

# **International Donors and Democracy Promotion in Africa: Insights from the Activities of the Department for International Development (DFID) in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

*Since returning to civil rule in 1999, Nigeria has enjoyed international support and assistance directed at strengthening the capacity of its democratic institutions to deliver on their core mandate thereby aiding the sustenance and deepening of the nation's democratic process. International financial assistance and technical supports to stakeholders in Nigeria democratic project have been delivered through international development institutions and agencies of which the United Kingdom, Department for International Development DFID remains important. While studies have assessed the contributions of international development assistance to democratic promotion in Africa, there has not been much engagement with the work of particular international development agencies as case studies. Given this context, this article examines the contribution of DFID to the strengthening of democratic institutions and deepening of the democratic process in Nigeria through the agency funding of programmes and projects that are directed at enhancing the capacity of democratic institutions, civil*

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*society organizations and other stakeholders in the nation's democratic project.*

### **Introduction**

Democracy's 'Third Wave' which began in the 1970s, saw a dramatic surge in the spread of democracy all over the world. The demise of international communism and the end of the Cold War in 1989 further intensified the wave of democratization internationally. Particularly, the Post-Cold War era witnessed an explosion in the spread of multiparty democracy. The 'Third Wave' brought about historic democratic transitions in Latin America in the 1980s, Asian Pacific countries from 1986 to 1988, Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and sub-Saharan Africa beginning from the late 1980s. There are varying figures regarding the exact number of democracies owing to variation in qualifying criteria employed in assessment, however, what is no doubt that there is marked increase in the number of democracies in the past three decades<sup>1</sup>. Despite this significant rise in the number of democracies, however, the challenge is that many of the new democracies have not been adequately consolidated. This implies that, regardless of the existence of electoral institutions, political democracy remain fragile in these democratizing states due to a plethora of factors including economic instability, continued elite domination of the political process, military interference, among others<sup>2</sup>.

The introduction of democracy in Africa was characterized by hurdles, albeit the persistent push by the West coupled with the internal agitation by the civil society in African countries, as a result of the wide-spread disillusionment with entrenched authoritarian regimes aided the process<sup>3</sup>. Undemocratic regimes in Africa were

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1. For details on the growth of democracies across the world sequel to the 'Third Wave' see Moller, J. and Skaaning, S-E (2013) 'The 'Third Wave': Inside the Numbers', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 24, no. 4, 97.
  2. Diamond, L. Is the 'Third Wave' Over? *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1996, 20-37.
  3. Amuwo, K. "The International (and Domestic) Context of Democratic Transition in Africa: Roadblocks to Democracy," in *Democratic Transition in Africa*, edited by B. Caron; A. Gboyega and E.E. Osaghae, (Ibadan: Centre for Research, Documentation and University Exchange, CREDU), 1992, 9-13.

popular for their impunity, witting human rights abuses and desecration of the rule of law. Thus, the general notion that democracy would usher-in a political climate where the fundamental rights of the individuals and the rule of law would be given a fairer treatment, further helped to keep hope alive and sustained the tempo in the struggle against centralized and authoritarian state systems that dominated the African continent up till the late 1980s and early 1990s. Arguments that galvanized the popular acceptance and internal push for the transition to democracy were not also isolated from economic concerns. Authoritarian regimes had caused a lot of dislocation to the economies of most African countries, immersing them into the doldrums of debts and poverty<sup>4</sup>. But democracy promises to provide way out of this gloominess. Even though the necessary democratic institutions and structures were not yet put in place (the ideals of democracy), as amplified by the experiences from the already established democracies in the West left African countries with no other choice than preference for multiparty democracy.

With the experiences of protracted military rules, implanted culture of disregard for the constitution and rule of law and collapsed/lack of functional democratic institutions and processes, there has been a rising international concern on the need to aid the process of democratization in the transition countries, especially those of Latin American, Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Many donor agencies and international development partners and organizations consider democracy promotion in fragile democracies as a critical area worth investing-in, as part of effort by the international community at fostering development in Third World countries. Undoubtedly, developmental partners and international organizations provide array of supports (financial, political, and technical) as part of their efforts in bailing out fragile economies, directing assistance selectively to cohort of stakeholders and over a long period of time<sup>5</sup>. Notable among these international organizations working in the area of democracy promotion are; the United States Agency for

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4. Amuwo, K. "The International (and Domestic) Context of Democratic Transition in Africa," 9-13.

5. International Crisis Group. "Nigeria's Dangerous 2015 Elections: Limiting the Violence," *International Crisis Group*, Africa Report, No. 220, 2014.

International Development (USAID); the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID); and the European Union (EU). Other Organizations include the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA); the Open Society for West Africa (OSIWA); the John and Catherine MacArthur Foundation; and the Ford Foundation among others<sup>6</sup>.

After more than three decades of military dictatorship, Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999. The hitch free management of the transitional elections and the handing over of political power to elected democratic leaders at the National and Sub-national levels in May, 1999 marked the commencement of the country's Fourth Republic. However, the long years of military rule meant that Nigeria's return to civil rule within the context of weak and fragile institutions many of which are just been implanted back into the nation's polity and political system. Nigeria has held five consecutive general elections, (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015), the first time in the anal of the nation's political history. The conduct and administration of the processes for each of these elections comes with their peculiar issues and attendant challenges that serve as lessons for the future.

Stakeholders in the Nigeria's democratic project notably the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and Civil Society Groups have received tremendous support and assistance from international development partners, donor agencies, international institutions and embassies of foreign nations. The financial assistance and technical support are directed at enhancing the capacity of institutions central to the democratization process and by so doing aid the promotion of the nation's democratization project. While studies have assessed the contribution of international development agencies to democratic promotion in Nigeria there have not been much engagement with the work of particular international development agency or partner institution

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6. Adetula, O. V.; Kew, D. and Kwaja, C. 'Assessing Democracy Assistance: Nigeria', FRIDE, Project Report, 2010.

as it relates to democracy promotion in Nigeria.<sup>7</sup> It is within this context that this paper examines the contributions of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) to the strengthening of democratic institutions and deepening of the democratic process in Nigeria through the agency funding of programmes and projects that are directed at enhancing the capacity of democratic institutions, civil society organizations and other stakeholders in the nation's democratic project.

### **Democracy Promotion in Nigeria**

Democracy promotion has been a prominent issue in international politics and a cardinal pillar of foreign policy of developed democracies for decades<sup>8</sup>. Arising from this, many bilateral and multilateral organizations, as well as national and international non-governmental organizations, have continued to make meaningful contributions to democracy promotion through the granting of financial and technical assistance that are directed at aiding democratization process in third world countries. As Carothers notes, international democracy promotion is undergoing changes that impacted enormously on ranges of issues and the three most important are the actors involved, the activities that it now encompasses and the countries where the democracy promotion

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7. For discussion on development partners and democracy promotion in Africa see; Alli, W.O. "Development Partners, the 2007 Elections and the Challenges of Consolidating Democracy in Nigeria," *Studies in Politics and Society*, vol. 8, 2007, 163-204; Abdullahi, A. "Promoting Credible Elections in Developing Countries: International Development Partners and Civil Society Organizations in Nigeria," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, vol. 9, no. 5, 2015, 190-199; Burnell, P. 'From Evaluating Democracy Assistance to Appraising Democracy Promotion', *Political Studies*, vol. 56, 2008, 414-434; Burnell, P. (2007) 'Does International Democracy Promotion Work'? German Development Institute, Discussion Paper, No. 17; Rao, S. Impact of Electoral Assistance. Help Research Report, Governance and Social Development Research Centre, 2013.
  8. Schmitz, J.G. "Canada and International Democracy Assistance: What Direction for the Harper Government's Foreign Policy," Centre for International and Defence Policy, Queen's University, Occasional Paper Series, No.67, 2013; Burnell, P. 'From Evaluating Democracy Assistance to Appraising Democracy Promotion', *Political Studies*, vol. 56, 2008, 414-434; Youngs, R. 'Democracy Promotion: The Case of the European Union Strategy', Centre for European Policy Studies, Working Document, No. 167, 2001.

activities now take place<sup>9</sup>.

According to Carothers, the attempts at promoting democracy can be classified into two approaches: political approach and developmental approach<sup>10</sup>. The political approach take-off from a relatively narrow understanding of democracy and it majorly focuses on elections and political liberties. It sees democracy promotion in terms of a process of political contest in which supporters of democratic process strive to gain advantage in society over non-democrats and democratic states align with themselves more than the non democratic ones. It directs assistance at explicit political processes and institutions with particular attention on elections, political parties, and civil society groups engaged in the political process. The developmental conception focus on a broader notion of democracy, one that entails concerns about equality and justice and the concept of democratization as a slow, iterative process of change involving an interdependent set of political and socioeconomic developments. It favours democracy supports that prioritize incremental long-term change in a wide array of political and socioeconomic sectors, consistently reifying the importance of governance and the building of a well-functioning state<sup>11</sup>.

Given progress that has been recorded in the area of democracy support, issues surrounding the discourse of democratic advancement has continue to receive increasing attention by scholars and policy analysts. At the conceptual level, questions still surround the extent of the genuineness of Western governments' democracy promotion drive and the connection of such efforts to perceived geo-strategic political and economic interests. There have also been debates over the kinds of strategies deployed and their capability to deliver on the objectives of advancing the course of democratic process in developing democracies. Within this context, the issue of positive measures in relating to democracy assistance especially as it has to do with aid projects targeted at

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9. Carothers, T. "Democracy Assistance: Political vs Developmental?" *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2009, 5.

10. Carothers, Democracy Assistance, 2009, 6-7.

11. Ibid, 6-7; Laurynas, J. 'The Democracy Promotion Policies of Central and Eastern European States', FRIDE Working Paper, No. 55, 2008.

enhancing democracy and the adherence to human rights have been focus of attention<sup>12</sup>. There has been discussion on where democracy assistance funds should be directed at and this reveal the concern over where best to directed assistance: state institutions, political parties, civil society organizations, faith based organizations, media among other stakeholders in the democratization process in third world countries. There is also the issue of attaching political conditionality to the delivery of financial assistance targeted at democracy promotion. These issues and many more constitute fertile ground for debates and discussion by scholars and policy analysts engaged in research on democracy promotion since the 1990s<sup>13</sup>.

According to Epstein, Serafino and Miko, democracy promotion represent a core pillar of US foreign policy and has become a primary component of America's development assistance in recent years.<sup>14</sup> In specific terms, US engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan can be situated with the context of America's democracy promotion efforts around the world. Within this context, democracy promotion is seen as a policy tool to fight autocracy and terrorism, promote stability in troubled regions and increase prosperity in poor countries<sup>15</sup>. Indeed, democracy promotion has been a cardinal principle and pillar of US efforts at making the World 'safe for democracy' since the end of the Second World War. While not underrating US efforts at promoting democratic principles and values, the extent to which US engagements in Iraq, Afghanistan

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12. Youngs, R. "Democracy Promotion: The Case of the European Union Strategy," Centre for European Policy Studies, Working Document, No. 167, 2001; Burnell, P. Edited *Democracy Assistance: International Cooperation for Democratization*. (ed.) (London: Frank Cass) 2000; Carothers, T. *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*, (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 1999.

13. Stokke, O. *Aid and Political Conditionality*, (ed.) (London: Frank Cass), 1999; Burnell, P. "Good Government and Democratization: A Sideways Look at Aid and Political Conditionality," *Democratization*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1994, 485-503; Barya, B. J-J. "The New Political Conditionalities of Aid," *An Independent View from Africa*. IDS Bulletin, No. 24, 1993.

14. Epstein, B. S; Serafino, M. N and Miko, T. F. "Democracy Promotion: Cornerstone of US Foreign Policy?" Congressional Research Service, Report for Congress, RL34296, 2007, 1-4.

15. Epstein, Serafino and Miko "Democracy Promotion," 4.

and other trouble spots constitute democracy promotion is doubtful and subject to debate.

As Youngs, notes, the EU like the United States had developed new initiatives and programmes in the field of democracy promotion.<sup>16</sup> Many of these new initiatives pushed by the EU to advance the course of democracy promotion in third world countries compete favourably with projects and programmes deployed by United States agencies and institutions in the field of democracy promotion across the globe. Unlike the United States, EU's approach directed at advancing democratic change has focused more on strengthening the social and ideational pillars of sustainable democratization and thus, less focus on the use of punitive conditionality. To that end, EU democracy promotion policies, programmes and projects prioritize grass root development work and good governance initiatives as pathway for advancing democracy promotion agenda. Notwithstanding, the giant stride that EU institutions and agencies have made in advancing development, governance and democratization process, EU approach still suffers from significant weakness, the most important been the lack of proper coordination of policies, programmes and projects in ways as to reinforced the complex relationships between the social, political and economic aspects of development assistance targeted at democracy promotion.

Western donors' dedication to democracy promotion has manifest via an increase in and more strategic use of political aid and the funding of projects specifically directed at strengthening democratic procedures. This has been a core pillar of European Union and the United States government strategy in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Political aid had established itself as an important element within the profile of European Union aid-work during the 1990s. In the same wise, the United States under the Presidency of George W. Bush in its 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism cites democracy promotion as a long-term solution for winning the 'War on Terror'<sup>17</sup>. Some, however,

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16. Youngs R. "Democracy Promotion: The Case of the European Union Strategy."

17. Carothers, T. (2009) 'Democracy Assistance: Political vs Developmental'? *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2009, 5-19.



hold a contrary opinion that avers that democracy promotion can be a destructive factor in a country and have documented reversal to democracy promotion, including restrictions of freedom in some countries where democracy promotion has taken place<sup>18</sup>.

Notwithstanding the criticisms level against Western nations' democracy promotion efforts and backlash that might have arisen in transitional democracies where democratic assistance has been offered, the promotion of democratic advancement within the context of the 'third wave', has brought remarkable transformation to the democratic landscape in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Democracy promotion in Nigeria is directed at improving the capacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), strengthening political parties, supporting women and marginalized groups and improving the means of civic engagement with the political process. In the bid to coordinate assistance and support to the democratic process, notable international development partners including the European Union, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established the Joint Donor Basket Fund in 2005. Through the fund, the contributing partners give financial assistance to aid the works of stakeholders and enhance the conduct and management of the 2007 Nigeria's general elections<sup>19</sup>. The central aim of the project is to contribute towards the strengthening of the democratic process in Nigeria. The specific objective is to strengthen the Nigeria's electoral commission INEC, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other relevant stakeholders via technical assistance, training, capacity building and material support, so as to enhance their capacity to fulfil their respective roles especially as they relate to the conduct

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18. Carothers (2009) 'Democracy Assistance, pp. 5-19; Carothers, T. (2006) 'The Backlash against Democracy Promotion', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, March-April, pp. 55-68; National Endowment for Democracy (2006) *the Backlash against Democracy Assistance*. Report for United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 8 June.

19. Alli, W.O. "Development Partners, the 2007 Elections and the Challenges of Consolidating Democracy in Nigeria," *Studies in Politics and Society*, vol. 8, 2007, 166; DFID, "Nigerian Election Support, 2007," Abuja: Department for International Development DFID, 2007, 8.

and management of the 2007 general elections.

While development assistance to stakeholders in the Nigeria's democratization project have become more prominent since around 2005 with the establishment of the Joint Donor Basket Fund, the delivery of financial assistance and technical supports targeted at aiding the advancement of democratic process in Nigeria date back to the 1990s. In the heat of the campaign against military dictatorship, international development partners gave financial assistance and technical supports to civil society, non-governmental, community based, faith based and professional organizations. The objectives being to energize pro-democracy and human rights campaigns and the struggle against military dictatorship<sup>20</sup>. Within this context, these organizations become the vehicle for the delivery of assistance and support directed at exerting pressure on the military establishment to return the country back to civil rule. Thus, the financial assistance and technical support to stakeholders in the Nigeria's democratization project since the conduct of transitional elections of 1999 and beyond represent a demonstration of donors continued support for and engagement with the democratic process in the country.

Through the granting of financial aid and technical supports, international development partners have made enormous contributions directed at strengthening democratic institutions in the bid to enhance the sustenance and consolidation of democratic process in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, international democracy promotion efforts by development partners operating in Nigeria has generally not been seen in positive light. To lend credence, the EU and DFID financing of the UNDP-managed Joint Donor Basket Fund (JDBF) to support the 2007 Nigeria's elections attracts criticism from Nigerian and international NGOs, not least for its many collaboration and supports given to the nation's electoral umpire, the Independent National Election Commission, INEC. While there are challenges especially as it relates to the management of the conduct of the 2007 general elections, yet the financial assistance and technical supports given by donor agencies particularly to the Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC) and coalition

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20. Alli, *Development Partners*, 168.

of Civil Society Groups were instrumental to the conduct of the elections and other process before, during and after the general elections. Not only did international development institutions continue to extend assistance and supports to democratic stakeholders in Nigeria, their engagement with democracy promotion remains central to the progress that has been made in the nation's democratization project since 1999.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Department for International Development (DFID) and Electoral Support in Nigeria**

The UK Government and its development agencies notably the Department for International Development, DFID continues to show commitment to democracy promotion especially in Africa and Asia. This effort and commitment is anchored on the understanding that democracy is the form of state administration that best meet the expectations and aspiration of people around the world. The UK Government also held the view that democracy helps to enhance the realization of peaceful and stable societies, protect human rights and advance social and economic development<sup>22</sup>.

Commenting on United Kingdom avowed commitment to democracy promotion, Jeremy Browne MP, and Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office note that:

*'Britain supports democracy worldwide because we believe it is the system of government that best allows for individual freedom. But it is not only about values: supporting democracy is also in our enlightened national interest. There is correlation between societies that are secure and prosperous and those that enjoy participative democracy...Democracy creates the right framework for poverty alleviation,*

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21. Rainer, L., Menocal, A.R. and Fritz, V. Assessing International Democracy Assistance: Key Lessons and Challenges, Overseas Development Institute, Project Briefing, and No.14, 2008.

22. DFID and FCO (2010) How to Note on Electoral Assistance. 10th December. Accessed from <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/elections/how-to-on-elect-asst.pdf>. (Accessed on 28 December, 2016).

*reduces corruption and supports sustained economic development*<sup>23</sup>.

Advancing similar position, Stephen O'Brien MP, and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development noted that:

*'Democratic politics plays a vital role in the fight against poverty. It is politics that determine how a society makes choices, how competing interests are mediated and how resources are allocated. That is why the United Kingdom puts support to inclusive, democratic politics at the very heart of our development efforts*<sup>24</sup>.

These positions and understanding about the centrality of democratic governance to peace, stability, security, social justice, and inclusive development among others constitute the basic assumptions underlying United Kingdom Government support for democracy and democratization process as a pillar of the country's international engagement.

Unarguably, elections alone do not improve development outcomes, but they constitute an important aspect in the whole processes of consolidating and deepening democracy, which itself enhances development. As an upshot, the Department for International Development, DFID over the last 10 years has provided £197 million in an effort to support electoral process in 26 countries, via ninety (90) separate projects. Aside the bilateral efforts at democracy promotion, the UK through DFID also offers electoral financial support through the European Union. It does this, for example through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. Over the said period, the UK, DFID delivered £140 million or 71 percent of its electoral support and assistance through

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23. Independent Commission for Aid Impact ICAI Evaluation of DFID's Electoral Support through UNDP. Report No. 8, 2012, 2; DFID and FCO. 2010. How to Note on Electoral Assistance.

24. Ibid.

the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP.<sup>25</sup>

The partnership with the UNDP as vehicle for the delivery of UK assistance was in conjunction with other bilateral donors through a Donor Basket Fund managed by the UNDP on behalf of the development partners. The basket fund for electoral support lessens the burdens of electoral assistance as it aids the sharing of the cost of elections support and assistance among the donors. Given its global agenda, the United Nations (UN) is recognized as the most appropriate platform for offering support in a politically sensitive area. The UK gives most part of the remaining £57 million or 29 percent of its electoral support to a host of international and local non-governmental organization (NGOs) for the purpose of election observation/monitoring, voter education and related activities. Some of these NGOs included the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Carter Center, among others<sup>26</sup>.

Based on a country's prevailing conditions, the UK favours both direct and indirect mediums for the delivery of electoral assistance. For instance, in Rwanda, the UK provided electoral support directly to the government, while in Nigeria and Uganda its delivers some of its electoral financial assistance through other bilateral donors<sup>27</sup>. Where the concern is large-scale electoral support, the UNDP is often the choice of delivery institution for the UK. Nigeria is among the largest beneficiaries from the foreign aids provided by the UK's DFID in a bid to enhance the conduct of elections and related matters. Through its varied elections supports funding and other assistance, the UK government through its flagship development agency, the Department for International Development (DFID) has contributed to the strengthening of the democratization process in Nigeria.

Of utmost importance to the UK, however, is election in post-

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25. DFID 2015 Support to Nigeria's Electoral Cycle, 2011-2015; CRIS Number: NG/FED/37407.

26. Independent Commission for Aid Impact, ICAI (2012) Evaluation of DFID's Electoral Support through UNDP.

27. DFID, Operation Plan 2011-2016, DFID Nigeria. (Abuja: Department for International Development), 2014.

conflicts societies. The UK through DFID shows particular interest in electoral process in such countries owing to the realization of its critical role in stabilizing the polity. It is in view of this that the UK directs the largest chunk of its electoral support at countries emerging from or at the risk of conflicts. Consequently, countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Afghanistan, Nigeria, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Liberia benefited to the tune of more than 60 percent from the total UK's spending on elections over the last ten years. The UK considers elections in post-conflict countries as being highly important in disrupting the cycle of violence, restoring the constitutional process and political normalcy. However, elections in post-conflict societies are usually more expensive than elections in politically stable environments, particularly in a situation where voter registration is to be conducted afresh.<sup>28</sup> The importance the UK attaches to elections in post-conflict states as being critical to development underlines its immense funding of electoral process and other election supports to such countries.

From 2001-2010, for example, the largest beneficiaries or recipients of UK's electoral support/assistance were mainly countries emerging from conflicts. Evidence to this effect is contained in the table 1 and figure 1 below.

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28. Independent Commission for Aid Impact (2012). Evaluation of DFID's Electoral Support; 2012, 3.

**Table 1: Largest Recipients of DFID Electoral Support, 2001-2010.**

Country	UK DFID electoral Support (£ million)	Proportion of total UK DFID funds for elections
Democratic Rep. of Congo	38.9	19.6%
Afghanistan	25.8	13.0%
Nigeria	24.8	12.7%
Sudan	17.8	9.0%
Sierra Leone and Liberia	16.9	8.5%
Bangladesh	16.3	8.2%
Tanzania	9.7	4.9%
Pakistan	6.1	3.1%
Malawi	5.7	2.9%
Rwanda	5.0	2.5%
Uganda	4.6	2.3%
Kenya	3.0	1.5%
Zambia	2.2	1.1%
Somalia	2.1	1.1%

Source: Table sourced from ICAI, 2012: 3.





As observed from the table 2 and figure 1 above, Nigeria was the third largest recipient of UK's electoral assistance put at £24.8 million (12.7 percent) within the period 2001-2010. It came after the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan, that received £38.9 million (19.6 percent) and £25.8 million (13.0 percent) respectively. On general level (i.e. not specifically confined to election matters), UK international development support was the largest of the EU countries' at GBP 213 million between the period 2004 and 2007, and continue to grow on an annual basis. Specifically as it relates to Nigeria, the UK government through DFID has significantly increased its development assistance funding for Nigeria in the last fifteen years. To show its commitment to democratization and improved governance environment in Nigeria, the UK is the only country whose development agency (DFID) has multiple offices in Nigeria. The agency has maintained a national office in Abuja since 2001, with regional offices in Lagos, Enugu and Kano<sup>29</sup>. While DFID has been active in the field of development assistance in general, the agency's democracy promotion support and assistance has been instrumental to the deepening and sustenance of the democratization process in Nigeria.

DFID support for the democratization process in Nigeria was anchored on the rationalization that a peaceful, more democratic and prosperous Nigeria is achievable. Towards the realization of a prosperous Nigeria, DFID notes that reducing internal conflicts, deepening democracy, and building investors' confidence are of strategic importance<sup>30</sup>. To this end, DFID has given support directed at enhancing the strengthening of the democratic process, developing a deeper appreciation of Nigeria's political economy, and used its information and expertise to foster political accountability, transparency and strengthening the Nigerian judiciary<sup>31</sup>. The major pillar and avenue for the delivery of DFID democracy assistance in Nigeria is through the institution's governance assistance of which the Deepening Democracy in

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29. Khakee, A. "EU Democracy Promotion in Nigeria: Between Realpolitik and Idealism," Madrid: FRIDE, Working Paper, No. 47, 2007.

30. DFID, Operation Plan 2011-2016, DFID Nigeria. (Abuja: Department for International Development, DFID), 2014, 6.

31. *Ibid*, 7.

Nigeria (DDiN1) and other collaboration framework such as the Donor Basket Fund (DBF) remains significant<sup>32</sup>.

Recognizing the centrality of election management body to the sustenance of the democratization process in Nigeria, DFID has given technical and financial support to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). To this end, DFID in partnership with other development partners have provided assistance directed at enhancing the operational capacity and efficiency of the Independent National Electoral Commission. The overarching objective was to build an increased capacity for INEC to deliver more professionally on its constitutionally assigned responsibilities of managing the conduct of free, fair, credible and competitive democratic elections that will aid the deepening and consolidation of the democratization process in Nigeria<sup>33</sup>.

In the bid to improve the effectiveness of the democracy assistance programme and projects and reduce wastage, the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom, DFID, and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), came together to contribute and manage a Joint Donor Basket (JDB) Fund. The operation and management of Joint Donor Basket fund is usually based on agreements between donor governments and the recipient country and is often target at specific programme and/or projects. Such an agreement was signed with Nigeria on democracy assistance and support. The Joint Donor Basket fund enables a number of development partners to provide assistance and support directed at enhancing the credible conduct and management of the 2007 Nigeria's general elections. Through a common management and policy structure, the JDB fund help to avoid the bureaucratic delays that often characterize the provision of international development agencies support, obviate the need for a multitude of short-term agreements between the donors and recipient agencies and organizations, and allow for greater control over programming and disbursement.<sup>34</sup> The JDB created purposely for the objective of aiding the delivery of development partners'

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32. Ibid, 8.

33. Alli, *Development Partners*, 170.

34. DFID, *Nigerian Election Support, 2007*, (Abuja: Department for International Development DFID), 2007, 2.

assistance and support for the conduct of the 2007 general elections was managed by the UNDP.

The objectives underlying the establishment of the JDB fund include but are not limited to the followings: Alli, (2007) *Development Partners*, p. 168.

- i. to contribute to the development of an open and accountable political system of governance and the consolidation of democracy in Nigerian, encouraging democratic pluralism, competitive politics, education and tolerance, the organization and conduct of regular free and fair and accessible elections with an equitable legal and constitutional framework;
- ii. build a strengthened civil society able to be a vehicle for change, able to engage in policy reform and development, and equipped institutionally and programmatically to implement effective targeted, well-planned voter, civic and electoral education at the national, state and most importantly local levels;
- iii. encourage increased capacity of INEC to deliver more professionally based efficient and reliable electoral services including the development of materials, improved logistic and technical operations, enhanced management capacity and improved skills base of staff, the implementation of delimitation process and delivery of systems that preclude as far as possible the rigging of elections and manipulations of results; and
- iv. enhance the integrity and credibility of the electoral process as a key element in the building and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria among others<sup>35</sup>.

The strategy for achieving the above objectives was through the funding of several Non-Governmental Organizations, (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations, (CSOs), the direct funding of some INEC programmes, and election related programmes in the media among others<sup>36</sup>. Through this fund, the international partners funded

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35. Alli, W.O. 179-180; DFID, *Donor Support*, 12.

36. DFID, *Donor Support*, 12.

several programmes including: Voter Education, Media Monitoring, Domestic Observation and Gender Monitoring through Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the six geo-political zones. The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) became an umbrella body for over 400 NGOs interested in working with the development partners under the Joint Donor Basket platform.

In recognition of the centrality of donor supports and assistance to aiding the delivery capacity of the electoral body, former INEC Chairman, Maurice Iwu, noted that 'development agencies have shown their commitment to the deepening of democracy in Nigeria by their financial support and other assistance'. In specific term, Iwu acknowledged the support of the European Union, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) to the UNDP-managed Joint Donor Basket Fund for electoral assistance to Nigeria<sup>37</sup>.

DFID as part of its governance support and assistance for the democratization process in Nigeria has given support to institutions that work to aid the strengthening of the capacity of political parties. To this end, DFID in conjunction with other development partners notably Canada International Development Agency, CIDA and United Nations Development Programme, UNDP give support to the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, (NIPSS) for the establishment of Political Parties Leadership and Policy Development Centre in 2013. The objective being to contribute to the strengthening of the institutional and organizational capacities of Nigeria's political parties so that they can make meaningful contribution to the nation's democratization process<sup>38</sup>.

DFID was also actively involved with Civil Society Organizations, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and other stakeholders in the democratization process in Nigeria as it relates to the management and conduct of peaceful, free, fair and competitive general elections in 2015. In view of this and in furtherance of DFID's objectives of providing funding and

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37. INEC, Proceedings and Communiqué of the INEC National Forum on Nigeria's 2007 General Elections: The Critical Challenges Ahead. (Abuja: Independent National Electoral Commission), 2006, p. ii.

38. DFID and UK AID, Electoral Assistance and Politics: Lessons for International Support, (London: Department for International Development), 2010.

technical assistance for the process in Nigeria, the agency partnered with cohort of civil society organizations that were engaged with the elections process. In specific term, DFID gave financial assistance and other support to the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (NCS-SR)<sup>39</sup>. The funding and assistance given to the NCS-SR, INEC and other stakeholders in the Nigeria's electoral process was in furtherance of DFID objectives of aiding the strengthening of the democratization process in Nigeria. It keys into DFID operational plan and principles of ensuring that no UK aid goes through government budgets as mechanism for protecting against corruption and avoid substituting Nigerian public resources<sup>40</sup>.

The NCS-SR is a broad platform of civil society groups with the objective of providing a more effective response to electoral failure in Nigeria through active and robust observation and monitoring of the 2015 general elections. The Situation Room, whose secretariat is hosted by the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), provided an avenue for exchanging information among civic society groups, engaged in on the spot analyses of field reports by election observers, provide evidence based and objective insights into the challenges that confront the election management body (INEC) in the management of the electoral process and the conduct of the elections, provide prompt response to emergencies-especially election related violence and provide platform for constructive engagement and collaboration between civil society organizations and other election stakeholders, including the Independent National Election Commission in the course of the 2015 general elections<sup>41</sup>.

Following the success recorded in the conduct of the 2011 general elections, DFID continued to provide funding for the Joint Donor Basket (JDB) fund managed by the UNDP. To this end, the UNDP through the fund in the JDB continues to provide support

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39. The NCS-SR was formerly known as the Nigeria Civil Society Election Situation Room and was formed in 2010 as part of CSOs preparation towards the observation and monitoring of the 2011 General Elections in Nigeria.

40. DFID (2014) Operation Plan 2011-2016, DFID Nigeria. (Abuja: Department for International Development, DFID), 6.

41. Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, NCS-SR Report on Nigeria's 2015 General Elections, 28 March & 11 April 2015. (Abuja: Policy and Legal Advocacy Center, PLAC), 2015, 2.

directed at strengthening ongoing reform and capacity building processes for key democratic institutions, agencies and stakeholders in the democratization process in Nigeria as part of the preparation towards the conduct of hitch free elections in 2015<sup>42</sup>. DFID through its Deepening Democracy in Nigeria (DDiN) programme continue to give technical support and assistance to Nigeria's election management body, the Independent National Electoral Commission towards the conduct of credible democratic elections in 2015. DFID also gives support to civil society organizations engaged in voter education advocacy, electoral observation and those conducting advocacy programmes on the mitigation of election related violence. It also provides support to civil society groups and strengthening their capacity to engage with INEC and government to be accountable to Nigerians<sup>43</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

Since the beginning of the 'Third Wave' of democratization in Southern Europe in the late 1970s, the task of aiding the spread, sustenance, consolidation and deepening of democratization process in transitional democracies and countries emerging from conflicts has remained a major plank of international development assistance. Budget of governmental agencies, institutions and non-governmental organizations working in the area of democracy promotion now runs into billions of US dollars annually<sup>44</sup>. Without doubts, the reasons that have been advance to support the argument on the importance of democracy promotion and support vary considerably. On the one side, is the argument about the 'universal value' of democracy and the need to ensure that the intrinsic benefits that democratic governance holds is spread to all cultures and societies across the globe<sup>45</sup>.

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42. EU Support to Nigeria's Electoral Cycle, 2011-2015.

43. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights & Democracy: The 2015 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by Command of Her Majesty. (London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office), 2016, 6.

44. Burnell, P. "From Evaluating Democracy Assistance to Appraising Democracy Promotion," *Political Studies*, vol. 56, 2008, 414-415.

45. Sen, A. (1999) 'Democracy as a Universal Value', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1999, 3-17.

Aside this, there are reasons anchored on the instrumental worth of democracy as a system that aid the delivery of array of 'good things'. It is on this note that the European Council of Ministers, avers that, 'the embedding of democracy and democratic process in third world countries holds out the best prospect for the development by them of effective policies related to global issues of particular concern to EU citizens'.<sup>46</sup> The sentiments about the intrinsic and instrumental values of democracy continue to be echo by leaders of established democracies from Washington, DC to Brussels<sup>47</sup>. It is on this note that the established democracies have taken on the moral responsibility of ensuring the spread of the democratic culture, values and processes through the instrumentality of democracy promotion.

The successful conduct of the 1999 transitional general elections ushered Nigeria into its Fourth Republic and return the country back to the path of civil rule after years of military rule. Since then, the nation has gone ahead to conduct four rounds of general elections in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015. Within this period, Nigeria has witnessed its first civilian to civilian transition of power and the alternation of ruling party at the federal level. In the course of the 18 years democratic journey, development partners, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations and other democratic stakeholders have played prominent role that have aid the sustenance, consolidation and deepening of the democratization process in Nigeria. One prominent example is the United Kingdom, Department for International Development (UK-DFID).

Over the course of years of engagement with the democratic project in Nigeria, DFID has provided technical and financial supports to the Independent National Election Commission, Nigeria's election management body. The assistance and support are directed at enhancing the capacity of the commission to deliver on the agency's responsibilities of conducting free, fair, credible

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46. European Council of Ministers 'The EU Approach to Democracy Promotion in External Relations: Food for Thought'. Available online at <http://www.democracyassistance.eu>. (Accessed on 28 December 2016), 2.

47. Burnell, P. "From Evaluating Democracy Assistance, 2008, 415; Burnell, P. 'Does International Democracy Promotion Work'? German Development Institute, Discussion Paper, No. 17, 2007.

and competitive democratic elections whose outcome will be acceptable to all stakeholders in the Nigeria's democratic project. DFID has given bilateral financial assistance and technical supports to civil society organizations, faith based organizations and other stakeholders working in the area of voter education, election observation and monitoring, women democratic empowerment, peace and violence free elections advocacy among other important issues. On the multilateral front, DFID is a contributor to the Joint Donor Basket, JDB fund managed by the United National Development Programme. Through its financial supports and technical assistance to institutions, agencies, organizations and other stakeholders engage with the democratic process, DFID has contribute immensely to the consolidation and deepening of the democratic project in Nigeria.