

Policy Brief:

African Union Support Programme

This policy brief is designed for DFID, government stakeholders and implementing partners involved in the African Union Support Programme (AUSP). It draws upon lessons from the baseline evaluation.

What is the AUSP?

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) is supporting the African Union to deliver on shared UK-Africa priorities through the African Union Support Programme (AUSP), a three-year intervention running from 2018-2021 and focusing on the following policy areas:



Trade

With a view to promoting mutual prosperity and boosting economic growth.



Peace, conflict and security

Through electoral assistance and strengthening conflict prevention systems.



Migration

Through tackling the drivers of illegal migration and promoting mobility.

Since its inception in 2001, the African Union Commission (AUC) has helped to prevent escalation of conflict on the continent through early warning systems and electoral monitoring, has unlocked regional, sustainable economic growth through initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and promoted effective migration policies such as the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) across Member States. The AUSP provides targeted capacity development support, helping the AUC to deliver on its priority policy objectives, reinforce goals outlined in Agenda 2063 and achieve its overall aim of 'driving the African integration and development process in close collaboration with AU Member States and African citizens'.

How is it delivered?

DFID provides funding to implementing partners which work in collaboration with specific AUC departments.

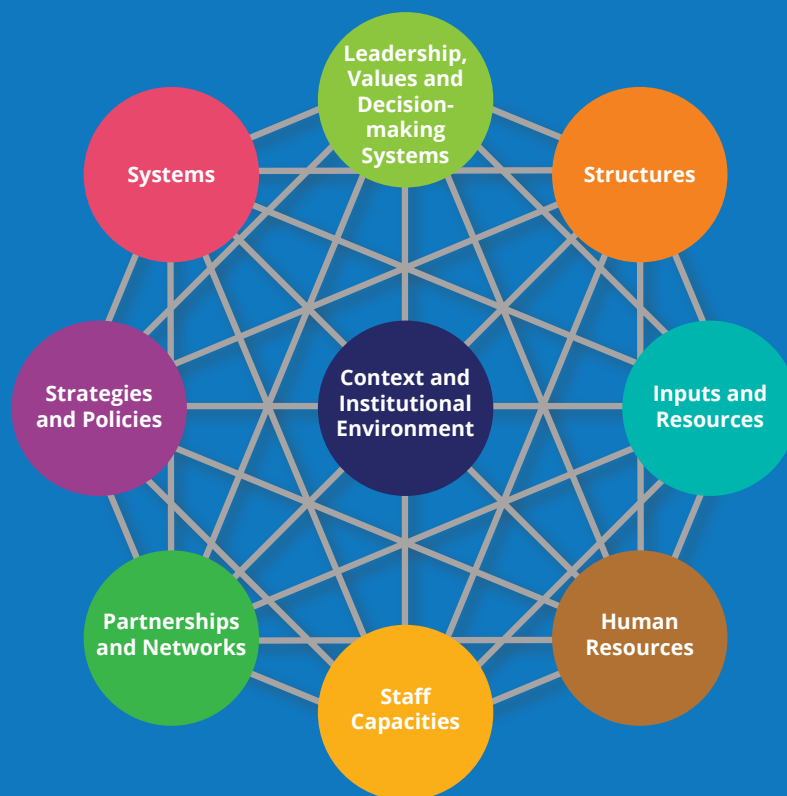


Capacity development is provided through a range of mechanisms, and in response to key needs identified by partners, the AUC and DFID. This includes:



Organisational Capacity Framework

Interviews conducted with partners, AUC staff, secondees, donors and external experts from November 2019 – January 2020 showed that the AUCSP is already having a positive effect. Evidence was analysed against a bespoke Organisational Capacity Assessment Framework to capture the multiple dimensions of capacity development and determine whether the programme is targeting the most relevant areas and leading to desired changes. While we recognise that the AUCSP only targets some of these dimensions, the strength of the differing AUC Departments across all nine dimensions will be an important factor in contributing to overall outcomes and will help us understand potential reasons for success or failure.



Capacity is being strengthened across multiple OCF dimensions



Trade

An AUCSP-funded Trade Specialist Fellow and Senior Investment Expert (SEI) have addressed shortages of staff (**Human Resources**) and provided evidence-based input throughout the negotiation and implementation of the AfCFTA. This has subsequently strengthened the AUC's skills to successfully conduct AfCFTA negotiations (**Staff Capacities**). Secondees have provided much needed day-to-day support to the DTI and UNECA, strengthening the planning and logistics of activities (**Systems**) and facilitating enhanced communication between the AUC, UNECA and DFID/ODI, Member States and other funding partners (**Partnerships and Networks**).



Considerations

The SEI and Trade Fellow could improve **Structures** by ensuring that AfCFTA negotiating structures, such as Technical Working Groups and Ministerial consultations, are properly organised and informed by high-quality research, and that relevant stakeholders from RECs and Member States, including women, effectively participate. By offering technical assistance and facilitating the AUC's attendance in trade-related events, the AUCSP could also substantially contribute to improving **Strategies and Policies**, including by ensuring that gender-based analysis informs all DTI policies and concrete actions result from this.



Elections

The AUSP has supported the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit (DEAU) to refine its long-term observation methodology (**Strategies and Policy**) and draw on a roster of observers to mobilise quickly in response to elections (**Human Resources**). EISA has introduced new technological tools and software (**Inputs and Resources**) to strengthen the collection of robust evidence and enable more efficient data management (**Systems**). This, along with Pre-Election Assessment data, has strengthened the capacity of DEAU staff to conduct credible Election Observation Missions and provide assistance in line with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (**Staff Capacities**).



Considerations

The AUSP could help to position DEAU as a thought leader in the elections field through proactively targeting civil society groups, RECs and other international observation networks (**Partnerships and Networks**). The planned merger between **DPA** and the **Peace and Security Department** offers a unique and timely opportunity for the AUSP to assist DEAU in assessing where election observation fits within broader **African Governance Architecture** and ensuring strategic alignment with well-established peace and security mechanisms (**Strategies and Policy, Leadership, Values and Decision-making**).



Migration

The Division of Labour, Employment and Migration benefits from a comprehensive guiding **Strategy and Policy** in the form of the MPFA. The AUSP-funded Migration Expert (**Human Resources**) is playing a leading role in building the credibility and legitimacy of the MPFA, including through developing knowledge products, reference documents and manuals (**Inputs and Resources**) that can be leveraged and adopted by Member States, inculcating results-based M&E systems and developing **Partnerships and Networks** by coordinating efforts between Member States, IOM, donors and key AUC Directorates working on migration.



Considerations

The AUSP could support the re-establishment of a Migration Technical Working Group to increase the visibility and priority of migration work within the AUC, convene key actors and build momentum as migration continues to emerge as a priority sector (**Partnerships and Networks; Leadership**). It could also help to build the nascent evidence base for implementing effective migration activities at the Member State level, including by commissioning research and analysis into specific areas required to effectively promote and operationalise the MPFA (**Strategy and Policy**).

Certain institutional and structural challenges are beyond the AUSP's control

The AUSP is not a homogenous programme, nor does it impose a rigid model on the AUC. By tailoring its approach to each of the policy areas, it has the flexibility required to respond to emerging capacity needs and challenges. Nevertheless, the AUSP cannot expect to influence change across every OCF dimension. Many issues related to the AUC's structure, leadership and decision-making systems, and the institutional context in which it operates (including reliance on the financial contributions and buy in of Member States and the inevitable politicisation of elections) are outside of the programme's scope and remit, yet can have a critical effect on the achievement of outcomes.

Long-term impact relies on collaboration with RECs and Member States

The target impact of the AUSP is heavily reliant on mechanisms of change that are outside of the programme's direct influence. In the case of trade, successful implementation and roll-out of the AfCFTA relies on Regional Economic Communities, which are the building blocks of the agreement. Similarly, enhanced integrity of electoral processes and entrenchment of democratic norms will only be achieved if Member States and Electoral Management Bodies push for electoral reform in response to AUEOM recommendations. DFID should actively consider how it can involve and leverage regional actors in future capacity building efforts.

Capacity must be institutionalised to ensure sustainable results

AUSP's secondment of experts is both necessary and highly appreciated by the AUC, helping to ensure work is delivered on time, implanting new ideas and reinvigorating Departments. However, it does not address the root challenge of staff shortages that will remain when postings end, and systems risk failing if there are not enough people to carry them forward. Considering the recruitment freeze introduced by the AU Reform Process, DFID must ensure robust exit strategies are in place to absorb skills into existing systems and capacitate AUC staff to assume the responsibilities of secondees beyond AUSP funding.

The AUSP can address a cross-cutting gap by championing gender within:

- **Trade negotiations:** The AfCFTA has the potential to be highly beneficial for women and girls, but this can only be achieved through development of gender-responsive trade policies and complementary measures to ensure that intra-African trade liberalisation does not exacerbate existing gender inequalities and tangibly benefits women. The SEI could work with UNECA Trade and Gender consultants to advocate for increased numbers of female negotiators, organise dedicated working groups accompanying Phase 2 AfCFTA negotiating fora to consider the differential effects of trade agreements on men and women, and ensure the Country Business Index allows for gathering of gender-specific data.
- **AU Election Observation Missions:** The AUSP can advocate for women to take more meaningful roles in AUEOMs, including through collecting primary data, training in the use of ballot boxes and working with Electoral Commissions to disaggregate electoral registration system data by gender.
- **Individual AUC Departments:** The Women, Gender and Development Directorate plans to capacitate AUC staff to engender existing policies through developing and rolling out an e-learning course. Already endorsed by the AU Chairperson, the training is currently being discussed with the Learning and Development Unit within the HR Department but requires additional resources.



Longer-term considerations

It is important that the AUSP does not over-burden an already constrained system by adding to the multiple lines of accountability that the DPA, DTI and DSA report to. Engagement with the GIZ-led AUC basket funding mechanism could help to ensure efforts are targeted according to key needs and partner expertise, whilst reducing the administrative pressure on the AUC to coordinate between donors. DFID can also leverage its position within these meetings to influence funding decisions and direct resources towards key gaps identified under the AUSP, thereby contributing to a multiplier effect.

Given the crucial role that RECs play across the three policy areas, it is important to actively consider how the AUSP (as well as DFID/HMG more broadly) can involve these actors in future capacity building efforts. Action research into the work delivered by the World Bank, UNITAR and the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights provides a unique opportunity to understand how to build collaboration between the AUC, RECs and Member States, and identify potential good practice that can be scaled up in a selection of 'case study' countries in the future.

The funding cycles employed by donors perpetuate the short-term focus of many AUC departments. Rather than funding the DEAU to move from country to country to conduct AUEOMs, future AUSP programming could consider supporting the DEAU to implement its Long-Term Observation approach in a select number of countries and work with Election Management Bodies to follow up on emerging recommendations. Likewise, longer-term funding could be used to document successful examples of Member States implementing country-specific migration policies using the MPFA and provide guidance that can be tailored and applied by other countries.



“DFID has been instrumental in helping the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit of the AUC to use technology in election observation data collection through tablets.”

Guy Tapoko, Head of DEAU
Department for Political Affairs



“The deployment of an expert to support the AfCFTA Unit on investment negotiations was the most important contribution of DFID to the process. She has been in place for a year, has been performing very well and we appreciate the work she has undertaken with us.”

Prudence Sebahizi, Head of AfCFTA Negotiations Unit and Chief Technical Advisor on the African Continental Free Trade Area