

**PROVISION FOR POST-PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10**

EVALUATION REPORT



UDF-GLO-08-213: Assessing Democracy Assistance

Date: 30 May 2012

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iv. Recommendations

For UNDEF

f **Continue to fund global research projects where there is a need to improve the evidence base and the potential for impact on aid quality has been demonstrated.** Based on Conclusions (i), (ii) and (iv), UNDEF should take advantage of its flexibility and broad remit to fill research gaps where they are identified. In doing so, it fills a need that is not easily filled by other donors. The advantages of working through high-quality partners, as well as the support given to younger researchers through such activities, more than counterbalance the fact that such projects contribute little to capacity building and institution strengthening. We make a concrete suggestion that **thematic state-of-the-art** UHYLHZV SHUKDSV WDNLQJ ³FOXVWHU´ HYDA as **Backlog**, IURP W **might be a good idea.**

f **Continue to place emphasis on partnerships with world-class institutions.** Based on Conclusions (

papers produced would have had no difficulty in attracting publication by a leading academic press. The great bulk of contributions were by FRIDE staffers and network members, so uniformity, quality, and timeliness were to a large extent under control. Web-based reporting and working papers are effective tools of dissemination, but the prestige factor and contribution to professional careers of a book should not be underestimated. That said, such an option is only worth pursuing if the press or the journal is a leading one.

v. Concluding comment

The essential purpose of the project was to elicit views, right or wrong, of democracy assistance recipients regarding the aid on offer. While not strictly called for by the Terms of Reference, the evaluation report concludes with a brief consideration of how the results that emerged from this important research exercise and summarized in the project Synthesis Report might be applied to UNDEF.

An overall assessment might be that, as a small, flexible, mostly demand-driven donor, UNDEF is responding well to beneficiary needs. Unlike a few donors such as Soros, it has limited ability to finance NGOs that are in open breach with governments, but it has succeeded in supporting democratic activists in a few very adverse countries (e.g., Myanmar, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia). It is less overtly political than the major bilateral donors, which are often instrumentalized for political purposes. 8 1 ' () ¶ V Z H D N H V W S R L Q W P D \ lack of field presence and limited resources for project selection and monitoring, themes that emerge not from this evaluation but from others in the series. This makes it acutely dependent on the capacity and quality of its grantees and implementing partners.

II. Introduction and development context

(i) The project and evaluation objectives

This report evaluates the project 'Assessing Democracy Assistance' implemented by Fundación para las relaciones internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) from 1 October 2009 to 30 September 2011. The total UNDEF grant was US\$ 220,000, of which the project budget was US\$ 198,000, and US\$ 22,000 was reserved by UNDEF for monitoring and evaluation. 7 K H S U R M H, F a c t o r i n g I t e m P r o j e c t D o c u m e n t, Z H U t o p r o v i d e t h e f i r s t c o m p r e h e n s i v e a s s e s s m e n t o f g l o b a l d e m o c r a c y a s s i s t a n c e e f f o r t s b a s e d o n t h e v i e w s a n d S H U F H S W L R Q V R I O R F D O e n s u r e t h a t t h e h i g h q u a l i t y d i s s e m i n a t i o n a n d c o n s u l t a t i o n a m o n g p o l i c y m a k e r s, o p i n i o n l e a d e r s, m e d i a a n d l o c a l s t a k e h o l d e r s, t h e I L Q G L Q J V T L P S D F W R Q I I X M s w a y t h e p r o j e c t a i m e d t o i m p r o v e t h e q u a l i t y o f d e m o c r a c y a s s i s t a n c e o c r a

- How effective was the dissemination of the papers generated by this project to the development assistance community, the democracy support community, academics and local activists, and what impacts can be identified?
- In what ways did the Arab Spring affect the project, and was the project able to leverage its impact in light of unfolding events?

(iii) Development context

The project grew out of the Fifth Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy (WMD) held in Kyiv in April 2008. The feeling arose at that meeting that, while the volume and range

(ii) Logical framework

An approximation of the project logical framework, drawn from the project document, is given below. The figure maps the logical path from activiti

type implemented in other countries would be out of place given events in the streets, the democratic transformation. The national partner selected for this activity was the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and the report is available on, in addition to the FRIDE website, the UNDEF website: <http://www.un.org/democracyfund/News/NFTF04Aug11.html>. This observation

(ii) Effectiveness

There were no significant issues regarding the production of high-quality outputs – the donor data sheets, the country case studies, the synthesis paper, the focus group discussions, and the dissemination activities. The fourteen planned case studies were completed on time, and sufficient resources were left over to finance five additional case studies. The planned focus group discussion in Venezuela was cancelled, as mentioned above, because it was feared that participants would be at risk of intimidation, arrest, or violence. This prudent decision is not a negative mark for effectiveness. The dissemination of project results at the 2010 WMD assembly in Jakarta was an adroit feature from multiple standpoints: relevance, effectiveness, and impact.

The synthesis report is available online at http://www.wmd.org/sites/default/files/FINALREPORT_smaller_2.pdf



Participants in a workshop following the presentation of Democracy Assessment results, World Movement for Democracy Assembly, Jakarta, April 11-14, 2010.

The six country case studies reviewed by the evaluator are of high substantive quality, are presented in a readable and visually attractive manner, and are posted on a smoothly functioning website. The high intellectual level of the country case study authors is evident, and the synthesis report is of the quality that would be expected from a leading academic. Focus group discussions – subject to the caution that the term was very loosely used by UNDEF (FRIDE itself preferred the more neutral and well documented. Presumably for reasons of confidentiality, these were not posted on the web.

Of interest for impact as well as effectiveness,

- A seminar on study results was organized at UN headquarters. Participating were Dr. Larry Diamond, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Dr. Joel Barkan, Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Dr Richard Youngs from FRIDE. The report and video were posted at: <http://www.un.org/democracyfund/News/NFU17May11.html> and <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2011/05/press-conference-organized-by-undef.html>
- A seminar presenting the Synthesis Report was organized by FRIDE in Brussels, with attendance by top policy makers and NGO practitioners. The European Commission (EC) was well represented, and a staffer of the European Parliament attended, as well.

- The Cairo conference (see accompanying text box) represented an especially major deviation from the project document, and one greatly to be recommended. A film of the conference, commissioned by UNDEF from project funds reserved for evaluation, was shown at the UNDEF function for the International Day of Democracy on 15 September 2011 and posted at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9KOUbRnSM>).



81'() 6HPLQDU ³3HUFHSWLRQV RI 'HPRFUDF\
results of the demo FUDF\ DVVLVWDQFH UHFLSLHQWV¶
New York, 9 May, 2011.

(iii) Efficiency

There was a reasonable relationship between budget allocated by UNDEF

(iv) Impact

The second specific query of the donor agency highlighted assessing impact, and this has presented some difficulty. Impact of this project can be assessed along several dimensions:

- (i) a strengthened commitment by the international donor community to democracy assistance,
- (ii) perceptible shifts in program design in order to better conform to beneficiary needs and priorities,
- (iii) a strengthened intellectual foundation for democracy assistance.

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As dramatically evidenced by the prosecution of leading national and international democracy NGOs in early 2012 and the banning of 11 presidential candidates in the spring, democratic transformation in Egypt is under threat. A perfect storm is brewing, as the military and Mubarak-era forces fight to maintain their traditional privileges and impunity, Islamist parties attack the legitimacy of secular democracy, obtaining overwhelming support outside urban elites; and internationally-supported democracy NGOs are broadly perceived to be foreign implantations. The results of the May 2012 first round of elections, which will lead to a runoff between the Muslim Brotherhood candidates and a candidate close to the old regime, have been characterized as the worst possible outcome for progressive forces.

In view of the dramatic Arab Spring events of early 2011, UNDEF and FRIDE concluded that a ³UHJXODU' IRFXV JURXS -@ democracy assistance would be absurd. Instead, a new partner, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies or CIHRS ± was brought into the

None of these is easily assessed.

- (i) Some contribution to the first could be indicated by, e.g., increased commitments to democracy assistance, but so many other forces are at work, especially in the

current volatile economic environment, that mechanical accounting exercises are of little interest. Moreover, commitment is essentially political in nature and cannot reasonably be expected to have responded to a two-year project involving a few hundred thousands of dollars.

- (ii) The second is perhaps more easily assessed but aid programs, like large warships, do not turn on a dime. The UNDEF-financed project had its genesis in the conviction of the donor community (and other stakeholders) that change was needed in approaches to democracy assistance. In this sense, the project was preaching to the already converted. As highlighted in the accompanying box, the changes called for by beneficiaries are not only strategic and tactical, but political. This poses an existential dilemma for international democracy assistance donor community: How effectively can it always rely on donor agency governments to provide needed political support?

With the third, we are on firmer ground. The potential impact of making available to donors a solid intellectual basis on which to engage with their governance structures and pay masters is large. donor agency seeking support for its proposed program. By focusing on concrete issues of programmatic design to improve aid quality, this project increased its potential impact. For example, the documentable findings (see box) that political support is now more valued than dollars and that the traditional package of training, capacity building, and institution building is of declining relevance in many settings are important ones for program design. They might, for example, have implications for the design of media projects, where beneficiaries in some countries have reason to argue that they are more technologically advanced than their benefactors. Or, they might suggest that in settings where the political environment is hostile and the forcefully with power structures is low, aid resources may be better be allocated thematically or geographically elsewhere.

however, to dodge the question of how much impact the project has actually had. Papers generated in the course of this project have been widely disseminated and used by academics, donor agencies, and NGOs.

technology (ICT) as described above enhanced this. The dissemination through the World Movement for Democracy Assembly in Jakarta and seminars in New York and Brussels was exemplary.

Finally, the project's positive impact on the careers of a number of younger researchers (most of those involved) should not be forgotten.

The UNDEF Project Officer identified a number of further impacts, mostly benefits that the project delivered to UNDEF:

- A strengthened working relationship with NED, NDI, FRIDE, and IDEA.
- Enhanced UNDEF reputation.
- Extended UNDEF relations with national experts in the field.

(v)

(iii) The project benefitted from the attention given to the in-country group review and discussions. Yet, **focus groups** is sometimes casually used to apply to any interview in which more than two persons are present. Qualitative research, a field in which focus group discussions are an important tool, has a methodological apparatus as formidable as quantitative research. This project is to be saluted for having taken participatory assessment seriously, yet, based on documents consulted, a liberal stretch of imagination on our findings related to **relevance** and, to some extent, **effectiveness**.

(iv) A phrase often used, as in the democracy community, is that democracy is a comforting, soothing feel to them. Yet, democracy is a concept lying in ideologically and culturally contested terrain. Is it? Anti-democratic forces, or forces with radically opposed interpretations of democracy, are not intellectually, financially, or politically weak. By including both civil society and government representatives, the research design has addressed this problem to significant extent, however, the nagging question remains whether those who are not present will have some engagement if democracy assistance is not to preach to the converted, who are in church already. This conclusion derives essentially from our analysis of **relevance**, perhaps to some extent from findings on **impact**, as well as from the finding that emerged from the study that a primary concern of democracy activists is the lack of political support from abroad. Indeed, the beneficiary message that democracy assistance can merely add a fig leaf or, worse, increase the credibility and efficiency of an essentially anti-democratic system is a stern warning for the democracy assistance community. Identifying and transmitting that signal was, perhaps, the most important result of this project. We shall see what impact it has.

(v) Based on **all the findings** above, the project highlights the benefit to UNDEF from working with first-class partners who can produce first-class outputs on schedule. The project strategy was sound, the research design was appropriate, and the researchers chosen to implement it were of excellent quality. There is a role for field-based, NGO implemented projects, often in very challenging circumstances, but there is a role, as well, for global projects implemented in partnership with international players: This project, due to its well-articulated strategy, sound research design, and excellent implementation,

VI. Recommendations

For UNDEF

i. Continue to fund global research projects where there is a need to improve the evidence base and the potential for impact on aid quality has been demonstrated. Based on Conclusions (i), (ii), (iv) and (v), UNDEF should take advantage of its flexibility and broad remit to fill research gaps where they are identified. In doing so, it fills a need that is not easily filled by other donors. The advantages of working through high-

The urgent need for better coordination between democracy promoters. UNDEF is in a poor position to engage in classic Paris Declaration coordination due to its non-existent field presence and weak HQ staffing level. However, as a small donor, it is arguably less at fault than the majors.

How is the agenda for democracy support set and controlled?

CSOs and representatives of state institutions unite in calling for priorities to be set locally. UNDEF, which maintains a broad umbrella approach and responds to local NGO applications, represents a force promoting this idea. It might reinforce this role by considering, in its selection process, whether a proposal is filling a gap created by major donor focus on the theme of the day.

CSOs criticize donors for funding organizations that they regard as unscrupulous. Consider the source. Civil society organizations are notoriously sectarian. Given their lack of stable funding and often tenuous legitimacy, local NGOs compete for support. UNDEF has neither the field presence nor HQ strength to exercise due diligence over applicants apart than through the audit and evaluation processes.

Recipients complain of overly bureaucratic procedures and lack of transparency in the allocation of donor funds. All responses in the current series of UNDEF evaluations have been that UNDEF is among the most flexible and least bureaucratic of donor agencies. We

Gaps between concrete needs and reform aims

CSOs most appreciate local

Neutering by governments

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VIII. Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<i>f</i> Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? <i>f</i>

Annex 2: Documents reviewed

Project Document
Final narrative report

Case study Nigeria
Case study Ukraine
Case study Georgia
Case study China
Case study Egypt
Case Study Morocco

Conference report Egypt
Focus Group report Ukraine
Focus Group report Georgia
Focus group report Morocco

Annex 3: People interviewed

Name	Organization
Kerry Brown	Chatham House
Ana Echagüe	FRIDE
Kristina Kausch	FRIDE
Daniela Konietzko	FRIDE
Hélène Michou	FRIDE
Natalia Shapovalova	FRIDE
Richard Youngs	FRIDE

Annex 4: Acronyms

CDDRL	Center for Democratic Development and Rule of Law
CIHRS	Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
CoE	Council of Europe
CSO	Community Service Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DfID	Department for International Development
DG	Directorate General
EU	European Union
FRIDE	Fundación para las relaciones internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund-
US AID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WMD	World Movement for Democracy