

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Birmingham		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 22, Anthropology and Development Studies		
Title of case study: Changing How Organisations Support Leadership for Development		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
David Hudson	Professor of Politics and Development	2017-present
Claire Mcloughlin	Lecturer in Political Sociology	2008-present
Heather Marquette	Professor of Development Politics	2002-present
Jonathan Fisher	Reader in African Politics	2012-present
Niheer Dasandi	Senior Lecturer in Politics and Development	2016-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact Over the last 10 years, the University of Birmingham's Developmental Leadership Programme (DLP) has directly shaped Australian aid policy and strategy. Specifically, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs has changed its aid programming design and delivery, adopting the language and definition of 'developmental leadership' as a political and collective process. DLP has directly influenced the design of programmes worth AU\$900m (£500m) that emphasise the role of local leadership, with theory of change that builds on DLP research. The approach has extended to other development agencies globally including Department for International Development, United States Agency for International Development, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, influencing the development sector's approach to aid.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research The Developmental Leadership Program (DLP) is an international research initiative that investigates the role of individual and collective leadership (organisations and coalitions) at the elite and grassroots levels in securing positive development outcomes. DLP is unique in that it focuses on the people who work inside the governing institutions of society to understand how and why they succeed or fail. As noted in the DFAT independent review of DLP [C1]: "There are very few organisations or research programmes dedicated to politics and development also able to meet this new demand." Since 2013, the DLP has been led by colleagues at the University of Birmingham (UoB), in association with La Trobe University, directed by Marquette (2013–2017) and Hudson (2017–). DLP research is funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Three key findings underpin the impact:</p>		
<p>F1. Politics is the way to get things done — not an obstacle to remove or avoid — and is about agency and choice. Conventional approaches to aid effectiveness have focussed on trying to insulate aid from local politics by identifying technical best practice and replicating the design across all contexts. Orthodox approaches rightly point to the importance of inclusive and representative institutions for developmental success. But there is little understanding of how institutions are set up or maintained. DLP's work shows how individual motivations matter and that successful change typically happens through forms of collective action and the building of coalitions [R1]. This means taking politics seriously — i.e., how interests, incentives and values result in key stakeholders supporting or resisting development goals. Politics tends to be associated with corruption, patronage and the self-serving abuse of power. Hudson, Mcloughlin and Marquette have argued for and evidenced an alternative view: that politics is a necessary process of contestation in order to locally legitimate and make any proposed intervention, reform</p>		

or change sustainable [R1]. **Hudson, Mcloughlin and Marquette** also show why development must examine the role of agents and how they navigate within and use institutions [R1]. **Mcloughlin** shows how this process works in Sri Lanka, how perceptions of fairness and process are essential for effective institution building and maintenance of state legitimacy [R2, R3].

F2. Because the political context is always fluid, development staff need to do ongoing political analysis to inform a more flexible, adaptive and iterative approach to programming [R1]. This is in contrast to more rigid programme designs that pre-specify and fix outcomes and pathways without responding to changing political dynamics and opportunities. **Fisher and Marquette** demonstrate why donor staff should do ongoing political analysis to ‘think and work politically’ instead of commissioning external experts to carry out one-off pieces of ‘Political Economy Analysis’ (PEA) at the outset of a programme [R4]. DLP case studies by **Marquette** and co-authors document these processes, such as reform of the governance of the oil and gas industry in Nigeria [R5].

F3. A gendered understanding of power and politics makes development aid more effective. In 2017–2018, **Hudson** led a comparative analysis of 17 case studies across more than 40 countries to examine the difference a gender-informed approach to governance programming makes [R6]. Findings show that, first, when gender analysis is not used, programmes focus on formal political power and tend to miss the informal power of gender norms. Second, prioritising more politically feasible goals can unintentionally make things worse by reinforcing the patriarchal status quo. As such, aid programmes that manage to integrate gender and governance are more effective.

3. References to the research

- R1. Hudson, David, Mcloughlin, Claire, Marquette, Heather, & Roche, Chris** (2018) *Inside the Black Box of Political Will: 10 years of Findings from the Developmental Leadership Program*. University of Birmingham. Available on [DLP website](#)
- R2. Mcloughlin, Claire** (2015) “When Does Service Delivery Improve the Legitimacy of a Fragile or Conflict-Affected State?”, *Governance*, 28(3): 341–356. DOI: 10.1111/gove.12091
- R3. Mcloughlin, Claire** (2018) “When the virtuous circle unravels: Unfair service delivery and state (de-)legitimation in divided societies”, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 12(4): 527–544, 2018 DOI: 10.1080/17502977.2018.1482126
- R4. Fisher, Jonathan, & Marquette, Heather** (2015) “‘Empowered patient’ or ‘doctor knows best’? Political economy analysis and ownership”, *Development in Practice*, 26(1): 115–126. DOI: 10.1080/09614524.2016.1119249
- R5. Lopez-Lucia, Elisa, Buckley, Joanna, Marquette, Heather, & McCulloch, Neil** (2019) “Lessons from Nigeria for improved thinking and working politically in the extractives sector”, *Development Policy Review*. DOI: 10.1111/dpr.12441
- R6. Roche, Chris, Cox, John, Derbyshire, Helen, Gibson, Sam, & Hudson, David** (2018) *The Bigger Picture: Gender and Politics in Practice*, Birmingham: Developmental Leadership Program. Available on [DLP website](#)

4. Details of the impact

The impact is on government aid agencies and international and non-governmental development organisations. The impact is of three types; specifically we have:

- (1) Shaped aid strategy and policy within DFAT;
- (2) Changed DFAT aid programming design and delivery, changing how they allocate and deliver Official Development Assistance (ODA);
- (3) Influenced the development sector’s approach to aid and development globally.

1. Shaped strategy and policy within DFAT

DLP has **informed key policy documents and strategies within DFAT** — which has **changed how programmes are designed and delivered**, transforming how the Australian government delivers aid. Drawing directly on DLP’s key findings, DFAT have:

- Adopted the language and definition of **developmental leadership as a political and collective process** [F1] and have committed to supporting and promoting it the programmes they fund [C1];
- Recognised that a politically informed approach demands a **flexible, adaptive and iterative programme design as well as monitoring and evaluation systems** [F2; C2];
- Adopted the position that the biggest opportunities for transformational change lie in **supporting women’s leadership and taking a gendered approach to governance** [F3; C3, C4].

These features were not explicit in previous DFAT policy documents and DLP’s influence is clearly demonstrated by the referencing of DLP’s research in key policy documents. To illustrate, DFAT’s Aid Programming Guidelines (APG) make clear that aid management is not linear and programmes need to be designed such that the phases in the management cycle will be repeatedly revisited [F2; C2]. Similarly, DLP’s research on gender and politics [F4] has focused DFAT’s Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy and the related Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development firmly on supporting women’s leadership in its delivery strategy and programme design citing DLP research [C3]. The influence of DLP is confirmed by DFAT’s independent review of DLP, which states that “DLP excels at policy uptake [...] **shaping policy and programmes** (e.g. new DFAT funded research on governance and gender; influence on DFAT’s approach to scholarships)” [C5]. DLP research was used in drafting DFAT’s overarching policy ‘Australian Aid: Promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability’ and was directly referenced in ‘Effective Governance Strategy for Australia’s Aid Investments’, accounting for 5% of all references in the document [C2, C6]. These strategy documents matter: they **directly shape how aid is delivered** because they set out “**how to design, implement and assess governance programming**” [C6]. Together they shape DFAT internal country strategies, aid investment plans and sector investment plans which guide Australia’s engagement with their bilateral aid partners, as well as the design of specific individual programmes.

2. Changed DFAT aid programming, design and delivery of ODA

The policy change has led directly to a **new approach to aid programming, design and delivery** of overseas development assistance (ODA) across DFAT’s portfolio that emphasises the role of local leadership. This is illustrated, using eight cases where DLP had a **direct influence on programmes**, amongst very many other possible cases, and a further 12 **programme designs with a combined value of AU\$901m** [C2]. The design documents of these large new investments directly reference DLP’s research. For example:

- The Pacific Leadership Program, an investment of AU\$15m (2014–2017), directly built on DLP’s research to work from “an understanding of development which involves a donor bringing resources of various types to developmental leaders to support them to achieve positive social change” [F1; C4]. The programme’s theory of change was built on DLP research about how to support leadership. PLP enabled several activities that have shaped national government policy. For example, the introduction of reserved seats for women in Vanuatu, and building the Samoan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) into an effective and powerful lobby group which now sits on numerous government committees and policy development forums [C4].
- The Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development programme, an investment of AU\$320m, used DLP research to shape its philosophy of “Working through local coalitions is important to support ownership, tap into local understanding, facilitate development of local solutions and build the capacity of local development partners to implement those solutions” [C3]. In 2019 alone, the programme has enabled 21,233 women to access crisis support services (including counselling, health and justice services), with a further 179,106 men, women and children participating in awareness raising, advocacy and outreach activities to end violence against women [C3]. In the lifetime of the programme, the initiatives they’ve supported have enabled 1.22 million Pacific Island women, men and children across 14 partner countries to access services and information.
- DFAT’s Balance of Power programme, a ten-year investment of AU\$8.6m, explicitly draws on DLP research into the role of local actors [F1] and the importance of flexible monitoring

and evaluation [F2], and is seeking to shift gender norms around women's leadership [F3] in its investment design document [C7].

- The Women's Leadership Initiative, a five-year investment of AU\$5.4m, also references DLP research in its design [F3; C1]. The 2020 independent strategic review of the programme suggests that "developmental leadership is the conceptual backbone of the programme", and DLP and its concepts are cited throughout [C1]. The initiative has empowered many women in leadership roles, with 93% of alumnae respondents acknowledging that the programme provided them with greater knowledge and skills to exercise leadership, and that those who returned home after the programmes rated themselves significantly higher as leaders compared to when they started the programme. Programme participants were also more aware of networks and were using these to build coalitions to drive their development ideas. 15 teams of alumnae across six countries are now engaging with local coalitions to tackle issues related to Covid-19 [C1].

3. Influenced approaches to official overseas development aid

DLP has **influenced how development aid is understood in policy and delivered in practice across the globe**. This is attested to by an independent review of DLP's work, based on 75 interviews with international experts. The review concluded that DLP's "policy uptake has also extended globally well beyond DFAT [...] As a result, **DLP can demonstrate its influence in DFID, USAID, World Bank, UNDP, OECD and many other significant development players.**" [C5]. DLP was a co-founder of the international 'Thinking and Working Politically' Community of Practice, which brings together senior policymakers, practitioners and researchers to better understand how to work in a more politically informed way across different sectors in international development. DLP's work through the CoP is described in the World Bank's 2017 World Development Report — an annual landmark statement of global development thinking — as being at the heart of moving "politics and power from the margins to the core of development thinking and action" [C8: p.271].

In the UK, DFID's recent Governance Position Paper sets out its **refreshed approach to governance, arguing for the importance of "thinking and working politically across all our work"**, a direct reference to our work [R1; C9]. Further, we have directly influenced DFID's aid policy framework (the 'Building Stability Overseas' Framework) which cites Mcloughlin's research [R2]. The framework asserts that perceptions of fairness among citizens are critical to build state legitimacy, as well as building hospitals and schools. Mcloughlin's influence also came through his membership of HMG's Strategic Advisory Group, and through shaping specific elements of the framework at a drafting workshop with senior policy makers.

Finally, DLP has produced short guidance notes and briefs; for example, Everyday Political Analysis, which was co-authored with a DFID governance advisor and translates the underpinning research into actionable insights and guidance for staff. The tool is used by DFAT, DFID [C6, C10], and WaterAid in their programming and training.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

C1. DFAT (2020) [Australia Awards Women's Leadership Initiative Independent Strategic Review Summary Report](#). [Available as PDF]

C2. Adams, C. (2018) *Developmental Leadership Program: End of Award Impact Review*. [Available as PDF]

C3. DFAT (2014) [Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Design Document](#). [Available as PDF]

C4. Strategic Development Associates (2017) Independent Evaluation of the Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) Phase 3. [Final Report](#). [Available as PDF]

C5. Piron, L-H. (2016) [Independent Review of the Developmental Leadership Program Partnership \(Phase 2\) with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#). [Available as PDF]

C6. DFAT (2015) [Effective Governance Strategy for Australia's Aid Investments](#), Canberra: Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade. [Available as PDF]

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- C7.** DFAT (2019) BALANCE OF POWER: Investment Design Document. [Available as PDF]
- C8.** World Bank. (2017) [World Development Report: Governance and the Law](#), Washington DC: World Bank. [Available as PDF]
- C9.** DFID (2019) [Supporting Governance for Growth, Stability and Inclusive Development](#), DFID Position Paper, London: DFID. [Available as PDF]
- C10.** UK National School of Government International's guide on [Political Economy Analysis](#), 2017. [Available as PDF]