Frequently Asked Questions on SPARC support to Governance Reforms in Lagos State

Lagos State is focused on becoming “Africa’s Model Megacity, and Global, Economic and Financial Hub that is Safe, Secure, Functional and Productive”. Since 2008, the State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC) programme has been working in partnership with the Lagos State Government across a wide range of governance reform areas to ensure that this vision is achieved. This leaflet presents some frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the SPARC programme and its reform activities in Lagos State.

What is SPARC?
The State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC) is a programme of the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) also known as UKaid. The programme works across 10 states in Nigeria to improve the way Governments allocate and manage their resources through supporting governance reforms already underway in the state.

Does the SPARC Programme work only in Lagos State?
SPARC also works in Anambra, Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Niger, Yobe, and Zamfara. It also has a Federal Component that works with agencies that deal with state governments such as the Office of the Senior Special Assistant on MDG’s.

What does SPARC do on governance issues?
- **SPARC** works with state governments to support improvements in the way policies and strategies are prepared, monitored and evaluated for results and impact so that Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDA’s) are more responsive to the needs of citizens and uphold their rights.
- **SPARC** works to improve the way financial resources are managed to ensure that state resources are used accountably, responsively as well as efficiently and effectively.
- **SPARC** works to strengthen better performance in state governments. In other words, to help state government staff boost their knowledge and skills so that they can do what they are supposed to do, but better.

Are there other DFID programmes asides from SPARC?
Yes, DFID Programmes in Lagos include Partnership for Transforming Health Systems II (PATHS 2), Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN), States Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI), Growth & Employment in States (GEMS1, GEMS 2, GEMS 3 and GEMS 4), Enhancing Nigeria’s Response to HIV/AIDS (ENR), Justice for All (J4A), Enhancing Nigerian Advocacy for a Better Business Environment (ENABLE), Support to National Malaria Programme (SuNMaP), Voices for Change (V4C) Developing Effective Private Education in Nigeria (DEEPEN).

Does SPARC have any plan for the non-SPARC states in terms of providing technical support?
Direct support is provided only to the 10 states in which SPARC currently operated. However, SPARC has now established the Access for Sharing Knowledge (ASK) platform that provides remote advice, information and support on governance reforms which is accessible to all Nigerian state governments.
The “ASK” help desk was setup to stimulate demand and share actual experiences in governance reform initiatives with states not directly involved in the SPARC programme. ‘ASK’ can be accessed by downloading an enquiry form from our website www.sparc-nigeria.com/ASK. You can also send an email to ask@sparc-nigeria.com.

Does SPARC provide support to the private sector?

No. SPARC does not provide direct support to private sector - however we encourage the state government to collaborate with the private sectors.

I’ve been told that SPARC programme has a lifespan, when does the programme end and what are the plans for sustaining reforms? Is there an agency of Government that will sustain these reforms when SPARC ends?

SPARC began in June 2008 and should end in June 2015. We are working with LASG to ensure that reforms are institutionalized and sustainable. The programme has been working particularly with the Office of Transformation on some of these reform initiatives to build OoT’s capacity to take on the role of independently leading reforms in the state.

Is there a plan in place that provides an overall direction for the growth and the development of Lagos State?

A Lagos State Development Plan (2012-2025) developed by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget with technical assistance from SPARC and has been approved by the Lagos State Executive Council. The plan provides a framework through which all sectors of the economy - public, private and civil society - can direct their energies and contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of people in the state as well as a means whereby performance is evaluated against the set goals and objectives.

In what ways is MTSS relevant to improved service delivery by sectors/MDAs?

The Medium Term Sector Strategies (MTSSs) sets out a strategy in the mid-term (three years) through which MDAs achieve their mandates within the given budgetary constraints. This is relevant to improved service delivery as MDA mandates are the function Agencies are setup to perform. The MTSS elaborates on programmes that it will carry out towards this function. It also details available resources and enables agencies to prioritize their activities for the most efficient allocation of resources towards realization of set targets.

Is there a linkage between the Performance Management Report process, Medium Term Sector Strategy and the Annual Budget?

The three processes are part of the annual planning and budgeting cycle. It commences with the development of the MDA strategy drawn from the overarching policy with includes costed programmes which have been prioritized this feeds into the MDA annual budget. Sector strategies and budget are subsequently reviewed for performance against set targets following implementation and this is informs adjustments to the sector strategy in the subsequent year.

Why do MDAs have to profile their annual budgets?

The profile of the annual budget is a breakdown of the budget into months/quarters for both expenditure and revenue which allows MDAs to operationalize their budget. It also provides details to enable STO prepare a cash plan so determine the cash requirements of the state so that a cash plan can be implemented to prevent delays in cash release. The budget profile is also closely linked to the procurement plan which set out parameters for
procuring goods and services according to the provision of the law.

I understand that, LASG has made marked progress in improving its annual planning and budgeting processes in recent years. Has this been harmonized with the Lagos State Local Government?

There have been some significant improvements in Planning and budgeting at the state government level, this has led to more realistic budgets. Revenue forecasting is becoming more accurate and overall outturn between budgeted and actual has improved. To enhance synergy in Planning and budgeting at both state and local government level, a joint local government-state steering committee and technical working group has been inaugurated to oversee the implementation of planning and budgeting reforms at the LGAs/LCDAs. In 2012, a planning and budgeting manual for local government was also developed and officers trained as part of the process to strengthen the harmonisation of processes.

**Does SPARC support improvement in Public Procurement practices?**

Yes. SPARC has supported the implementation of procurement in Lagos right from the enactment of the Law, through to the setting up of the agency, structure for decentralization and capacity building for the Procurement Cadre. Trainings have covered the procurement law and regulations, pre-qualification and tendering, standing bidding documents and the procurement manual. To further the support to the institutionalization of best practices in procurement, Auditors across the state were also trained on procurement audit to acquaint them with the use of modern audit tools and empower them to carry out statutory procurement audits.

**How does the shift to professional Human Resources Management (HRM) impact how we work in our MDAs?**

This shift from Administration to professional proactive HRM provides LASG the opportunity to drive government reforms through better people performance at individual MDAs and service wide levels and will help build a public service that is well structured, organized and whose staff have right attitude, skills and motivation to deliver the vision of the state.

**What are the benefits of Workforce Planning to LASG?**

The benefits of Workforce Planning to LASG include helping the Public Service to accurately project future manpower needs, ensuring better forecasting, cost control and value for money; having the right people in the right job with the right skills; providing better services and increased citizen confidence in those services; ensuring increased staff capability and capacity; ensuring increased MDA productivity; and making the LASG Public Service more attractive to young talent and professionals.

**I have heard the term ‘Corporate Planning’ several times but I don’t know what it is all about?**

Corporate Planning is a process in which an MDA determines its objectives, priorities, structure and functions in the light of its mandate. It also determines how to organize and apply its resources (human, financial etc.) to achieving its objectives and meeting its service delivery standards and targets. Specifically, a Corporate Plan guides the management and staff of the Ministry in a cohesive effort to carry out the Ministry’s mandates.’ It is a review and re-organization process usually carried out in response to a recognized need or desire to change.
What effort has SPARC made in supporting Lagos State Government deliver quality services to the inhabitants of Lagos and that they are responsive to citizens?

SPARC worked with the Office of Transformation to develop Customer Service Charters for fourteen (14) pilot MDA’s designed to expand access to public services, stimulate effective demand and enhance accountability in public service delivery. Service charters empower citizens by increasing their awareness of the public services they are entitled to, and encouraging them to demand higher standards. So far, with SPARC support, Lagos State Government has produced a service charter policy, as well as guidelines to help MDAs develop and deploy their charters. These emphasized a systematic and effective approach to reorganizing work in order to bring about improvements in service delivery. A key output of the process is the development of customer service charters that is widely circulated and support increased access to services by members of the public.

I have heard some of my colleague talk about CoP established in their MDAs with support from SPARC, what is CoP all about and what does it aim to achieve?

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who have similar concerns and voluntarily come together to share and learn from each other and apply what they have learnt to their work. The CoP aims to enhance the technical knowledge of members, improve confidence and competence foster professionalism and social interaction and achievement of corporate advantage. SPARC supported the implementation of three CoPs with officers of three Lagos State Agencies namely: Ministry of Economic Planning and Budgeting (MEPB), the Lagos State Public Procurement Agency (LASPPA) and Ministry of Information and Strategy (MoIS).

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The opinions expressed in this leaflet are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department for International Development.

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