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EVALUATION REPORT



**UDF-RAF-08-219 – Leadership for accountable governance
(Southern Africa)**

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluator. They do not represent those of UNDEF nor of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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I. Executive Summary

i. Project Data

Between 1 November 2009 and 28 February 2011 (including a four-month extension), Freedom House coordinated a 12-month project called: *Leadership for accountable governance*. Freedom House headquarters in Washington designed and had oversight of the project, but it was implemented through Freedom House's Johannesburg (South Africa) office.

The project included 44 participants from 10 countries in southern Africa: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It comprised four principal components: training, support to "personal reform" projects developed by the trainees, integration of the trainees into an existing network, and evaluation of the reform projects with a view to identifying good practice and replicable initiatives. Additionally, funding for the project covered a two-day meeting that brought together 16 alumni of this and earlier subregional training programmes in Africa.

The southern Africa project was part of the creation and development of the African Institute for Governing with Integrity (AIGI) that, in its early stages at least, essentially comprises a network of alumni of the various subregional training projects, including this one. UNDEF provided USD350,000 to the southern Africa project, of which USD 25,000 were retained for the final evaluation.

The overall objective of the project was: "to empower forty-five (45) young government and civil society leaders from southern Africa to catalyze transformative change in their home institutions and communities". The longer-term objective of "building a critical mass of young government and civil society leaders who will be equipped to forge progress in making state institutions more competent, transparent and accountable" is in fact an objective of the broader AIGI initiative.

ii. Evaluation questions

In considering the **relevance** of the project, the broader context of democratic progress in southern Africa, and in particular the need for actions to create a better informed grassroots electorate that might in future elect the young leaders being formed, was taken into account. Questions also focused on the design of the project and in particular the inter-connectedness of the core components and the likelihood that they would contribute to achieving the stated objective.

A decision was taken by Freedom House in Washington early in the project not to support the proposed reform projects and this meant that the training courses had to bear the load of securing the project's objectives. Since the 44 participants were divided into three separate and different training modules – Ethical and transformational leadership, Accountable governance and Citizen-focused public policy – which lasted only eight days each,¹ this was an unreasonable expectation. While the project was relevant to the need to promote ethical leadership and understanding of democratic practices among young people in the region, therefore, the methods used for achieving this were inadequate.

¹ Although the training sessions were described and budgeted as 10 day courses, this included rest days and arrival/departure time. Each session actually comprised only eight days of training.

In evaluating the relevance of the project, the evaluator also looked at the gender appropriateness of the training materials and any obvious political bias, as well as how these were checked by project management.

In exploring the project's **effectiveness**, the process for selecting the training participants (the "young leaders") was important, since choosing the right trainees would decide whether the outcomes of the training would be successful; and because, depending on the profile and positioning of the participants, the unsupported reform projects might or might not go ahead, *independent of the project itself*. It was difficult to judge whether the participants selected were the 'right' ones, that is whether other candidates might have been preferable, however it was noted that the selection process was not open but relied on referrals from known organizations.

In relation to **efficiency**, the comments of many respondents, as well as the trainers and Freedom House Johannesburg, that there was "insufficient" funding was explored. This apparently led to the decision not to support the reform projects at an early stage. In fact, this was a relatively expensive project. The original budget allowed for 15 reform projects to be supported, and a number of other expenditures that either did not occur or for which alternative funds were found. In evaluating efficiency, therefore, questions were asked about the allocation of funds between essential project-related activities and expenses and staff/programme support costs at Washington head office. This is further illustrated in chapter III, under the efficiency section.

The participants contacted were asked to describe what they believed the **impact** of the project had been on them and on their work. Most were positive about personal gains from the training, except two (reasons are explained in Chapter III, section on impact) and in particular from the opportunity to meet others from the subregion. A number mentioned the acquisition of skills that they had used since the training.

Impact on the institutions and communities of the participants was almost impossible to gauge, precisely because no direct cause and effect could be demonstrated between the project/training and the 18 reform projects that participants subsequently initiated. Cause and effect is additionally clouded by the very nature of the selection process, since it privileged participants who were in many cases already positioned to develop (and in some cases secure funds) for mini-projects. The broad impact of the project on the development of democratic processes and good governance is consequently not assessable.

Questions relating to **sustainability** focused on the alumni network and, more broadly, on the viability of the AIGI. A number of respondents expressed concerns that the AIGI could not continue without funding and while it might be perceived as being linked to 'external ideologies'. Freedom House advised that the AIGI is currently not functioning, has no allocated staff and no funds. The alumni network, on the other hand, is to some extent self-maintaining as interested participants communicate through social media.

iii. Conclusions

- The evaluator concluded that the project was **poorly designed**. In particular, a lack of understanding of the importance of the inter-connectedness of the three core activities (training, reform project support and alumni network) to achieving the medium- and long-term objectives of the project led to decisions being made early in the project that compromised its likelihood of success.

- After carefully reviewing the training content and programmes, the evaluator believes that ***insufficient attention was paid to the gender appropriateness*** of the training materials and there were no checks in place to rectify this.
- The evaluator was particularly concerned that ***insufficient attention was paid to political and indeed racial tensions*** that might reasonably be expected to occur in groups that brought together people from 10 African nations. Some of the training materials exhibited poor judgement in relation to comments about political leaders, and some respondents said this was “uncomfortable”.
- Despite these weaknesses, ***the training component was generally well received by participants and in some cases clearly had a positive impact.***
- It is clear that ***financial planning and management was weak***, and that this had a serious negative impact on project activity and the likelihood of the project achieving its objectives. The evaluator was particularly concerned that consultants and participants were led to believe that there was a shortage of funds when, in fact, adequate funds had been provided but had not been appropriately allocated. The evaluator concluded that the ***allocation of funds between headquarters support costs and project-related staff and activities in-country was unbalanced.***
- Given weaknesses in project design and the fact that the budget was handled in such a way that funds for project activities had to be cut, it appears that no attempt was made during the life of the project ***to draw reliable lessons, positive and negative***, and in particular at times when there were clearly challenges facing those implementing the project but still time to re-think plans (for example, relocating later training sessions and the alumni event to a venue where costs would be lower).
- Mixed responses from participants suggest that there has been ***inadequate and inconsistent follow-up*** of the alumni network, which has potential but needs guidance and structure. Since there is currently no staff or budget allocation for maintaining and managing the network, it is entirely dependent on the enthusiasm of current members.
- There seems to be a ***lack of clarity and vision for the future of the AIGI and of strategies for achieving sustainability***, specifically as an independent African initiative. Although there are documents outlining the vision and conceptual basis of the initiative, there appear to be no concrete strategies for ensuring its future.
- The project had a positive impact on some participants both professionally and personally, however overall it ***represents poor value for money for UNDEF*** taking into account the high cost, relatively small number of participants, lack of strategies for broader engagement and inadequate outcomes.

iv. Recommendations

For Freedom House

- In light of the several and different areas of weakness in project design, there is clearly a need to ***review how projects are designed.*** Particular attention needs to be paid to a number of specific areas: ***strategic links between different components*** of the project and how these links lead to desired objectives; ***gender appropriateness*** of materials and outputs as well as actions; ***relationship between the budget and project activities***; and ***monitoring and evaluation*** both during the project and when activities have been completed.

- This project illustrates clearly how important it is at design stage to ensure that a **comprehensive risk analysis** is undertaken, and a **risk management plan** developed, periodically reviewed and implemented when required. Such analysis should consider, *inter alia*, risks relating to internal and external political (or racial) tensions, financial shortfalls or shifts, and possible negative repercussions on staff and/or participants of project activity.

- In the light of difficulties in securing funding for the future of the AIGI (and the repercussions this has on the current ability to manage the alumni network), consider undertaking a **thorough survey of similar initiatives in Africa** and in particular whether the AIGI replicates or complements them. If it complements, then consider entering into **discussions to develop cooperative, strategically relevant relationships** that will convince potential donors of the value of contributing to initiatives that might seem to them to be duplicating existing efforts; if it replicates, then **reconsider the value of continuing plans** for the AIGI (without necessarily dismantling the alumni network).

For UNDEF

- While every project submission is judged on its individual merit, it is nevertheless clear that particular **attention needs to be paid to the relative allocation of project funds between head office and field actions** where the head office is in a third country. This is particularly true if headquarters are located in a developed country where salary and support costs are high. In this case, it is likely that the high headquarters costs impacted directly on decisions made relating to project activity and the subsequent compromising of project outcomes.

I. Introduction and development context

i. The project and evaluation objectives

From 1 November 2009 to 28 February 2011, Freedom House (headquartered in Washington DC) coordinated the project: *Leadership for accountable governance*. The project, which was implemented with oversight from Washington through Freedom House's Johannesburg (South Africa) office, included participants from 10 countries in southern Africa: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The 12-month project was extended by four months. It received USD350,000 in support from UNDEF, all of which was expended (USD 25,000 was retained by UNDEF for the final evaluation).

The overall objective of the project, as stated in the original Project Document, was: "to empower forty-five (45) young government and civil society leaders from southern Africa to catalyze transformative change in their home institutions and communities". In practice, there were 44 participants in the project.

The objective was to be achieved through four linked actions: (1) The participants would attend one of three eight-day training courses leading (2) to the design and support of "reform initiatives to strengthen citizen participation and to make state institutions more accountable". The project also aimed (3) to integrate the trainees into an alumni network that would provide ongoing support to the initiatives. Finally, (4) the initiatives were to be evaluated in order to provide innovative examples of grassroots reform that might be replicated across the region.

The project constituted the southern Africa component of a broader project to establish and develop the Africa Institute for Governing with Integrity (AIGI). Although no long-term objective was identified for the UNDEF-supported project, two additional objectives pointed to longer-term aspirations of the AIGI: "continue to grow a network of emerging government, private sector and civil society leaders in Africa to bolster their shared commitment to democratic governance in the region and to reinforce each other's efforts" and "support efforts of these young leaders to develop and implement reform projects in their institution or community that make public policies more responsive to citizens and strengthen the ability of citizens to hold their governments to account", with a view to "building a critical mass of young government and civil society leaders who will be equipped to forge progress in making state institutions more competent, transparent and accountable".

Although the present evaluation aimed to explore lessons relating to the southern Africa project, the relationship between the project and the AIGI is of course important to assessing whether the participants in this project are likely to remain engaged once it ended and whether the AIGI is a suitable vehicle for that continued engagement.

ii. Evaluation methodology

An international expert designated to lead the evaluation prepared a preliminary planning note (Launch Note) in June 2012 based on a review of project documentation (see Annex 2).

Because project participants were spread across 10 countries, and project oversight was additionally provided from Washington DC, the evaluation was conducted as a desk review. Following a set-up Skype interview with the Project Coordinator in Washington DC, detailed questions were sent to relevant representatives of Freedom House in both Washington DC and Johannesburg, to all contactable participants in the project (38 of 44), and to trainers and

facilitators. Once responses were received, there was follow-up with selected respondents by various means.

Freedom House provided the evaluator with the email addresses of 41 participants in the project but three of these were no longer working. Thirty-eight questionnaires were sent to participants following an introductory message from Freedom House, and 14 responses were received. Follow-up contact was made with all those who responded. This response rate (38%) is considered to provide a reasonable evidence base for the evaluation.

Additionally, responses were received from the three trainers/co-facilitators engaged by the project and from Freedom House in Johannesburg. No further input was received from Freedom House in Washington DC following the departure of the Project Coordinator and the evaluator was referred to the Johannesburg office, which had been responsible for project implementation.

Information was collected, analysed and is presented in this report according to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation criteria are outlined in detail in Annex 1.

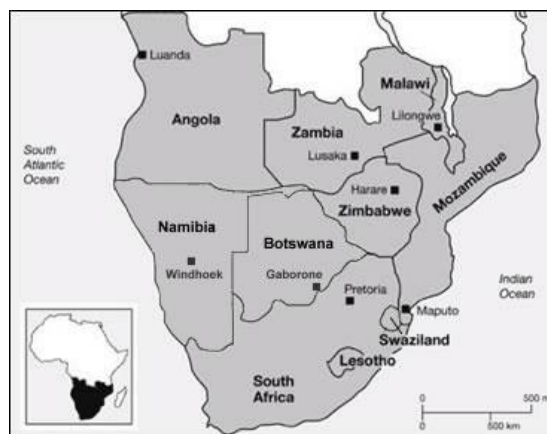
iii. Development context

For the purposes of this report, southern Africa is defined as the project defined it, comprising 10 countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe (see map).

The 10 countries in question in this report ranked in the Medium and Low classifications of the *Human Development Report* in 2011. Botswana ranks highest, at 118 (of 187 ranked countries), with Namibia (120), South Africa (123) and Swaziland (140) completing the Medium-ranking group. Angola (150), Lesotho (160), Zambia (164), Malawi (171) and Zimbabwe (173) all rank poorly, and Mozambique (184) is near the bottom of the rankings.

The subregion fares poorly, also, in global democracy and governance rankings. According to the World Bank's *Worldwide Governance Indicators*, democratic governance in the subregion has not improved since introduction of the indicators in 1996. By 2011, the broader region of sub-Saharan Africa was ranked low in the 25th – 50th percentile for all six indicators used.² That same year, 39 per cent of the countries in the sub-Saharan region were rated as 'not free' (*Freedom in the World Report* 2012), with only 18 per cent rated 'free'. The same report noted that, despite perceptions of steady progress in the establishment of democratic institutions in most sub-Saharan countries in the past decade, the year 2011 showed a moderate decline.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) bureau for southern Africa notes in a 2008 analysis that, while by 1994 no *de jure* one-party state remained in the subregion, in recent years most southern African states had become *de facto* one-party, with opposition frequently being suppressed or silenced.



² Voice and accountability; political stability/absence of violence; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption.

The most recent USAID Afrobarometer survey exercise suggested that, although between 50 and 69 per cent of citizens in the countries of southern Africa supported democracy, many did not know what it means. While the most common response to the question “What does democracy mean to you”, for example, was “civil liberties”, the second most frequent response was “I don’t know”. Similarly, USAID analysis suggests that “people do not have a good grasp of the roles and responsibilities of different institutions of democracy and how the institutions of democracy should ideally relate to each other”. This is equally true, according to USAID, at the level of leadership.

It is in this context of *de jure* democracy but *de facto* weaknesses in democratic institutions and public understanding that the Freedom House project was implemented.

II. Project strategy

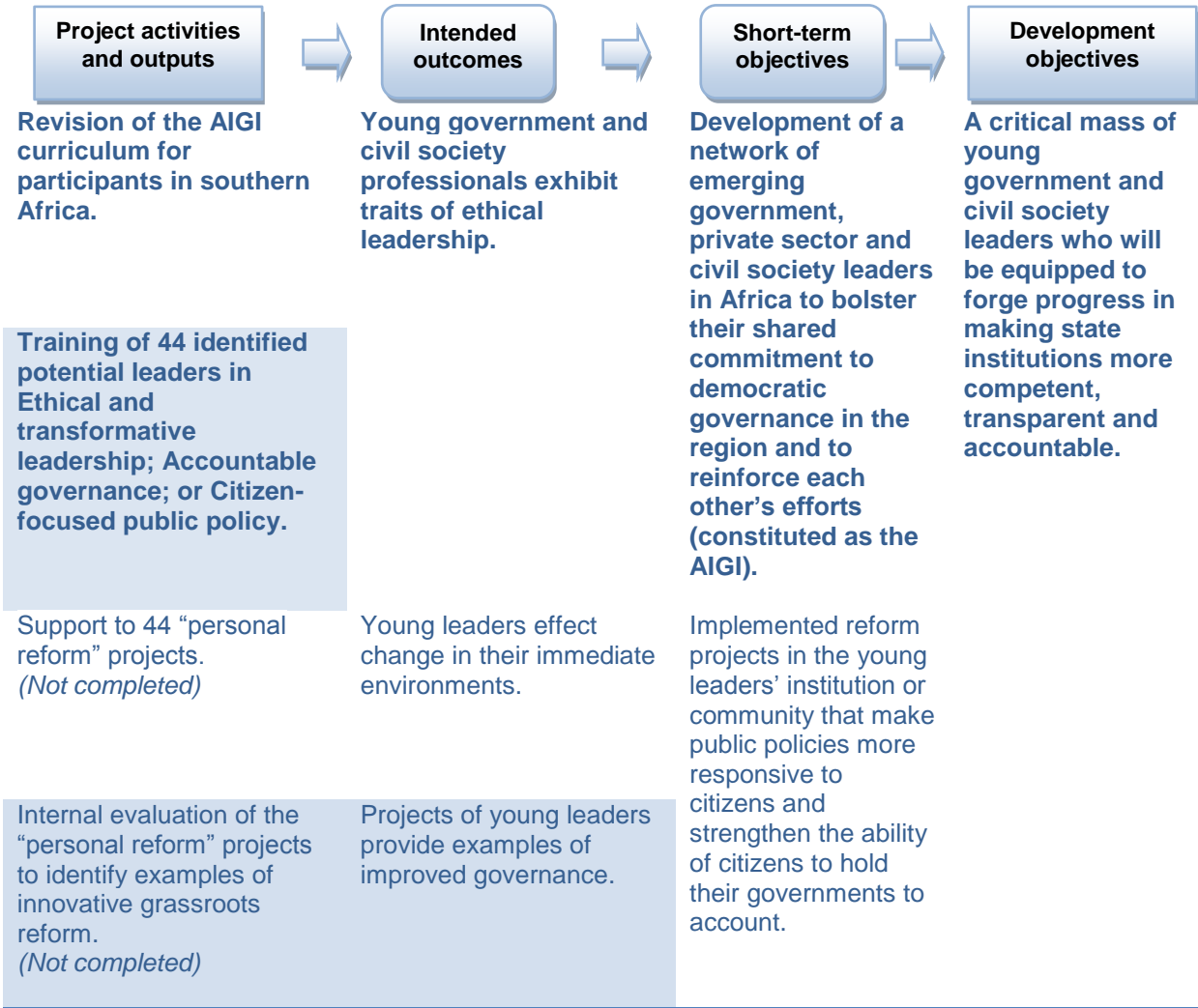
i. Project approach and strategy

To achieve its primary objective, the strategy comprised four main components:

- Training and mentoring of 44 women and men (aged 20 – 36) identified as potential future leaders;
- Support to these 44 participants to implement modest “personal reform” projects in their home institutions or communities;
- Integration of the 44 participants into an existing alumni network (a component of the AIGI);
- Evaluation of the reform projects with a view to identifying good practice and replicable initiatives.

The development objectives and the actions and outcomes leading to them are outlined in the logframe diagram that follows:

ii. Logical framework



III. EQ answers / findings

i. Relevance

▪ ***Project design***

The project was intended as “growth and strengthening” of the plan to establish and develop the Africa Institute for Governing with Integrity (AIGI), which had begun in 2005/6. In response to questions relating to the birth of the AIGI concept, the implementing agency explained that the idea grew from “the realisation that democratizing forces in Africa were not achieving what they were meant to achieve due to leadership challenges”. The project was designed in Freedom House’s US headquarters.

Since 2005/6, training projects have been carried out in West Africa, East Africa, Central and southern Africa. In total, 109 people have participated in the initiative, 61 men and 48 women. Earlier subregional components were funded by the US National Endowment for Democracy.

The evaluator asked about continuity of content between the earlier subregional initiatives and the southern Africa project and was advised that training materials from earlier phases were used as reference reading during the courses. New training modules were developed for this project, however, with the trainers’ terms of reference specifying that the training materials developed should be relevant to southern Africa. The three trainers and facilitators all have experience in teaching in Africa.

▪ ***Gender appropriateness***

Those same terms of reference specified that materials should be gender-appropriate, however there is no indication of how this was verified. Careful reading of the course materials, programmes and feedback notes provided suggests that insufficient attention was paid to assuring the gender-appropriateness of the training. ‘Gender’ was not considered as a topic for teaching or discussion in any of the three courses offered, although there are clearly places in the curriculum where a specific discussion of the role of gender, the importance of women’s participation and equity, and the threats to democratic governance of exclusion and marginalization of women would have been appropriate (there is a section in the course on ethical leadership on the importance of youth participation, and there are several mentions of the imperative of including ‘ethnic minorities’, however there is no mention at all of women as an oft-excluded group or a building block of democracy).

Additionally, the evaluator is concerned that the examples of leadership given in the materials are almost exclusively male and in particular that the approach to ethics used is based on Confucian principles that are quoted without any attention to gender sensitivity, *viz.* Confucius said, “Let me have but one minister....regarding the talents of others as though he himself possessed them and, where he finds accomplished and perspicacious men, loving them...such a minister will be able to preserve my sons and grandsons and my people...” and so forth. This is not just a question of inappropriate language; it reflects a lack of attention to gender appropriateness throughout the materials. The materials should have been reviewed by Freedom House, potentially at headquarters level.

This finding contributes to Conclusions 1 and 2.

▪ ***Other issues relating to training content***

Training was the principal activity in this project. The evaluator is concerned that the examples quoted of ‘bad’ leadership show a distinct political bias and are based on value judgements that should have no place in a course that aims to help and encourage potential

young leaders to observe and objectively evaluate what constitutes ethical leadership and accountable governance. One example of this is a section on former US President George Bush (strangely referred to in the present tense in the materials, which were clearly not updated after the 2009 inauguration of President Obama). This section quotes the intervention in Iraq as an example that brings into question Bush's "moral philosophy" and "ethical grounding" and is followed by a detailed example relating to the Bush Administration's taxation policy (described as "Bush's views on taxes"). Personal views and political affiliations aside, Bush was a democratically elected leader, re-elected after the invasion of Iraq. Such an example was clearly not appropriately presented in materials designed, it is important to repeat, to promote unbiased observation and judgements on the fundamental elements of ethical leadership and accountable governance.

Interestingly, comments on the political and even racial tensions present during the training course came from both students and facilitators. One quoted the challenge of having a pro-Mugabe participant in the training and the conflict this caused at the beginning of the course; another, a white South African, said that, "it was a surprise to be disliked by one participant because of my race". Such realities were not sufficiently taken into account in designing the project – suggesting a need for a comprehensive risk analysis and management strategy – and are particularly important given the objectives of the project. One of the trainers noted this, "we could have thought through racial dynamics more carefully...and had a game plan to deal with challenges". This same trainer noted, however, that having to deal with the issues during the course may have contributed to a stronger course experience, however this is coincidental to project design and a result of the facilitators' abilities rather than good planning.

These findings contribute to Conclusions 1 and 3.

- ***Training approach***

The other major area of concern in relation to the training materials and course content relates to whether or not they were likely to achieve the objective of developing future leaders with a sound ethical and democratic outlook. All three courses were in fact a mix of quite theoretical presentations of approaches to governance and leadership (subsequently discussed in smaller groups by the participants) and skills training which, while useful, was unlikely to enhance the ethical and democratic development of the participants. The responses of the participants as to what they consider the major outcome of the training was for them are telling in this regard and are covered in the section on Impact, below.

Over the course of the project, three separate training courses were held: on Ethical and Transformative Leadership, Accountable Governance and Citizen-focused Public Policy. However, with little indication of contents, the participants had to choose among these and only attended one course each. The explanation given for this is that the courses would not have been effective if more than 15 people had participated, however this meant that the primary objective of the project -- empowering the young government and civil society leaders to catalyze transformative change in their home institutions and communities – effectively had to be achieved through one eight-day training course (see below on the other components of the project). No matter how inspirational the trainers and guest speakers were, and despite the capacity and enthusiasm of the participants, this does not seem likely.

These findings contribute to Conclusion 1.

- ***"Personal reform" projects***

One of the two principal arms of the project, and of the AIGI-focused methodology being replicated in other regions, was support to "personal reform" projects proposed as part of the recruitment process, further developed during the training and then to be implemented once the participants returned to their home communities or institutions.

Freedom House explained the purpose of the reform projects as “challenging the participants to initiate an intervention that was aimed at solving a problem in their community” and added that, “through implementation of this project, the individual will be applying various leadership skills learnt from the training”. In short, the aim was to transfer theory into practice by encouraging participants to look at their own communities/institutions, to develop solutions to identified problems and implement actions that would bring about change. It was also important to “positioning” the participants within their own institutions or communities as leaders and change agents.

It is surprising, therefore, that the decision was taken at the very beginning of implementation, even before the Johannesburg-based Programme Officer had been recruited, not to give the promised small grants to those who had developed projects. According to Freedom House, this was because of a lack of resources but also because funding the projects “became in itself a personal leadership challenge for the participants”. This is disingenuous. The development *and implementation* of the projects was an essential component of the project methodology. Without the practical outcomes of training that the projects represented, the training itself was no more than an eight-day event with minimal short-term outcomes for the participants.

One participant whose reform project did go ahead suggested that, “the personal reform projects deserved concrete support, rather than being mere rhetoric – talk without action”. Importantly, this respondent said that she had been disappointed that her project had not received support from Freedom House. She had not engaged fully with the alumni network, she explained, “because of the limited support I got afterwards”. The strategic links between the training courses, reform projects and alumni network seem not to have been taken into account.

These findings contribute to Conclusions 1 and 5.

- **Broader context**

What seems to have been missing from the project, and indeed from the broader AIGI initiative, is awareness of the fact that leaders cannot be successfully forged out of the context of the people they will lead. The USAID Afrobarometer quoted earlier, for example, showed clearly that there is broad public ignorance of what democracy is and how it works, suggesting that any leadership initiative must also address the broader context. In a 12-month project this cannot be addressed comprehensively, however there are modest, low-cost ways of linking the development of leaders with information to the public(s) they may one day lead.

This observation contributes to Conclusion 1.

ii. Effectiveness

Effectiveness of the project relied on a number of distinct actions, and in particular on the profiles of those selected to participate in the training courses (and subsequent follow-up) and the extent to which they were likely to contribute to the project’s ambitious objective of effecting transformational change.

- **Selection of participants and allocation of topics**

Selection of the 44 “young government and civil society leaders” was done by calling for nominations by organizations and individuals from the 10 countries. Candidates were shortlisted on the basis of application forms they had completed and then interviewed by telephone. Additionally, each candidate was required to submit a concept note for a “personal reform” project. The criteria used to select the 44 participants were: leadership,

service to the community, and commitment to influencing change. The selection of participants was competitive (79 applications were received for the 45 places available), however it was not open. That is to say, a filter had already been put in place by the very nature of the approaches to known organizations and individuals. While this is a practical approach, it is not particularly democratic, since it clearly excludes potential candidates who may not have been known to the organization and individuals concerned.

Of the final group, 11 were between the ages of 20 and 25 (7 male, 4 female); 21 were aged between 26 and 30 (9 male, 12 female); and 12 were between the ages of 31 and 36 (7 male, 5 female). One of the trainers noted that there were not enough women on the course, however overall the gender balance of selected participants seems appropriate. All the target countries were represented, fairly evenly. The participants had different levels of education and worked mainly in government institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, with some participants from labour or student unions. One student suggested that, “the project would have meant more if the selection process had focused on change makers”.

One important consideration is whether, in fact, the selection criteria targeted people who were already primed for leadership within their organizations/communities and consequently to what extent the training courses enhanced their leadership potential. This is considered in the section on Efficiency, which follows.

▪ **Statistical overview**

The project achieved most of the statistical targets it had set itself (with the exception of the grants to reform projects), however this needs to be seen in the context of expenditures, discussed in the section on efficiency, below:

- 44 (target 45) women and men between the ages of 20 and 36 participated in the training courses: 15 from nine countries in Ethical and transformation leadership (27 August – 4 September 2010); 15 from eight countries in Accountable governance (20 – 29 July 2010); and 14 from 10 countries in Citizen-focused public policy (30 November – 10 December 2010). All the courses were held in South Africa.
- 44 young leaders were signed up to the alumni network, however at time of the evaluation only 38 e-mail addresses were valid.
- 0 grants (target 15) were awarded to reform projects, however 18 projects were initiated by participants themselves.
- 16 selected AIGI former students and project participants (target 15) participated in a two-day alumni meeting in South Africa (25 – 26 February 2011).
- Internal evaluation/lessons-learned from the reform projects was not undertaken during the implementation period of the UNDEF-supported project.

iii. Efficiency

▪ **Budget**

The project was effective, with one regrettable exception. It is difficult to understand why Freedom House, trainers and students all cite “lack of funding” as contributing both to limitations within the project (overly intensive training course, lack of follow-up of the network) and what Freedom House itself has called “scrapping” of support to participants’ reform projects. The evaluator has not received a copy of the final acquitted budget, however notes the following planned budget items that were not spent:

Participation of two trainees from Zimbabwe funded from other source, and Shortfall in participation rate from 45 to 44	USD 6,690
Intended purchase of equipment and software not undertaken	USD 7,000
Reform project grants not given	USD 15,000
Lessons-learned exercise of reform projects not undertaken	USD 11,000
TOTAL not spent from original budget allocation:	USD 36,690

Freedom House staff salaries and associated staff costs seem to have taken up a disproportionate amount of the budget. Some of these related to headquarters staff not directly involved in project activities:

Washington HQ staff salaries	USD 33,111
Washington HQ “programme support” salaries	USD 27,250
Travel and per diems (not directly related to project activities)	USD 8,000
TOTAL Washington HQ staff-related expenses	USD 68,361
Johannesburg staff salaries	USD 42,635
Johannesburg staff travel and per diems	USD 7,486
Johannesburg overheads	USD 23,038
TOTAL Johannesburg staff and office expenses	USD 73,159
TOTAL Freedom House staff and support costs	USD 141,520

In the evaluator’s experience, the balance between Freedom House’s overall costs and the allocation of funds to project activities was inappropriate. Although it is not unusual for international NGOs to incur relatively high administrative costs, this must be balanced with expenditure on core elements of project activity, and in this case it was not. Disconcertingly, a large number of respondents – both participants and trainers – alluded to the fact that the project had “limited funding” and so was unable to complete all it had planned. It is not clear where this message came from, however it is quite inappropriate that financial aspects of the grant should be discussed with participants, and certainly not as an excuse for why things did not happen.

These findings contribute to Conclusions 1, 5 and 6.

Efficiency also relates to the nature and success of the planned reform projects, however it is difficult to assess this since effectively the reform projects did not form part of the project as implemented but were initiated by individual participants. Although it is probable that some participants did carry into their reform projects some of the lessons they had learned in the training course, it is impossible to gauge the cause/effect relationship between the training/project and the reform projects. In particular, the profiles of the participants selected may, in fact, lead to the conclusion that they were in any case primed to act within their relevant institutions/communities even without participating in the training.

When asked to suggest some tangible links between the project and the actions of individual participants quoted in the final report as ‘project outcomes’, the implementing agency agreed that “it is difficult to clearly show cause and effect, however inference can be made to the role of AIGI through reports from the individuals concerned”. Some participants did indeed credit the training course with spurring them into action. However, several respondents indicated clearer links between their profile (i.e. *sans* participation in the project) and the follow-up actions they had initiated: “I am a former national student leader and Board Member of the XX National Youth Council... I led the development of an Emerging Scholars’ Network”; “I moved into a development position and use the training in my daily work so I do not need to

have a reform project”; “There has not been much change for me because I was already politically active”.

This finding relates to Conclusions 1 and 7.

- **Activities**

The training courses were well received but with some reservations. The trainers believed that they had delivered what was expected of them, and the participants commented favourably on the trainers and the guest speakers they introduced. The major reservation related to the balance between theoretical and practical aspects of the courses; a number of participants wanted more help with putting theory into practice. This is particularly important given that they were then not supported as some of them attempted to implement their reform projects. Additionally, trainers and students agreed that the courses were too intensive and that there was not enough time. On many days the students were engaged for 12 hours and additionally expected to do background reading. This risks compromising learning and engagement.

There is a link between these shortcomings and project design/financial planning: All students should ideally have taken all three courses and clearly there was need for more ‘breathing space’ in the courses, not least because one of the aims of the programme overall was to promote networking among the participants and long-lasting connections. There are obvious financial constraints in bringing together participants from 10 countries, however the decision was taken to hold all three training courses in South Africa, one of the most expensive countries in the region (and also, as it happened, affected by delays caused by South Africa’s hosting of the FIFA World Cup, which pushed up hotel and transport prices). Why were the training courses not relocated?

The reform projects cannot be judged as an outcome of the project. There have undoubtedly been some successful follow-up actions by course participants (Freedom House estimates that 18 projects have begun since the project ended) but there is no way to link these directly to the project and indeed there are some indications that the decision not to provide any support to personal reform projects was a disincentive for some participants (see Impact, below).

The alumni event was held as planned although it did not contribute directly to the outcomes of this project. Rather it – and the alumni network – should be seen in the broader context of growth and development of the AIGI, which at this time is not functioning.

iv. Impact

- **Training courses**

When asked whether they had gained anything from the training courses, the majority of respondents said that they had, however the gains some nominated do not necessarily demonstrate enhanced leadership: the two main responses to this question related to having met interesting people from other countries (“I hope I have made friends for life”) and gaining new practical skills, in particular logframe development. Indeed, one of the trainers also believed that understanding of logframes was the major outcome of one of the courses.

A number of respondents, however, also said that, as a result of the training, they believed their understanding of democratic values and accountability had grown, and some indicated that this had made a practical contribution to their working lives. One respondent said he believes he has influenced the way his workmates view their work; another believed he is now able to integrate his learning into his organization and personal life. This same trainee has now begun training local government staff on ethical leadership. A participant who

described himself as “already a political activist” thought that he had been able to engage better in discussions of ethics and democracy; and a student working with an NGO engaged in voter mobilization wrote, “Above all, I walk the talk today because of the inspiration I got from the facilitators”.

It appears that, despite shortcomings in the planning of the training courses (in particular the need to cram so much material into eight days and insufficient attention to the political and racial dynamics of the participant group), the training itself had a positive impact on many of the participants in different ways.

It is perhaps worth noting that the pressure to cover a great deal of material in a short time, and to provide only one course out of three to the participants was based on how the funds available were planned and then used. In this regard, the decision to hold all the training courses in South Africa is surprising. This is a planning/project design issue.

These findings lead to Conclusions 1 and 4.

- **Follow-up: Projects initiated**

Eighteen reform projects have been initiated by participants in the training however, as noted above, it is impossible to say whether there is a causal link between the training and the projects. Some participants were already clearly placed to undertake small project work and, in some cases, to access funding from the organization in which they work to do this. Some may well have benefited from the ‘boost’ the training gave them to proceed with reform projects they may otherwise not have begun.

Those who were not in that fortunate position should have been helped to acquire additional skills. The training courses did not include sessions on how to write funding submissions or where to look for funds, taking into account the fact that many of the participants were individuals not constituted as entities that might seek funds from the most obvious sources. What is also clear is that attention should have been paid when Washington was taking the decision to cut project grants to the serious *disincentive* to some participants of developing projects that they could then not implement. The majority of participants who responded to questions asked about their projects said they were “very, very disappointed” that their projects were not supported. All said they had no idea why their ideas had not been funded and that they had been given no feedback. They did not know, in any case, how project selection would proceed. A number of respondents even asked the evaluator for help in securing funding for projects that, they believed, were of significant importance to their communities/institutions.

Reform projects

These examples illustrate the difficulty of demonstrating clear cause and effect between the project’s actions and the reform projects initiated precisely because of the criteria used for selecting participants:

A participant from Zimbabwe established the Zimbabwe Scholars Network to improve research and debate on governance issues. The network hosted a regional conference in Zimbabwe. (The participant works with a rights-based NGO that provided funds.)

Participants from Lesotho organized a series of roundtables that contributed to the election of junior lawyers to the Law Society’s Executive Council for the first time. (One of the participants already held a senior position in the Law Society executive.)

In Angola, a participant established the Youth Forum, a non-political group that aims to promote public debate on freedom of expression and young people’s participation. (This participant works with a major international NGO working on these issues).

Although a minority of the participants who responded said they would still try to implement their projects and so were not too disappointed, it was nevertheless naïve of the implementing organization not to realize that not proceeding with funding the reform projects would not only disappoint but potentially compromise positive outcomes of the training for some (actually the majority of respondents in this case). The language the respondents used in this regard illustrates how emotionally they have reacted to not being able to proceed with their projects, “I am not sure why my project was not supported and I was disappointed...I just think there was a feeling that some participants like me could find funding easily elsewhere, which was not the case”; “I am very disappointed. I suspect the evaluators did not grasp the concept or they did not find it exciting enough or they did not like me or my organization or my age or all of the above. I was not given feedback. I don’t know. I feel like I’m wasting my time”; “Naturally I was disappointed”; “I was disappointed because the project was part of the learning process...participants needed to be helped with funding proposals”; “I don’t know where I messed up – they did not give us feedback at all”.

The decision not to support the reform projects appears to have been an error that severely compromised the methodology of the project and therefore its outcomes. Moreover, it appears to have been based entirely on financial considerations.

These findings contribute to Conclusions 1, 5, 6 and 10.

- ***Follow-up: Alumni network***

The alumni network – essentially a Listserv to allow the participants from this and earlier training courses to stay in touch – was a key component of the project and linked it to the broader AIGI initiative. As with all such networking initiatives, it was partly successful and partly not depending on the motivation and attention of the participants themselves. A number of the respondents said that they were active members of the network and regularly exchanged ideas with others; some said they were not even sure whether they were on the Listserv.

The key to developing and sustaining a network is the ‘hub’ – the individual, group or organization that actively communicates with members regularly, prompting ideas and initiatives and making sure all those who are nominally members see that it is an active, dynamic avenue that they will find useful.

Unfortunately, often the agency that set up the network pays insufficient attention to it once project funding has ended and simply hopes that it will somehow continue at the initiative of the members. This is what has happened here. Freedom House does survey the alumni periodically to develop future projects, however primarily the network is sustained by those of the participants who see its value. No-one within Freedom House Johannesburg is currently tasked with maintaining the network, and the evaluator was advised that “the AIGI is not functioning now; there is no money and no staff”. There is more on this in the section on sustainability, below.

This finding contributes to Conclusions 1 and 8.

Of the participants who provided input to this evaluation, all but one was a member of the network (three did not respond to the question). When asked why they continued to engage with the network, the respondents replied with enthusiasm, saying that they believed the network provided opportunities to share ideas and contact with “friends for life”. Clearly the network is a crucial component of this project and the future of the AIGI. This should be balanced with the modest budget required to maintain it – indeed, there is no real need to maintain or manage a Listserv, given the easy availability of social network sites such as Facebook (which provides for closed groups that are restricted to members only) and in fact

the active network members already use a Facebook site to keep in touch. The challenge, obviously, is maintaining the motivation of those who will not engage without 'prompts'. The respondents were very aware of this. One noted that, "Freedom House and AIGI have been very quiet", another suggested that, "If you plant a seed, you need to water it!".

The project design also included a two-day Alumni Event, however the respondents were not aware that such an event had taken place. In fact, it was designed to bring together only selected participants with alumni from earlier training courses (total 16 attendees) in order to take stock of progress and share ideas on next steps. This is in itself a relevant initiative, however it was also a missed opportunity since the 44 participants in the UNDEF-supported project never met (they had been divided into three groups for the three separate trainings), making bringing them together into a network more difficult.

These observations contribute to Conclusions 8 and 9.

- ***Negative impacts***

There were some negative outcomes of the project. In one case it is clear that participation in the project resulted in a negative outcome for the participant, however in the other case it is not entirely clear whether there may have been other factors involved:

A participant from Swaziland had been bringing together young people in rural areas to encourage them to take part in pro-democracy activities. His employer, a state department, transferred him to a remote post where he had no access to communications. Sponsorship granted to him to participate in a training course on policy analysis was withdrawn days before the training was to begin.

In Malawi a participant resigned from her job because of constant harassment by the head of the institution following her participation in the training. In this case, the head of the institution contacted the AIGI programme officer demanding to see the training materials that had been used in the course.

This finding contributes to Conclusion 1 and specifically the need for a risk assessment and management strategy at planning stage (see Recommendations).

v. Sustainability

- ***African Institute for Governing with Integrity***

At this time, the AIGI is a loose network of project alumni. It currently has no strategic plan, no funding and no staff to maintain or drive it. To date submissions for follow-up funding by Freedom House have not been successful and this may, indeed, be linked to the lack of a strategic plan.

Conversely, there are clear indications of hope and aspiration among those who participate actively in the network, and consequently a modest platform on which some form of follow-up can develop, whatever form that takes. This is unlikely to happen, though, if someone does not drive efforts to consolidate the network, consult and develop a long-term vision and plan, and identify sources to fund this on an ongoing basis. Certainly tying the AIGI to short-term project funding is neither efficient nor sustainable.

In particular, a number of respondents commented on the need to ensure that the AIGI is constituted and seen to be an African initiative. Freedom House therefore has a responsibility to build 'separation' into any plan that is drawn up.

These findings contribute to Conclusion 9.

IV. Conclusions

i. The project was **poorly designed**. In particular, there was a lack of understanding of the importance of the inter-connectedness of the three core activities (training, reform project support and alumni network) to achieving the medium- and long-term objectives of the project. This led to decisions being made early in the project that compromised its likelihood of success.

ii. **Insufficient attention was paid to the gender appropriateness** of the training materials and there were no checks in place to rectify this.

iii. **Insufficient attention was paid, also, to political and indeed racial tensions** that might reasonably be expected to occur in groups that brought together people from 10 African nations.

iv. Despite weaknesses in planning and oversight, **the training component was well received by participants and in some cases clearly had a positive impact.**

v. **Financial planning and management was weak**, affecting project activity and the likelihood of the project achieving its objectives. In particular, the **allocation of funds between support costs in Washington and project-related staff and activities in-country was unbalanced.**

vi. No attempt was made during the life of the project **to draw reliable lessons, positive and negative**, from individual elements of the project, and the project overall, with a view to addressing shortcomings.

vii. There has been **inadequate and inconsistent follow-up** of the alumni network, which has potential but needs guidance and structure, especially at a time when 'new' alumni are potentially joining.

viii. There is a **lack of clarity and vision for the future of the AIGI and of strategies for achieving sustainability**, specifically as an independent African initiative.

ix. The project had a positive impact on some participants both professionally and personally, however overall it **represents poor value for money for UNDEF** taking into account the high cost, relatively small number of participants, lack of strategies for broader engagement and inadequate outcomes.

V. Recommendations

For Freedom House

i. (Based on Conclusions 1, 2 and 7): There is a need to ***review how projects are designed*** and in particular attention needs to be paid to a number of specific areas: ***strategic links between different components*** of the project and how these links lead to desired objectives; ***gender appropriateness*** of materials and outputs as well as actions; ***relationship between the budget and project activities***; and ***monitoring and evaluation*** both during the project and when activities have been completed, in particular with a view to feeding lessons back into the project or future initiatives.

ii. (Based on Conclusions 1, 3 and 5): All projects require a ***comprehensive risk analysis to be undertaken during design stage, and a risk management plan*** to be developed, periodically reviewed and implemented when required. Such analysis should consider, *inter alia*, risks relating to internal and external political (or racial) tensions, financial shortfalls or shifts, and possible negative repercussions on staff and/or participants of project activity.

iii. (Based on Conclusions 8 and 9): In the light of difficulties in securing funding for the future of the AIGI (and the repercussions this has on the current ability to manage the alumni network), consider undertaking a ***thorough survey of similar initiatives in Africa*** and in particular whether the AIGI replicates or complements them. If it complements, then consider entering into ***discussions to develop cooperative, strategically relevant relationships*** that will convince potential donors of the value of contributing to initiatives that might seem to them to be duplicating existing efforts; if it replicates, then ***reconsider the value of continuing plans*** for the AIGI (without necessarily dismantling the alumni network).

For UNDEF

iv. (Based on Conclusion 5): While every project submission is judged on its individual merit, it is nevertheless clear that particular ***attention needs to be paid to the relative allocation of project funds between head office and field actions*** where the head office is in a third country. This is particularly true if headquarters are located in a developed country where salary and support costs are high. In this case, it is likely that the high headquarters costs impacted directly on decisions made relating to project activity and the subsequent compromising of project outcomes.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

General evaluation question categories

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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents reviewed

Background documents

Freedom House website: www.freedomhouse.org

Ford Foundation website (southern Africa section): www.fordfoundation.org/regions/southern-africa/

Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa website: www.eisa.org.za

Panos Institute (southern Africa) website: www.panos.org.zm

Media Institute of Southern Africa website: www.misa.org

USAID Southern Africa regional programme website: <http://sa.usaid.gov/southern-africa>

Human Development Report 2011: Regional indicators (UNDP 2012)

Democracy and Governance Assessment – USAID/Southern Africa (USAID 2008)

Worldwide governance indicators: Subsaharan Africa (World Bank 2011)

Freedom in the World 2012: Subsaharan Africa (Freedom House 2012)

Project outputs

AGI poster

AGI concept note

AGI Note on Output, outcome and expected impact

AGI Ethical and Transformational Leadership training course: Programme Aug-Sept 2010

AGI concept note for the Ethical Leadership training in Johannesburg (25 August – 4 September 2010)

AGI Accountable Governance course

Accountable Governance course: Feedback and lessons-learned note (undated)

Citizen-focused Public Policy course: Feedback and lessons-learned note (undated)

AGI individual and organizational testimonials

Project documentation

Project Document, UDF-RAF-08-219

Mid-term Progress Report, UDF-RAF-08-219

Final Project Narrative Report, UDF-RAF-08-219

Milestone verification mission report (9 Sept 2010)

Annex 3: People Interviewed

Aleta Musvoto	Programme Officer South Africa, Freedom House	Johannesburg
Jeff Smith	Programme Coordinator, Freedom House	Washington DC
Mandla Hlatshwayo	Consultant trainer, nominated future Director AIGI	Johannesburg
JME Simekha	Consultant trainer	
Fiona White	Consultant trainer	
14 participants whose anonymity was assured. The participants, both female and male, came from five different African nations.		

Annex 4: Acronyms

AIGI	African Institute for Governing with Integrity
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EQ	Evaluation Questions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus/Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
HQ	Headquarters
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States dollar