranges between 25 and 40 per cent of the institution's total annual budget per grant year.

The World Bank office in Ghana has made small grants available to civil society groups to undertake research and advocacy on specific transparency and accountability issues. The focus of the Bank's grants, ranging from USD 50,000 to 100,000 per project, has varied from year to year. In 2009, for instance, the World Bank will support research and advocacy on the governance of oil and gas resources. The Bank also offers technical assistance to key governance accountability outfits such as the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) and the Audit Service. The DFID-funded Rights and Voice Initiative (RAVI) is another fairly successful pooled civil society support project in Ghana. The RAVI, which began in 2005 with a commitment of GBP 4.5 million, gives money to local civil society organisations to engage with the government on a range of voice and accountability issues, including the passing and enforcement of laws protecting the rights of the vulnerable in society. The perceived success of this initiative has attracted the interest of CIDA, EU, DANIDA and the Netherlands Embassy, who wish to join the second phase of the RAVI project.

## Local views on the impact of democracy aid projects

Local actors in Ghana's democracy promotion community uniformly agree that external democracy assistance has been crucial to the country's efforts to make the transition from a quasi-military and civilian authoritarian order to a relatively open and stable democracy. Actors in state and governmental bodies as well as those in media and civil society readily acknowledge that external support has been extremely helpful to their respective institutions and programmes. Indeed, many of Ghana's civil society organisations readily acknowledge that they would not be in existence or functional without the sustained financial, technical and moral support they receive from the donor community. They indicate that opportunities for generating resources locally are extremely limited, especially because the domestic private sector is weak and beholden to the state.

## Peacefulness and credibility of elections

Both state and non-governmental actors believe that the solid institutional reputation Ghana's election management body has acquired and the relative peacefulness and credibility of polls in the Fourth Republic is due to external funding. External democracy aid has been crucial to the ability of state and non-state bodies to undertake election transparency and credibility enhancing programmes. It has also been vital to the staff and technical capacity strengthening of these same bodies.

Donor assistance has helped to broaden the space for civil society engagement and participation in the electoral process. Sustained external support has also assisted in the improvement of civil society's technical capacity, which in turn has increasingly enhanced its public standing. It has also enabled domestic civil society to extend the reach of its election-support programs nationwide. CODEO, which comprises over 30 national secular and religious civil society bodies, has been able to mobilise several thousands of citizens to undertake nationwide poll watching since 2000. The presidential debates organised by the IEA with Dutch/NIMD funding enjoyed the cooperation of all major parties in the 2008 polls. The emergence of diverse domestic civil society bodies, with considerable technical competence and credibility monitoring the processes before, during and after elections has complemented the EC's independence and credibility. It has also reduced the EC's dependence on self-interested or rival politicians to vouch for its credibility and the outcomes of the elections it manages. Grants from USAID and other donors enabled the CDD/CODEO and others to monitor and help secure the integrity of the 2008 polls. The introduction of a Parallel Vote Tally (PVT) system by CODEO in 2008 broke new ground in civil society's ability to independently verify the election results announced by the Electoral Commission (see box 2). The visible presence of these local groups and media, combined with the unprecedented number of international election observer groups in Ghana ahead of the 2008 polls, certainly boosted electoral transparency and public confidence in the process.

Donor funding and encouragement has helped to put in place reasonably effective mechanisms for resolving electoral conflicts among Ghanaian political parties and candidates, without having to resort to destabilising tactics. The IPAC, for example, has allowed the political parties to sort out disagreements behind the scenes. Dutch government/NIMD political party support grants facilitated the development and adoption of a code of conduct for the parties in the 2008 polls. The IEA used the same grant to organise debates for presidential candidates from the main political parties during the 2008 election campaign, which helped to calm the rather tense process.

A variety of donor-funded programs have helped to attenuate the uneven electoral playing field. The exchange programmes between Ghanaian political parties and developed democracy affiliates (between the New Patriotic Party and European liberal democratic parties and party foundations, and between the National Democratic Congress and European socialist/social democratic parties), IMD party development assistance and other packages have provided training in fundraising and campaign management to party officials, which has helped opposition parties in particular to build capacity and reduce their resource deprivation.

### Box 1: Elections in Ghana

Ghana's first elections in 1992 were severely flawed. The opposition parties (and some international observers) believed that the process had been rigged to ensure the self-succession of Rawlings and the erstwhile quasi-military Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) administration, which had rebranded itself as a political party called the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The opposition boycotted the subsequent parliamentary elections, leaving the NDC with 198 of the 200 parliamentary seats. Independent candidates won two seats.

The opposition was coaxed back into the political process with the indirect support of the international community. The Interparty Advisory Committee (IPAC), which consists of representatives of all the parties, was established by the Electoral Commission to help oversee the implementation of opposition demands. With donor support, the electoral register was substantially cleaned, reforms were instituted for greater transparency in the voting process (for example by the introduction of clear ballot boxes) and changes were made to provide more equal access to the state media by opposition political parties. Donors also supported the creation of a network of domestic observers to monitor the election. As a result of these reforms, the 1996 elections were a significant improvement. The opposition parties won a third of the parliamentary seats, and in 2000 won both the presidential and the parliamentary elections. Donor support was vital in bringing about these outcomes, particularly in the 2000 election. The support of an independent media environment, further improvements in the voters register and support for a vibrant civil society contributed to the change of power that occurred in Ghana in 2000.

Donor support has also proven to be crucial to the progressive improvements in Ghana's electoral system since the 2000 election. The IPAC continues to be a vital institution for the identification and resolution of issues in the electoral process. In addition to this, donor support for the repeal of the criminal libel statute in 2001, and subsequent donor interventions to financially support the work of the EC, the NCCE and various civil society organisations were important in ensuring the success of the 2004 elections.

Improvements in the electoral process faced their toughest test in the 2008 elections, in which the ruling NPP and the main opposition parties were roughly equal in electoral strength and Ghana was set to become an oil producing nation within a few years. The Electoral Commission withstood severe pressure from the contestants and demonstrated professionalism, independence and neutrality. The winner of the 2008 election was decided by the narrowest of margins, after an election that was characterised by tension, sporadic violence and ethnic voting. The eventual success of the 2008 polls and the peaceful political handover in January 2009 is widely attributed to the electoral system, whose credibility proved strong enough to deter the losing party (which also happened to be the ruling party) from attempting to manipulate the result. Donor support since 1992 has been fundamental in ensuring the credibility of the electoral system.

Despite the obvious success of donor support in this area, Ghana's electoral system still faces cultural and institutional obstacles, some of which were highlighted by the 2008 election. Abuse of incumbency remains an issue. The lack of effective campaign finance oversight structures makes it impossible to track sources of campaign funding, and the amount and nature of campaign spending by politicians. Ethnic campaigning appears to be increasing, and both major parties used intimidation and harassment to maximize votes in their regional strongholds. Also, as donor assistance helps to consolidate Ghana's democracy, new problems are arising. The major parties are now evenly matched. This is a fact that is known to both the parties and the voters and has both positive and negative consequences. The electorate now expects politicians to provide them with both public goods and patronage. The political parties recognise that as they are evenly matched, and electoral violations are rarely effectively sanctioned, gaining any undue advantage by illegal or unethical means can reap rich rewards. This, at least in part, accounts for the heightened levels of violence and intimidation in the 2008 presidential elections.

There has also been a tendency for recurrent problems in the electoral process such as weakness in election security, defects in the voters' register and abuse of incumbency, which are glossed over in an orgy of self congratulation once the elections conclude. The victorious party lauds the polls as clean and celebrates its victory, and donors celebrate their part in yet another successful Ghanaian election. It is only when the next election approaches that interest in addressing recurrent electoral defects resurfaces. Donor election assistance to Ghana must not be narrowly focused on polls but on improving the overall institutional and cultural context for credible elections.

## Control of corruption and enhancement of governmental transparency

Corruption remains endemic and a culture of official secrecy prevails, although key actors interviewed credited external donor assistance support with helping to enhance government transparency and raising levels of public awareness of official corruption.

External donors actively supported local efforts to overcome official media repression and expand the frontiers of media freedom and free speech in the early 1990s, culminating in the emergence of independent FM radio stations in the mid-1990s and the repeal of the criminal libel law in 2001. Additionally, donor assistance has enabled Ghanaian civil society bodies to sustain their campaign for the passing of a right to official information law since the late 1990s. For instance, a USAID grant supported the IEA-led drafting of the 'whistle-blower' protection legislation. Indeed, donor encouragement, moral and material support has been altogether crucial in expanding the space for local non-state bodies to sustain anti-corruption and transparency promotion. Funding has enabled the Ghana Journalists' Association, West African Media Foundation, IEA, CDD, GII, GACC and other non-state bodies, as well as the Ghanaian media at large to undertake programmes promoting official transparency.

The constitutional fusion of the executive and legislature in Ghana, and the fact that the Minister of Justice is also the Attorney General impose major structural constraints on the promotion of governmental transparency and accountability. This is compounded by the problem of the funding of key state bodies mandated to promote transparency in governmental affairs and helping to combat official corruption and abuse of office such as CHRAJ (which combines human rights protection, ombudsman and anti-corruption functions), the National Media Commission (NMC), the Serious Fraud Office (SFO), the Auditor General's Department and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament. By law, the state is responsible for funding these bodies. However, state funding to these institutions is typically inadequate and barely covers programmes. These official government transparency and anti-corruption bodies acknowledge the importance of external support to help them reduce funding and capacity gaps, especially with respect to staff, technical capacity-building and public education.

## Strengthening Parliament: the local opinion

Local actors acknowledge that today's Parliament is more effective than the first Parliament of the Fourth Republic, if only because it has acquired a degree of legitimacy in public opinion. However, the impact of external assistance on strengthening the Parliament of Ghana's Fourth Republic is largely rated as low, despite this area receiving external support since the mid-1990s. The oversight and legislative capacity remains generally weak.

The general framework of donor assistance to Ghana's parliament has received some criticism. Most of the support programmes are directed at specific parliamentary committees; the leadership of Parliament decries this practice and calls for a more even support for the entire institution of Parliament. They also point out that the forms of aid offered do not address Parliament's most basic needs, such as office space.

## Other local views on the impact of external democracy assistance

Local actors have mixed opinions regarding the efficacy of different forms of external support. Some local recipients of external aid, notably independent state and constitutionally-mandated democratic governance agencies such as the EC, parliament and the NCCE, express a clear preference for 'in-kind' rather than 'in-cash' external support. State funding to such bodies is always insufficient; it only provides enough to pay salaries and other recurrent expenditures. Donor support enables them to reduce gaps in staffing and technical capacity-building and to undertake actual programmes. As an EC employee stated, external financial support is less helpful 'mainly because you would be told directly what to use the money [for]', even if such a project is not critical to the recipient at that time. In-kind support is also favoured by political parties, who claim it allows them the room to build staff and other institutional capacities. These views contrast sharply with the majority of local non-state actors, who said they would accept any form of external assistance, but would much prefer financial democracy assistance, particularly as it allows them greater flexibility of use.

Those working for state institutions within the executive branch of the government and those from independent state institutions and civil society had rather different views regarding channelling external democracy assistance through the central government versus giving it directly to the local actors. Executive branch actors such as the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MOFEP) and National Governance Program (NGP; an executive branch agency responsible for coordinating governance institutions and reforms) tend to perceive direct external democracy assistance to state and non-state civil society democracy promotion bodies as inefficient. To MOFEP, for instance, financial support channelled through general budget support is the best form of external assistance to democracy promotion. Executive branch officials also believe that direct external financial support to democracy promotion bodies is likely to be based on inflated and self-serving needs assessments by grant seekers. By contrast, CSOs laud direct external support because it enables them to maintain their independence from the government. Multi-year and/or multi-donor external funding mechanisms such as G-RAP and RAVI are particularly popular among civil society groups because they partially cover core institutional cost, allow for medium-term programming and are deemed less susceptible to governmental manipulation.

Local actors generally rate the impact of external democracy assistance as very high at the meso level of politics (notably election credibility, media and civil society vibrancy), but quite weak at macro and micro levels. For instance, institutional checks and balances remain insufficient; official corruption and opacity prevail. Local actors deem external democracy support to be largely ineffective with respect to local government decentralisation. They also believe that the impact of external democracy aid is mostly felt in Accra, with barely any effect in rural areas. An Action Aid employee did suggest, however, that the growing emphasis on a rights-based approach to democracy and increased governance promotion activities might help to reduce the gap. Local actors are also concerned that Ghana's democracy may become too dependent on external sources of support.

## Shared understanding of democracy

Those interviewed for this case study generally shared a common understanding of democracy. Most cited credible elections, freedoms, rights, voice and accountability as essential ingredients of democratic politics. However, some seemed to conflate democratic progress with economic and social development.

### Box 2: Examples of External Support to Elections

Two specific interventions in the 2008 polls stand out among the many donor supported election activities in Ghana's Fourth Republic: the USAID and National Democratic Institute supported Parallel Vote Tallying project and the Netherland Institute for Multiparty Democracy's (NIMD) Ghana Political Party Program (GPPP).

#### Example 1: The PVT programme

In the 2008 election, USAID funding and technical support from the NDI enabled CDD/CODEO to introduce a Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) system into Ghanaian elections. With the cooperation of the Electoral Commission, the CDD/Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) recruited and trained non-partisan observers and assigned them to a nationally representative sample of 1000 polling stations (representing over 500,000 votes). The observers recorded information about the voting process, including information on opening and closing times of polling stations, the availability of voting material, the conduct of EC and security personnel, incidents of violence and intimidation as well as the official vote counts. This information was sent to a server at the CODEO 'command centre' in the capital city by text messages for collation and analysis.

The field reports received from the PVT observers enabled CODEO to periodically issue press statements on the process throughout the polling day and at the close of the polls. The PVT also allowed for a scientifically accurate verification of the official vote totals. Most importantly, the PVT project enabled CODEO to independently verify the authenticity of the official results and the integrity of the overall electoral process in the two rounds of elections plus the 'special' election in Tain. Given the closeness of the 2008 poll, this information may well have played a role in the losing party's acceptance of the outcome. In the words of a USAID employee: 'USAID supported the Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) process. Did that impact the election? I don't know. What I can say is that the actual results of the PVT were incredibly successful. The vote projections were very close to the actual election results'. It helped to discourage the ruling party from challenging the final results declared by the EC.

**Box 2 (continued) Example 2: The Ghana Political Parties' Programme (GPP)**

The NIMD has been funding the Institute of Economic Affairs' Ghana Political Parties Programme since 2002. The cumulative effect of the programme, whose objectives include the creation of a level playing field for all political parties registered and operating in Ghana; building and strengthening the institutional capacity of political parties; and enhancing the image of political parties in the eyes of the electorate was felt in the 2008 polls. Channelling funding through a well-established local NGO made it possible to circumvent the legal impediment to external funding of political parties in Ghana. Technical assistance and funding provided through the programme to the four parties represented in parliament – New Patriotic Party (NPP); National Democratic Congress (NDC), Convention Peoples' Party (PNC) and People's Convention Party (CPP) – helped the parties to write and publicise their respective manifestoes. The manifestoes were highly symbolic, even if they were technically weak; the prescriptions they contained were hardly supported by empirical data and they were not subjected to critical assessment by the media and electorate. The programme also supported the development of a blueprint on multi-party democracy, the Ghana Democratic Consolidation Strategy, for future implementation. Together, they helped to make the 2008 polls relatively issue-based.

The program also helped to level out the electoral playing field. In-kind and financial support helped the major parties, especially the normally resource-starved opposition, to undertake their election campaign and other crucial activities. Above all, the substantial levels of funding made available to the four parties inspired them to cooperate. It also contributed to promoting inter-party dialogue and consensus in the extremely tense atmosphere of the 2008 elections. It supported the development of a code for fair representation of all political parties in the state-owned media, elaborated by the IEA and the political parties. Indeed, the project played a significant role in enabling the IEA to successfully organise two live televised 'debates' for the presidential candidates of the main parties, and another for their running mates. In addition to contributing to making the 2008 polls relatively issue-based, the debates helped to bring a degree of calm to the stressful election process, at least temporarily. It was reassuring to hear the candidates from the ruling and opposition parties publicly pledge their commitment to accept the results of the polls during the 'debate' and to see them hugging each other at the end of the second programme, broadcast from the northern Ghanaian city of Tamale.

Nonetheless, it was difficult to escape the perception that the direct funding and technical support offered under the GPPP was the primary motivation for the political parties to participate in the program. The frequency with which they breached their promises to eschew election violence and intimidation and to promote equality and fairness to each other makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that they only made such promises in order to obtain the resources provided by the GPPP. The programme may have helped to build parties that are strong enough to contest elections, but it is yet to help the parties build credible policy development capabilities and comply with 'soft laws' and codes of democratic conduct.

## Factors weakening the impact of democracy did

Local actors find some aspects of their interactions with aid agencies decidedly frustrating. There is, for example, a general perception that democracy assistance is unduly deferential to the policy priorities of the government in power: even where these priorities are misplaced, exaggerated or serve narrow, partisan objectives rather than the broader national interest. Deference to the government in power by donor agencies is fuelled by the fear of appearing biased, or being accused of interfering in Ghana's domestic policies while providing governance and democracy assistance. As a result, democracy assistance priorities can be somewhat erratic, with donors switching almost without warning from, for example, parliamentary support to support of local government initiatives based on private discussions with government officials or recent government policy pronouncements. This, as can be expected, affects the planning of local organisations as shifts in donor priorities result in shifts in CSO focus areas.

Some recipients of donor assistance recognised that this was, in a sense, inevitable as donor agencies are often affiliated with the foreign and diplomatic structures of their home countries. There is therefore usually an underlying interest in building and maintaining bilateral relationships between the donor government and the government of Ghana, and part of the process of developing this relationship is through supporting the government's democracy assistance priorities. However, this does not always translate into effective democracy assistance programming, and it has contributed to a sense of mistrust and a perception among at least some civil society agencies that many donors are unreliable partners when it comes to democracy assistance, and will be unwilling to support programmes perceived to be hostile or unwelcome to the government in power. External donor deference to the government is also problematic because government/civil society relationships are often contentious. It serves to reinforce the monopolistic orientation of the Ghanaian government, which frequently suggests that it would prefer to have a greater role in democracy assistance funding to civil society organisations.

Though pooled funding initiatives (such as G-RAP and RAVI) are now well established and donor coordination is more the rule than the exception, there is still some inter-donor competition for the most high profile and high impact democratic assistance programme: which typically suggests working directly with government agencies in big budget democracy assistance programmes (such as funding the activities of the Electoral Commission, parliament or the political parties). These programmes are implemented with or without civil society support, intermediaries or facilitation. The attractiveness of such high profile projects again tends to reinforce the desire of the donor community to maintain good relations with the government in power when it comes to their democracy assistance work.

A number of those interviewed claimed that donors are too quick to abandon projects that show the slightest sign of success so that they can jump to the next dire situation. Such truncation of democracy reform projects, it is argued, undermines the prospect of the sustainability of democratic gains. A classic example of this is that during the run-up to the 2008 general elections, the donor agencies largely ignored election monitoring proposals presented by the CODEO because in their estimation, Ghana had held successively clean elections and there was no real danger of the polls degenerating into chaos. It was only after the Kenya election crisis that these donor agencies discovered the folly of their assessment and decided to fund the CODEO election monitoring effort. Donor agencies must learn to strike a good balance between expecting quick results and the need to build long-term capacity on the ground. Governance reform, interviewees point out, happens slowly and it is important that donor agencies are patient and remain consistent in their commitments if effective and sustainable headway is to be made. There is, for example, widespread acceptance of the importance of elections to democracies, and donor agencies have not been reticent in supporting the electoral process in Ghana. However, there is little enthusiasm for funding vital post-election activities that are important for the long term survival of Ghana's democracy. Thus, in the 2008 election, while donors were willing to support domestic observation efforts by a variety of civil society organisations, they were significantly less keen to support exit polling, which is vital for understanding and testing the levels of democratic consolidation and democratic citizenship in Ghana. Also, as pointed out by IDEG, the transition period is insufficiently attended to. Unfortunately, by the time transition issues become apparent, donor funding (and occasionally interest) has been exhausted on their successful mainstream election activities.

The effectiveness of donor assistance for institutional capacity-building, such as support to parliament and district assemblies, has been significantly undermined by high staff turnover within those institutions. Far too many of the competent staff in government agencies targeted for democracy assistance capacity-building, project implementation or oversight roles are political appointees who leave their posts long before projects are fully implemented. In addition, the low salaries paid by most state agencies make the retention of qualified staff difficult, further contributing to the high turnover. This situation makes it very difficult to transfer institutional expertise across generations of staff.

The problem of high turnover among governmental and non governmental agencies that are the beneficiaries of democracy assistance is compounded by the fact that there is also a high staff turnover at donor agencies. The combined impact of high turnover among donor and recipient agencies affects the implementation and sustainability of long-term projects. There is poor institutional memory on both sides, thus scarce democracy assistance resources are frequently recycled in different guises. The reporting systems of donors are also found to be unnecessarily burdensome and the situation is made worse by the difference in reporting guidelines and timelines adopted by the different aid agencies operating in the country. Local CSOs complain of spending an inordinate amount of their time and resources just filing these reports. Interviewees reported a pressing need for a more harmonised project reporting system by the major donor agencies operating in the country.

Democracy assistance in Ghana also faces the perennial challenge of managing the sometimes difficult relations between the donor agencies and their local partners. Democracy support donors will have to learn to build constructive partnerships which are also equal and transparent, in particular partnerships where local actors can offer input which is taken seriously, leading to changes in initial project plans. Some local partners expressed the view that the donor agencies treated them 'with suspicion'. There were some complaints that democracy assistance priorities are being determined by the overseas headquarters of donor agencies

without taking into account the needs on the ground. It was felt that donor agency personnel were not stationed in the country long enough to have a deep enough appreciation of key democracy and governance issues facing the country, which led to a tendency to fund programmes that are high profile but ultimately ineffective.

Democracy assistance is also negatively affected by Ghana's domestic economic, social and political configurations. Some in the donor community complain about the general lack of effective political leadership at many of Ghana's ministries, which has a negative impact on the implementation of some donor assistance projects. They also point to government and civil society corruption, a general lack of transparency and a culture of effective record keeping as challenges; aid has become a market and governments have learned to secure their share of this market through sometimes dubious means. This view is supported by some civil society organisations, which increasingly see the government as a partisan, self-interested competitor in the quest for a share of finite portions of democracy assistance funding.

### **Box 3: Success and failure of donor supported anti-corruption initiatives**

The success of donor anti-corruption assistance is unquestionably mixed. DANIDA funding and technical support from Transparency International (TI) were crucial in the holding of Ghana's first National Integrity Conference in 1998, which paved the way for the formation of the Ghana chapter of TI, Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), which has since served as the focal point for civil society anti-corruption civic activities. External donor support has enabled the media and civil society bodies to undertake activities to raise public awareness of anti-corruption and governmental transparency as key to the functioning of Ghana's democracy. The active encouragement which some donors, notably the US Embassy, gave to civil society crusades against the persecution of journalists in the 1990s culminated in the repeal of the Criminal Libel Act in 2001, which helped to bring about the freedom enjoyed by the Ghanaian media under the Fourth Republic. USAID support was crucial to the development and passing of the whistle blower protection legislation. Multi-donor support has enabled coalitions of civil society bodies to sustain advocacy for a Freedom of Information Bill and to strengthen the extremely weak public office holder asset disclosure legislation to make it more transparent. External donor assistance has also helped state anti-corruption bodies such as CHRAJ, SFO, the Auditor General's Department and the Public Accounts Committee to assuage the perennial resource scarcity they suffer and to build some capacity. Sustained DANIDA funding to CHRAJ has been pivotal to the constitutional agency's ability to pursue its anti-corruption mandate, despite perennial underfunding from the government. Significant support from the German technical cooperation agency, GTZ, to the Serious Fraud Office and Public Accounts Committee of parliament as well as the Auditor General's Department has been vital to the survival of these agencies.

However, concrete external support to anti-corruption institutions and activities has had mixed results. It has helped to raise popular awareness of the problem of corruption. External support should be partially credited for some of the successes achieved so far by CHRAJ and some media in investigating allegations of corruption by some public officials and getting some of the suspects to resign. But by and large, civil society, media and state anti-corruption activities have hardly translated into tangible improvements in the level of corruption in Ghana. Ghana's scores on the Transparency International index, for example, have improved only marginally since the return to constitutional rule. From 1998 to 2008, they ranged from 3.3 to 3.9 out of 10.

It is, however, also clear that external donor support for anti-corruption initiatives directed and implemented by civil society and independent government agencies such as CHRAJ, has been far more effective than those aimed directly at agencies within the executive branch of the SFO. The generous support GTZ has given to the Serious Fraud Office over the years to strengthen institutional capacities has failed to produce an effective SFO, largely due to the agency's flawed legal-institutional framework. Its director is appointed by the executive and he is often only appointed in a temporary 'acting' capacity. This lack of tenure and persistent political interference in its activities compromises the independence of the SFO. Support given directly to government in this area is invariably hampered by a lack of political will to implement real reforms.

Patronage and corruption are pervasive in both state and non-state institutions in Ghana. Corruption was often cited among interviewees as one of the reasons for the failure of democracy assistance programs. The Ghana Integrity Initiative, for example, suggests that patronage damages technical assistance programmes when those without the necessary basic skills are selected for capacity-building at the expense of more qualified and appropriately positioned individuals. Some interviewees suggested that employees of both state and non-state agencies engaged in democracy assistance are motivated primarily by self interest. Thus, for example, local beneficiary decisions to subscribe to a particular democracy assistance programme tend to be largely based on the remuneration rather than its inherent utility. The failure of donors to establish uniform standards reinforces this tendency to 'cherry pick' among programmes.

In addition to the above, democracy assistance is hampered by some domestic factors, such as the country's weak democratic institutions. Ghana's Parliament, which has been the focus of significant donor attention, has structural and constitutional deficits that preclude it from playing a more effective role in Ghana's democracy irrespective of how much donor assistance it receives. Democracy assistance given to the government and CSOs to promote local government comes up against deeply entrenched patronage interests that have narrow, partisan views of the operations of local government and are resistant or hostile to reform.

Finally, it has become increasingly apparent that the capacity of CSOs engaged in democracy assistance is very unevenly distributed throughout the country. Donors also find that the effective CSOs are all concentrated in Accra, with few activities in the countryside. Aid agencies with projects that have a more rural focus have to operate them through poorly-run rural NGOs with little capacity to effectively implement projects, or else assign them to Accra based NGOs with the capacity to conduct research in the field.

## Views on diplomatic back-up to aid programmes

### Coordination of assistance efforts

The donor agencies in Ghana have devised an elaborate system for collaboration in implementing their governance assistance projects. They have established seventeen sector groups to advance their collaborative efforts. The democracy promotion donor community participates mainly in the decentralisation, public sector reform, and core governance group, which includes the judiciary, parliament, elections and rule of law sector groups. Importantly, the democracy and governance group is probably the most vibrant of all the assistance sector groups in Ghana. These groups, which meet with increasing regularity (on a monthly basis), provide an opportunity for the various democracy assistance actors to get together and share information on ongoing projects and possibly collaborate, where the opportunity exists. They all invite civil society representatives to participate in these meetings.

Interviewees were generally positive about Multi-Donor Budget Support. The donors participating in the MDBS facility also make up an informal governance thematic group focusing on democratic accountability issues. Most were of the opinion that it was a good idea in theory, and that it should be supported and encouraged. They were, however, not certain that it achieved the stated aim of reducing transaction costs. Some civil society organisations expressed concerns that it gave the government even more leverage over them. It was widely agreed, however, that the sector groups are yet to achieve true harmonisation and effectiveness in governance assistance efforts to Ghana. Part of the challenge is the incongruent and incoherent aid policies from the headquarters of donor agencies from different countries. Moreover, the participation of the World Bank and other multilateral donors in the local aid harmonisation arrangements has been ambiguous. And it is doubtful whether the active involvement of multilateral agencies such as the World Bank in these aid coordination efforts will be positive for Ghanaian democracy promotion since they typically frown on democracy projects and/or prefer to work exclusively with national governments.

As previously discussed, there is a lack of effective leadership on the ground due to the high turnover of both donor agency and government staff. In addition, it appears that some local actors have a strong interest in seeing a harmonised aid disbursement system fail. It has been suggested that this is because a harmonised system would also mean a streamlined grant management system and increased scrutiny. As a result of this, despite some progress being made, democracy assistance in Ghana is still some distance away from realising the goals of the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and other aid harmonisation international compacts.

Turf struggles between the donor agencies also undermine prospects for effective democracy aid coordination. While some forms of specialisation do exist and appear to have been agreed upon among the democracy donor agencies, the aid agencies (especially those representing national governments) appear to have needs that push against true collaboration with other donors. USAID is generally accused of being notorious in this regard. The US aid agency, our interviewees argue, is too eager to showcase America's generosity so much so that the actual effectiveness of their efforts is subsumed under this underlining public relations imperative.

The G-RAP provides a new model for effective collaboration in democracy assistance in Ghana. The organisations that identified it as a source of funding were uniformly positive in their evaluations of the initiative. They found the quantity of the assistance substantial. They also liked the fact that it gave them the ability to undertake programmes recipient organisations deemed necessary to address democracy assistance needs. Similar sentiments were expressed about the Rights and Voice Initiative. However, it did not seem to have occurred to beneficiaries of G-RAP and RAVI grants that the activities they choose to undertake directly or indirectly with those grants may not necessarily be the most appropriate or strategic for the purposes of advancing Ghanaian democratisation.

## Attitudes towards conditionality

Opinions regarding 'conditionality' in the dispensing of democracy assistance vary within the aid recipient community in Ghana. It should be noted from the outset though that much of the decidedly negative reaction to the institution of aid 'conditions' is reflexive and is rooted in the country's experiences with the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program. Beyond this cautionary point however, our interviewees offer some valid arguments against the employment of stringent conditions in implementing democracy assistance. Some of the respondents suggested that the use of inflexible aid conditions sets up an uneven relationship between donors and aid recipients and has the effect of stifling the open exchange of ideas between the parties. It also generates a low sense of project ownership by the local partners to programs; the sapping of the 'sense of ownership' occurs when local vision and needs are discounted in order to follow the requirements of such conditionality. Stringent donor conditions also have the effect of reducing the space for exploring alternative and perhaps more effective means of implementing a particular project. The World Bank, until five years ago, maintained the practice whereby they established independent project implementation units (a coterie of foreign consultants) within government ministries with which they partnered. The Bank soon realised that their projects were not sustainable because the local partners rarely 'owned' them. They have since moved to the new 'project mainstreaming' model where reform efforts are implemented through the existing institutional structures.

Institutional reform that involves the direct participation of the government also has a higher chance of success when they are crafted to reasonably fit into the government's general development agenda. It is important that governments in countries in transition are not always viewed as corrupt villains; we have to engage the institutions of the state if we are to reform it. It is also important that the 'logic of power' is not ignored when donor agencies ask government agencies to implement unpopular austerity measures: the backlash to such unpalatable conditionality is mostly negative.

Local opinions regarding the place of conditionality in democracy assistance are not all critical; most of the local respondents are in favour of grant prerequisites that aim to promote accountability and transparency in project implementation. Some civil society leaders interviewed in Ghana generally think that the existing standards and conditions for democracy assistance are reasonable and necessary to ensure basic accountability. This self-critical position is based on a perception, even with the CSO and community and among state agencies, that occasionally, money that is granted for development assistance is not properly utilised.

It is clear from the responses that the processes through which 'prerequisites' are arrived at are as important as the actual content of these aid conditions. Aid conditions, our respondents argue, should be jointly decided by both donors and recipients of aid – and the end goal must always be to improve results and nothing more. Thus conditionality that is the product of donor collaboration with aid receiving institutions is welcomed and generally viewed as unproblematic. Conditionality that is imposed by donors, particularly if it is tied to onerous reporting requirements, is still deeply resented by recipients of democracy assistance.

## The quality of implementing personnel

Some Ghanaian civil society leaders do not believe that the representatives of donor agencies fully appreciate the intricacies of Ghanaian politics. Some local experts think that expatriate personnel are handicapped by a lack of the required cultural literacy that impairs perceptive analysis about the democratic needs of Ghanaian society or about the various local actors and institutions. Nonetheless, there is a widespread belief that the culture gap can be addressed by more effective collaboration between donor agencies and their local counterparts. Indeed, a significant number of the respondents were of the opinion that the expatriate staff in Ghanaian donor agencies was sufficiently knowledgeable about local conditions. This was ascribed to the adequacy of their 'research' on local conditions, or by a belief that they were well advised by the Ghanaian staff that they had recruited and to work with them. It became apparent from some responses that there was a general desire to see the staff of aid agencies spend a longer period at their respective posts to enable them to develop the cultural capital necessary for their jobs. The personnel of aid agencies should also have the latitude, within reason, to tweak programs based on the peculiar realities on the ground.

There were no comments suggesting that the expatriates staff sent to Ghana lack experience of Africa, or lack the requisite capacity to do their jobs. Indeed, it can be argued that the opposite was suggested. Some respondents were of the view that the expatriates were well educated and well versed in development and democracy assistance issues generally, but sometimes too theoretical and 'textbook' in their approaches to aid, and that they needed to adopt their theoretical knowledge to local conditions more effectively to produce more helpful and impactful democracy assistance outcomes.

## Conclusion

External donors have been fairly active in supporting the democratic project in Ghana's Fourth Republic. External democracy assistance has been a crucial factor in Ghana's democratic progress over the past decade and a half. Local democracy aid recipients strongly endorsed external democracy support and credited it with the success of their own pro-democracy activities. But they tended to complain about levels of funding and their volatility. They expressed unhappiness about the lack of uniformity and cumbersome nature of reporting requirements attached to external support. There were widespread complaints but grudging acceptance of the requirement of conditionality.

Large pooled donor funding facilities with strong local input managed by independent agencies such as the G-RAP secretariat were both extremely popular and deemed relatively effective. There is also a clear preference for multi-year funding among aid recipients. Multi-year support helped to increase the organisational capacities of the Electoral Commission and civil society bodies that proved crucial to holding successful elections in 2008. A clear lesson is that donor support to elections would have greater effect if it was planned and implemented continuously rather than only during election years.

However, the overall impact of external democracy assistance must be judged as mixed. It has been particularly useful in the creation of a functioning electoral democracy. It has helped to encourage a vibrant civil society and media, and fostered substantial improvements in election administration and transparency. The stellar reputation of the Electoral Commission can be at least partially attributed to the strong support it has received from the donor community in Ghana in implementing innovative, necessary but often costly improvements in the electoral process.

External donor support has certainly helped to make Ghana a functioning electoral democracy, but it has yet to make substantial stride towards substantive democracy. Ghana's elections continue to face integrity challenges and are not completely free from intimidation and violence; institutional checks and balances are weak; there is inadequate transparency and accountability in use of national resources, citizen participation is weak in between elections; and democratic citizenship has yet to evolve.

The impact of external democracy support has also been mixed with respect to different sectors and institutions. For instance, support to Ghana's Parliament and SFO have been less successful on account of constitutional and politico-cultural constraints. In the case of Parliament, for instance, its legislative and oversight functions are inherently limited by the constitutional provisions making the executive branch inordinately dominant in legislative and other matters. Similarly, the high turnover of MPs limits the effectiveness of donor funded capacity building programs. External support to sectors passed through different agencies has also had a mixed record of achievement. Support to independent state agencies such as the Electoral Commission, CHRAJ and arguably the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament as well civil society and the media has been far more effective than that going to state agencies within the executive branch, such as SFO and the Auditor General's Department. Donors must leverage their funding to executive branch institutions to get the government to allow greater autonomy, especially security of tenure for the key officials of these agencies.

## Appendix: Country Report Methodology

### Scope and aims of this report

This report assesses external democracy assistance in one country according to the views of local democracy stakeholders.

The report does not aspire to provide an exhaustive record of external democracy assistance to the country in question. Neither does it aspire to be a representative survey among local civil society at large. The scope of this project allows reports to provide only a rough sketch of external democracy assistance to the country assessed, and of the tendencies of local civil society activists' views on the latter.

### Sample of interviews

The report's findings are based on a set of personal interviews that were carried out by the author between spring and autumn 2009.

For each country report, between 40 and 60 in-country interviews were carried out. The mix of interviewees aimed to include, on the one hand, the most important international donors (governmental and non-governmental, from a wide range of geographic origins), and on the other hand, a broad sample of local democracy stakeholders that included human rights defenders, democracy activists, journalists, lawyers, political party representatives, women's rights activists, union leaders and other stakeholders substantially engaged in the promotion of democratic values and practices in their country. Wherever possible, the sample of interviewees included representatives from both urban and rural communities and a selection of stakeholders from a broad range of sectors. While governmental stakeholders were included in many of the samples, the focus was on non-governmental actors. Both actual and potential recipients of external democracy support were interviewed.

### Donors

The term 'donor' is here understood as including governmental and non-governmental external actors providing financial and/or technical assistance in the fields of democracy, human rights, governance and related fields. Among all the donors active in the country, authors approached those governmental and non-governmental donors with the strongest presence in this sector, or which were referred to by recipients as particularly relevant actors in this regard. An exhaustive audit of all the donors active in this field/country is not aspired to as this exceeds the scope of this study. While many donors were very open and collaborative in granting interviews and providing and confirming information, others did not reply to our request or were not available for an interview within the timeframe of this study. While we sought to reconfirm all major factual affirmations on donor activities with the donors in question, not all donors responded to our request.

We do not work to a narrow or rigid definition of 'democracy support', but rather reflect donors', foundations' and recipients' own views of what counts and does not count as democracy assistance. The fact that this is contentious is part of the issues discussed in each report.

### Anonymity

External democracy assistance to local activists is a delicate matter in all the countries assessed under this project. It is part of the nature of external democracy assistance that local non-governmental recipients, especially when openly opposed to the ruling establishment, fear for their reputation and safety when providing information on external assistance received to any outlet that will make these remarks public. In a similar vein, many donor representatives critical of their own or other donors' programmes will fear personal consequences when these critical attitudes are made public on a personal basis. In the interest of gathering a maximum of useful information from our interviewees and safeguarding their privacy and, indeed, security, we have ensured that all interviewees who requested to remain anonymous on a personal and/or institutional basis have done so.

### **Interview methodology**

In order to carry out field work, authors were provided with a detailed research template that specified 7 areas of focus:

1. A brief historical background and the state of democracy in the country;
2. A short overview of donor activities;
3. A general overview of local views on impact of democracy aid projects on the micro, meso and macro levels (including best practices and variations of the local and international understanding of the concept of 'democracy');
4. Local views on specific factors that have weakened the impact of democracy aid;
5. Local views on diplomatic back-up to aid programmes (including conditionality; diplomatic engagement; donor coordination; relevance, quality, quantity and implementation of programmes, etc.);
6. An illustration of the above dynamics in one or two key sectors of support;
7. A conclusion outlining the main tendencies of local views on external democracy assistance.

Along these lines, semi-structured one-on-one interviews were carried out by the authors in the country between spring and autumn of 2009.

### **Key sectors of support**

Transitions to democracy are highly complex political, economic and social processes. No study of this scope could aspire to fully justice to them, or to external assistance to these processes. Aware of the limitations of our approach, we have encouraged authors to let their general assessment of local views on external democracy support be followed by a closer, slightly more detailed assessment of the dynamics in one or two key sectors of support. These were chosen by the respective authors according to their estimated relevance (positively or negatively) in the current democracy assistance panorama. In none of the cases does the choice of the illustrative key sectors suggest that there may not be other sectors that are equally important.