

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: The Philosophy and Culture of Aid, HC 101

Tuesday 7 September 2021

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Members present: Sarah Champion (Chair); Mr Richard Bacon; Theo Clarke; Brendan Clarke-Smith; Mrs Pauline Latham; Chris Law; Navendu Mishra; Mr Virendra Sharma.

Questions 122 to 181

Witnesses

I: Ammara Khan; Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Save the Children; Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, Chief Executive Officer, Christian Aid.

II: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; Charlotte Biswas, Deputy Director of Civil Society and Civic Space, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Ammara Khan and Amanda Khozi Mukwashi

Q122 **Chair:** I would like to start this final session of our inquiry, into racism within the aid sector—part of our overarching inquiry on the philosophy and culture of aid.

We are very fortunate today, on our first session back live with all Committee members, to be joined by Ammara Khan, who is the director of diversity and inclusion at Save the Children, and Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, who is the chief executive of Christian Aid. Thank you both so much for making some time for us. I wonder if we could start by asking you just to give a little bit of background about your organisations and your role within them. Ammara, could we start with you, please?

Ammara Khan: I am from Save the Children UK, which is an organisation for the rights of children around the world. My role is director of diversity and inclusion and I started in the role in December of last year. There is a team of three of us, so there is myself and two D&I specialists, and the focus of our work is actually to implement our diversity and inclusion strategy that was developed last year and launched in November. That was launched by our diversity and inclusion steering group, along with consultation from different staff networks and spearheaded by our CEO at that time.

The D&I strategy has three particular pillars. The first one is around building an inclusive organisation, pillar 2 is tackling underrepresentation and pillar 3 is decolonising development and the way that we work. Our focus is on pillar 1 and pillar 2, the whole people and culture piece, at this time. We are working through all our policies, processes and practices to have a look at how we can look at detecting and designing out any racist practice or behaviours in our employee engagement and employee experience work. That is our particular focus and we have 28 actions in our D&I strategy.

Pillar 3 is around decolonisation and the way that we work. It is slightly different in the way that is working because it is more of an exploration piece, actually looking at how it impacts on us as an organisation, and that is being led by our global programming colleagues, but we have oversight of that to make sure our ethos is similar in the way that we work across the three pillars.

Q123 **Chair:** Thank you, Ammara. I will pause you there. We will come into the detail as we go through the questions. Amanda, thank you so much for joining us today. You are chief exec of Christian Aid. I wonder if you can tell us a little bit about your organisation.

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: Thank you very much, Sarah. Thank you to the Committee for inviting me. Like you say, my name is Amanda Khozi Mukwashi and I am the CEO of Christian Aid. Christian Aid has been in existence for the past 75 years. We are focused on development and



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humanitarian interventions in quite a number of countries. Over the last few years we work more in fragile states than any other.

We focus very much on addressing issues of extreme poverty, power and what we call prophetic voice. When I say “power”, we look at structures that keep people in poverty and that keep people in situations of need, and we try to look at those systematically and structurally to try to tackle and dismantle them.

We are an organisation that was founded and established by the British and Irish churches, the 41 denominations, and so we see ourselves as an agency of the churches, but we work with people of all faiths and none. I am happy to talk a little bit more in detail in terms of the issue on race, but for now I will leave it there and say that our operating model is primarily focused on localisation, so we work through local partners in the different countries where we are present.

Q124 **Chair:** Thank you very much. As a first question from me, is the aid sector racist? Amanda, could I ask that of you, please?

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: Thank you. That is a very interesting question, if I may say, and it would be very easy to simply say that the aid sector is racist, but to be fair it is important to understand that the aid sector exists within a society and therefore is influenced and informed by societal norms, practices, beliefs and behaviours. In that context, I want to be very clear that the aid sector is a reflection of its own society and for Christian Aid, being a British international NGO, we are largely a reflection, to some extent, of British society, behaviours, practices and legacies, whether from a colonial past or a slavery past and going back further.

Maybe to help the Committee, it is really important to say that as an aid sector we have to therefore address those things that we have inherited in terms of the systems and the structures and how power is manifested within our sector, for example on issues of institutional funding and contracting.

If I give you a very tangible example, the way the funding operates means that when we get funding from donors for those that are in developing countries the contracts for our staff, for example, are based on our institutional funding, and so they are not permanent contracts. What we have are short-term contracts or fixed-term contracts that do not provide security of job tenure for most of the people who work for us, and that is about the power dynamic. The burden actually is transferred to those who are more vulnerable and less able in terms of finances, and that is a legacy of the giver and the recipient.

I tend to say that even when you look at issues, for example, of the knowledge base within the aid sector, it is in this case British knowledge whose standards we follow rather than the knowledge of those people and those communities that we work with. It is more valued and that



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again is a legacy of the past. If you look at employment law, because we are a British charity, we follow UK standards, even when we know that the International Labour Organization, for example, has standards that are more global in terms of being globally applicable.

Is the aid sector racist? Probably the question to ask is about how we should be addressing racist behaviours within the aid sector but also, connected to that, within British society, because the two are connected; we cannot separate them. I hope I have answered your question, but I am happy for you to get back to me if you need more.

Q125 Chair: Thank you. You have, and you have led us into the questions that we will be following up with. Ammara, what are your thoughts? Is the aid sector racist?

Ammara Khan: Amanda has covered it all, but certainly I support what Amanda says, in the sense that it is always a bit difficult when we make these sweeping statements about sectors and we say a particular sector is racist. We hear that a lot about, let us say, the criminal justice system, the NHS or whatever service it may be. It is important to have more detail and understand that it is the processes, policies and practices within the sector that are institutionally racist, or that there are particular racist practices and behaviours that go on within the sector.

We have already talked about the model of development. Just by definition of how the sector was set up, it was those from developed countries going out to developing countries with a possibly euro-centric point of view, doing to them and disregarding the local experience and the expertise that is there, so certainly that delves into racist practice.

Also, if we look at what is happening in the aid sector right now and we look at our data, that also firms up the argument that there are systems and processes within the aid sector that are structurally and institutionally racist. We know when we look at workforce data that there is an underrepresentation of black, Asian and minority ethnic people in more senior positions, even when aid sector organisations have a pipeline, so there is really no excuse for why people are not moving in and being recruited to senior leadership positions.

We also know that we have ethnicity pay gaps in the aid sector; again, that is a clear indication that something untoward is happening that we need to break down and focus on. Rather than a sweeping statement, I would say there are certainly structures, processes and practices within the aid sector that are racist and need to be dismantled.

Q126 Chris Law: Amanda, if I could begin with you, what prompted your organisation to begin confronting issues around racial injustice, diversity and inclusion?

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: A few years back, in about 2018, we started looking at how we could have greater impact as an organisation, and we decided that we were going to go through a big change. We came up with



a strategy called Standing Together, and we wanted to deepen the way we work in terms of localisation. To do that, we believed that we needed to reduce the number of countries that we are working in.

This led to a change process within the organisation, and during that change process it was brought to our attention by some of our staff, especially some of our staff in the UK office, whether we had considered the impact of the changes that we were making on members of staff who are from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. It was a big question and it led us to looking at our data, and our data was not adequate.

We looked at some of our processes, some of our policies and our systems and we realised that actually we needed some help, and so we hired a team of six consultants and said, "Come in and really help us to look at what we have, our data, the shortcomings and the gaps". We also realised that just looking at the data and the policies was not enough, because racist behaviour is experienced by people and it is sometimes very subtle, so we asked the consultants to look at and interrogate the lived experiences of our black, Asian and minority ethnic members of staff.

That is what prompted us, and the murder of George Floyd really gave us that additional lift to build upon that momentum, to do as much as we could and to come up with a process that would lead us on a journey that takes us to being an anti-racist organisation. That is what led us to do that.

It was not easy and it has not been an easy journey; I do not want to talk about this as though it has been an easy process. We have the addition of being a faith-based organisation, which means that what we saw as a result of the integrity and collaboration report, which was our race report, was that we have values and ideals, and there was a gap between those ideals and some of the lived realities of some of our staff, and so we have committed that we need to address that.

Q127 Chris Law: As a faith-based organisation, what was the biggest challenge that you have faced and have had to overcome to date?

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: As people of faith, you want to believe that you are doing the right thing and that was the biggest challenge, in terms of confronting ourselves and saying, "Actually, we might have some members of staff in Christian Aid who believe that their experiences are not exactly the same as their white counterparts". That was really hard, but I would like to believe that we have managed to overcome that, because the approach that we took was not the accuser and the accused or the guilty and the victim.

What we said was that we all have our hearts in the right place and we want to work together as a group, including our trustees, and so we have been trying to have those open conversations in as much of a safe



environment, and we have created safe spaces to have those kinds of conversations.

Q128 **Chris Law:** Ammara, I wonder if you could tell me how your senior leadership is held to account to ensure change happens.

Ammara Khan: We have various mechanisms in place. We are fortunate that we have quite an active BAME staff network that meets regularly with our CEO, also with myself and my team and also members of our executive leadership board. That is where issues can be taken up from the BAME network on behalf of black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues across the organisation, and we are fortunate they are active and they hold us to account.

Also, after the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement, our executive leadership team developed some solidarity commitments that they work towards actively, to ensure that we became an anti-racist organisation. That has not been easy. It is very challenging, because we are trying to confront the issues and have open and honest candid discussions.

Going back to one of the biggest challenges, for us it is actually having that brave space where people can talk openly and honestly about how racism manifests within our organisation, and that can be quite difficult for some people. It is a journey that we are on. By no means are we perfect, but we acknowledge that in order for us to eradicate racist practices and behaviours, we have to have that open discussion of the lived experience of our black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues and what it is like for them to work in our organisation, but also to then think about how we can take this forward.

I have a very close working relationship with our executive leadership team and have to report back. There is a level of accountability through that and through our diversity and inclusion implementation group, our strategy implementation group. That is also chaired by our CEO; if there are issues that are stuck and things are not happening, then the CEO will go back to our leadership team, and that is where the accountability also is dealt with.

Q129 **Navendu Mishra:** If I could go to Ammara first, could you please tell us what your organisation is doing to increase diversity, but also how you are lifting barriers for people from underrepresented backgrounds to enter the industry?

Ammara Khan: It is actually a huge cultural piece of work, and that was a priority when myself and my team came into the organisation. As you can imagine, there is a whole big end-to-end process around recruitment. The work is so huge that we are having to take it bit by bit.

The bits that we have been able to progress have been around how we design our jobs, how we write our job adverts making sure there is inclusive language, where we advertise those roles and who gets to see



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them. There was also a piece of work that we wanted to do around recruitment data to see who is applying to our roles, who is not, who is being shortlisted, who is being appointed and, more importantly, who is not being appointed. We are still working on that.

Data is quite a pressing issue for us, because unfortunately we are held by the databases that we have. We have to get robust data and sometimes that is quite patchy, so it only tells us a little bit of the story of what is going on.

In terms of actually widening the pool, we have put guidance in place to ensure that we look at where we advertise our jobs to make sure we go to diverse inclusion boards and networks to make sure that a wide pool of people see our job adverts. We have also looked at the language in our job adverts and our job descriptions to make sure that they are inclusive and we actually have built-in software that you can run your text through to make sure it is inclusive.

We have also done a piece of work around our recruitment panels to make sure they are representative, so there was some guidance that we developed and we had lots of discussions around what a representative panel looks like, how to recruit them, how to make sure they are not seen as tokenistic and to make sure that we evaluate how we go in that area too.

There are lots of different areas that we have looked on within recruitment, but we have also looked at internal recruitment too, so not just external, but also our internal promotions process. We have put a lot of emphasis in that particular process because of the lived experience and the feedback we got from our black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues about their experiences; also, when we looked at the data on success rates, they were lower than for their white counterparts.

We developed a positive action programme to look at mentoring, development, sponsorship and reverse-mentoring, but also looked at our internal promotions procedure to lift any barriers that we placed as an institution that had a negative impact on our black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues progressing through the organisation. It is not perfect but we are working on that and are making headway in that area.

Q130 **Navendu Mishra:** Could I come to you, Amanda, with the same question, please?

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: In terms of your question on what we are doing to increase diversity within the organisation, there are a number of things that we are doing. The approach that we have taken is that there are two things. There are the systems, the policies and some of the practices that we do that need to be tackled, but really what we want ultimately is to change the culture of the organisation, and so people need to understand why they are doing what they are doing. That is



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really important, so that it does not become an equal opportunities form that you are ticking as a tick-box exercise.

We are working at different levels. At board level, for example, we have a trustee who has been a named trustee responsible for race and diversity. The board itself has oversight of this work. We have approached it in a similar way to how we approach the safeguarding work. The board has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that Christian Aid as an organisation is an anti-racist organisation where all members of staff can identify racist behaviours and be able to call it out, because racist behaviour itself will never end, but it is the ability of our staff to be able to see it, to name it, to call it out and to be intolerant to it. That is the overarching thing that I wanted to say.

At board level, we have then asked the sub-committees, whether it is the finance sub-committee, audit and risk or human resources, to now look at their work through a race lens. If you are making financial decisions, what is the impact on race and diversity within the organisation of these decisions? It is the same with audit and risk. At the board level, that is what we have done.

At director level, when we did our review, which I mentioned is called the integrity and collaboration review, we had a report and we came out with a management response. Within the management response there is a whole list of actions that we need to take on data, human resources, culture and leadership.

To also add to what Ammara has said in terms of this question, we are looking, for example, at the diversity of our board. We have 14 trustees. We have four from ethnic minorities. We have nine women and five men. We begin to also look at the intersectionalities of diversity. If you look at our senior leadership team, which we call the extended leadership team, we have 27 people from across the world. Nine out of those 27, so a third, are ethnic minorities. We still have some way to go because we would like to see more representation from the global south, because, after all, we work in the global south. We are not yet there.

In terms of our people functions and systems, I am just repeating what Ammara said. During the change process we agreed that all our interview panels needed to be diverse, so every single interviewing panel had to be diverse. We looked at advertising. We are looking at recruitment processes. We have done some unconscious bias training. If there is a lesson that I can share, all these bits in themselves are not going to address the issue, but together and consistently that is when we can begin to raise the consciousness of all our staff, trustees, volunteers and partners that we are working with that this is how racist behaviour manifests itself and this is how we challenge it and call it out, and it has no space in our work.

I hope I have answered your question. I think you had a secondary question to that.



Q131 **Navendu Mishra:** Yes. There is lots of food for thought there, thank you. Ammara, could you tell us about the ethnicity pay gap? Has publishing that made an impact?

Ammara Khan: Yes, absolutely. Just by carrying out the work, that has made a huge difference for us as an organisation. Publishing it externally makes us accountable externally, but it is more important the impact it has internally, so being transparent and saying, "These are our ethnicity pay gaps". What we were able to do was drill down the various groups, but also take an intersectional approach, so that we could see what the pay gaps were between, let us say, black women and white women, Asian women and white women, et cetera, so we could really look at where the most pronounced gaps were.

Off the back of that, we then established an equal pay working group and that is exactly what it is. It is a working group. We did not want another talking group. We had enough data to actually have a look at how we could narrow these particular gaps. It is just a small group of colleagues who have the influence to change things quickly, and so we are working through that at the moment and having a look at particular cases, drilling down to the different grades and seeing why these gaps have come about, and influencing our culture, the way we operate and our policies and processes.

An example of that is looking at starting salaries. Unfortunately, we inherit ethnicity pay gaps because we have ethnicity pay gaps across industry. What can we do as an organisation to have checks and balances in place when we recruit? We introduced a balance that, when people recruited and starting salary was negotiated, it would go through two colleagues, one in reward and one in recruitment, to make sure that it was balanced and pitched at all the other types of salaries that were awarded based on looking at gender and ethnic background.

We should not have to put those checks and balances in, but we have these ethnicity pay gaps and you have to hit it at every angle possible. Fundamentally, we are looking at our pay and reward processes anyway, because obviously we want to make those right to ensure that we have long-term transformational change in the organisation when it comes to pay and reward.

Q132 **Chair:** Ammara, could I come in at that point? When you looked at the data, did you find that there were differences in pay, in position and in reward based on ethnicity?

Ammara Khan: Yes, absolutely there are pay gaps, and then when you drill down further, you have a look at the different grades to see where they are more pronounced. When you find those pay gaps, then the work is to explore further why you have them and then make them right. Part of that is direct action, and then the other element of that is looking at how we allowed them to happen in the first place, so it is about looking at the policies, mechanisms and process to try to stop that from happening.



Q133 **Chair:** When you did that research, what did you find, without breaching confidentiality, and also what were the conclusions that you drew about why they existed?

Ammara Khan: Historical-wise, we were picking up pay gaps that were already out there. A good example is IT roles that are heavily male-dominated. If you had a male and female coming forward and then throw in a bit of race and intersection, you would have men coming in at a higher salary range, negotiating harder and getting a higher salary. We recognised that we had to do something at that level, and so that is when we developed that mechanism where the salary would be checked, but also to provide a guide as well on the different salary ranges and make people aware of those existing pay gaps in industry that we are inheriting. That was the first thing.

The second big thing was our equal pay working group. We wanted to take some direct action and look at our pay and reward. Another element is how do people increase their pay? How do they progress up the pay scales? That forces us to have a look at our general pay and reward policies, which we are looking at now. It is a work in progress, but we are working in the right direction. We are not there yet. It is a total journey for us, but the acknowledgement is there that we need to take that direct action.

Q134 **Navendu Mishra:** Thank you for that. That is very important and interesting. Amanda, what plans do you have to help people from low and middle-income countries to reach senior leadership roles in your own organisation?

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: One thing that I forgot to say, which links to this question that you are asking me, is that, if I am not mistaken, I am probably the first—if not the only—black African woman leading a big British international NGO. It is just worth noting that, because it is important to see where the board is in Christian Aid.

In the last year we have appointed the first black African international director for programmes, Ojobo, who is not going to be based in the UK but is based in Nigeria. We have recently announced that Dr Rowan Williams, who has been chair of Christian Aid for the past eight years, will be stepping down in November, and the incoming chair is John Sentamu, the former Archbishop of York. There are things there that we are doing and I just wanted to mention that.

In terms of helping staff in middle and lower-income countries, the structure of Christian Aid is different from the federations or the confederated nature of other organisations. We are part of ACT Alliance, but as Christian Aid we work primarily through local partners, so that is one thing. Where we have country offices, all our offices are staffed by local nationals in those countries that we are working in. For example, the recent case that I can give is in Afghanistan, and all of them, bar one, are Afghan nationals from Afghanistan.



Where your question really challenges me and the organisation is that it is okay for us to have national staff operating in those countries, but what about the global roles that we have as an organisation? How do we ensure that local staff or nationals can move into those positions?

There are a number of challenges there. One, which we are beginning to move away from, is that most global roles used to be based in the UK, and so you would have the issue of visa requirements and all those other barriers. Now we are able to actually have global roles sitting in Nairobi and other parts of the world, and so it has become easier for our staff to apply to those roles, but it is a work in progress. We are not there yet.

Q135 **Navendu Mishra:** My next question latches on to that. You mentioned that you have contractors that work for the organisation, but also local staff employed in countries themselves. If those individuals wanted to pursue a leadership career in your organisation, do they have a clear route map to do that? I take the points around immigration and all of that, but in addition to the challenges you mentioned, do they have that opportunity, or is there a lot of work that needs to be done?

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: It is not a lot of work. In terms of what is within our control, we are beginning to see members of staff applying for jobs in other countries. Where visa requirements are not a problem, we can facilitate that. What we now need to do is to increase the confidence among members of staff and also the opportunities. One of the things that we are doing is we are advertising internally before we advertise externally, but it is a long way to go yet.

Q136 **Navendu Mishra:** We are quite tight on time, but if there is anything you want to share with us on a confidential basis or something you want us to include in the report, I am sure the Chair would be more than happy to receive written representation.

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: I would be happy to do that.

Q137 **Navendu Mishra:** Ammara, could we have a brief contribution on your plans to include people from low and middle-income countries? I am quite conscious of time.

Ammara Khan: Amanda has covered it really well. We have a global strategy that looks at shifting power from our members to our regional country offices and we are also looking at succession and talent management, which diversity and inclusion is a key element of, but we are still on a journey and actually embarking on that right now.

Q138 **Theo Clarke:** My first question is to Ammara. How will you build an inclusive working environment for staff in the UK and overseas?

Ammara Khan: Going back to our diversity and inclusion strategy, it covers pillar 1 and pillar 2, and that is basically around developing an inclusive working environment, so all the things that we have talked about.



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This work is huge, and it is huge simply because, when it comes to race, we have not really given it the time and attention that we possibly gave to gender or disability. I have always found race quite a difficult subject for some people to talk about. Certainly in our organisation we have become more vocal about it after Black Lives Matter and the murder of George Floyd, where we now feel that there are brave spaces where we can have those candid and open discussions.

We are hitting it at all angles. There are 28 actions in our D&I strategy. It looks at environment, appropriate behaviours, the language that we use, the way we communicate with each other and right into how we recruit, so all the different elements. We have introduced D&I reps locally, so there is a local resource for different divisions to tap into if they want to talk about championing D&I locally or if there are issues coming up around D&I. We have developed a mentoring and development programme for people in underrepresented groups. We are trying to look at all the different elements possible, but the piece is absolutely huge.

What we are trying to do is work across the movement. As you can imagine, Save the Children UK is 900 staff strong and there are huge issues to work on. Luckily, some of the projects we are working on overlap with our international colleagues in Save the Children International, and we have mechanisms in place at CEO level and board level where they are sharing best practice on diversity and inclusion and all the things that we have been working on. There is also a global small group where we look at the programmes of work and see how that can actually be spread across the movement too. While we are focusing on Save the Children UK, we are trying to influence what is happening around the world in our country offices too.

Q139 Theo Clarke: That is a really helpful overview. Can I just clarify then, given that your job title is director of diversity and inclusion, who exactly is the responsible person for driving the anti-racism agenda within your organisation?

Ammara Khan: That would really go to our CEO and our board. I would first say that it is everybody's responsibility, but the ultimate responsibility lies with our CEO and our board. My role reports directly to the CEO and that has been really helpful. More often than not in diversity and inclusion, roles like mine tend to be reporting into HR or another department, and then what happens is you do not get that exposure from working corporately across the organisation in all our core areas and functions.

Also, reporting to the CEO is quite powerful, in the sense that if there are things that you need unblocking or you need the CEO to come out and talk about these issues, the connection and support is there. It has been really important that I and my team have that close working relationship with the CEO and our exec leadership team, and also regularly with the board.



Q140 **Theo Clarke:** My other question is to Amanda. How has your work on racial justice affected the way that you work with your supply chains?

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: I would probably want to give you something in writing on that, because we work primarily through national and local partners organisations, like I have said, and we do very little direct procurement in either our development or humanitarian programming. Nonetheless, we are reviewing our procurement and supply chains through a modern slavery working group. While this is not a direct anti-racist brief, it complements this agenda and we are awaiting any recommendations from that.

We are setting up what we are calling a race governance working group to enable us to look at all the different workflows within the organisation in terms of functional responsibilities, so that we can have that coherent approach. I can give you more on this in writing, if you are okay with that.

Theo Clarke: That is really helpful, thank you.

Q141 **Mr Sharma:** Amanda, what core recommendations would you put to the FCDO to support the sector becoming anti-racist?

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: That is a big question, but I am glad that you have asked it.

Mr Sharma: That is why I am asking.

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: As I said in my first remarks, the aid sector is a miniature of the society that we come from. FCDO in particular is challenged because it sits between a rock and a hard place, to be fair to it, in that, on the one hand, the bare mention of a decolonised aid programme or decolonisation of the aid sector raises some very interesting responses from Government, in my experience, because what comes into mind immediately is reparations and the politics of the day here in the UK at home, which stands as an obstacle around that.

One of my key recommendations personally is that we need one Government approach in terms of the understanding of issues of race, decolonisation and diversity; otherwise FCDO will always be between a rock and a hard place.

The second thing, in terms of recommendations, is that we need leadership. The conversations around race are very sensitive, they are very difficult to have and they are very uncomfortable to have, but let us have them. It is better when FCDO is leading those conversations rather than being fearful of them. You will remember that there was a report last year that was commissioned by Whitehall's race network, which said that racism was endemic in DFID and its network of offices abroad. We need to be honest that this anti-racist journey must include FCDO and other parts of Government. It is only then, with that type of leadership, that there is going to be credibility and respect from international NGOs,



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like Christian Aid, that we know need to do quite a lot of work, as a sector. That is the second one of my recommendations.

I will also just say that the lack of engagement from the UK Government as a major international donor, recent actions notwithstanding, which had a vast colonial empire contributing to Britain's current wealth and status, is obstructing progress towards addressing structural power imbalances that sustain poverty and inequality. As long as the Government do not open themselves up to having this conversation and leading it, we will always do just partial work. There is only so much that we as an international NGOs can do.

I know we are running out of time, but I really just wanted to put that on the table that the leadership of FCDO and the leadership of Government is perhaps the single most critical thing in the conversation around creating an anti-racist aid sector and dealing with issues of decolonisation. Decolonisation is not something to be feared. It is something to be embraced in the quest for justice and reducing inequalities.

Q142 **Mr Sharma:** Ammara, do you have any contribution or addition to that?

Ammara Khan: Just following on from what Amanda said, absolutely we need that guidance and leadership in place. As I said before, it is very hard to progress an anti-racist agenda when people lack confidence and there is a fear of talking about the real issues. That is where FCDO could really help in providing some guidance across the sector, because I do liaise with a lot of my counterparts in different aid organisations, and you can see quite clearly that there is a lack of expertise in race and race work. Not everybody can do it. You need people who understand how race and racism manifests.

We need some guidance, and maybe a framework too, as you have seen being developed in other sectors. That would help give guidance or work through a framework of all the things you need to do to achieve good race equality.

Funding stipulations are also quite important. There is a unique opportunity here for FCDO to put in some kind of funding requirement to actually provide data on race. If an organisation is applying for funding, maybe they need to provide some data on what they are doing on anti-racism and the actions they are taking or some information. That would put more emphasis on organisations, when they are applying for funding, to be accountable for that funding through their actions and their work on anti-racism.

Q143 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Amanda, if I can just ask you first, thinking of organisations that are just starting out on this journey now, what advice would you give them? What do you think they can learn from your experience?



Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: I have found myself in a unique position of being from an ethnic minority background and leading a big organisation. What I would say is, first, regardless of whether you are black, brown, white, a man or a woman, the journey and the conversation to become an anti-racist organisation is going to be tough and uncomfortable, so be uncomfortable. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable, if I can say that. That would be the first thing: be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

The second thing is that nobody has all the answers. One thing that I have learned in Christian Aid is that the assumptions that there is somebody or a system, a think-tank or a group of people who have all the information around this actually is not there. Certainly, it is not that people of colour have all the answers, so let us debunk the assumptions that we have. It is a process of unlearning.

Then be honest and reflective. There is nothing to be afraid of. Fear is probably the biggest obstacle for all of us. There is nothing to be afraid of. If we talk about documenting history the way it was, we should not be afraid of that, and in our organisations we need to look at our own history and really document that and talk about it.

My lessons learned and my recommendations to a small organisation are to start as you mean to go on, involve all your staff, make sure that your trustees are with you and have open conversations also with your donors and your supporters. Let us not be afraid of talking to supporters about the realities of the challenges that we are going through. They are more helpful than we think or than we are fearful of. At least, that is what I have found with Christian Aid. Our supporters and the churches are grappling with the same issues and they all want to have a safe space. Have the conversation.

On a personal level, make sure that you have a support group. If you are the CEO, make sure that you have a support group, somewhere where you can go and say, "I am struggling with this. It is not working. What am I doing wrong?" Just learn from others in terms of what they are doing. That is what we are doing, and thanks to some of the think-tanks, such as ODI, for helping us to think through some of these areas. They are also learning with us and we are learning with them. I hope that is what you were asking for. If not, I am happy to continue talking.

Q144 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** That is very comprehensive. Thank you, Amanda. Ammara, would you add anything to that at all?

Ammara Khan: The only thing I would like to add is about the accountability and leadership. Anti-racism needs to be role-modelled right at the top and champion that message. That needs to be full of commitment and be genuine. That is really important.

Resource is really important in this area. When we are talking about this whole programme of work, it is not going to be easy. You will need the



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resource. We have a team of three. We are pitched at a level where we have that inroad to CEO and board, which is really important when you want to unblock barriers in this area, so you need to really think about where your roles are pitched in the organisation.

Again, we have said this before: it is about open and candid discussion, to have those discussions. It will not be nice and it will be uncomfortable, but you have to have them in order to progress and take action. One of the biggest things for me is that we talk a lot, we look at data, we know the lived experience from our surveys and we know the experience of our black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues in the sector, but we need to take action. We have talked a lot and we have looked at a lot of data. We have all the data we need. We do not need to really look at more. What we need to do is actually take some risks and take some action, because non-action is not an option anymore.

Q145 **Chair:** Amanda, do you want to come back in again?

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: Yes, just quickly. There were two things that I left out that are quite important. First, this is not a sprint. It is not a 100-metre sprint. It is a lifelong race. If you embark on it in that way, do not look for quick wins all the time. Know that the change is going to take a long time and is going to be deep. That is one thing.

The second thing is especially true if you are from an ethnic minority background. For example, Chair, when I accepted to come and speak to you, I asked myself, "Is the Committee really serious? Are they going to hear me or is this a tick-box exercise?" because I want to speak my truth. I have come body and voice and it is really important for my own dignity, but also for validation and affirmation, that I am heard and I see actions coming out of this. That is another big thing. Members of staff need to see that. They need to know that when you ask them to speak out on their lived realities you are going to use that for their benefit and it is not just you saying, "We have spoken to these people. Tick, tick, tick", and that is the end. That is really important for all members of staff. It is also important for me this afternoon.

Chair: Amanda and Ammara, we have heard you, and we will be acting on what we have heard.

Q146 **Chris Law:** Over the last few months, and the last couple of months in particular, each of us individually has been hearing from NGOs and INGOs about the impact of the aid cuts that were voted through in this Parliament this year. I wanted to ask you both, as leaders in your own organisations, what difficult decisions you have been forced to make as a result. I will start with Amanda.

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: We were slightly fortunate that we went through this change process that I talked about in 2018 and 2019 and during the Covid pandemic supporters really rallied behind. For the changes that we needed to make that others are having to make, in



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terms of cutting the number of members of staff and closing projects abruptly, where we are able to we have used some of our own resources to try to exit gently out of that.

The discussion around the aid budget cut was not just in itself about the money. It was about a much bigger message that was sent to our partners and to communities, and that message has been reaffirmed by the approach that we have taken as a Government on the vaccine inequity and on the issue of the COP that is about to come in November, in terms of how those from developing countries are being treated and how the whole thing is being treated. That message is that the British Government are no longer interested in working with people living in extreme poverty and those who are really vulnerable, because we were able to just cut them off. For me, that is the big issue that has impacted us.

As a CEO working with the board and with the directors, we have tried to manage that by keeping the conversations with our partners and with communities going and trying everything that we can to talk to other donors to try to support the work that we are doing. I am hoping that the British Government will come round eventually, sooner rather than later, because the impact of those decisions is now coming to the front, and we can all see what is happening.

Ammara Khan: I do not have much more to add. We will continue to lobby, campaign and advocate. I cannot really talk about the detail of how it has impacted on us, but I can certainly provide written evidence if you need it.

Chris Law: That would be great.

Chair: That is very helpful, thank you.

Q147 **Navendu Mishra:** I just have a very brief question regarding staff who are employed locally and staff who are employed abroad. Are they on different pay scales? I know Amanda has made reference to being a UK-based NGO, but is it possible to have a very brief answer about perhaps phasing out different pay scales for different staff?

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: In terms of our terms and conditions, they are the same right across.

Navendu Mishra: Sorry; the question is about pay for locally hired and internationally hired staff. I take the point about terms and conditions.

Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: Can you just repeat the question for me then?

Q148 **Navendu Mishra:** I take your point about terms and conditions. The question is about pay for staff who are hired on local contracts and staff who are hired on international contracts.



Amanda Khozi Mukwashi: We have a global pay structure, which we are currently about to review, using the same grades, but for local staff and for regions there is a regional pay structure and there is a local pay structure that we use. We are in the process of reviewing that globally, and we should have the results of that hopefully by the end of the year.

Q149 **Navendu Mishra:** The Committee will be really keen to hear any progress on that. Ammara, do you want to make a brief contribution on locally and internationally hired?

Ammara Khan: It is just similar. We are SC UK. We do not have different pay and terms and conditions. Save the Children International have some roles where they might be slightly different, but that is on a downward trend, so we are working to basically make that as minimal as possible. Again, we can provide written evidence if you need it.

Chair: Thank you, Committee, and thank you so much, panellists. You have both been incredibly open and generous. To reiterate, we have heard you. Thank you.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon and Charlotte Biswas.

Q150 **Chair:** I would like to start our second panel of this inquiry into race within the aid sector, which we will follow with some additional questions to Lord Ahmad about Afghanistan and the humanitarian situation there. Lord Ahmad, we are incredibly grateful that you have made the time for us today. We believe we have you until 4.30. You are nodding, so that is a relief. We know just how busy your portfolio is right now, and can I personally thank you for all the work that you are doing on Afghanistan to try to stabilise the situation as much as is humanly possible? It is deeply well received. Thank you.

Lord Ahmad, Minister of State for South Asia and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, I wonder if you could briefly introduce a little bit about your portfolio. Also, we are joined by Charlotte; I wonder if you could introduce your colleague as well, please.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Of course. First of all, good afternoon. I am delighted to join you here, and I just want to put on record my thanks for both the structured but also co-operative way we have been dealing with the issues that really matter in previous times

I have been here in front of the Committee and indeed the sub-committee. I know we are going to go on to talk about Afghanistan, and I can assure you that that really is not just the tone but the actual nature of how I wish to engage with the Committee. I know there is wide experience, as I look around this Committee, on various elements of my portfolio. I never for a moment assume that just because you are a



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Minister, you know it all—far from it—and the insights and expertise that we get from parliamentarians, but also from the witnesses that you have been calling, really do inform our policies, so thank you.

In terms of my own portfolio, briefly, I am Minister of State for the Commonwealth, South Asia and the United Nations. I am also the Prime Minister's special representative on preventing sexual violence in conflict. I am also the Minister for Human Rights as well. I look after a wide range of FCO corporate services as well as part of my portfolio, but another major part of my activity is, when it comes to the other place, the House of Lords, as the prime Minister for the FCDO. You then become the person who covers everything, so whether it is the Foreign Secretary making a statement or one of my colleagues, I am responsible for all parliamentary business from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

I am delighted to be joined by Charlotte, who is one of our deputy directors within the FCDO. Our engagement together, both as a senior official and as Minister, dates back to my previous incarnation when I was a Minister at both DFID and at the FCO, but subsequent to the merger, Charlotte has been one of those experts who we have also been working very closely with on various parts of my portfolio. I do not know, Charlotte, if there was anything else you wanted to add.

Charlotte Biswas: I will explain my portfolio. I am deputy director for civil society and civic space. I also lead on G7 open societies and the strategy and transformation for open societies within the open societies directorate.

Chair: We have the right people in front of us then. Thank you very much for your attendance today.

Q151 **Chris Law:** Good afternoon, Lord Ahmad. It is good to see you and also yourself, Charlotte, in person after so long behind monitors. Several witnesses have described a current aid sector where power and resources are concentrated in the hands of large donors such as the FCDO as a continuation of colonial power structures. Do you agree with this characterisation? If so, why?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: First of all, I should address you in the continuing tradition as Chris-ji. That has a meaning that I am sure Mr Law understands, as well as Virendra-ji as well. I welcome being in front of the Committee in person as well.

If I just took a step back, I said in my introductory remarks that I am Minister of State for the Commonwealth. If one makes a link to the colonial past and the Commonwealth today, it is a great testament to our country that, when you look around different professions, different parts, indeed our Parliament, indeed our Government and all benches in the House of Lords and the House of Commons, we are reflecting what modern Britain is all about.



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As a son of someone who migrated here from the Indian sub-continent, I am mindful of the fact that my office overlooks the Indian Office Council Chamber, from where we used to administer. Literally, it is opposite, and the Committee are welcome to visit me in the office. There is a poignant factor in that: that our own country has progressed to a level whereby our different migrant communities from different parts of the world now really shape what Britain is about today. That is a very good thing.

In terms of the aid sector specifically and the colonial influence, tone and language matter. Often when I speak with colleagues, it is not just what you say; it is how you say it. You can have a script in front of you, but are you really getting behind it in terms of what it is seeking to do?

I have certainly learned through my engagement, particularly at organisations such as the United Nations. I am also, I should have said, Minister for the Overseas Territories and Minister for the Caribbean. That gives me great insights directly where that issue of the colonial past and the legacy is very in evidence. That said, I am also very cognisant that what we do through the development budget through the FCDO is a major part of how we can really not just change the narrative but change the reality.

I do not totally contextualise and recognise that the aid sector is all about the continuation of colonialism, but I do accept that it is important to understand a country's own history. We should not be arrogant. For example, when we talk about human rights and as countries evolve, particularly young democracies, we hold them through the lens of what the United Kingdom is today.

The values-based system is extremely important, but our own history is also a lesson to ensure that we work constructively in a way with countries to help them nurture, through the different realms of their progression as democracies and the broader level of human rights. The support through the aid sector and FCDO funding is a key part of that.

Q152 Chris Law: Given your answer, I was going to ask you what steps has the FCDO taken to open up a meaningful dialogue with its partner organisations on how to tackle racism and increase diversity, inclusion and equity.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Again, it is important what we say. We are still Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth. In the last meeting of the Foreign Ministers that was held under the stewardship of the Foreign Secretary, one of the areas my team and I worked on was a statement, post what happened in the US, about racism. That was an important statement that the United Kingdom led on within the Commonwealth 54 on abhorring the whole nature of racism in all its ugly guises. It is important we recognise those statements matter, particularly within the Commonwealth context.



That is one example of how, within an international forum, we can actually make clear statements that we are not just part of but that we lead on, on actually rejecting all forms of racism in all its ugly guises. That was a fact that was signed up for all the Commonwealth 54.

In practical terms, we do work with partner countries and local communities. The merger of the FCDO has also allowed our network, through an empowered high commissioner and ambassador, to work through local entities on the ground, because, ultimately, if our assistance is really going to help people on the ground, it has to have that localised focus, and that localised focus will assist us in ensuring that our policies and indeed the strategy we set reflect what people need.

As I said, in all of this, it is important that the language we use is reflective of the here and now. It is not us giving a loan; it is supporting and building. That is why the difference with supporting countries in terms of what we do on development is an extremely crucial part of the narrative, rather than just thinking that we are giving a grant for the sake of fulfilling an aid promise.

It is very important we look constructively and that there is a continuum as well. As we help countries, there needs to be a process to our development support that allows them to move through in a structured fashion to the next level of their own development, but I am very clear from my own perspective that priorities must be set from the ground upwards, to ensure that our strategy reflects that.

Q153 **Chair:** Thank you for that answer, Lord Ahmad. I was very struck by our last panellist saying that FCDO should show leadership and encourage those organisations that it funds to have those difficult conversations about race and racism. The example you gave was talking on a country-to-country level. Do you have similar conversations with organisations that are benefactors of British taxpayers' money?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Today my colleague, Minister Morton, is holding a roundtable with NGO partners. Since taking over within the new FCDO certain responsibilities for NGOs, one of the roundtables I have initiated, which I feel very deeply passionate about, is an NGOs roundtable with faith groups. Why I do that comes back to the purpose of your investigation and inquiry. Faith-based organisations, in my mind, have a very unique perspective.

Often, when we look at the issue of race it is also reflective of some of the specific communities we are trying to help and, whether it is working through Christian agencies, Muslim agencies or indeed others, we need to have a holistic approach. The short answer is, yes, we are, but certainly what I have sought to do is broaden the scope of the NGOs we work with.

The other thing, Madam Chair, is just to throw down the gauntlet to them as well. I have asked each agency to come back; I say in our conversation, "Why don't you tell us which country you have a strength



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in, which country you have an established network in, so that we can then guide our ambassadors or high commissioners to work hand in glove with you on the ground?" First, it helps in terms of equities; secondly, you save on overheads; and thirdly, and most importantly, you get, as I said originally, support to those who need it most.

The faith sector has an important role to play and we are certainly working more broadly. Is it a completed task? Far from it. There is a lot more to be done. We need to move and not just encourage but direct some of the support we give, to ensure the bigger partners that we have also recognise the importance of local partnerships.

Charlotte Biswas: We have been engaging in those conversations on racism, race and colonialism in the sector. We feel that we do not want to lead those conversations. It is quite right that those conversations are generated from the grassroots, and so we are mindful of the role that we can play in over-imposing in the conversation, but we are very much involved in those. The Permanent Under-Secretary has met with a range of organisations to have those conversations, as well as the Foreign Secretary also having expert conversations on the issue as well.

There is significant momentum in the sector and that conversation is being had at all different levels. We are also learning, and we are keen to learn from the people who have been most affected and, therefore, not drive the agenda. We have had the very important step within FCDO as a new organisation of really having a good, hard look at ourselves and setting a high bar for how we behave among our own staff. We hope that that also sets a positive example.

Q154 **Mrs Latham:** Good afternoon, Lord Ahmad. It is good to see you. Why has progress stalled for donors and international NGOs on meeting the commitments agreed to under the grand bargain in 2016, which was to shift power and resources towards the communities where aid programmes are delivered?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Over the last 18 months, there have been some added challenges with operations on the ground, particularly because of the Covid crisis, but I accept it. When you look at the grand bargain agreed by the World Humanitarian Summit back in 2016, progress has been both slow and challenging.

In terms of our own efforts, we have worked through specific examples. On my patch, for example, I can talk about Bangladesh, where we supported a range of initiatives at country level to move our support specifically to the ground. There are other good examples in Iraq and Somalia.

It is also about data and being informed with respect to the information we collect. We are aiming to collect more effective data on the perceptions of community members of centrally provided support, to ensure that our policies and support are reflective of the community



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reactions and feedback we get in each country as well. We have also supported a variety of different initiatives looking at inconsistent application of our support and how we can broaden that at a base level.

That said, the progress on localisation needs much more work. Yesterday, I believe, on the 6th, we completed the open consultation on the new international development strategy. Part of the roundtables that we will be operating will be reflecting on not just the issue of race but particularly this issue of localism, which needs to be reflected in our approach.

Q155 Mrs Latham: Do you think that channelling funding through international intermediaries offers good value for money when compared with funding locally led organisations directly?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: That is a very pertinent question. It is a mixture of both. I mentioned earlier I work very closely with the UN. Taking UNICEF as an example, it was one of the first bodies I reached out to not just when, I would add, the current crisis was upon us. It was very obvious that the likes of UNICEF have some very effective networks on the ground.

There are two elements with that. When you work with a recognised international agency and partner, such as a UN-endorsed organisation, the structures and the governance are there to ensure that the aid, support and development funding that we are providing gets to the end partner. Where there needs to be added strength in that, you can combine the two. We have localised partners we can work with within a country, which may be receiving funding through an international agency but are working in a very complementary fashion and also informing what a larger agency can do on the ground. It is a mix of both.

The challenge you have when you go directly to a country, first of all, is we should not be arrogant and assume we know better. It should not be the UK or any other developed nation coming in and saying, "We think you should spend it on this, and this is the person". There needs to be more co-operation.

That said, often on the receiving end you will get Governments that say, "We do not like you working with agency X, Y and Z. We would rather you give the money to us", and that is where the importance of development and diplomacy comes in, because you need to navigate that diplomatic channel to ensure you get an end result that works for the person who should be receiving the benefit. Again, I would add that it is an in-country approach. There will be different models that work best for different countries.

Q156 Mrs Latham: There has been a pilot programme with Comic Relief to engage with civil society organisations in Ghana, Zambia and Malawi. Do you have any plans to extend that to other countries?



Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: First of all, on the particular funding for those programmes, that has been set. Again, partly because of the challenges around recent months with Covid et cetera, we have set out the business plans for those three particular countries. Going forward, we want to see how the programme evolves. The three countries are Zambia, Malawi and Ghana, and certainly we want to see the learnings from the mechanisms we put in place to see how perhaps those can be replicated elsewhere. Charlotte, I do not know if there was more to add on that one.

Charlotte Biswas: This is a programme that we are very excited about, because it really is innovative. We are very committed, alongside Comic Relief, to explore those different approaches and to see what really does drive sustainable local development. It is meant to be a pilot programme. Subject to funding, we would assume that we will take the lessons from that and then we will use those across a range of different programmes. Whether it is a continuation of that programme or whether it is fertilised within other programmes across FCDO, we do not yet know. The whole programme lasts 10 years.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We might have to explain the red noses in some of those countries, but we will wait and see. That is an interesting narrative to explain.

Q157 **Theo Clarke:** Minister, it is a pleasure to have you back with us in person today. My question is about working with internationally hired and locally hired staff. We have heard from witnesses who told us that some of the working practices of the FCDO are actually preventing them from working equitably with partners in country. Do you think it is feasible to potentially change the FCDO's fee rate structures in order to reduce the need for dual pay scales? I am particularly interested in this difference between internationally hired and locally hired staff and whether we can do something to rectify that.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: That is an anomaly that I know exists. When I entered the room, I heard Mr Mishra asking one of your previous witnesses on that. It is a balance to be struck, and Charlotte will, I am sure, want to come in on this as well. When you look at a country as a whole in which you are operating, there will be national pay scales for like work, so different agencies, corporations and organisations will be working on the ground and there is a sense of a localised element to whatever that pay scale would be.

We can certainly set the parameters but individual organisations should have the flexibility to be able to ensure that, yes, they meet the required standards in terms of terms and conditions, but in terms of pay standards, it should not be a Government imposing what the pay scales should be. We can certainly set the parameters in terms of ensuring the pay terms and conditions are the same.



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I will draw an analogy, if I may. We have just been through a merger with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and DFID, and I can assure you that, when we looked at things like contracts and pay, even with two Government Departments working in the international sphere, because of the nature of the work, there were differences between a package and salaries, et cetera. It is right that we bring those together, even within an organisation such as FCDO, but it should be for individual organisations, within parameters, to ensure that they can reflect the pay scales. There will be a read-across to an in-country position as well.

Charlotte Biswas: That is right. They are locally set to match the local economy, but we do have a way of benchmarking to make sure that fee rates compare very well, so actually, compared to private sector international organisations, et cetera, we see it as being competitive, but also value for money. We do not anticipate that there will be a levelling up globally, but we want it to be competitive within that country and to meet the expectations of local organisations.

Theo Clarke: Minister, I take your point, but what we heard from witnesses earlier this year was that it is the FCDO's reserve status that they believe is preventing them from hiring foreign nationals on the ground, and they think that is disenfranchising local communities.

Charlotte Biswas: FCDO staff.

Q158 **Theo Clarke:** Yes, exactly. As an additional question, what steps is the FCDO taking to open up project lead roles to staff from those countries where the programme is actually being delivered?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: First of all, taking the first point, Theo, what we can do is certainly take that. That is why these sessions are extremely helpful to me as a Minister, but also in our policy setting. From your witnesses in terms of their feedback, it is important we feed that into our own structures and also in terms of the processes that we deploy. Certainly, we should be all encouraging.

Moving on to your second question, at a local level we need to ensure that we go as broad as possible in terms of our recruitment. There are many countries in which we operate, tragically, where women will not get equal rights to access—we do not need to go further than the current situation in Afghanistan—but also there will be many places where people from particular ethnicities, coming back to the issue of race, and indeed from particular religious backgrounds may not have access to those opportunities. We should certainly ensure, from our side within the FCDO, that when we work with partners on the ground they are exercising the full gambit of accessibility, irrespective of who that individual is.

Charlotte is right in terms of we cannot impose, but it is about how you define leadership. Leadership should not be about just taking and saying, "You will do this". Leadership is also about, through your own words and, more importantly, actions, demonstrating that you can encompass what



you are seeking to achieve, which is equality of opportunity irrespective of the person's gender, race or any other reason. We can strive and do better in that. At a local level, yes, we will be guided by the sensitivities of not trying to impose, but we can certainly lead without dictating.

Q159 Mr Sharma: It is nice to see you back here face to face rather than, as previously we sat, sitting behind those machines. We have heard that due to the aid cuts UK-funded programmes have been withdrawn with little or no consultation with FCDO partners in country or with the communities where these programmes are delivered. What message does this send?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: First of all, I have been very candid with you in our previous meetings and I say it again: when you have to—and it was a difficult decision to make when we reduced our funding when it came to ODA—it does mean that there is going to be an impact, whichever way you present it. When you reduce funding, it will have an impact on programming.

We have sought to minimise the impact of it, first, through our own diplomatic network, trying to work through on the priorities the seven themes that the Foreign Secretary laid out in terms of prioritisation of programmes, but of course there is an impact on different agencies, and it is not just those local on the ground. I said earlier that I am Minister for the UN. There have been some pretty tough conversations for me personally with people who are doing some phenomenal work through UN agencies, because of the nature that we have had to reduce certain levels of funding.

The approach we have had on this, which has been really important, is to ensure that, with every programme, we go into the detail of it to see, at the time where we have had to reduce funding, what the core elements of that programme are.

I can certainly quote one, for example, when we were looking at a programme in Nepal. It was a very good programme in terms of sanitation and cleanliness, which is particularly important through the Covid crisis. I am just giving you one example. How I looked at that project is to say, "What are the core elements of the project that make it work? Who are the key people that make sure that this programme can keep running? What are the immediate priorities?" but to work as best as possible through our post and that local organisation to try to deliver upon that. Were we successful? Yes, because we were able to scale back some of the immediate programme without losing the expertise, which is important.

"Expertise" is a key word. There have been some, as I said, very tough decisions in all of this, recognising the challenges we have faced. In the reductions we have had to make, we try to seek to retain the expertise, and ensure that, at the given time when I hope we will be able to increase our support in this respect, we have not lost the expertise.



I come back to a point I made earlier of continuity. Dare I say it, but if you lose the people, it takes that much more time to scale up the expertise and deliver locally, and that expertise is important. We should not forget the people factor in all of this as well. I have given you one practical example, and certainly that has been an approach reflected not just by me, but other colleagues across FCDO as they look at programmes on their patch as well.

Charlotte Biswas: Although the cuts were a big surprise to many organisations and that was incredibly challenging, it was necessarily to take that approach to make strategic decisions, and then at the stage at which we were able to talk to organisations, the senior responsible officers for each grant worked very closely with the organisation to make sure that any changes to the grant or to the contract would be implemented with the great most care to downstream partners and beneficiaries.

There was a really strong emphasis to do no harm in so much as was possible. That was in the context of a very challenging fiscal situation, but I am aware of a huge number of those senior responsible officers making very sensitive and careful progress with organisations in partnership to try to implement the cuts.

Chair: Charlotte, this is not the focus of the session, but I will just say we have heard some very different views about how it was communicated, and I am yet to hear one tell me that it was communicated sensitively, but this is not for this session.

Q160 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Good afternoon. Lord Ahmad, many of the FCDO-funded projects that we have seen incorporate gender equality and social inclusion assessments. Are these likely to be expanded to anti-racism or ethnic diversity and inclusion, for example? Is this a possibility?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My short answer is they should be. My inner being ethos is that, fundamentally, any kind of discrimination is wrong. Does it take time to work up new parameters, et cetera? It cannot be right. We have to look at the data and how we work, but in terms of the terms and conditions that we set in terms of our partners, they need to be explicit and clear. Although it takes time to change, there is an opportunity to drive forward that change, but there should not be that level of discrimination.

If you look at how rights have evolved, we have got better over time. Certain discriminatory practices, rightly so, over our own history got a particular focus at a particular time, and the same applies in terms of the work we do. There is not any contract that is set deliberately to try to discriminate against anyone, but if the parameters we set can be improved, we should certainly do so. I cannot see why we cannot do that when it comes to the issue of race specifically.

Q161 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Have you considered asking partners explicitly



whether they can do this?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: That is a discussion we are having. We already had a code with partners that said, as we work with them, that there are procedures in place that ensure full accessibility, irrespective of who the person is, but certainly, as I said, we are at this juncture now where we have just completed our open consultation on the international development strategy, and it is an important pillar to take forward now.

We should never say that we have the perfect model. Anyone who thinks that is wrong. Everything can be better, anything can improve and the more expert insights you get into our framework that we set can only improve the process.

Q162 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** In terms of smaller organisations, how can FCDO support them to basically facilitate this and make these necessary changes? Is there something that we can put in place there for them, or any added support that is already built in?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have something, which again I am sure Charlotte will talk to, called the programme operating framework, where there are specific rules and it is intended to work very much with smaller organisations on the ground. That is both to assist them, but also to ensure that they are fully cognisant of how the rules are.

Totally moving away from the aid sector, when we talk about SMEs, what is the distinct challenge an SME faces over a large corporate? It is in terms of their scale, people and expertise. We have this on the international stage as well. We are talking about climate change and COP 26 accessing small developing states, but when I go to a small developing state that needs help, one of the first challenges a Minister or anyone else I speak to in that organisation will pose to me is, "Tariq, that is really good. It is great you have made this big funding announcement, but how do we go and access that money?" We need to look at how we can improve technical support in that respect. The intention of the programme operating framework is to provide the technical support possible to allow smaller organisations to also be part of the development support. Charlotte—

Chair: Lord Ahmad, would it be possible for Charlotte to write to us on that point?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Sure, of course.

Chair: I am very aware that we are pressed for time and we want to move on to Afghanistan.

Brendan Clarke-Smith: Thank you. That is much appreciated.

Q163 **Navendu Mishra:** I just have a supplementary. Lord Ahmad, thank you for being with us. It is wonderful to have you. We asked the previous two witnesses we had about the culture within their own organisation. There



has been a very large merger between DFID and FCO. Do people of colour in your Department have a route to senior leadership roles? Do you think that is good enough? It is a very broad question; I apologise. In your own Department, so not talking overall about the Civil Service, do you think it is a welcoming environment and is there a clear route to those roles?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I think there is. My own experience dictates. I will be quite honest: whether it was in my professional life in the City for 20 years, as a Minister or in public life, there are always barriers you get. People face different barriers, and race has been no different, but I come back to the point I made right at the start. I am not just saying it; I genuinely feel this—as someone of heritage from the Indian sub-continent, and Muslim by faith, I have immense passion for my country and that reflects on the opportunities we extend.

Can we do more in the FCDO? Yes. We have in-built champions, including myself as one of the ministerial champions. We are beginning to see more women. We need more women at the top levels of our diplomatic service. That is happening. We need to see more people from different ethnic backgrounds at the top level, because it then improves the quality of the people we will attract.

I can speak from experience. I have been a joint Minister and now at the FCDO. There have been improvements I have seen in terms of what the PUS and his team are doing. We have programmes that have been established where we try to encourage more inclusion and there are various programmes where we encourage people who may have been through other routes into the FCDO and not just the fast track in. We need to be broader. The organisation is changing. Is there more to do? Yes, absolutely.

Q164 **Chair:** Lord Ahmad, I would like to effectively end that session and shift our questioning to around Afghanistan, focusing on the humanitarian aspect of that. I am very grateful that you have agreed to do this, and the Committee is keen to do a short inquiry going forward, looking at the impact of the decisions taken around Afghanistan on humanitarian delivery and humanitarian workers, so this is the opening gambit of that. I think that you have a few comments that you want to say in advance, and then you could take some questions as well, please.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: First of all, thank you, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss. I do not just say this on your behalf—perhaps I am speaking slightly out of turn—but from my side as well: as I have done before, I welcome the input and insights on this important issue.

The situation that is evolving in Afghanistan is challenging and that is an understatement. The rapid success of the Taliban on the ground has lent itself to various issues, whether it is at the diplomatic level or the issue of what was an evacuation programme.



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Just for the record, as someone who was at the heart of it, the planning was there. It was stood up. We would not have managed to evacuate the number of people in the categories that we did if there were no plans in place. I say that with great humility, because that is exactly how we should be, because, at the same time and in the same breath, there are a lot of people in country, people who worked with us, people who have dependents in the country who are British nationals and people who have Afghan heritage, as I have heritage, but who are Brits as well.

We need to help them, but also those, importantly, who we helped in terms of creating a vision for Afghanistan over the last 20 years, which is a lot of the women and minority groups who we helped and who, for the first time in over 40 years, talking about the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, saw hope.

Let us see what the Taliban say. We say about holding them to account. I am on record to say I do not think they have changed in terms of their ideological beliefs, but here is something from a Minister: I want to be wrong on that. They are making international statements. We got some good traction on the UN resolution we passed, which is relevant to the Committee here, on issues of safe passage, but importantly on humanitarian access, which was a big win, human rights, which was a big win when you look at the makeup of the Security Council in the UN, and then holding the Taliban to account on the promises they make.

I do hope and pray that we will see them acting in a manner that reflects the rights we want to see, to protect those people who are still there and those who want to leave Afghanistan to be given safe passage. We are working on all those areas, but I just wanted to put some context into this. Just on the humanitarian side, I assure you, as I said earlier, that we are working with key partners, including many UN agencies, on ensuring this important issue of humanitarian access.

Q165 Chair: I would like to focus you, if I may, on what we can actually do and what we have been doing to date. On 8 July, as you know, the Prime Minister came to the House and told us about the planned withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. What plans were in place before that date for both the security and the delivery of the humanitarian work that FCDO was funding?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have been working on the ground with many agencies, including the Afghanistan Government as well under President Ghani, and part of our humanitarian support and indeed our development support was done under a framework document, which ensured that the aid, support and development support that we were giving was very much based on conditionality.

I had quite extensive and explicit discussions with President Ghani and the Foreign Minister, as well as others, on the importance of that conditionality, which they totally subscribe to: that the money was not passed to anyone who did not adhere to the intent of that support, in



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terms of full accessibility, adhering to human rights and the ability for minorities and women all to equally have the right to access that support. That was the framework, so that was all very much running. Fast forward to the fluid situation where we are now.

Q166 Chair: Before we go to that, could I pull you back? On 8 July many of us were questioning the Prime Minister about the security of those on the ground if the troops withdrew. Before 8 July, had you been having conversations with NGOs, saying, "This is coming up. This is what our plan is"? Had you been speaking to the embassy about the withdrawal of humanitarian workers, for example?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Yes, of course, but you know humanitarian workers as well as I do.

Chair: I do.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: And people of this Committee do. There are some really courageous people in there and, notwithstanding just our travel advice but in terms of the work that we were doing, clearly, once the US announcement was made under the previous Administration on withdrawal, it was quite obvious there would come a point in time where the challenges for those remaining in country in whatever walk of life, humanitarian workers included, would become that much more challenging. Certainly, we were having conversations with our partners on the ground about safety and security.

Equally, I would just say, Madam Chair, using UNICEF, if I may, as an example, we have had constant discussions about programmes we run and we work with the likes of UNICEF, and one positive, notwithstanding what we got with the situation in Afghanistan, was one of the early meetings I had after the Taliban began to take over, which was not just about Kabul; this was happening over time, where there were certain parts of Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban already.

Where the Taliban had already been in place, yes, there were some restrictions, for example, for women aid workers and support workers in terms of how they were dressed in terms of fulfilling their function, but certainly the direct feedback I had from organisations such as UNICEF was that they were still able to deliver some of their crucial projects when it came to healthcare services. I am trying to be slightly reserved because it is important we protect some of this. It is a fluid situation, so I am not going to say that will continue.

Q167 Mr Sharma: On 1 September, Minister, the Foreign Secretary told the Foreign Affairs Committee about the humanitarian assistance. How does the Government plan to deliver that?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As I said, we used to work to a framework document. One of the things I can say very clearly to you is that there will be no support given to through Government channels, because the



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Government are not a Government we recognise, but there are agencies still working on the ground.

The allocations are still being worked through and, once that is finalised, we will of course share what we can. There are agencies that are taking stock of their position on the ground. We need to establish what that new structure will look like and then identify those agencies where we can securely, in a focused manner, respecting their work but also the priorities we set on important issues such as girls' education and women's health, ensure that every pound and penny is delivered to the person who needs it.

Under the current situation, it is fluid, but the whole intention is that you set the money there and then we work through the structures. In that regard, I can assure you, even during the constant nature of the evacuation and while there was a real intensity to it, we do not lose sight of ensuring that we are engaging with all the agencies on the ground, particularly the important UN agencies.

I have had a very detailed discussion already with the likes of Filippo Grandi at the UNHCR and Peter Maurer at the ICRC to really understand what their network is on the ground to ensure that we can best support their efforts in ensuring the priorities we have set ourselves can be delivered, but it is going to be challenging. I do not deny that.

Q168 Mr Bacon: Lord Ahmad, it is great to see you. Thank you for coming. There are many Afghan staff who have been contracted to UK-funded development projects who are ineligible for settlement in the UK and now fear for their lives in Afghanistan because of their association with the British. How do you justify the different treatment of staff employed directly by the UK Government and contractors when they both face significant security threats?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: There are, first of all, different schemes and I know colleagues are fully aware of them, but the ARAP scheme was first set up for specific people, particularly those working within the Ministry of Defence. What we saw over time was the broadening of the application of that scheme. When I say "over time", it was a very short time.

Just for clarity, where we are now is anyone who was on the ARAP scheme who was called forward but was unable to leave Afghanistan will be dealt with exactly as if they had been called forward, just parking the issue of safety and secure passage for a moment.

Secondly, there were those special cases—perhaps again some of those that you mention, Mr Bacon—of those who did not qualify under our particular ARAP scheme but who were particularly vulnerable. We have talked about judges, women MPs and perhaps some of the people you have just mentioned. That is where the leave outside the rules scheme



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that was operating allowed us also to broaden and provide support for the particular vulnerable and ineligible people who we could bring out.

We have moved into what I call stage two, where there are people clearly in country who would have been called forward under those two particular areas, and the issue is how we can ensure safe passage out from Afghanistan, because they clearly wish to leave. We are working with international partners, including the likes of Qatar and the United States, to ensure that we can do that.

The other thing is the Foreign Secretary travelled to Qatar and Pakistan last week. I also travelled to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and, again, part of this is to have structured discussions and ensure that we are not just giving an ask that we need. The borders at the moment are sealed, which provides an added challenge, but equally, with the funding that we have announced, we immediately stood up £30 million to ensure that there will be individuals perhaps who may not come to the UK and will go to the neighbouring countries.

Pakistan was a good example. That took a sizeable number of refugees in the previous crisis in Afghanistan, but also, with the likes of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, these countries do not have the infrastructure or support to take in a large number of refugees. What can a country like the UK and international partners do to support that?

There are two answers, I suppose. There may be some in the cohort who may well be eligible under the new scheme that the Home Secretary announces, but there will be others who may seek sanctuary in near neighbouring countries. We are working both channels.

Q169 Mr Bacon: We are very short of time, so I am going to ask you an extremely short, broader diplomatic question. You have mentioned Pakistan, and Michael Scheuer's book, *Imperial Hubris*, talks about the Pakistani need for the kind of Afghanistan they wanted to see. They have been supporting the Taliban for many years. We do not have much influence with the Taliban—you mentioned that we do not recognise this Taliban Government—but we have quite a lot of influence with Pakistan. Pakistan has a lot of diaspora who live here in the UK.

I chair the all-party Iran group. Iran hosts 4 million Afghan refugees—at least when I was last in Iran, which was now four years ago, it was 4 million. It is probably higher now and there will be pressure for it to go yet higher. There are a lot of people who do not have an interest in instability in Afghanistan. Without disclosing anything you do not want to disclose, do you think there is diplomatic opportunity to apply pressure to get the Taliban to provide a greater degree of liberality in letting people who want to leave do so because of our other links in the region?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The short answer is yes. The Prime Minister, for example, talked about this issue of recognition and the international community moving together. It is important to recognise



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that one of the things the Taliban are after is recognition, and that is an important win for them.

Within that scope, I refer back to the UN Security Council resolution. It was important, when you look at the four deliverables within that, the issues of human rights, safe passage and humanitarian aid were contained within that resolution, and there were others who were party. In this particular case, Russia and China abstained, but it was important to recognise they also have an influence. As to where we end up, the short answer is I do not know

Chair: Lord Ahmad, I will take the short answer. Thank you very much.

Q170 **Theo Clarke:** Minister, you were talking then about staff contracted to development projects and who is eligible for the ARAP scheme. Can I just clarify: are NGO workers funded by FCDO definitely eligible for ARAP, or are they going to be considered against the special cases criteria for resettlement?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In terms of individual cases, there are nuances on both cohorts and individuals. We have circulated a letter in that respect on people who have not yet been called forward. That should be your first port of call, and then from that, if there are specific issues relating to individuals, whether it is with the Home Office colleagues, et cetera, we will seek to try to tackle that. I do not want to give you a blanket answer, because certainly I have learnt in my experience, having served at the Home Office as well, that each case is looked at individually.

We have tried to provide a structured approach to people who would qualify, and there are qualifying criteria within ARAP and, for that matter, on the special cases, with those people who are particularly vulnerable. In terms of the detail of the scheme, the Home Secretary has already given the high-level elements that she will consider. When the details of the scheme are there, then we should direct people as appropriate.

Q171 **Theo Clarke:** I take that point, but can I ask why it was that NGO staff were retrospectively added to the list of special cases?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: When you are in a crisis situation, it is important to recognise the speed at which this particular crisis evolved, but it also demonstrates the willingness on the part of the Government to recognise the important contributions people make and then to make a decision quickly.

We often get challenged and held to account for decisions taking a long time. I can assure you, without going into detail, we were making decisions as the crisis evolved. It was right to broaden the scope of it. Whether individuals qualified for the ARAP scheme or indeed the other scheme, as I said, we have tried to provide a docking point for each particular group and I hope that will assist. As individual cases evolve,



both we in the Department I represent but also, importantly, the Home Office stand ready to assist with specific enquiries.

Q172 **Chair:** Lord Ahmad, this question links into my opening question about planning in advance of the withdrawal of the troops. Why was it not considered on 8 July or 8 August that NGO workers were likely to be vulnerable and should have been on that first list rather than added retrospectively?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As I said, when you set things in policy and set things in train, it is important to recognise the dynamic nature of the environment we were in, but equally what we did was the right thing in terms of broadening schemes. There are a lot of things you can look back at over any particular crisis where certain things could have been done at certain times, and this is no exception.

Q173 **Chair:** I apologise for interrupting, but you said that you were speaking to UNICEF months before and they were raising concerns, but everything was okay. At that point, was that not setting off alarm bells to you that maybe NGO workers could be vulnerable?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I said I was speaking to UNICEF about its programmes in Afghanistan because it is a key partner, and what I also said was that, after the situation of the fall of Kabul and the Taliban takeover, I have also engaged UNICEF, which is continuing to retain a presence there. The point I was emphasising is that humanitarian agencies—all credit to them—often, in the most difficult conflict-affected situations around the world, stay true to their cause, and that has to be respected.

Chair: I agree.

Q174 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Lord Ahmad, we saw the Government announced in August that they are going to double the humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and the commitment is welcome, but can you confirm that this is in addition to the ODA money that we are already putting in, or are we robbing Peter to pay Paul? Where is the money coming from for this?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: These were not allocated moneys from before, so this was additional money that has been announced. As I said before, in terms of the specifics of how this money will be then subsequently allocated, that is still to be determined.

Q175 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Excellent. Do we regret the decision to cut aid before with Afghanistan?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We were giving a substantive amount of support to Afghanistan, both in terms of development but also security. Like with all decisions, we worked very closely with the then Government and other agencies. I have already said any decision we take is challenging, but the programme that we had set up with Afghanistan



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prior to the current situation evolving was very positively received by the Afghan authorities.

Q176 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** You do not think it has affected our soft power at all.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Again, take a step back. I have been very honest here in saying that, when you reduce funding, it has an impact. I have had the huge honour of travelling around the world representing our country. When I do so, we are recognised for the strength of who we are, what we are and what we do. It is a great testament that, notwithstanding the domestic challenges we have faced, we have stayed true to the principles of what we are trying to do on the development side, and I am proud of that.

Can we do more? Of course we can. We can learn from experience, we can learn new insights and I hope, God willing, we will be able to do more in this particular space in due course. The priorities we have listed when it comes to development support—Afghanistan was no exception—are a very powerful testament of who we are and what we are as a country.

Q177 **Mrs Latham:** Will the cost of relocating Afghans come out of the aid budget?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: If I may, I will come back to you specifically, but that is not my understanding. This is very much about a separate programme that is being run, and we have already heard various announcements from the Government on support for local councils and moneys being found.

Q178 **Mrs Latham:** It is definitely not from the aid budget.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I can confirm that. That is not coming from the aid budget.

Q179 **Navendu Mishra:** Minister, how does the current situation affect the refugee population and the support available to them in places like Iran, Pakistan and other neighbouring countries? Do you expect any changes going forward to funding? I appreciate you are going to contact us in writing, but the situation is quite difficult. Do you anticipate any changes in funding and the impact?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As I have already indicated, the additional funding that has been announced by the Prime Minister is recognising that there is a regional impact of this and a number of regional countries, as I have already alluded to, do not have the infrastructure or support.

For example, recently, when I was in Tajikistan, I again met with key partners, including the World Bank and other agencies. The Aga Khan Development Network, for example, in Tajikistan has a very strong foundation. Indeed, they have established a camp on the borders. It is important we link in with all these agencies to see what level of support we can offer.



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Of the £30 million announced, the £10 million we have immediately stood up is to allow for that infrastructure support in near neighbouring countries as well. This is not just about Afghanistan as a whole. It is trying to ensure that as refugees may leave Afghanistan through various border points, which as I have already said are currently sealed, we are ready as best we can to support those countries that may actually be receiving these particular refugees.

Q180 Navendu Mishra: Just on that, with regard to religious minorities in Afghanistan that have been forced into that situation, you mentioned your work with the UN. I wrote to the Foreign Secretary—many members of this Committee signed that letter—regarding the Hazara, Hindu and Sikh communities. Will the FCDO and Her Majesty's Government be offering specific support to these people who are perhaps in other countries, like India, trying to come to the UK under the scheme?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Home Secretary in her announcement of the new scheme specifically mentioned issues of vulnerable minorities and, as someone who has previously been the freedom of religion or belief envoy for the Prime Minister, I am acutely aware of the Hazara community's plight, for example, but also the tragically dwindling number of Sikhs and Hindus who remain in the country, and others as well. We are working with international partners, without again going into detail, to see how best we can not just protect them while they are in country but also facilitate support for them.

Q181 Chair: The final question is from me, Lord Ahmad. You have spoken about working with the UN and NGOs to continue delivering the humanitarian aid. I wonder how you plan to make sure that those staff are safe and secure if they are delivering aid in Afghanistan.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As I said, first of all, in terms of security and support, this is part and parcel of the discussion in country. It is not just us but also key partners, such as the US, who have an important role to play. As I said, I can only share with you some of the feedback I have received that some of the agencies are continuing very much with their programmes not in a restrictive way but perhaps adapting to the new way of working. We are certainly stressing that, both with those countries that Mr Bacon pointed to that also have influence, but equally at an operating level to the Taliban itself, and that is work in progress.

One other point, just on Pauline's point on funding, as I said, I have given my view specifically, but for clarity on the funding point I will write specifically, so that that point on the question that Pauline asked me is very clear as well.

Chair: Thank you. That will be very helpful, because I know in the past the Home Office has drawn down ODA money for refugee programmes.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: If I may, I will write to you on that particular point, so it is clear for all and for the record.



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Chair: Lord Ahmad, can I end as I began, thanking you for all the work that you are doing in this field? It is something that the Committee has a very keen interest in, so if there are ways that we could engage with you on the programme going forward, we would be very grateful to provide that service and we are looking at doing an inquiry specifically into this. Again, if we could work with you and your team on areas that we ought to be covering, we want to make sure that the investment of the last 20 years in humanitarian work does find a way to continue, but also there is a key interest in the security of those staff who are out there, who have believed in the views that we have been supporting for the last 20 years as well.

Thank you very much for your time. It is deeply appreciated how openly you have engaged with this Committee and we hope that this is the start of many such debates in person. Thank you very much.