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| **Title: Business Case for Office for National Statistics Partnership Programme for the Modernisation of Official Statistics** | | |
| **Programme Summary: ONS** Partnership Programme with international National Statistics Institutes for the modernisation of official statistics. | | |
| **Programme Value:** Up to £3.0 million | | **Country/ Region:** Global |
| **Programme Code:** 001 | **Start Date:**  01 April 2021 | **End Date:** 31 March 2022 |
| **Overall programme risk rating:** | Low | |

1. **Strategic Case**

**A. Context**

The ONS is the UK’s largest independent producer of official statistics, the recognised National Statistical Institute, and the heart of the Government Statistical Service (GSS). The National Statistician is the government’s principal adviser on official statistics as well as being head of the GSS and the Government Analysis Function.

Between 2017 and 2021 we have been funded through a [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) grant](https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-300443) to support statistical modernisation in FCDO partner countries. The purpose of the programme was to support National Statistics Institutes (NSI) in their ambitions to modernise their institutions, improve the quality and availability of data to support the Global Goals, also known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensure no one and no where is left behind. The ONS is well placed to offer this support as a world leading statistical institution, respected globally, and seen as a modernisation flag bearer.

The original programme was a pilot that enabled ONS to build its own capacity of operating internationally, during this time period, we have worked with the support of FCDO and Government Partnerships International (GPI) to **“actively build our aid-management capacity”** (ICAI <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/html-report/how-uk-aid-learns/>) and have put significant focus on monitoring, in depth reviews, and learning. We have built up good evidence of what works. With our own ODA funding we will be able to scale up the technical assistance, to deepen our work with existing partners delivering more, and to develop more partnership based on a rigorous scoping criteria and to cover more countries with a broader range of work.

The ONS international strategy establishes the ambition that the UK statistical system is shaping the debate in all areas of importance to the UK. In order to realise this, we will build and maintain sustainable and effective bilateral and multilateral relationships and partnerships to learn and share best practice and to work together to deliver shared action on the most pressing statistical challenges in support of the UK’s priorities. The ONS will build strong working relationships with multilateral organisations, shaping and strengthening the UKs global voice by working across the GSS, ensuring that post EU Exit the UK remains able to advance its interests. This programme will enable us to deliver on this ambition by allowing us to develop the key ODA eligible partnerships.

Building on the success of the ONS’s existing peer-to-peer partnerships with National Statistical Institutes (NSIs)**–**at a country level the proposal will support the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office’s (FCDO) single-country plans by achieving the following for partner countries:

* **Higher quality and more frequent data** being published and used for key decisions (including for example censuses and economic statistics)
* **Increased data literacy** and sharing, leading to better decision making and evidence-based policies;
* More cost-effective data production through the use of **digital technology** and **data science initiatives;**
* **Greater public trust in data** which increases the utility of published data and analysis;
* More **effective leadership** increasing the rate and quality of data production, and staff morale;
* Adherence to international standards allowing for better cross-country comparison and improving efficiency and quality.

 At the global level the proposal will:

* **Share UK expertise in digitally enabled, data driven decision making**, helping less developed and middle-income countries achieve the SDGs, while also establishing international influence for HMG priorities.
* **Ensure the UK is at the forefron**t of new digital and data innovations;
* **Drive the use of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and their central aim to put citizens first and “leave no one and no where behind”;
* **Support emergency responses**, and the operational delivery of ODA programmes, making sure the FCDO itself has the capability so that data can be used to make evidence-based decisions;
* **Ensure the UK leads** the way in data regulation, improve standards and increase the use of ethics;

**B. How support will be delivered**

We have built up an effective model of:

* **“Tier 1 partnerships**” with NSIs in FCDO priority countries in Sub-Sahara Africa, and in one case with a pan African statistical body; these take a broad strategic approach to supporting statistical modernisation in the partner organisation and by working regionally we have been able to maximise impact.
* **“Tier 2 partnerships”** are more focussed scope, these are effective alongside larger FCDO or other donor projects – with the ONS bringing in specific peer-to-peer expertise.
* **“Global programmes”** where we are open to supporting other (ODA eligible) countries with ONS skills or ‘products’ which are in global demand; 4 main areas of support to date:
  + **Data science**: showcasing why data science is valuable for NSIs and for international development, including our well-received mentoring of new data science teams in ODA-eligible NSOs, government departments, and international organisations,
  + **SDGs:** UK/US [Open SDG platform](https://open-sdg.readthedocs.io/en/latest/) fully available for all to copy; support available for ODA eligible countries, support to countries developing and implementing Inclusive Data Action Plans;
  + **Economic stats**: ONS technical experts available to support global projects for building economic statistics capability.
  + Support **ONS engagement and leadership** in key international events and in work on best practices, for the benefit of developing countries, for example the [Titchfield City Group on Ageing](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/user-facing-pages/ageing-statistics/)

Our current Tier 1 partnerships are with Kenya (where our support was fundamental to the success of their first digital census), Rwanda (where we have assisted them in all aspects of building a new sustainable data science team, leading the way in Africa) and Ghana (where we have supported the development and launch of their 2020-2024 strategy, ensuring an increased focus on users and on use of their data). We also have a partnership with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), with their Africa Centre for Statistics. By supporting the UNECA, as well as three leading NSIs in Africa, we have been able to ensure ideas and progress can be shared and have a multiplier effect, this has particularly been evident in our work to support censuses across the continent.

The Data Science Hub has delivered mentoring to analysts within partner countries - helping to automate the production of statistics and shape projects including data science techniques and new sources of data. It is also working with FCDO colleagues and other development organisations - for example using global shipping data to explore port efficiency in East Africa and measuring livestock numbers using satellite imagery in South Sudan. The SDG team have co-developed [Open SDG](https://open-sdg.org/), an open source, free-to-reuse multilingual tool for collecting and reporting disaggregated SDG data, with the ODA funding they also support developing countries to set up their own data websites using Open SDG. Globally the tool is being used by at least 22 countries, regions, and cities, ten of which are developing countries.

**C. The programme aims to achieve the following impact and outcomes:**

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| **OUTPUTS** | | |  | **OUTCOMES** | |  | **IMPACT** |
| 1 | Maintain 4 effective ‘Tier 1’ partnerships, supporting statistical modernisation comprehensively in the partner country | |  | Partners produce more trustworthy, high quality and valuable data; | |  | The production of better statistics, which in turn (i) leads to improved user-engagement, (ii) better policies and decision making, and so (iii) improves the sustainability of NSOs and progress towards the SDGs |
| 2 | Develop and manage 3-4 Tier 2 partnerships, supporting some elements of modernisations where ONS can add strategic value | |  |  |
| 3 | Global good and HMG ODA data science support: | |  | Improved institutional capacity and sustainability within partner NSOs | |  |
| 4 | Support to other (ODA eligible) countries with ONS skills or ‘products’ which are in global demand | |  |  |

**D. Evidence to support proposal:**

This proposal builds on the success of our current programme which have shown that the UK is able to have influence because partner NSIs see the ONS as a like-minded, peer partner. Feedback shows our approach has been influential in delivering important results regarding how they operate, and that ONS work is making sustainable changes with potential to deliver more in many other areas. This approach involves rigorous scoping followed up by medium-term, true peer-to-peer working, with an embedded strategic adviser based in country. The ONS has filled a clear gap by focussing on the ‘softer side’ of managing a National Statistical System effectively e.g. communications, stakeholder engagement and ensuring policy relevant analysis as well as technical support. These are core factors in ensuring the data produced is relevant and is used effectively for policy making.

There is evidence of a regional multiplier effect in Sub-Saharan Africa, which shows this work is more powerful when we make linkages between our different partners e.g.  we have linked Sierra Leone with Kenya to borrow tablets for the upcoming census, and linked partners with each other and with UNECA to improve censuses and statistical leadership.

These partnerships are complemented by a range of more ad hoc, and wider reaching programmes which enables the UK to use our comparative advantage to support and influence NSIs globally, increasing impact and putting us at the forefront of shaping the global debate on digital and data.

There is evidence of demand from additional NSIs and FCDO offices in Sub Saharan Africa i and beyond to work with the ONS **–**. We will prioritise where our intervention can add most value, and in line with FCDO country plans.

In the FCDO Annual Reviews of the previous programme in 2018 and 2019 we scored an A in both years and received the following comments “**there have been substantial achievements in the [global programmes] and the beginnings of long-standing relationships”** and**“This programme continues to perform well”.**

**I**n  2020 the programme scored an A+ and attracted the following comments “**This programme continues to perform well and despite a very challenging context”**and “**The partnerships at country level have deepened with a growing range of examples of the impact of ONS’s work”.**For the 2020 Annual Review ONS produced a range of case studies, 13 of which were assessed by the FCDO as evidence that the ONS has had moderate or major impact on data availability or statistical capability in partner countries.

**B.Financial Case**

1. **Overview of costs**

The programme has a ceiling allocation of £3.0m for 2021 - 2022. These funds will be used to fund the challenge of measuring the Global Goals and the commitment to “leave no one behind”.

1. **Cost profiling and planning**

All funds used in this programme will be ODA-eligible and are expected to be disbursed according to the table below:

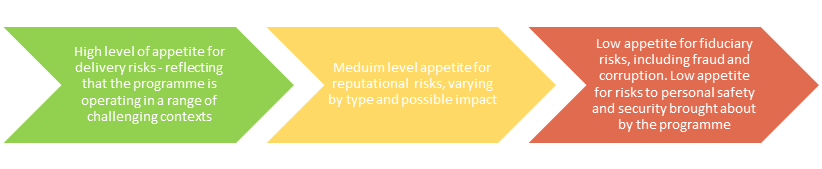
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| £ |  | Total Apr 21 - Mar 22 Forecast Spend |
| **TIER 1 PARTNERSHIPS** |  |  |
|  | Rwanda | £496,000 |
|  | UNECA | £460,000 |
|  | Ghana | £423,000 |
|  | Kenya | £488,000 |
| **TIER 2 PARTNERSHIPS** | | £240,000 |
| **GLOBAL PROGRAMMES** |  |  |
|  | Data Science Hub | £567,000 |
|  | SDG | £169,000 |
|  | International events | £15,000 |
| **Cross cutting** | Programme evaluation | £50,000 |
|  | Other core costs not associated with any project line | £92,000 |
| **OVERALL TOTAL** |  | **£3,000,000** |

ONS International Development Team will maintain oversight of all the proposed, approved and underway assignments, planning and monitoring the staff costs and other associated costs, as well as the objectives and deliverables of the assignments. ONS then report to Steering Committee quarterly on the activities undertaken. ONS International Development Team will ensure the programme will deliver value for money. Expenditure will be validated against the work plan, progress reports and financial reports.

1. **Travel and subsistence**

ONS staff undertaking overseas travel as part of their official business, will use the official rates for expense payments as published by HMRC on .gov.uk

**C.RISK MANAGEMENT**

Based on the analysis below we judge this programme to have a risk level of minor.

ONS risk appetite underpins the risk management approach to program implementation. Underpinning risk management is a culture of openness where staff and partners are encouraged to be completely open about risks. The ONS’ risk policy document sets out clear roles and responsibilities as well as the escalation process.

The major risks and mitigation strategies include:

**Reputational:**All peer-to-peer partnerships come with a **risk that the ONS / HMG is associated with any (real or perceived) problems in the partner organisation**, in the case of statistical offices this could be manipulation or suppression of statistical results or  inappropriate treatment of sensitive data for example. We will work closely with FCDO to continually monitor these risks at country level and understand the specific risks and the context associated with each partner. Our work focusses on technical areas, and we will avoid political discussions. We will encourage and advise partners on how they can manage risks, for example by having appropriate legal and policy environments, and a suitable code of practice.

**Operational:** As with all work which involves international travel, to sometimes fragile countries, there is a risk to **security, health, and safety of ONS staff, partners, or others** under the care of the programme. The ONS works closely with the FCDO at a country level to ensure the safety and security of staff based in country and those undertaking duty travel. We ensure all our staff are well briefed and trained on risks, including health, safety and security, and safeguarding risks, and their personal role in mitigating them. As an example, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated ceasing of international travel and the quick withdrawal of the four strategic advisers back to the UK. Although this risk materialised the mitigation measures, including remote working, meant that the programme has continued to operate in all four countries.  As travel begins to be possible again, ONS will ensure that all staff follow COVID19 prevention regulations in the UK and in partner countries.

**Delivery**: There are risks that**space for delivery is narrow and/or that the partners do not prioritise the deliverables of the partnership.** These risks are mitigated by effective use of tools such as theory of change, our workplans and log frames, and developing these jointly with partners. The role of the strategic adviser and any locally engaged staff based in-country, is to form strong relationships with senior leadership, to understand the context and to ensure that the programme is flexible and designed to meet the partner’s needs, and that in-country capacity to absorb technical assistance is assessed before work starts including a realistic assessment of any barriers;

**Fiduciary**: Risks of **fraud and corruption** are low: as the programme is designed so that the ONS manages all procurements and does not provide funding to partners.

**D. MANAGEMENT CASE**

Effective governance arrangements have already been established through the previous MoU for the UK Partnership Programme for the Modernisation of Official Statistics between the ONS and FCDO. Although during this phase, the ONS will have its own grant, similar governance arrangements will be followed.

They will be organised around a **Steering Committee**which: sets the overall strategy and vision for the programme, approves the partnerships and activities under the Global Programmes, reviews progress, risks and assumptions and makes recommendations.  The **Steering Committee**will comprise of senior staff from ONS, FCDO and GPI, with responsibility for the programme, and with relevant expertise. The **Steering Committee**will be chaired jointly by the FCDO Chief Statistician and the ONS Director responsible for this work. It will meet every three months and is underpinned with a TOR.

The Steering Group will be supported at the operational level by a **Working Group**. This is comprised of the senior staff (Grade 7 and above) from the International Development Team together with managers (Grade 6 staff) of business areas which play a key role in the programme (SDG team, Data Science Campus etc)  this Group are responsible for the management and operation of the programme.

1. **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

This programme is concerned with technical skills transfer, institutional building and influencing change, our success is determined by how effectively the skills and expertise we provide to NSIs lead to effective and sustainable change. As such, our monitoring, evaluation and learning systems have been designed to effectively show what we are doing, is having impact.

The programme design is driven by an overall theory of change which sets out the impact the programme wants to achieve, the outcomes that need to be delivered for the impact to realised and the activities the ONS will undertake to ensure delivery of these outcomes. Theories of change for the lower levels of the programme especially for the country partnerships and the data science output, have also been developed to guide decision making at that level. The programme is agile to consider new opportunities that help deliver on overall objectives and help align with any changing UK priorities (for example our theories of change were revisited after the COVID19 pandemic began, allowing us to pivot the programme to support partners to deal with changing circumstances and provide data to meet new national priorities).

There will be a dedicated resource to lead this work, to support consistency of approach across the programme and embed this into how we operate. The resource will support reporting, facilitate learning, and build team capacity raising standards.

**Monitoring:**

* Based on the **overall theory of change**, the results framework will be sets out programme deliverables and timescales for delivery, this framework will be the guiding document for reporting progress against programme objectives.
* **Monthly progress meetings** assess performance of the partnerships looking at progress of planned activities as well as reviewing finance and risk.
* **Quarterly published reporting** feeds into strategic discussions at steering committee meetings. These reports will also be used in strategic discussions with partner countries.
* **Country partnerships** will be encouraged to re-visit theories of change at least every 6 months to ensure programme activities and outputs remain on track.
* **Regular collection of results and evidence** of change including feedback from partners and key stakeholders on progress.
* **Annual published reporting** against the overall programme performance framework setting out what results have been delivered what overall changes have been observed, value for money assessments, discussion of risks and recommendations for the following year.

**Evaluation:**

Evaluation that looks at various aspects of our operation model and how it delivers results will be important. The ONS is therefore commissioning an external evaluation in mid 2021, as we design the next phase of the programme, bringing together the evidence we have gathered so far and looking at any evidence gaps the evaluation should address.

Through our monitoring and evaluation processes the ONS will quickly identify whether or not a partnership is delivering and will be able to take swift remedial actions if required; if it is not possible to put things back on track we will close the partnership and invest elsewhere.

**Learning:**

Learning will be an integral part of how we operate and will be at all stages of the programme. We will systemise learning in the following ways;

* **Lesson learning sessions as part of monthly progress meetings** to discuss challenges and share operational experience
* **Sharing lessons** of challenges and successes across the team following quarterly reporting
* **6 monthly in-week**looking at strategic areas allowing for more in-depth discussions and external inputs from others- including political colleagues, other donors, and our partners
* **Annual learning sessions** with the team and partners following the annual review process.