

Operational Plan 2011-2015

DFID ASIA REGIONAL TEAM

May 2011

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1) Introduction

- The UK Government is determined to help reduce the inequalities of opportunity we see around the world today. We believe that promoting global prosperity is both a moral duty and in the UK's national interest. Aid is only ever a means to an end, never an end in itself. It is wealth creation and sustainable growth that will help people to lift themselves out of poverty.
- In May 2010, the International Development Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, commissioned the Bilateral Aid Review to take a comprehensive and ambitious look at the countries in which DFID works through our direct country and regional programmes. The review focussed on the best ways for the UK to tackle extreme poverty, ensuring that we make the greatest impact with every pound we spend. In parallel, through the Multilateral Aid Review, DFID assessed how effective the international organisations we fund are at tackling poverty.
- On the 1st March 2011, the key outcomes of the reviews were announced, including the results that UK aid will deliver for the world's poorest people over the next four years. The Bilateral Aid Review has refocused the aid programme in fewer countries so that we can target our support where it will make the biggest difference and where the need is greatest. The Multilateral Aid Review findings enable us to put more money behind effective international organisations which are critical to delivering the UK's development priorities. In addition the independent Humanitarian Emergency Response Review looked at how the UK can build on its strengths in responding impartially to humanitarian needs and help ensure future disaster responses can be better prepared and coordinated.
- DFID is committed to being a global leader on transparency. In the current financial climate, we have a particular duty to show that we are achieving value for every pound of UK taxpayers' money that we spend on development. Results, transparency and accountability are our watchwords and guide everything we do. DFID regards transparency as fundamental to improving its accountability to UK citizens and to improving accountability to citizens in the countries in which it works. Transparency will also help us achieve more value for money in the programmes we deliver and will improve the effectiveness of aid in reducing poverty.
- The UK Aid Transparency Guarantee commits DFID to making our aid fully transparent to citizens in both the UK and developing countries. As part of this commitment we are publishing Operational Plans for country programmes. The Operational Plans set out the vision, priorities and results that will be delivered in each of our country programmes.
- We will concentrate our efforts on supporting achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, creating wealth in poor countries, strengthening their governance and security and tackling climate change. The prize, in doing so, is huge: a better life for millions of people, and a safer, more prosperous world.

2) Context

The Asia Regional Programme covers South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal), and (where relevant) Burma and Central Asia. This is in line with corporate guidance which says that all regional programmes should focus on delivering in countries where DFID will continue to maintain a sizeable footprint. In addition, it seeks to improve regional analysis covering Vietnam and Indonesia.

Despite reasonable growth rates, South Asia is home to 40% (600 million) of people living below \$1.25 a day, and 74% (1.1 billion) of those living below \$2 a day. Burma has a large and significant Millennium Development Goal (MDG) challenge and Central Asia must enhance growth and use natural resources more sustainably in order to reduce poverty sustainably. The entire region is climate vulnerable. In less than 20 years, more than 750 million people, which is 50% of the population in the Asia region, were affected by at least one natural disaster, with 230,000 deaths and US \$45 billion in damage.

The development problem is complex and multidimensional, with significant economic, political, social and environmental challenges. While these are best addressed in large national programmes, in many cases the impact and effectiveness can be enhanced and widened by taking a regional perspective.

In response to the large and diverse development challenges, Asia has some of DFID's largest country programmes in this region – in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Burma – and smaller bilateral programmes in Central Asia. DFID also has a graduating programme in Vietnam and a climate-focused programme in Indonesia. The purpose of the Asia Regional Programme (ARP) is to both complement and supplement those programmes in order to improve the impact of frontline delivery. In many cases, the purpose is to support the creation of conditions that can unlock progress on key regional constraints that hold back potentially large development benefits in areas like intra-regional trade and cross-border natural resource management. The Programme sets a high bar on the value-added of acting regionally. It does so by focusing very directly on (a) issues with a clear cross-border dimension; (b) on regional public goods – where action in one part of the region has a much wider positive impact; and/or (c) where there is a compelling reason and demand from country offices for regional delivery. It aims to enhance the benefits of frontline delivery by country offices e.g. increasing nutritional outcomes to complement large in-country agriculture and rural livelihoods programmes and by improving climate-related outcomes.

South Asia's regional characteristics differ from other regions, for example Africa. Strategic, well targeted, catalytic regional investments that are modest, responsive, timely and flexible are more likely to reap benefits in this region than large volumes of aid. These investments can help to ease constraints, as well as make the case and provide evidence for much larger investments from multilaterals, private sector and national governments in key regional and cross-border interventions. Interventions where acting in concert and in a cooperative way will achieve much greater benefits for all – and especially for poor people by increasing their economic opportunities and making their livelihood more resilient to economic, environmental and political volatility.

3) Vision

Overview

The Asia Regional Programme (ARP) will make targeted investments that are modest in size and respond to regional windows of opportunity. We will focus on cross border issues – regional integration, climate change and human trafficking - and also on hunger and maternal health across the Asia region. The programme will focus on achieving results that can impact the lives of poor people in a sustainable and lasting way. ARP will work across 5 of the 8 pillars of the Bilateral Aid Review including 3 cross-border issues (trade, regional climate and human trafficking) and the 2 most off-track MDGs in the region (MDG1c & MDG5).

An important innovative aspect of several interventions is the linking of the political to the technical in order to achieve development outcomes that can transform the lives of poor people. This type of an intervention needs high-level influencing underpinned by technical rigor in order to create the right conditions to enable better in-country results.

For example: more cross-border trade and regional integration will increase growth and create jobs; help address the huge energy constraint, and reduce incentives for cross-border conflict. Similarly, better management of shared eco-systems – including trans-boundary rivers – will address the critical interconnected challenges of food, water and power in the region, and also mitigate one of the biggest conflict risks (water).

Our interventions will be designed to unlock much larger resources from multilateral and other partners. In most cases it needs demand for more than one partner country in the region to do so. By undertaking technical analysis that generates evidence of the great potential benefits of regional cooperation, by undertaking feasibility studies which demonstrate what is possible, and by implementing small interventions that demonstrate the potential for positive change, we aim to build confidence and leverage change. In doing so, we will also seek to influence multilaterals' own approach to regional operations, encourage cross-thematic integrated approaches and foster closer cooperation between them.

Alignment to DFID and wider UK Government priorities

ARP will contribute directly to the Structural Reform Programme and wider DFID objectives especially around reproductive health, nutrition, wealth creation and climate change. All our offers have a strong focus on UK Government priorities including: Afghanistan-Pakistan trade and integration; Trade facilitation and increase in trade volumes; Organised crime; Women's empowerment; Climate change and natural resource management; MDGs; and Regional security

What we will stop doing:

Only the Gender Policy Fund (£600,000 in 2010-11) will no longer continue.

4) Results

Pillar/ Strategic Priority	Indicator	Baseline (including year)	Expected Results (including year)
Health	Number of maternal deaths averted	0 (2011)	7,400 (2015, cumulative, modelled)
Poverty, Vulnerability and Hunger	Number of national programmes which better integrate a multisectoral approach to food security and nutrition.	0 (2010)	8 national programmes which improve nutrition (2013, cumulative)
Governance and Security	Number of women and girls prevented from being trafficked	0 (2010)	60,000 (2015)
Climate Change	Number of people benefiting from improved water resource management that reduces climate vulnerability in regional rivers	0 (2008)	6 water resource management plans that consider climate change impacts being implemented by 2015, covering river basins containing more than 500M people (DFID climate change programming is subject to the strategy and allocations of the UK's cross-Government International Climate Fund (ICF). ICF priorities are to be agreed by summer 2011)
Wealth Creation	Time and cost saved for goods to cross borders in 6 key regional posts	0 (2010)	Time and cost reduced by 40% on average by 2016

4) Results (continued)

Evidence supporting results

The quality of evidence to support headline results is inevitably variable, given the size and range of interventions proposed. In the **Poverty, Vulnerability and Hunger** pillar there is robust international evidence on the impact of direct nutrition interventions which this programme seeks to promote as part of a multisectoral approach to tackling under-nutrition. Although available interventions can make a clear difference in the short term, significant reductions in malnutrition in children will also require long term investments to improve education, economic status and empowerment of women.

In **Health** there is uncertainty around the estimates of the incidence of unsafe abortion and consequent mortality, especially where it is restricted and largely inaccessible or legal but difficult to obtain. The evidence for interventions to avert maternal deaths is very good (e.g. evidence for the value of family planning, that safe abortions are effective and save lives in resource poor settings). The programme impact (expressed as deaths averted during the project and beyond) is based on a model using international estimates of maternal mortality.

For the **human trafficking** intervention, evidence is weak on integrated value-chain-based approaches. There are a few examples of small projects that have demonstrated evidence of success, e.g. one project found that the prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation of children decreased significantly in the area over the course of the project.

Under the **Wealth Creation** pillar, there is good evidence to highlight the political dynamic in South Asia as a key barrier to intra regional trade. Studies suggest it is through more intensive collaboration that the complexities of the region can be addressed and resolved. Strong evidence also suggests that reducing border delays is critical for trade liberalisation to have positive impacts on welfare. Efficient trade logistics and facilitation policies are recognised as essential for economic growth.

In the **Climate Change** pillar, South Asia Water Initiative (SAWI) is generating evidence that its approach can increase engagement between regional players and unlock investment, with \$1.66bn-worth of work already in preparation with SAWI support. There is also emerging evidence that a range of adaptation measures are available which offer very high benefit-cost ratios - for example integrated watershed activities have contributed to building climate resilience and a meta-analysis of watershed programmes in India has shown strong impacts and a mean economic rate of return of 27.4%. Other studies show that addressing climate change impacts can bring double wins that reduce climate vulnerability whilst also benefiting the poor.

Value for Money (VfM) rationale

Through innovative regional approaches we will create conditions that unlock much larger investments from multilateral partners (e.g. World Bank), the private sector and national governments ensuring strong VfM across our programmes. Overall, investment in maternal and reproductive health is very good value for money. Advocacy for reducing restrictions over the availability and legal status of abortion has shown good returns on investment. For example, in Nepal the legalisation of abortion in 2002 and its wider availability is judged to have contributed to the fall in maternal mortality. For relatively few resources, the SAFANSI programme will also potentially result in efficacy and efficiency gains in public programmes to deliver highly cost effective (direct and indirect) interventions to address under-nutrition and behaviour change that produces (incremental) outcomes with positive net present values. The VfM of increasing regional integration is huge and has very sizeable rates of return. Through partnerships the potential to reduce trade costs is significant: the AsDB estimates that cost savings per ton could be reduced by between 30 to 70 percent in five years through a series of trade and logistics interventions. This would then feed through to considerable increases in trade flows. By providing a political vehicle to unblock huge investments in integrated power and irrigation projects, and to reduce costs of droughts and floods, SAWI's VfM is also potentially highly positive.

5) Delivery and Resources

The Asia Regional allocation of £15m/year over 4 years has the potential to leverage much larger flows from the wider development community. It will deliver through partners including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and IFC, and will seek to work with the Commonwealth, EU, US, Australia, South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and large global foundations like Gates and Nike.

Partners have been selected based on their strategic positioning on the issues. In the case of the South Asia Water Initiative a World Bank multi-donor Trust Fund is the chosen instrument because it is a signatory to the Indus Water Treaty and is one of the key lenders on water infrastructure and water resource management with a strengthened team with expertise in this area.

The South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative (SAFANSI) will also use a multi-donor Trust Fund through the World Bank for similar strategic reasons. The World Bank will focus on political economy analysis, build strategic communications capacity and integrate gender into all SAFANSI activities.

Following a competitive tender process, a consortium of NGOs, have been contracted to design and, on approval, to implement this maternal health programme. This programme is bi-regional covering 14 countries in Africa and Asia, partners will therefore include DFID's Africa Division.

Under the wealth creation pillar, high level policy dialogue will be facilitated by an independent convening partner to bring together government officials with private sector, civil society and development partners across the region. Feasibility studies to finalise design and implementation arrangements of schemes will be conducted by neutral intermediaries, yet to be identified, followed by work with partners to find appropriate investors. Influential and knowledgeable regional experts will also be used to engage in dialogue with private sector and work with line ministries and government agencies to address technical problems and create new monitoring and enforcement institutions to reduce the technical barriers to regional trade.

Asia Regional Programme will be delivered by the Asia Regional Team (ART). ART is part of Asia Division and is guided by the Asia Regional Board which consists of the Directors and Deputy Directors of both Asia Division and West Asia and Stabilisation Division.

5) Delivery and Resources (cont)

Pillar/Strategic priority	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		TOTAL	
	Resource £'000	Capital £'000	Resource £'000	Capital £'000	Resource £'000	Capital £'000	Resource £'000	Capital £'000	Resource £'000	Capital £'000
Wealth Creation	3,500		4,000		4,000		4,000		15,500	0.00
Climate Change	3,500		3,500		3,500		3,500		14,000	0.00
Governance and Security	500		750		750		1,000		3,000	0.00
Education									0.00	
Reproductive, Maternal and Newborn Health	5,000		5,000		5,500		5,600		21,100	0.00
Malaria									0.00	
HIV/Aids									0.00	
Other Health									0.00	
Water and Sanitation									0.00	
Poverty, Hunger and Vulnerability	2,500		1,750		1,250		900		6,400	0.00
Humanitarian									0.00	
Other MDG's									0.00	
Global Partnerships									0.00	
TOTAL	15,000		15,000		15,000		15,000		60,000	0.00

5) Delivery and Resources (cont)

Efficiency savings

Strategic Reprioritisation	Termination of Gender Policy Fund (£600,000 in 2010-11)	£0
Reducing consultancy costs	By doing more analytical work in-house, the consultancy costs will be reduced by half in the first 2 years and by 2/3 in the outer two years	

6) Delivering Value for Money (VfM)

ART has demonstrated itself to be able to deliver good value for money in difficult and changing environments. Although the costs of delivering development assistance in fragile states such as Afghanistan, Pakistan or indeed Nepal is high relative to countries with more benign conditions and given the more limited choice about the instruments DFID uses, DFID have nevertheless been able to secure good value for money by adopting a flexible approach to design of our programmes, and using a mix of multilateral partners, non governmental organisations and commercial partners for delivery, and driving a degree of competition between these.

Challenges

Between 2011 and 2015 ART will face some key challenges to continue to drive VfM through its programmes. These include:

- Operationalising and using the new Business Case Template
- How ART will be able to monitor and ensure good VfM through our implementing partners systems, particularly making sure that the benefits realisation are captured and estimated in monetary terms in a proper and cost effective way.
- The scarcity of good quality data and evidence to assess VfM.
- Ensuring all DFID staff make VfM considerations a priority task in programme management.
- How to build a comprehensive overview of the key cost drivers under each of our pillars

Actions

As ART moves through the programme design processes, we will ensure that VfM is delivered by:

- Working with Asia Division's ' *Effective Programmes Team*' to design a formal programme approval process that embeds early on an analysis of vfm
- options, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) design and a clear feedback loop between appraisal and ex-post evaluation.
- Including a VfM objective in every team member's performance framework
- Identifying an individual team member within ART for leading the vfm processes and who will be explicitly tasked with challenging all programme to identify ways in which we can address these issues more robustly.
- Reducing consultancy budget by half in 2011/12 and 2012/13 and by 2/3 in 2013/14 and 2014/15 as compared to the 2010/11 baseline.
- Ensuring that the documentation for all new programmes are subject to a peer review process, regardless of size.
- Harnessing Corporate and Divisional financial improvement strategies and tools to ensure ART has the correct systems, procedures and practice in place to drive continued improvement in financial management with emphasis on improved financial forecasting.
- Reviewing our procurement strategies to ensure more service providers are identified by international tender.

7) Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring

How – each of our programmes will have a M&E framework, which will track programme progress against outputs. In addition, data will be collected where appropriate through special surveys, if necessary. M&E may also be complemented by operational research studies. Tools will be used for tracking beneficiary satisfaction, such as the Community Perception Index (CPI) and participatory assessments with recipients of cash transfers. For the maternal health intervention, the results will be reliant on the NGOs' established reporting systems which are quality assured and audited. These include a measure of contraceptive delivery and coverage – the Couple year of Protection (CYP) – which is widely used and internationally recognised.

Who - primary responsibility for monitoring will fall to programme partners, for example for SAFANSI, results will be monitored by the World Bank using their network of 30 Food Nutrition Security advisers working in the region. The DFID Asia Regional Team lead advisers managers will monitor all programmes on a regular basis, and the programme team together will review its results framework regularly.

When – Monitoring at the project level by implementing partners will be continuous. ART will agree a regular reporting schedule with programme partners (usually quarterly). During annual reviews, DFID will assess progress against outputs and how this is contributing to the achievement of the outcomes. The office results framework will be reviewed at least every 6 months, and the operational plan reviewed/refreshed annually.

What - DFID will ensure that the best complement of methodologies will be used to provide a rigorous qualitative and quantitative information base that informs programme management and provides evidence to assess progress at impact, outcome (including headline indicators), and output levels. DFID will also ensure that this evidence base is used to improve the quality of future programming and supports the challenge of programme appropriateness.

Evaluation

ART is committed to fully evaluating a greater than average proportion of its programmes than is likely for other 'units' in DFID. This will provide an important contribution to the evidence base for similar innovative interventions in all parts of the organisation in the future. ART is also committed to using best practice approaches both to measure the impact of our investments and their value for money. By using emerging best practice approaches, we will record the full range of potential outputs and net benefits, and set and monitor indicators that will demonstrate whether these benefits have been achieved. Specifically for the maternal Health programme, there will be a multi-country evaluation covering all countries to assess the validity of the assumptions underpinning the project design. The evaluation design will identify evaluation questions for each country. In two countries (one in Africa and one in Asia) there will be rigorous quantitative impact evaluation of selected program components, most likely employing a randomized control trial design. For the **Governance & Security pillar** impact evaluations will also be conducted for each programme so the results provide a regional and global public good of knowledge and evidence on what works to reduce and effectively tackle trafficking.

Each component of the **Wealth Creation** intervention will develop a baseline and plan impact evaluations during the design phase. All of the evidence of impact will be used to feed into the high level process to build confidence and help generate political momentum. Finally for **Climate Change**, influencing is central to both interventions and as such their M&E will both draw on and contribute to DFID's developing work on measuring influencing impact. Randomized controlled trials and other rigorous methods will be used to test the efficacy of adaptation interventions so evidence and best practice can be scrutinized, shared and scaled up across the region.

Building capacity of partners

DFID will look for ways to help institutions to build their capacity and skills for independent evaluation and use country systems for evaluation whenever possible. DFID will also consider how in working with partners, we can increase their capacity and capability to effectively monitor and evaluate our joint work as well as their own.

8) Transparency

Transparency is one of the top priorities for the UK Government. We will meet our commitments under the UK Aid Transparency Guarantee: we will publish detailed information about DFID projects, including programme documents and all spend above £500. Information will be accessible, comparable, accurate, timely and in a common standard with other donors. We will also provide opportunities for those directly affected by our projects to provide feedback.

Asia Division considers Transparency to be fundamental to improving accountability and providing value for money to the UK taxpayer.

- We will ensure that all required project documentation is published on the DFID website (including: concept notes, business cases, logframes, project completion reports, annual reviews, project scores and formal agreements) and is of a high quality, comprehensive, accessible, comparable, accurate and in plain English. We will also allocate dedicated staff time to ensure timely and accurate input of all relevant documentation and data.
- All budgetary information will be entered correctly on ARIES including quarterly forward budgets for all committed projects within the spending review period and correct business processes will be followed and documented on the Quest system and available as records for FOI readiness.
- In addition to the work being done by our Country Offices, we will meet the standards set out in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and encourage the Multilateral Organisations we work with and NGO partners to do the same.
- We will increase accessibility to information about our regional work, and where possible provide summary programme information in local regional languages. We will also provide the people affected by our programmes the opportunity to feed their experiences back to us, for example through the DFID website public enquiry point.
- We will publish programme products in regional languages where useful and relevant.