

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: The FCDO's approach to displaced people, HC 525

Tuesday 1 April 2025

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Members present: Sarah Champion (Chair); Tracy Gilbert; Monica Harding; Noah Law; Alice Macdonald; Brian Mathew; Sam Rushworth.

Questions 23 - 90

Witnesses

I: Daphne Jayasinghe, Director of Policy, Global Protracted Displacement Team, International Rescue Committee; Bethan Lewis, Head of the Humanitarian Unit, Plan International UK; and Gideon Rabinowitz, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Bond.

II: Dr Jessica Hagen-Zanker, Head of the Migration and Displacement Hub, ODI Global; Louis Hoffmann, Senior Co-ordinator for Peace, Recovery and Solutions, International Organisation for Migration; and Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan, Head of MAG Europe, Mines Advisory Group.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Daphne Jayasinghe, Bethan Lewis and Gideon Rabinowitz.

Q23 Chair: I would like to start this session of the International Development Committee's inquiry into the FCDO's approach to displaced people. We have two panels today. On our first panel, we have Daphne, Bethan and Gideon, and I will ask them to introduce themselves in the order they present in front of us. So Bethan, tell us about you and your organisation, please.

Bethan Lewis: Thank you. It is great to be here. My name is Bethan Lewis. I am the head of the humanitarian unit at Plan International UK. We are part of the Plan family. In my role and my team, we are focused on scaling up support to humanitarian crises, whether that is a new crisis or whether it is an existing and long-term crisis.

Currently, the focus is on the Myanmar earthquake response. Since last week, I have been working with the Plan country office in Myanmar to scale up the support, and it is very relevant here today because we know that in Myanmar there is already an existing crisis with 3.5 million people internally displaced and an additional 1.5 million refugees. It is a busy time in terms of scale, but it feels like a great opportunity to share some examples from Myanmar.

Chair: What you have not told us is what Plan is.

Bethan Lewis: Plan International is an international non-government organisation. We are working across 80 countries in different settings, and our main focus is support to women and girls.

Chair: Thank you. Gideon.

Gideon Rabinowitz: Good afternoon, thank you for having me. Gideon Rabinowitz. I am the director of policy and advocacy for Bond.

Bond is the membership and representative body for international NGOs in the UK. Our role is to support the sector in working collaboratively on key issues of concern to the work they do, but also to support them to engage Parliament and the Government on key challenges facing the sector and the cause of development more generally.

Our humanitarian working group is one of our key working groups supporting our members to collaborate. We also have subgroups working on crises such as Israel and the occupied territories, Ukraine and Syria. Those groups emerge when key crises happen. We try to be quite responsive to the needs of members. I hope to provide some insight from the work of those groups.

Daphne Jayasinghe: I am interim senior director of policy and solutions at the International Rescue Committee. The International Rescue Committee, the IRC, is a humanitarian organisation working to help people restore health, education, economic wellbeing and power in conflict and crisis settings, working predominantly with displaced



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populations. Part of our work is also on the resettlement and integration of refugees both in high refugee hosting countries—relevant to today's conversation—but also here in the UK and across Europe. We have been working on that across the US as well. I am pleased to be here today, and I am keen to highlight some of the pressing issues for a lot of the people we serve at the moment.

Q24 **Chair:** Thank you. If appropriate, and specifically looking at your organisation, could I ask you about the impact of the US cuts and the potential UK cuts on your work?

Daphne Jayasinghe: Yes, the impact of the US cuts has been felt almost immediately, with suspension and, realistically, termination impacting a lot of our programmes. We are monitoring the situation regularly as some programmes become reinstated, but the implications of having to scale back support for those programmes has meant that some of them cannot be restored. That has implications for thousands of clients.

Q25 **Chair:** What sort of programmes and what sort of implications?

Daphne Jayasinghe: I can send you more details on that, and more specifics, but we have seen implications for our health programming, our education programming and some of the GBV programming as well.

Gideon Rabinowitz: Bond has surveyed its members to understand more about the impacts of the US cuts. We are now starting to engage with them on what the implications might be of the cuts coming from the UK. Initially, our work in recent weeks has been around the US cuts. About 50 to 60 organisations have come forward with information about how it is impacting them, so it is affecting our sector in ways that we did not quite appreciate when the cuts announcement was made in the US. We had a session yesterday with a senior stakeholder from the US that has been directly engaging with the US Government around this. They were saying that one of the key concerns around the future of humanitarian programmes is that the bulk of the money may come back from the USAID humanitarian programmes but agencies are very worried about the conditions that are going to be applied to that assistance. Humanitarian agencies put a very high value on being politically neutral and being able to help all people in need, and they are very concerned about the conditions that will be placed on new US assistance in the humanitarian sector. It is a key concern for the future.

Q26 **Chair:** Is that nervousness an assumption, or is it because of what they are hearing?

Gideon Rabinowitz: One of the things that the US Government has done to recipients of its funding over recent weeks is send out a very lengthy questionnaire asking them all sorts of things about the way they operate, how they are responding to very particular US strategic interests. I think we could share that with you, if you would like to see it. That is a clear indicator of the types of issues they want the agencies they support to be proactively responding to and working with the Government to address



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While it is slightly suppositious, given the fact that new contracts have not been agreed yet, I think given what they are already being asked it is very likely that those types of conditions will appear.

Chair: Bethan, could I ask you the same for Plan? Has it had any impact on your work?

Bethan Lewis: Yes, it has. Within our Plan US organisation, 13 programmes received “stop work” orders. That was significant in itself, but what we are worried about and what we are feeling is the knock-on impacts of the non-direct fund to multilaterals. For example, we work a lot with Education Cannot Wait and, since the aid cuts were announced, we have seen programmes paused in Ethiopia and Egypt, but also news that any new funding for 2025 and 2026 would be paused. We have also seen cuts on live programmes through multilaterals. For UNFPA for example, we were just starting a programme in Sudan to support gender-based violence interventions for women and girls—acute needs—and we have seen that programme cut from \$1 million in support of interventions in three different states to \$300,000 in just one state, huge cuts. That is just one example, and we are seeing it play out across many different fragile contexts.

Q27 **Chair:** And what about the UK? We are told that the UK is looking to cut £500 million and is not looking to enter into negotiations over any contracts that are not signed and sealed. Does that impact on any of your organisations?

Bethan Lewis: Yes, we have already seen a couple of impacts on our development programmes. To give some specifics, programmes that were about to sign contracts in Nepal have been paused. Also, we are seeing that some humanitarian funding that was earmarked for perhaps Ukraine, even Myanmar, has been paused or is not coming through, or that programmes that were due to start earlier this year are not happening. So even on the humanitarian priorities, including the statement about Ukraine being a priority, we are not seeing that funding come through yet.

Q28 **Chair:** Is it your hunch that the funding is paused until the spending review, or is it a euphemism for it is not going to happen?

Bethan Lewis: For some issues, it has been explicit, that they are on pause until the spending review. For others, it is a bit of an assumption, to be honest.

Chair: It is a difficult situation for you all to be in. I am sorry.

Q29 **Monica Harding:** Can I follow up on Myanmar? It is not the only humanitarian disaster, but it is the most sudden since both of those aid cuts have happened. What has been the impact of the USAID cuts on that situation? I know that the US response was slower, comparatively, than usual, but has there been a comparative funding element to it? Has the funding decreased? What are you feeling about that?

Bethan Lewis: Certainly in previous responses, and Ukraine is another example, USAID would have been one of the earlier funders, and it has



not come through yet. It is our Plan US colleagues who track that, and I can share more details, but I think the DART team, which was the emergency response team, has been quite slow to respond in comparison.

Q30 Brian Mathew: Gideon, Bond stated in written evidence that the UK's focus on poverty reduction is falling. How will this affect displacement?

Gideon Rabinowitz: Thank you for your question and for seeing our submission. We provided a brief to parliamentarians, from which that evidence was drawn. Essentially, we looked at the volume and proportion of UK aid going to the least developed countries and low-income countries and what is going to sectors that are most directly linked to tackling poverty and meeting basic needs. We looked at humanitarian, education, health and other basic services, and we also looked at responding to the needs of the most marginalised. We referenced research done by some of our members on the level and quality of funding that supports gender equality programming. All these areas have been cut since the first aid cuts back in 2021, but in most sectors, they have been cut disproportionately. We have seen UK bilateral aid for humanitarian more than halved in real terms since 2020, and even in 2023, when UK aid went up quite significantly, we still saw 20% cuts to bilateral humanitarian programmes, which was quite astounding. It is hard to understand. From our perspective, the very first call on the aid budget should be reaching the most marginalised and vulnerable people around the world, and humanitarian is at the core of that, so we are concerned about those sectors, those priorities and those countries not being prioritised.

Q31 Brian Mathew: How will that affect migration patterns to Europe and the UK?

Gideon Rabinowitz: That is not a simple question to answer. When you look at the context of displacement around the world, which countries are hosting the most migrants and what is happening to funding from the UK, the US and others in those contexts, it is hard to imagine that it will not impact neighbouring countries or that knock-on effects for Europe and the rest of the world will not occur over time. I can give you some examples.

Take the main refugee-hosting countries in the world. There are still 1 million Rohingya seeking shelter from Myanmar in Bangladesh. In Ethiopia, there are 1 million people from South Sudan and Somalia. In Pakistan, there are 1.6 million people from Afghanistan. In Uganda, there are 1.65 million people from Sudan and DRC. These are countries that have not been identified as protected country programmes in the Government's newly stated budget and priorities for the aid budget. From both the UK and US contexts, these are countries that are dealing with enormous refugee populations, they are doing incredible things to support them, and their resources are going to be restricted very significantly in the coming years. It is hard to imagine that it will not impact migration flows around the world.



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Daphne Jayasinghe: I want to pick up the point about poverty and poverty elimination and build on Gideon Rabinowitz's points. The World Bank has estimated that two thirds of the world's extreme poor will be living in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence by 2030. The concentration of extreme poverty is likely to be in those countries affected by fragility and conflict. In our work, we look at those countries that are most vulnerable to risks of humanitarian disaster and the concentration of humanitarian populations. They are the 20 countries on our watch list that we launch every year, and 82% of people in humanitarian need are concentrated in those watch list countries that are conflict-affected, and in many instances those countries are climate vulnerable. Those countries are host to 47% of forcibly displaced people. The intersection of poverty, conflict and displacement means that there is a concentration of countries currently being neglected by aid because it is difficult to deliver to them. We are very concerned about the implications of aid cuts across the US and the UK and the shrinking volume of support for humanitarian aid, but also overall aid, reaching those contexts where there is the greatest risk of displacement and vulnerabilities.

Q32 **Chair:** Can I push you, all of you, if you want to come in: are there any examples of development money preventing the migration of people, forcing people from their homes? I ask because one of the arguments that we have been making is that using the ODA budget to deal with the consequences of migration, whatever the reason, is not as effective as using it to keep people safe and prosperous in their own homes. Can you give examples of projects that either you or Bond members have been involved with that have enabled people to stay healthy and prosperous in their homes?

Daphne Jayasinghe: I can say that the drivers of displacement include conflict, extreme poverty and climate shocks that expose people to risks that force them to flee, that intersection of conflict. I do not want to separate them from the causal argument, but where development projects support resilience so that people can maintain their livelihoods and continue to thrive, they will prevent or defend against the key drivers of displacement.

Q33 **Chair:** Do we know that, or are we assuming that? That is what I mean. Is there any evidence of an example? I know it is difficult to prove a negative.

Daphne Jayasinghe: Exactly. That is the question. We can certainly share some more evidence on the drivers of displacement, and the counterargument is to address those drivers of displacement.

Bethan Lewis: We have some more concrete project examples, probably more on the climate-induced displacement front. In the Philippines, where we have been supporting programmes around anticipatory action, releasing support to communities before the worst of the impact hits, we are hearing stories about communities and families who can get support—access to shelter materials or cash, to be able to reinforce their own homes and support their own needs—in their settings and without having to be displaced. It is a slightly different, quite specific example,



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but I think we can certainly share some more conflict-induced project examples as well.

Chair: Either or both would be good. I am thinking of Costa Rica, where local communities are taking control of their coastline to prevent erosion—that would be a good example.

Q34 **Noah Law:** You have answered my question in part, but perhaps we can just dig a bit deeper. Clearly, you have a very good understanding of the risk of displacement. I wonder how much that informs the patterns of the work that you choose to undertake and how much data you, as organisations, can collect. I appreciate that it may be theoretical, but you have access to case studies and do retrospective work, and I wonder if it also informs your work programme.

Gideon Rabinowitz: You are asking about how data on emerging crises informs where we strategically focus.

Noah Law: Yes, on the risk of displacement.

Gideon Rabinowitz: Following up on a key element of evolving UK support that we think is quite important, the Resilience and Adaptation Fund was announced in the White Paper in 2023. A number of our members have been quite active in calling for that type of funding to be provided as an anticipatory response to emerging indicators of where crises are becoming apparent or growing, funding to support communities to remain resilient and have the best chance of being able to stay in their homes or stay locally. The evidence has been there for a long time that more proactive support for resilience and supporting communities to deal with crises at an early stage is needed, and it will be fundamental to making the whole system work more effectively.

Q35 **Brian Mathew:** Moving on, but related to that—and it all helps to build our case—how will a fall in UK ODA spending on poverty reduction affect the UK's ability to exercise soft power?

Gideon Rabinowitz: There is a pretty strong consensus that the cuts that were undertaken in 2021, when we moved from 0.7% of national income to 0.5% for the aid budget, damaged our relationships around the world. What has been on the table up until recently was an opportunity to rebuild those relationships, and I imagine lots of countries received signals from the Government saying, "We are back on the global stage. We are going to be a reliable, equitable partner," and that those relationships were going to be rebuilt, that the UK was going to get back to a situation where those countries could rely on them for support. We have seen that we have now had to turn to those countries yet again and tell them that much of that support will not be forthcoming. It is a double whammy for our relationship with those countries. We have already let them down once. We have told them that we are going to rebuild those relationships, and now we are going to let them down again. We are talking about tens of countries across Africa and other parts of the developing world that were eager to see the UK back on the scene but will now lose their confidence that we are an actor that can partner with and support them to address their fundamental needs.



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Q36 **Monica Harding:** Can I push you on that point? I remember from before these most recent cuts, speaking at this Committee and asking, “Do they trust us? Do the countries where we are operating trust us?” They said, now they do, and now they are starting to—pretty much as you have said. Now that this second round of cuts has come in, has that trust completely disappeared?

Gideon Rabinowitz: I would not want to read the minds of leaders across regions of the world that I visit all too infrequently. It is hard to imagine what we could do to lessen their trust even more. On the one hand, it is probably a good thing that we have not scaled up and then taken the money away, in some ways, the promise of funding. We have started to scale up bilateral aid this year, so programmes have started going back up. I think countries will have already begun to think very seriously about how they can use that funding, how it could support their long-term needs, and start to bring in capacity to deliver those programmes. So yes, it is hard to imagine a policy or a set of actions that could harm that trust even more right now.

Q37 **Alice Macdonald:** One of the things that has been speculated about with the cuts both here and in the US is that it might open space for other actors to come in—China, Russia and so on—impacting our influence elsewhere. There has been some reporting. I know there are regional dynamics around Myanmar, and we have been seeing that in action. Have you seen other donors step in to fill the gap that has been left, particularly by the US, in any of the responses that you have been dealing with so far?

Bethan Lewis: Yes, I think that has been the case in Myanmar, and that is certainly what we are hearing from teams on the ground, including some very specific examples around access to visas and nationalities being deployed into the response. For us as an NGO, the types of donors that we are seeing start to fill the gap are also philanthropic organisations—trusts and foundations—not to the same scale or at the speed required, but yes, there is some slow movement to a more diverse set of donors, but nowhere near filling the gap.

Q38 **Alice Macdonald:** Is that aid delivered in different ways from other donors? Does the way that China gives aid in an emergency like Myanmar, for example, differ in approach from how the US or UK might have delivered aid in the past?

Daphne Jayasinghe: One thing that the UK has been very strong on is its flexibility and commitment to multi-year aid, which is important for programmes to yield outcomes. Relating that to the soft power question, I think that you are asking about trust. The UK has also played an important role in driving the efficiency of multilaterals. We have talked about the consequences of the cuts for multilaterals, but there are consequences of potentially reducing the contribution in losing influence over multilaterals.

I am thinking specifically about the World Bank, which the UK has done a lot to champion, and the International Development Association fund, IDA21, which was replenished last year. It did a lot to champion a focus



on fragility, conflict and violence that was welcome, and it also made a welcome contribution to the pledge at the end of last year. That all contributes to the power that the UK has as a shareholder on the World Bank board as well, and one we would want to see continue to be used for reforming the World Bank to drive efficiencies and outcomes for populations that would otherwise be left behind. I would say that power is at stake if the impacts of the cuts were to have an impact on the IDA21 pledge. We would want to see the UK ringfencing and protecting that pledge and it not being damaged by the cuts.

Q39 Alice Macdonald: Turning to the impact of the cuts on women, girls and children. First, can you explain the different challenges that are faced by displaced women and girls? Do you want to start, Bethan?

Bethan Lewis: We know from reports from Women for Women that one in five refugee women is likely to face sexual and gender-based violence, and that nine in 10 of the most fragile contexts have the highest rates of child early and forced marriage. I can give you a couple of illustrative examples. We already know that, in crisis settings, girls are more likely to drop out of school, more likely to take on additional caring responsibilities, have less access to healthcare and might eat last and least. Adolescent girls, particularly those facing conflict where there is displacement, are at higher risk of gender-based violence. There are also risks of trafficking, which we saw particularly after the Ukraine response, but also within Sudan at the moment where there are extremely high rates of gender-based violence. Because the data is difficult to disaggregate and also because of existing inequalities, the nuance and the requirements of the response for those girls, particularly adolescent girls, are often below par.

Daphne Jayasinghe: I can add to the risks faced by displaced women and girls. My colleague spoke clearly about the risks of violence, but another factor is economic marginalisation. Displacement compounds and adds to the intersection of discrimination that women and girls already experience. It is another factor that compounds the discriminatory effects experienced by women and girls. It works to marginalise women in the workplace, in the labour market and in access to essential inputs for agriculture. We have found that if we apply a displacement lens to indicators, you will find that displaced women and girls have faced greater barriers to accessing economic opportunities as well as safety and justice. I would be happy to send you some of that information to clearly explain and evidence how displacement acts as a compounding factor to gender discrimination.

Q40 Alice Macdonald: When the last set of severe cuts was made under the Conservative Government, there was quite a lot of data that showed that the impact on women and girls was quite big and immediate. In the context of what we are seeing now—and you touched on it, Bethan, in terms of data—why do you think women's and girls' rights and their unique situations are often overlooked? Do you think they are overlooked by policymakers? Is it about not having the data, not knowing the problems, or is it an issue of political will? Or do you think there is another reason why so often cuts seem to fall disproportionately on



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women and girls, and why not enough aid is directed to them by frontline organisations? I am interested in your perspective on why that seems to happen.

Daphne Jayasinghe: There is some interesting work on gender as a primary objective, rather than a secondary objective, to programming and ensuring that those programmes are transformative, transforming gender discrimination in communities. Those objectives are sometimes neglected in prioritising. There is a risk that the cuts will have implications. Particularly at a time when the UK has done a lot to champion women and girls, we would want to see that commitment retained both in terms of convening power for the UK and leading initiatives like the What Works initiative on generating evidence, but also continuing to prioritise targeting women and girls.

Bethan Lewis: I echo what Daphne has described, but I think that we also see existing inequalities, which means that the voices of women and girls are often not at the forefront of influencing policy and programmes. Alongside ensuring the continued focus from a decision-making responsibility, we should be looking at how women and girls inform programmes and how we consistently focus on gender equality, tackling gender-based violence, and raising awareness and our voices around those areas.

Gideon Rabinowitz: It in part depends on what the Government end up prioritising with their remaining resources. To our mind, when you are implementing cuts, especially those of the nature that are being implemented now, you have to focus ever more on those that need support the most, the poorest and most marginalised, but there will be tensions with what the Government are looking to prioritise—UK strategic interests and promoting UK plc. We hear Ministers talking about that. I think it raises concerns about the degree to which the emphasis will remain on the very poorest and most marginalised. That has to be at the heart of everything the Government do next with the limited resources available.

Q41 **Monica Harding:** We had testimony from an NGO working in Sudan that the mistake was that we treated the war in Sudan as a governance crisis, not an atrocity crisis. It speaks to what you are saying, which is that there is a huge amount of gender violence and conduct in Sudan, for example, without the voice of gender conflict coming to the fore. Could you expand on that?

Chair: I will take that silence as a no. Colleagues can come back to that.

Q42 **Alice Macdonald:** Bethan, could you also speak about the additional challenges that children face when it comes to displacement?

Bethan Lewis: Yes, 30% of the global population are children. Looking at displaced populations specifically, 40% is made up of children. So children are disproportionately impacted and reflected in the figures around displacement. Lots of the challenges I mentioned for girls in conflict apply to children, but with an additional dimension that the under-fives are significantly impacted by displacement and conflict. We



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know that children's brain development is at its peak in those early years. If what children learn and absorb in those first years is conflict, it will stay with them and their ability to develop socially and emotionally is significantly impacted. There are issues with their physical safety as well, because of their smaller bodies. How they cope with displacement and the stresses of being on the move or in low-resource settings are acute.

- Q43 **Sam Rushworth:** A question about localisation, firstly to you, Bethan. What advantages do you find in working with local organisations when helping displaced people?

Bethan Lewis: Thank you for asking that. Perhaps I will give some examples of current crises that we are supporting.

In Sudan, the local actors, community groups and others are on the frontline of response, supporting fellow community members with their needs and expanding as we look at bigger organisations. Similarly in Gaza, local civil society and local actors have been at the forefront of providing aid to affected populations. So how can we support that? I know there have been some discussions within the UK Government, but certainly ensuring that there is more ease of access to sustainable funding for local organisations is important, and that means: reducing some of the administrative hurdles; due diligence; passporting; and making sure that small organisations also have access to sustainable running costs so that they can direct their organisation and have a sustainable future. It is important to make sure that there is diversity among the local actors we support. Some will be big organisations, but it is equally important to hear the voices of the smaller women-led and girl-led organisations.

- Q44 **Sam Rushworth:** Daphne, building on that, can you think of any examples where the information that local organisations can provide assists with the UK's diplomatic and humanitarian response?

Daphne Jayasinghe: The advantage that local organisations bring to the humanitarian response is to do with agility, access, reach and, importantly, trust among the communities that are affected. Local organisations, including women-led organisations and refugee-led organisations, will be established in the community, trusted by the community, and will understand the needs of that community.

In the context of a humanitarian emergency, and we see this in Myanmar, the speed of the response depends on those established organisations that know the community well, have the trust and also may have access to those communities, particularly those communities that are outside the reach or control of the Government. Localisation helps to improve the speed and agility of humanitarian response, but importantly, it helps to increase the inclusion of humanitarian response, reaching populations that might otherwise be left behind.

Gideon Rabinowitz: I think it has been quite well documented with the Ebola response, both in west Africa more than a decade ago now and in the most recent outbreaks in DRC, that having community engagement, having people the community trusts leading the response, who can deal



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with the community's questions, with their complex cultural framing of what is going on, is vital to being able to respond. If outsiders who do not understand that context come in, they may very easily lose the trust of the local community and not get the access and collaboration that they need.

Q45 Sam Rushworth: I have seen for myself the access beyond where the state can go, in work that I did before I was an MP. Would you say that using local organisations to provide access imposes additional risks to their safety?

Bethan Lewis: If that is the sole reason the actor is being engaged, then potentially yes, but I think the way we try to look at working with local actors is much more holistic, much more about trying to develop a strategic partnership and not transfer the risk of operating in an insecure environment to the actor, but looking at how we work together and support one another, particularly in the first phase of a response.

Q46 Sam Rushworth: When a larger international NGO is engaging local actors, who is responsible for their safety? Is it left to their own risk assessments and evaluations, or does the NGO play a more active role in evaluating that risk?

Daphne Jayasinghe: Consideration of the security risks and concerns, and the access negotiations, are part of the complex role that a humanitarian organisation will play, and considering those things in relation to local partners is also something they will have responsibility for.

Q47 Sam Rushworth: Could I pick up on a point that Beth Lewis made in her first response? Beth talked about the need to ensure that funding was more easily available for some of these local organisations. I presume that they may be on the frontline of the cuts that we are seeing many countries in the world introduce. Is that your experience, that it is often these frontline, essential organisations that are the first to miss out on funding and support?

Daphne Jayasinghe: Local organisations that may not be set up with reserves, with means of staying afloat in the context of cuts, will be particularly at risk.

Gideon Rabinowitz: There is a real risk. The sector has had a strong focus on trying to take localisation efforts forward, but if we are all honest, we still have a lot of work to do on that front. It depends. If you see where local organisations are in the chain of delivering actors and who controls funding, most local organisations will still have a limited say over those funding decisions, and if the partner INGOs and partner national NGOs do not take more active consideration of the needs of those local partners, they may miss out. We must stay focused on that risk as we go through a very challenging period.

Sam Rushworth: I appreciate that.

Bethan Lewis: We are also seeing that play out in Ukraine at the moment. Smaller organisations are missing out on funding or are not



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able to sustain themselves in the examples provided, but again, it is those diverse actors who are representing the needs of marginalised groups that are often the ones that cannot survive the cuts. Certainly in Ukraine, the diversity of the organisations supported through aid is taking a hit.

Sam Rushworth: You pre-empted my last question, which is whether you will let us know if you see examples, because it is so important that this Committee and the Government understand the human costs of our decisions.

Q48 **Chair:** I met a second-generation Tibetan refugee two weeks ago, and I was struck by what he told me. His parents are still in a camp, and they are quite happy in the camp. Their whole community moved there, and they have maintained those community relationships. I had not thought about whole communities moving. Do you come across that often? Do you help communities to stay together, if that is what they want to do?

Bethan Lewis: I do not have any specific examples to hand, but I can send you some because I know there are examples of where we work with long-standing communities in what is almost a more developmental space at this point.

Daphne Jayasinghe: I think it is reflected in the reality of protracted displacement. People move out of a situation of just having to survive, but they also move into a situation of having to thrive and rebuild their lives, even in a displacement setting, which may go on for years. Rebuilding their lives in that way, and establishing a community, establishing networks—

Q49 **Chair:** This was not about establishing a community but about a community moving from one location to another and still maintaining that community cohesion from their original home. Is that something we factor into how we programme?

Daphne Jayasinghe: Yes. Being together. It is something that we respond to, because it is a reality of how people make choices.

Q50 **Noah Law:** With the reforms putting an increased focus on fragility, conflict and violence, how can the Government work alongside the World Bank better to ensure that we improve the help that the World Bank can provide to support displaced people?

Daphne Jayasinghe: The UK is a significant donor to the World Bank and made a significant pledge as part of the International Development Association replenishment. The UK has also been an important voice in the World Bank reform agenda. To continue the theme of localisation, thinking specifically about the flexibility in how the World Bank partners is something the UK has voiced and should continue to voice. The World Bank's clients are largely Governments, and that has a limiting effect in contexts where there may be a disruption in Governments or de facto authorities in control. The consequences of that are that some communities are not being served by World Bank programmes and that some World Bank programmes might be disrupted, suspended or



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cancelled because they cannot continue to fund in the context of a Government's absence, apart from through, say, trust funds.

Introducing some flexibility in partnerships for the World Bank will be important to continuing to remain engaged in conflict settings, to continuing to deliver programmes and to ensuring that communities continue to receive essential services that the World Bank is very effective in funding. The UK has now made that pledge, and it must continue to stay committed to that pledge and, as part of the reform agenda, use opportunities like the upcoming refreshment of the Fragility, Conflict and Violence Strategy to continue to push for more flexibility of partnerships to ensure that the IDA21 policy pushes the boundaries of third-party implementation—that is partnering with non-state actors, with the UN or NGOs—and continues to be an important voice for reform that factors in that concentration of extreme poverty in the context of fragility, conflict and violence.

- Q51 Noah Law:** Can I follow up briefly? We have discussed declining soft power, particularly in terms of the UK's bilateral commitments, but what you have just mentioned is also the ability of the FCDO primarily—correct me if I am wrong—to influence the discourse in how business is done at the World Bank and elsewhere. Can the UK, despite some of these cuts, continue to play that role from the FCDO and increasingly provide research to steer and drive the development approach?

Gideon Rabinowitz: Yes. The Government have signalled that they will continue to support the World Bank, especially through World Bank IDA. The more ambitious their support, the more leverage they have in the organisation. A big part of it will depend on what happens to the FCDO's human resources. We have had the development review. Through that review and other discussions that FCDO has been having with Treasury, there was a commitment to scale up development capability in the Department. An extra 206 staff, I think, were going to be recruited. I imagine that is up in the air, given the funding cuts, but FCDO still has an opportunity to protect and rebuild its capability for development in ways that allow it to continue to influence and generate evidence to make international institutions work better. We think that needs to be a priority. I know the Committee has raised questions about this, and we hope the Committee can stay engaged on this issue to make sure that the FCDO's development capability continues to improve.

- Q52 Chair:** I have been trying to formulate a nice way of saying this, but I am a bit grumpy with you all, because I wanted you to give us examples of how we could get upstream and keep people safe in their homes, what policy changes needed to happen, what Governments could be doing, what early indicators we could be responding to. Your organisations are great, and you are great at dealing with the outcomes when things go wrong, but we want you to inspire us, we want you to give us the evidence so that we can have exactly those arguments with the Government, and I am not getting that from you. What do this Government need to do to keep people safe, secure and prosperous in their homes? We all know that the length of time, once people are displaced, is going up and up. It is going in the wrong direction, and we



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have limited resources and very little interest around the world, other than to see people as some threat to society. Tell us.

Gideon Rabinowitz: Reversing the aid cuts would help, just to put that on the record.

Chair: That is not helpful, because that is not the reality—Gideon, please stop talking. That is not helpful. We are where we are, and there are a lot of things that you can do that require diplomacy, for example, or working with local communities, and I am not hearing that from you.

Gideon Rabinowitz: There are no simple answers, and in a low-resource context there are fewer simple answers. One of the opportunities—

Chair: Just—

Gideon Rabinowitz: Sorry, just to—

Chair: No, I am going to keep going on this, because we have—

Gideon Rabinowitz: And I am responding.

Q53 **Chair:** Thank you. We have had a good run where there has been a lot of money, and the president of the World Bank said two weeks ago that the biggest issue that will affect us all globally is illegal migration and, unless we get upstream of that, no one wins from this scenario. We have had a lot of money in the system for a very long time, so do not tell me it is just about the cuts that have come in during the last couple of weeks.

Gideon Rabinowitz: I am not saying that it is just about the cuts. I was going to make a point that one of the challenges is that, where you have skin in the game in a region or a country, you are helping to provide a solution to maintaining people in that region.

Chair: For example?

Gideon Rabinowitz: For example, in a country like Jordan or Turkey, the international community has been working very actively with those Governments to not only support the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees in those countries but, with the leverage that provides them, to be able to engage those Governments to provide them with more rights and opportunities to live, to get citizenship, to work. Unfortunately, if you do not have skin in the game, you are pulling back your resource and your support to those countries and it is very difficult to get the diplomatic and political leverage to find those solutions. The reality is that it will be harder and harder for the UK, in countries in which it is pulling back its investments, to be able to have those conversations and that dialogue with those Governments to help find those longer-term solutions.

Q54 **Noah Law:** Can I press on that briefly? To some extent, it is important. How do we recognise where we have skin in the game—leverage, soft power, whatever you want to call it? What I am getting is that we can be dramatically more effective in our responses where we recognise where we have that, rather than just taking a “let’s approach all scenarios” approach. If I may be so bold, does that not contradict what we have said



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about this all being a money issue and it being a dire time for Britain's soft power? Surely picking our battles is what we do now.

Gideon Rabinowitz: It is a very good question, and in a very low-resource environment you face very significant trade-offs. That will be one of the things that the Government will be thinking through—do we focus on a smaller number of contexts where we can make the most difference, where we can keep our skin in the game and have leverage, or do we try to respond to as many crises as possible? That will be a difficult question that they will have to think through.

Daphne Jayasinghe: If we are talking about keeping people safe in their homes, of preventing forced displacement, currently 77% of forcibly displaced people are in the 20 watch-list countries. Attention to those conflict-affected, fragile countries, with a reduced aid budget, is really important. We have to be realistic about the solutions that the Government invest in that work in those contexts. They are complex settings where some of the instruments that the Government are starting to look at might not work. Therefore, prioritise grants and multi-year finance to those complex settings that represent the countries where there is the highest number of forcibly displaced people.

I agree with Gideon on the diplomacy that can support the inclusion of those people who have been displaced, because what we have talked about a little bit is how discrimination is compounding the effects of existing gender discrimination and discrimination based on other characteristics that marginalise those communities and add to that displacement! and they are always further from economic inclusion and opportunities.

Chair: I am going to stop you there, because we did a whole report on this in the last Parliament.

Brian Mathew: I will go to Bethan. Full disclosure, I used to work for Plan. Some of the work that you have done in the past has been, I would say, important stuff, where you have been researching and telling stories that cast a light that is then understandable by the likes of us and the likes of your donors, your individual donors and what have you. It is a hell of a challenge at the moment with everything that is going on, but in that role, the NGOs can play—telling the narrative is so important.

Chair: Thank you. That was a statement, not a question.

Q55 **Tracy Gilbert:** Thank you for your time today. Moving on a bit to transparency and data collection, I will start with Bethan. The Government share little data about displaced people and the support that they provide. How could they benefit from tracking these spends and how we distribute ODA money?

Bethan Lewis: Thank you for that question. At the moment, it is quite hard to desegregate some of the data that is tracked and shared publicly by age, gender and inclusion status, and how money is spent in displaced settings. Having that desegregation of data that people can engage with, feed back on and influence would be a fantastic start. On small things like



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Development Tracker, it does not have that full desegregation of data on how displaced populations are supported. Publishing that data transparently helps the engagement and influencing piece.

Q56 **Tracy Gilbert:** That leads me to my next question. What metrics would be helpful, in addition to the ones that you have mentioned?

Bethan Lewis: Location and status of those community members; even the basics on gender and age would be a great start, because without those we do not have the basics.

Q57 **Tracy Gilbert:** Gideon, Noah touched on this point earlier when we were talking about work. If we had better data, how would Bond use it to prioritise better climate change adaptation, resilience and finance in programming for areas and people who need that support?

Gideon Rabinowitz: Data is fundamental to the ability of organisations to target their support in the most needy countries. We have seen a step change in the amount of data available. The sector is focused much more on the climate-related aspects of humanitarian risks, alongside conflict and natural disasters, as challenges that drive displacement and humanitarian need. One of the challenges now, for example, is to use climate and related indicators to see those crises appearing before they become extreme, and then to support communities at that stage to be able to improve and strengthen their resilience. That is something, as I said before, where we are eager to work with the FCDO on moving forward and having those anticipatory responses, using data and using monitoring to be able to have those smart, proactive approaches to response.

Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate all that you do, and I know that it is difficult out there right now. Thank you for the evidence, and thank you for committing to come back to us with other things. It is very, very helpful to have your thoughts.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Jessica Hagen-Zanker, Louis Hoffmann and Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan.

[This evidence was taken by video conference]

Q58 **Chair:** Thank you to our second panel for joining us. I will ask you to introduce yourselves and the organisations that you represent.

Dr Hagen-Zanker: My name is Jessica Hagen-Zanker, and I am a senior research fellow at ODI. I am also head of the migration and displacement hub at ODI. ODI Global is a think tank. We work on global issues, and we do research, advisory and convenings for a more resilient, just and equitable future for all. Migration is a crosscutting initiative at ODI. We have different teams looking at climate change, for example, gender issues or humanitarian issues who also look at displacement and migration.



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Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan: I am Hélène, the head of MAG Europe, Mines Advisory Group. We are a humanitarian development and peace-building non-governmental organisation. We work in over 40 countries worldwide to address and limit the causes and consequences of armed conflict. We clear the land of landmines and other unexploded ordnance. We deliver risk education; we do all we can to save lives and prevent and combat illicit small arms and light weapons.

Louis Hoffmann: Thank you, and good afternoon. Thanks for the invitation to join you today. My name is Louis Hoffmann and I am a director at IOM. I have been a staff member here for about 25 years. I have been able in that time to see the organisation grow from 63 member states to now 175, with something like 550 field officers around the world in 175 countries, so there has been a tremendous amount of growth. When I began, the budget was around \$250 million. We had \$3.8 billion of expenditure last year. Migration has grown as an important topic for the international community. As part of that growth in importance, IOM was integrated into the UN system in 2016 and accompanied the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in 2018. Most of my experience with IOM has been in crisis and fragility-related work in stabilisation and transition programming, including solutions to internal displacement. IOM maintains a very operational field-based presence around the world, and a good deal of its work and budget is committed to work in crisis environments, including with displaced populations. Last year we reached 31 million beneficiaries with a budget of about \$2.5 billion in the crisis portfolio.

Chair: Louis, I will pause you there because we are tight on time. We are looking for the ideas, the vision, the suggestions and the canaries to present to Government on how we should be going forward, looking at internally displaced people and forced displacement, and how to mitigate that and hopefully prevent it.

Q59 **Alice Macdonald:** Jessica, the previous Government's White Paper spoke about the importance of early action to prevent conflict and mass atrocities. Given where we are today, with cuts to ODA and the Integrated Security Fund in particular, are you confident that is still possible? If so, how will we do it?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: The drivers of displacement and migration are complex. There is rarely a single driver that means that people leave. Of course, there is the conflict or the violence, but it is often the indirect effects, the knock-on effect on services or the inability to find work that then means people leave. If programming becomes more restrictive and even more limited, it means it is less able to prevent people from leaving because the whole range of drivers needs to be targeted to have an impact.

Q60 **Alice Macdonald:** Is there an example you can give us of where investment from the UK in particular, in terms of early action, has had a real impact?

Chair: Or anywhere. What works?



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Alice Macdonald: Anywhere, yes. What works? Because we hear a lot about investing in early action and prevention, but what does it mean? If we were to say to the British taxpayer that this is why we should fund early action, what would you say?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Research we have done found that corruption can be a major driver of people wanting to leave. That was very surprising to us. We found that when corruption is being tackled, people have more hope about having a future in their community. That is an example of early action, and that is maybe not the most obvious area to target that can potentially have an effect.

Q61 **Alice Macdonald:** Hélène, if the deconfliction work funded by the Integrated Security Fund is cut, what effect will that have on displacement into neighbouring countries and further afield?

Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan: That is a very big question. Given that I have benefited from only one project under the Integrated Security Fund, I can maybe only comment on that one rather than the broader trend. There is certainly a direct effect of the end of the project that we received in Sri Lanka. We are now close to completing clearance of all remaining landmines and cluster munitions in Sri Lanka, where there are still 12,000 people internally displaced, although the conflict dates back years now, a very long time. Therefore, this will have an adverse effect on the ability of people to return to these communities that have not yet been cleared. There is a direct effect that we can see of people not being willing or not being able to safely return when there is contamination of unexploded ordnance, landmines or other types of explosive ordnance.

Q62 **Alice Macdonald:** In that particular example, if those are cleared, are you quite confident that people would return?

Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan: We have seen it in many, many different places. Our most recent evaluation of our programmes in Iraq, South Sudan, Lebanon and Guinea Bissau has demonstrated the impact of clearance of land, where people can access safe land and develop social and economic opportunities, as well as the word spreading to people who have been displaced who used to live in those communities. We are now seeing them returning. They return because they know it is safe, they return because they have options, they return because—which we found interesting—some of them expressed that they had trust in local governance and that they had reduced tensions between communities. We have seen different positive effects of clearing land and the movement of people.

Q63 **Alice Macdonald:** Have you had any intelligence or steer on funding from the ISF or the FCDO more broadly for your projects in the context of these cuts?

Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan: I must first thank the UK Government for their extensive support throughout the Global Mine Action Programme, which we say is a great programme in providing predictability and sustainability in funding. We are currently in its third iteration, and we are hoping for a fourth iteration to come. We are calling on this next



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iteration not to be affected by the cuts, in order to maintain the advances that we are making in those targeted countries.

This programme targets specific countries, currently 10 of them. In parallel, we have seen the ISF being useful to address other contexts. We have heard previously of the needs in fragile and conflict-affected countries, the needs that arise suddenly from a crisis, and for that purpose we also need those other instruments to step in to complement the operations needed for clearing the remnants of war, as well as delivering other important sides of the work. We often think that mine action is about clearing the land, but it is a set of activities. It is not just about rendering the land safe, it is about informing and educating people on the dangerousness of the explosive ordnance, of the remnants lying on the ground. It is particularly relevant for people on the move who have less awareness of the dangers of where they are going, because they are often leaving familiar areas for unknown areas.

Q64 Alice Macdonald: My final question specifically for you is on arms and arms diversion. How important is it to prevent arms stockpile leakage to address displacement of people, and are we doing it well at all?

Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan: It is another part of the work. Preventing armed violence starts with preventing firearms—small arms and light weapons—from falling into the wrong hands. This is the start of the work that we do with states and Governments to ensure good practice of stockpile management. We often see in many contexts, the most recent where I worked in west Africa, where stockpiles are not securely stored and are not securely managed, resulting in very easy access by anyone, leading to the diversion of small arms and light weapons to civilians, fuelling further contexts already prone to armed violence. Just in west Africa, to give you a figure, the last couple of years have seen a surge of 500% in events of armed violence compared with before, fuelled by firearms.

Q65 Noah Law: Jessica, you have been critical of the Government's approach to tackling the root causes of displacement. How would you encourage them to better focus their efforts?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: One reason why I have been critical of the root-cause approach is in terms of timeframe. It is unrealistic to expect that tackling the root causes will have a quick effect. That is often how it is communicated as a policy to the general public. Tackling some root causes can be effective. I mentioned corruption before, for example, and also tackling poverty, inadequate services or environmental degradation. They are all very important development issues to target. They can eventually also affect migration, but they should not be the primary reason for targeting those interventions. That is for background.

As I said, some areas can lead to reductions in migration aspirations and reductions in migration flows. Corruption we found was one driver that significantly increased migration aspirations; poor livelihood opportunities or lack of access to jobs we found was also a driver of migration aspirations. If those are tackled, it can potentially lead to a reduction in migration. Having said that, they are not easy or quick fixes, and they



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are also very expensive in terms of how much is put into, for example, the cost of a job compared with the number of people who are leaving. That is one thing to bear in mind.

- Q66 **Noah Law:** Why is that? Is it because the determinants of displacement are so multifaceted, or is it simply because, in the end, people's reasons for being displaced are idiosyncratic? Which of the two is it?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: It is both. Many drivers in migration interact. Those are key reasons. Some drivers of migration cannot be addressed at all. For example, men are more likely to leave than women, and there are personality traits and things like that. There was another reason that will hopefully come back to me.

- Q67 **Noah Law:** Thank you, those are very interesting and perhaps fresh perspectives on an issue that has been talked about a lot but perhaps with a lack of focus. You have also said that funding shortages have led to a back-to-basics approach, and that that has come at the detriment of resilience and stabilisation funding. Where do you believe that stabilisation funding should be best targeted?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Sorry, I just remembered my other point on root causes, which I want to share. Another reason why tackling the root causes is not necessarily effective immediately is because of the link between development and migration. We find that as countries become more developed, as education levels rise and poverty reduced, migration increases from those contexts. That is because people have the means to migrate, and they also have the aspirations to do so. That is something to keep in mind. It is called an inverted U-curve, that as countries develop, migration initially increases and then starts decreasing when they reach the level of development of, say, the Philippines at the moment. Mexico has already surpassed that level.

- Q68 **Chair:** Is that with internally displaced people or out-of-country displacement?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Out of country; it is looking at international movements.

- Q69 **Chair:** Do you see the two different models at play at the same time?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Yes. Internal migration is often much more accessible to poorer people. It is often assumed that it is the poor people who try to leave countries and come to Europe, but they are unable to do so because it is very expensive to come so far. We find that the most vulnerable and the poorest tend to be displaced within their own countries.

Chair: That is interesting, thank you. And Noah's second point?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Yes, on stabilisation. Of course, tackling the drivers of displacement is so important to reducing violence, to peacebuilding and to conflict resolution. Those remain important, but our priority is to focus on internal displacement, which we were just talking about, which accounts for the largest share of the displaced and the most vulnerable, generally. They tend to be neglected because they are within a country,



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so they are not a concern, an issue or a problem for the international community. However, it is important to support those people because most people do not want to leave their countries; they want to be able to return home quickly when they can. Therefore, it is important to support funding efforts for the internally displaced, to support access to services for them and also to ensure that they get access to national systems within the country. We also find that the internally displaced may lose access to certain provisions that they should in theory be entitled to, when they are displaced within a country.

Q70 Monica Harding: I want to scrutinise what you said a bit more, that people migrate more when wages rise or development increases. It is important, isn't it, to separate those who migrate because of humanitarian disaster, who are moved within or without the country and then come back? It is important to separate them when we are doing the data on this, otherwise we muddy the picture. Is that right?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Is the question whether we need to separate between those who move internally and those who move internationally?

Chair: No, she is asking about people who move for economic reasons versus a humanitarian disaster—earthquake or famine, for example.

Monica Harding: I am worried that what you just said muddies the narrative slightly, that people want to move for economic reasons rather than some having to move because of humanitarian disasters.

Dr Hagen-Zanker: At the very extreme end, we can, of course, distinguish between people who have to leave because there is an acute or immediate crisis and people who spot a job opportunity and therefore move. However, there is a big, grey area in the middle where motivations are very similar, where the migration journeys and pathways are very similar. It is often quite hard to distinguish. Even in areas of conflict and crisis violence, it is often other drivers or the combination of drivers that mean people leave.

Chair: Can I just pause you? Louis, do you have anything to add on this point?

Louis Hoffmann: It may be a more helpful approach to look at forcible displacement and moving for economic opportunity. It is a bit of a slice of what was just being discussed. Those who are forcibly displaced, both IDPs and refugees, are moving involuntarily. Some move with more resources, which is what Jessica mentioned. Those people tend to move further and across borders. If you look at Syrians moving into Turkey, many of them were professionals, and many of them have been able to integrate and find jobs. Those who are left behind inside the country are invariably the most vulnerable and have the least resources. However, this grouping is still distinct from those who leave a country or a territory in search of better economic opportunities. That is a different set of decision making.

Monica Harding: That is very interesting. We are interested in it from a UK perspective, where a lot of this just gets bundled up into one thing.



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Therefore, we must separate it, as you have done.

Chair: I agree.

- Q71 **Tracy Gilbert:** Louis, on the needs of displaced people and national economies, in your experience do displaced people fare better in camps or when integrated into local societies?

Louis Hoffmann: It is a mixed picture, and I could not give you a clear example. In the Central African Republic, Centrafrique, the World Bank did a poverty assessment in which, at some of our urging, it did a very focused piece on internal displacement. It found that some individuals on the poverty scale did better with services in camps—child education, for example. However, across the board, you are talking about a group that is more economically disempowered and, in general, more impoverished.

Secondly is the way that the community and displaced populations are moving always from camps these days. Certain benefits have come out over decades of work in camps on the accessibility of those things. However, we see that, in more displacement situations, people integrating into local communities where they can re-establish social networks and economic networks, provided that there is enough capacity to absorb them with services and other things, is a much better mid-term to long-term outcome for displacement. That is out of camps, offering some better benefits.

- Q72 **Tracy Gilbert:** Jessica, what are the benefits of allowing displaced people to contribute to host countries and societies through working?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Before coming on to that, I would like to add to Louis's point. It is important to bear in mind that most displacement is unfortunately protracted, so we need to think about what allows people to make a future in the interim before they return home. Part of that is work, which I will get to, but also generally being able to make a life for themselves, to integrate into communities, to send their children to school, to make a better life for themselves. That is what I was trying to say earlier about the grey area in the middle, that often motivations and decision-making processes are the same for all groups of people. Everyone wants to make a better life for themselves and their families, so that is where they overlap.

Most of the time there is a preference for not receiving aid but getting out into the job market. It is much more dignified for people. In our research, when we ask people, "What would you like to do? Where would you like to live?", they generally say out of camp and being able to work. Of course, there is always the concern that it can affect host communities negatively, that they would compete for jobs. It is similar to concerns that people have in the UK about migrants coming in. In general, broadly speaking, research finds that on a country level, if you look at countries as a whole, there are positive or no effects from including migrants or refugees in the labour market. When looking at specific groups, at small subgroups, you do find effects sometimes. Their wages might be lowered or there may be effects on unemployment, but that is specifically for a



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small subset of groups. When you aggregate that at the country level, you do not find an effect.

Chair: However, for that small subset, if you are one of them, that is quite a big deal.

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Exactly.

Q73 **Chair:** Who is this small subset? Presumably, the people who are at the bottom of the market.

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Exactly. It tends to be lower-income groups who are impacted the most, whereas higher-income groups tend to benefit the most from migration.

Chair: Isn't that always the way?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Yes. Having said that, we have also looked at whether including refugees and other displaced populations in national systems—does unemployment lead to tensions and how does it affect social cohesion? In general, we found very few negative effects. Even when, for example, displaced populations were receiving higher support, we found that among host communities there was a general understanding that this has potential positive knock-on effects for them. They could see that it means that refugees can go out and spend money in their shops and so on. They also perceived this as fair.

Q74 **Tracy Gilbert:** Louis, in your experience, how do host countries warm to this idea of displaced people working in their countries?

Louis Hoffmann: It is a very mixed picture. You are speaking of refugee-hosting countries. The vast majority of them are developing themselves. They have responsibilities and political commitments to their own population for jobs and livelihoods. At the end of the day, that may be the bottom line. Many countries have adopted flexible approaches to this. Generally speaking—and I appreciate Jessica's comments—the benefits are positive to integrating refugees into local labour markets. There are new skills that refugees and migrants bring. Those people, when they go home, bring new skills for reconstruction processes and others. That is a long-term benefit. However, generally, the UNDP has a figure of \$21 billion in economic costs per year caused by displacement, internal displacement specifically. That is 76 million people at last count. Therefore, there is a cost of this displacement to broad economies. The more that we can integrate displaced people into these economies, the better off things are generally.

Q75 **Chair:** Louis, could you tell me that statistic again? A \$21 billion cost to broader economies, did you say, or a trillion?

Louis Hoffmann: Globally, \$21 billion per year in economic costs. That is a UNDP figure, and it has been used by the Asian Development Bank as well. I am happy to share the reference with you.

Q76 **Chair:** That would be helpful, thank you. Could we move that on a little bit? Do you see a role for the private sector in responding to displacement?



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Louis Hoffmann: Absolutely. It is tremendous. There are two sides, and my experience is perhaps limited. There is philanthropy that comes from the private sector, and that is critical. It is a critical component, particularly in humanitarian assistance. When we are talking about some of these structural impacts, if you are talking about internal displacement, damaged infrastructure, destroyed communities and so forth, this is about the private sector coming in and investing. That can be about Government policy structures, derisking insurance, things that the IFC does now and could probably do at a greater scale to enhance private sector investment. However, if you look at it across 76 million IDPs in the world, the unemployment is staggering. To address this at scale, no UN agency, no aid programme will beat that. It is about having the private sector step in with investment and with some security to create these jobs. It is very important.

Q77 **Chair:** Do you have examples of where that has worked?

Louis Hoffmann: No, unfortunately we have not rung the bell, so to speak, on that anywhere. However, I do know that in Somalia, which is a place where we have done a lot of work on the solutions portfolio with the Government—and where it has a very active diaspora, by the way, investing in that community—there is a lot of potential for the private sector, and there is some interest. Somalia is perhaps a case in point to watch. My colleagues may have some examples as well.

Chair: Thank you. If you do, particularly you, Jessica, that you could write to us about, that would be great.

Q78 **Noah Law:** Just a quick clarification, Louis. You mentioned this figure of \$21 billion globally, which first struck me as perhaps a little bit low. Is that the total cost of hosting internally displaced people? If so, is that like for like with the figures that we have seen for inbound refugee costs in the UK of £3 billion to £5 billion, which I think has been the range in the past couple of years?

Louis Hoffmann: No, to clarify, the \$21 billion is strictly the opportunity cost of people being out of the job market and out of the economies.

Noah Law: Understood, thank you.

Q79 **Alice Macdonald:** One partnership that I have come across is the temp partnership that Chobani, the yoghurt company, pioneered. It struck me that it seems to be dependent on one individual stepping up and galvanising something, rather than state actors and the UN system. Is that a fair takeaway?

My main question is on the working. Have you found anywhere—this is something that we heard somewhere else—that people end up working in the black economy, for want of a better word? Is that your experience, and does your research show that, if there is no formal employment, it is informal anyway and there is less benefit?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Yes, that is very common, and many of the economies with large numbers of displaced populations have very high



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shares of informal employment anyway, so it is not necessarily that unusual. There are ways of incentivising refugees to be included in the formal economy. The Jordan Compact from 2018 is an example where the Jordanian Government were incentivised with ODA to open access in the formal sector to refugees in certain sectors, and to allow their inclusion in the social security system to ensure that they get the work protections and further protections they need.

Q80 **Monica Harding:** On that point, the ODA from which donor country?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: The UK was a major donor, and there were a number of multilateral and bilateral donors, I think.

Q81 **Monica Harding:** Thank you. My question picks up on your point, Louis, about the diaspora and the role they play in increasing private sector investment in their country of origin.

Louis Hoffmann: The diaspora inputs, the remittance flows; there are places, like Indonesia, where 1% or 1.5% of the entire economy comes through remittance flows from legal overseas workers. In unstable or fragile contexts, my experience is that the diaspora has a higher risk tolerance, they have private networks for funnelling cash and investments, and they tend to be very effective. Bringing this to scale is more difficult but we do have Ethiopia and Somalia as good examples of significant remittance flows. This helps meet basic household needs for many families, and in some instances does more for them in generating potential livelihood opportunities or entrepreneurial undertakings. Driving this to scale, and looking at larger problems in health services, housing and more structural issues, is the big challenge.

Q82 **Brian Mathew:** Jessica, how could better monitoring and transparency assist local organisations in supporting displaced people?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: What local organisations need to better support displaced populations is more share of the funding. We found that they are crucial to supporting displaced populations. That came up in the first panel a bit, that they provide the services when no one else is there and that they do this in an accountable way because they are very close to the people to whom they are providing the services, so they are being held accountable. They are seen as much more legitimate, and therefore their work can be impactful. We found that they often have the knowledge on how to provide the services that they need, but what they lack is the funding. Work that we have done showed that refugee-led organisations get 10% of the funding of local and domestic NGOs, which already get a lot less funding than international NGOs. Looking at this as a share of the total refugee response plans, they get less than 0.5%. They get a very tiny fraction of funding, even though their work is very impactful. What also often happens is that the funding they get goes through intermediaries, who then get a cut as well.

There can be some drawbacks to working with smaller refugee-led organisations. It means that there needs to be much greater capacity on the donor side to distribute small amounts of funding, work out more cost-effective ways for the refugee-led organisations and less



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bureaucratic ways of disbursing those funds, because they are often much less able to fulfil the bureaucratic requirements they are supposed to meet to get the funding.

Q83 Brian Mathew: Does this help prevent people from slipping into the black economy and other things that they perhaps should not be involved with?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: I would not necessarily say that people slipping into the black economy is always problematic. As I said, the major refugee-hosting countries have very high shares of informal employment, which is how these economies work. If refugees also work in the informal economy, that is not necessarily a major issue. Refugee-led organisations can support the most needy people because they are much closer to displaced populations, so they can target much more effectively.

Q84 Brian Mathew: Do local organisations have the funding and know-how to undertake this kind of data collection?

Dr Hagen-Zanker: Do you mean monitoring?

Brian Mathew: Yes.

Dr Hagen-Zanker: They probably have neither, definitely not the funding, because they are already very underfunded. In terms of know-how, we found that because they are often very small organisations, they do not have the management capacity to fulfil specific grant requirements. They would probably also struggle with meeting monitoring requirements.

Q85 Noah Law: I want to come back in before we move on from the economics of displacement, which we have discussed in some detail. Louis, you mentioned the \$21 billion figure. I am sorry, I am going to fixate on that a little bit.

Chair: I am the same.

Noah Law: If that is truly the cost and it is spread across 70 million people, that is \$300 a head or thereabouts. As much as we have said that addressing root causes is not necessarily good value for money, clearly addressing this issue, writ large, is extremely good value for money because the opportunity cost you have mentioned is massive. My question on the back of that is do you agree with that analysis? Secondly, when thinking about addressing root causes, which can be very superfluous, or direct action to support displaced people into work, into the economy or to return to their homes safely, how do you identify the optimal point at which to make what seems to me to be an intervention that is value for money in a way that so much else that we talk about in this Committee pales in comparison?

Louis Hoffmann: Can I say both, as a short answer? I think I have maybe missed some of this conversation, but we have found stabilisation programming, for example, that addresses root causes. As Jessica outlined, there are a number of these, and some are more addressable than others. We have a significant community stabilisation portfolio. It is



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designed to keep people in place, it is designed to absorb people when they return, through services, through better governance. These are critical investments, for a few reasons. The activities that they target are critical for some sort of medium-term to long-term stability. Between the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the longer-term planning arc and the data requirements for a development system approach, planned for in a five-year envelope, for example, there is a tremendous missing middle. It is an important space for investing in local governance and local service delivery. Some of these things, through conflicts, climate pressures and other things, have pushed people to move.

The trick with these programmes, if I may, is that they are very hard to measure. We do a lot of work trying to measure what those community impacts are. If we can get a local Government to convene community members from different ethnic groups, for example, the win is not putting the roof on the school building, the win is that we got a governance system working again in a potentially conflict-afflicted area. Therefore, these things tend to be very hard to measure. For sure, you may see more of a one-on-one return for this in supporting livelihoods. That is about the economic piece. Sorry, I do not want to take too long.

Q86 Chair: Louis, that is very interesting. On the stabilisation programme, particularly focusing on your missing-middle work, is any of that missing because of likely UK or US cuts? Do nations recognise the value of funding that? I would imagine that it is not that expensive compared with doing nothing.

Louis Hoffmann: Yes, that is an accurate measure against doing nothing. The US in particular was a large supporter of this programming. We have a good partnership right now with the UK and Germany, which is also doing more and more investment in this area. There is a particular flexibility that needs to accompany these funds, and there is a high-risk tolerance that accompanies these funds. The way that we design the programmes is around these issues. They are run in small grant increments, for example, so that if something does not work, it is not a tremendous financial loss. There are different methodologies to these programmes and, overall, there is a very limited donor group. We probably have four or five very committed donors in this portfolio, including the UK over the years. However, cuts will hurt.

Chair: We would be interested if you have any more information that you could share with us on that, please.

Q87 Sam Rushworth: I want to ask about the international legal framework, particularly to you, Hélène. We are looking for solutions, so is there anything that you think we should be promoting?

Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan: We are living in challenging times for the international framework, as I am sure you know. On this, we are calling for an unchanging position. The UK has been championing, for example, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Those treaties have been founded on the principles of human security and preserving lives and, as my colleague pointed out, refugees



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and displaced people are mentioned in the preambles as being beneficiaries of those frameworks.

We must stand strong for those frameworks. Decades of work and studies have led to those frameworks, banning indiscriminate weapons that are causing harm to civilians. Therefore, it is more about what are we standing for in terms of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. If we start withdrawing from certain treaties that are founded in those principles, it will erode those very first principles. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention bans landmines, anti-personnel landmines, which by their nature are indiscriminate, are scattered in vast areas of soil and kill, maim or inflict life-changing injuries. The UK can continue to remain an advocate for universalisation of those treaties, working with other countries, even if they have not joined those treaties, to continue to work towards those principles. Not only do those treaties and conventions have obligations of clearance, but they have also led to the destruction of stockpiles, and they have led to those indiscriminate weapons hopefully one day disappearing.

To give you an example of numbers, we have managed, since the signing of the APMBC, to reduce casualties from 25,000 per year in 1999 down to 6,000 in 2024. This is what we achieve when we have a framework established. Not every country has signed up to it, but the fact that the community of states has joined means that they influence other states and impose a bad reputation, and therefore they are less likely to be used in the future. Therefore, contributing, advocating universalisation, the principles and assistance. As part of those frameworks, there is the obligation of assistance. That is where leveraging funding to continue meeting those objectives of—

Q88 **Sam Rushworth:** What are the obligations of assistance?

Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan: The obligation of assistance is the article that encourages member state parties to the convention to provide assistance, to their level of capacity, to other member state parties.

Q89 **Sam Rushworth:** Does that include the clearance of landmines?

Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan: It includes assistance with clearance, it includes assistance with the destruction of stockpiles, it includes assistance with the management of programming mine action. It is not only about being able to clear the mines today; it is about installing the systems that will be able to deal with it. It is a very important part of the work that we do. It is not only clearing now and doing it for a certain state; it is working alongside authorities for them to be able to manage it. It is providing training, explosive ordnance disposal training, to local people for them to lead the response, and training on the standards to guarantee that the process of land release is conducted in a trustworthy manner so that, when we say that the land is safe, the land is actually safe.

Sam Rushworth: May I ask one more question?

Chair: It will have to end there. Is it a burning question?



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Sam Rushworth: Yes.

Chair: Go on, then. Hélène, can you answer briefly, please?

Q90 **Sam Rushworth:** A lot of people who work for you on the ground are former soldiers, part of DDR programmes. It is rumoured that thousands of them have been put on notice due to cuts. Is that correct and what is the impact of that?

Hélène Kuperman-Le-Bihan: In short, it is correct, due to the funding cuts. People are being made redundant. We are doing everything we can to leverage and minimise that as much as possible, particularly in attaining our objectives.

Chair: I really, really hope that you succeed. Hélène, Jessica, Louis, thank you so much for the evidence that you have given us today. It has helped us with our inquiry, and we might be pushing back to you for some additional information. This session is now closed.