

# International Development Sub-Committee on the work of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact

Oral evidence: ICAI's review on UK aid's approach to youth unemployment in the Middle East and north Africa, HC 824

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Members present: Theo Clarke (Chair); Mr Richard Bacon; Sarah Champion; Mr Virendra Sharma

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## Witnesses

I: Tarek Rouchdy, Commissioner, ICAI; Kate Tench, Review Team Leader, ICAI, and Senior Fellow, Agulhas.



## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Tarek Rouchdy and Kate Tench.

**Q1 Chair:** Welcome to our witnesses for this evidence session on the Independent Commission for Aid Impact's review into UK aid's approach to youth unemployment in the Middle East and north Africa. I am delighted to welcome to our witnesses today from ICAI. If I could start first of all with you, Tarek, as commissioner, why did you decide to carry out this review on job creation in the region for young people?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** Good morning. First of all, let me just say that, when I first joined ICAI back in July 2019, we began a methodology to select review topics, taking into account a number of indicators. This particular one started at that stage. The indicators that were in front of us at the time included the fact that the MENA region, or at least the north Africa region, was of strategic importance to the UK. This has been mentioned in the Integrated Review of 2021. The topics of economic and youth employment were key objectives in there.

In the UK's 2015 national security policy, the number of programmes within the region was sufficient large for us to look at it, spending around £2.5 billion. Ostensibly, not every pound of the £2.5 billion went towards youth employment, but in every programme that we looked at, it was the first or second objective. All in all, we felt that we would cover it as an important topic for Britain for review.

**Q2 Chair:** What were the main findings of your review?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** We had a number of recommendations. If I miss any points, Kate may like to jump in. Let me go through the recommendations. Many of the problems that we saw did not articulate exactly how the programme would achieve youth employment. One of the first recommendations is that, for any programme that is submitted, business cases have to articulate clearly how the programme will achieve youth employment and how this will be monitored going forward.

Another recommendation was about consultation with youth in programme design. A third was that we wish to see more coherence with multilaterals and other donors within the countries that we visited. Another recommendation related to the fact that a lot of the issues that are social barriers to employment within the region are not taken into account when programmes are being designed. Lastly, if I am not mistaken, a lot of the programmes do not take gender balance and social inclusion within the remit of a programme.

Those are the five that we submitted within the report.

**Q3 Chair:** Kate, would you like to introduce yourself and also respond?

**Kate Tench:** Good morning. My name is Kate Tench. I was the team leader for this review, working with Tarek and ICAI on it. Tarek has



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talked you through some of the key recommendations that we had. Just in terms of headline findings, it is important to say that we found that the overall approach that the UK Government take was largely relevant to the needs of the region, which is working on economic stability and growth through macroeconomic reform principally.

We found, however, that some of the assumptions underlying programme design were, in a number of cases, not supported by the evidence. In particular, UK programmes often make the link between economic development and reduced instability in the region, and the evidence for that is rather weak, if there is any at all.

We commended the coherence of interventions across UK Government Departments for the most part. There were a number of areas where, however, we felt that some further interdisciplinary work, particularly between economists and conflict specialists, would have added value. One element that we were concerned about was the lack of an even spread of technical expertise. In some country offices, we found that technical expertise was insufficient to ensure adequate oversight of programmes.

We felt that the evidence of effectiveness across the portfolio was limited, for two reasons. Programme design was sometimes weak, partly because of a lack of evidence, as I have mentioned, but also because complementary measures were not always designed into programmes to achieve impact; impact was not achieved because design was too thin. We also found there to be insufficient attention to monitoring and evaluation in general. Those are the headline findings.

**Q4 Chair:** I note that you awarded an overall amber-red score, finding that there was limited evidence that the UK aid portfolio had been effective in meeting its job creation goals. Tarek, are you satisfied with the FCDO's response to your recommendations?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** In essence, we had five recommendations that I noted. Two of them were accepted by the Government and they agreed with those. On the three that they did not agree with, what we felt was lacking in their reply were the elements of disagreement—in other words, what it was that they did not agree with in those recommendations for them to have a partial acceptance. In that sense, once the Minister is in front of the hearing on 1 December, he or she will probably give you more information as to why we had a partial acceptance on three of them. We felt that the responses did not go far enough to give us a complete answer.

**Q5 Sarah Champion:** Tarek, as part of your review, you interviewed young people who are beneficiaries of FCDO programmes. What did you learn from that engagement?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** We did a number of focus groups. Because it was the pandemic and we had already started this review before the pandemic



started, we were able to meet with a number of focus groups and interviewed around 23 participants, both female and male. We had a number of youth voices at the end of the report, which you may have read.

In general, we learned that everything that we had recommended, whether relating to social barriers or to employment, was evident in their voices. A lot of them felt unhappy that there were no role models within their country that would allow them to take on a job that was probably frowned upon at some point in time.

Many mentioned the fact that there were barriers in terms of transportation problems, where they could not get to work, and distances from the jobs that they would have liked to achieve. A lot of them mentioned the fact that a lot of the skills training that they were given did not lead to jobs, because there were no jobs attached to the training at some point in time.

We learned a lot. The good thing about the report, in that we covered the youth voice in the region, was that it triangulated some of the findings that we had and the recommendations mentioned. We found it a very useful exercise.

**Q6 Sarah Champion:** Are you saying that the schemes gave false hope?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** Yes, in some cases. I am familiar with many of the training schemes that there are in these countries, and there is an element of, once they have achieved that accreditation or that document at the end of the course, the question is, "What next?" The "what next?" is the one that we have to fill.

One of the best programmes that I have seen, which we mentioned in the report, is the Arab Women's Enterprise Fund, in which you combine technical assistance—in other words, training women to set up their own companies and empowering them—with funding. The joint funding of a project led by women and the fact that we support them with technical assistance to carry out their business is the best option, because you are marrying support with something whereby they are empowered to bring economic benefit to themselves and their families.

**Q7 Sarah Champion:** Looking at the development of future schemes, should FCDO be managing those expectations from the very beginning? You mentioned transport, so should providing a bus or money for a bus be built into future programmes? How much engagement is there with the young people on the development of the scheme, so that obstacles like that can be overcome before they become an issue?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** One of the recommendations is that we felt there was insufficient youth voice in programme design, which is something that we mentioned. The first recommendation talks about how we can articulate the output of the programme and measure the fact that, if we are conducting an exercise in, let us say, economic reform, it will lead to



jobs. What is it that stops them from having that last mile? If you look at a programme design right from the outset, you should look at the last mile and the last cultural barriers that women and youth face whenever they go out into the job market.

**Q8 Sarah Champion:** Could I pick up on that with my next question? You mentioned women in both examples that you gave, and you found that cultural barriers are a major obstacle to young women's employment. Could you tell us what those barriers are?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** The Middle East is quite a traditional society. Women are pressured to marry young and, therefore, early marriage is one obstacle. There is pressure for them to finish their education, get married and have families. The husbands, of course, are quite unsure of whether to allow their wives to work, especially if the work involves a long distance or transportation with others, whether they be colleagues or people who are on a public bus. There are a number of cultural issues relating to women working in general.

A lot of it is also the parents and the parents-in-law, who have an opinion as to the woman who their son has married. Should she be working? A lot of it is within the neighbourhood where they live. A lot of women who I know tend to leave the neighbourhood dressed in a certain traditional way, but once they get to the office, they have to change, because they would not be able to leave that neighbourhood in less than traditional dress.

The biggest obstacle is transportation. If you go to some of the urban areas, the public transport is so crowded that it is quite impossible for a young woman to get to work on time. If they are going to be taking a taxi, for example, a lot of taxis take on other passengers along the way; these passengers may be males who are not known to the women. All of these count as obstacles to their employment.

**Q9 Sarah Champion:** I am basically going to ask you the same question again. Has the FCDO identified these barriers? Does it have the tools in place to identify them in advance, so that it can put mitigating measures in?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** In the cases that we found, this was the last mile that the FCDO did not achieve. In other words, they did not identify those barriers particularly well for the full programme to operate as they intended.

**Kate Tench:** There are a number of very interesting issues being discussed. If I can just quickly reflect on the issue of false hope that you mentioned earlier, one of the challenges around that in relation to youth employment is around skills development. We found in the literature a number of places where it discusses the false hope that is generated through providing skills programmes in the absence of demand for labour and the absence of jobs, particularly in the Middle East region, where the



challenge is the demand side—the lack of jobs, not of skills. That was not necessarily a problem for the UK portfolio, because the UK correctly prioritised job creation rather than skills development overall across this region, which we felt was correct.

In terms of the links to young people in the portfolio, roughly half of the 19 programmes that we looked at in some depth included some degree of consultation with young people. That is good, but we would encourage that to be more than half. In particular—and this is the point that you also picked up on—the challenge is not just consulting young people but then using what you have heard to inform programme design and implementation.

You have just heard from Tarek about a number of issues around the limitations for women. The UK was well aware of those things. They had done gender analyses that picked up those issues, some of which they were, indeed, working on. For example, in Jordan, they were working with the World Bank to try to improve women's access to the labour market through political and policy-level reform with the Government. That was successful but did not lead to impact in terms of more women in the labour market. Why not? Because of these non-policy-related barriers such as social norms and traditions that were, effectively, preventing women from being active in the labour market.

One young woman who we spoke to in Yemen summed this up very well. She gave us very powerful testimony and was involved in one of the UK's programmes, Social Fund for Development, in Yemen. She said: "our workplace obstacles are not about the jobs themselves, but about social norms and traditions... After I was chosen (to participate in the project), my family was very happy and very proud of me...my work has helped shift attitudes in the area," and that with the project, "we are transforming women from a silent beneficiary to an agent for development and change."

As you can see, there were some very good examples of the UK tackling role models, and we would encourage them to do more, as we have highlighted in the recommendations, because that was not evident in all projects.

**Sarah Champion:** Thank you. That is very disappointing, but thank you for the evidence.

Q10 **Mr Sharma:** Could I just ask Tarek a supplementary on that? You mentioned early marriages. Is there any legal limit on the age of marriage, whether it is 18 or 16, or is it traditionally whenever the families want?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** In general, there are legal limits to the age of marriage. In reality, because a lot of marriages tend to take place in villages and small towns, the Governments, being what they are, cannot extend their umbrella over all of these areas. You tend to find marriages



that are far earlier than what is legally allowed. In answer to your question, yes, there are legal limits, but in many cases these limits are just ignored.

**Q11 Mr Sharma:** Which other marginalised groups face the greatest barriers to employment?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** If you look at the Middle East—and we have mentioned this in areas of the report—people with disabilities, people in non-urban or rural areas, because the jobs are mainly in urban areas, and, of course, women find it the hardest to get jobs. If you were to look at the most marginalised person, it would be a young lady living in a village and who is perhaps disabled.

One of the things that I have seen recently in Egypt is that the Central Bank of Egypt has issued an edict whereby all banks have to have access for disabled people across all of their branches. I am a director on the board of one of these banks, and the big push now is to ensure that the 207 branches of that particular bank have access. The Central Bank of Egypt has also dictated that disabled people have to have more benefits whenever they come to the bank for any service—in other words, reduced interest rates or fee waivers.

There is a consensus, or at least a push by Governments in the region, to look at disabled people a lot more closely than they had in the past, but those are the types of profiles that are probably the most marginalised and who one would have to target.

**Kate Tench:** As Tarek says, disability is absolutely a major challenge and vulnerable group. Only two of the 19 programmes that we sampled from the UK side targeted disability, so it is not mainstreamed through the portfolio in the region as yet.

The other group that Tarek did not mention is non-Syrian refugees. There are a lot of refugee populations within the region. Syrian refugees are very much the focus of a political push, including by the UK, with emphasis on support to host communities for those refugees. That means that other refugees—from Iraq or Afghanistan, for example, or even Palestine, going back some years—have not been as prioritised, and so they find it even harder than Syrian refugees to find work.

**Q12 Mr Sharma:** Tarek, what more could FCDO do to support these groups? What role can the FCDO play?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** Every programme has an objective to achieve. We cannot have one size that fits all. In a programme where youth employment is one of the objectives, the design of the programme has to take into account exactly how that will be achieved, covering all aspects of youth employment. If it is going to be a skills training course, there has to be a job at the end of it. If there is an intake within that particular course, we have to make sure that the intake covers the people who we wish to go and cover. It is all in the programme design. Even more



important is the monitoring of the programme during its lifetime. The monitoring of the achievement of those objectives has to be done. The review mentions that monitoring is weak and, therefore, part of the whole project cycle is to make sure that the objectives that were first set out in the business case are achieved.

**Q13 Mr Sharma:** Kate, my next question is to you. You found that some programmes, such as cash-for-work schemes, have been successful at supporting young people into work. Why have these programmes worked well? Why are they successful?

**Kate Tench:** We found cash-for-work schemes to be successful, but successful in a particular context, so let me make sure that I am clear on that. They are successful in providing short-term work opportunities, often in a crisis situation. They do not deliver on sustained employment opportunities for young people that are carried forward. They are very much a crisis response to deal with a countercyclical issue, and they are successful in that.

They are costly. Why are they successful? One of the reasons they are successful is they provide sufficient resources to be able to provide some emergency work for young people. The UK has learnt quite a lot of lessons from its portfolio of cash-for-work programmes, which has helped to improve the design of those programmes on an ongoing basis.

Some of the other activities that they have done have also been relatively successful—for example, support for entrepreneurship—but, again, costly. A very clear lesson has been learned that support to entrepreneurship works best where you combine financial support with training, coaching and mentoring services. Programmes have benefited from that learning and have combined those initiatives, which makes them expensive but relatively more successful.

Some of the other programmes that we looked at have been less successful in delivering their outputs.

**Q14 Mr Sharma:** You said that the FCDO has learned lessons and used that experience or learning curve in other programmes. Is there anything more that the FCDO can do in terms of advising other groups to follow it?

**Kate Tench:** Our recommendations focus on the areas where we feel that FCDO can go further on youth employment and improving its engagement with youth employment. In particular, there are the points that we have mentioned so far around ensuring that consultation with target groups, whether they be a particular group such as the disabled or women or whether they be young people in general, informs the design of the problem, and making sure that programmes meet the needs of the target groups.

One example I would give is that the UK invests heavily in work permits for refugee populations in Jordan. Those programmes have not been terribly successful. Why have work permits not been terribly successful?



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One reason is that the needs of those refugee groups have not been incorporated into the design of the work programmes.

For example, they might focus on work permits for agricultural sectors. Then you have IT specialists who do not want to work in agricultural sectors. There might be a misunderstanding about what happens if you benefit from a particular programme and whether that means that you lose access to other programmes, UN support and so on. There is a lack of knowledge and understanding, which comes from a lack of consultation with those target groups.

Consultation and making sure you use that to design programmes is important. Monitoring and evaluation is important, as is sharing that learning, particularly where programmes are working on the edge of what the evidence base supports—i.e. working around the links between youth employment, social cohesion and stability. Those areas need further monitoring and evaluation efforts. Those are the two things that I would really emphasise.

Thirdly and finally, there is a need to ensure complementary measures. If you are working to promote a particular group, you need to make sure that you are working on an end-to-end basis and packing different initiatives together to ensure that impact is achieved, and not just focusing on one element, which is insufficient in and of itself.

- Q15 **Mr Bacon:** I would like to ask Kate about work permits for Syrian refugees in a moment, but I would first like to go back to something you said earlier, when you were talking about the fact that the varied level of technical expertise meant that there was sometimes not an adequate level of oversight. When I heard you say that, I immediately thought, “If they are doing the overseeing, they are not doing the implementing”. In those cases, who is doing the implementing where you, in addition, have, as it were, inadequate oversight due to lack of technical expertise? They are not doing the implementing, so who is?

**Kate Tench:** I am sorry for not being clear. A lot of the UK’s portfolio in this region in the youth employment space is delivered through multilateral organisations and, in particular, the World Bank. There are others—the EU, the UN family and others—but the World Bank was one particular focus of the UK. In the case that we were talking about around a lack of UK oversight, it was engagement with the World Bank in a particular country, whereby even the World Bank told us how surprised it was that they were asked by the UK to prepare documents for the UK’s board to approve UK investment in a World Bank activity, because the UK did not have the technical expertise to prepare those documents themselves. We found that quite surprising.

- Q16 **Mr Bacon:** I am still not clear about who is doing the implementing. Are you saying that the World Bank then hires a contractor on the ground who does stuff and that the people who are supposed to be supervising or overseeing it do not, because they do not have adequate technical



expertise? I got the latter part, which you referred to in your first answer much earlier on in this hearing, but I still do not understand the other part, about who is doing the implementing.

**Kate Tench:** It depends on the type and nature of the programme. Youth employment programmes vary enormously. You might have a skills development programme, in which case you might have hired an implementing agency or body, whether that be a private firm, a civil society organisation or an NGO that is implementing.

The other examples we were talking about are very high-level policy reform programmes, whereby the World Bank is technically the implementing agency, because it is a high-level dialogue with Government. The Government of the country is implementing the reforms at the advice of and in co-operation with the World Bank. In those programmes where the UK is providing supporting finance, when we say in our report that we were concerned that they lacked oversight, we were concerned that the UK office or embassy in question might lack oversight of the programmes they are delivering, whether it be through the World Bank or through implementing agencies.

Q17 **Mr Bacon:** Yes, that is what I thought I understood you to have said. We will not necessarily know whether the money that was spent was spent well—effectively, efficiently and economically. That is what you are saying. We do not have enough knowledge and technical expertise to do the right kind of oversight.

**Kate Tench:** The Government would argue that they would have had a due diligence on the World Bank or another implementing agency, and would have confidence that they would be able to manage that spend. Our concern is that, if the UK is spending that money, the UK office should have some oversight of the person who is telling them that everything is going well.

Q18 **Mr Bacon:** Let us take an example that is referred to in your report. The UK Lebanon Tech Hub received over £3 million of funding. It was a non-DFID programme and a combination of Prosperity Fund, CSSF and Global Britain financing. Can you just remind the Committee what CSSF stands for?

**Kate Tench:** Conflict, Stability and Security Fund.

Q19 **Mr Bacon:** That is one of the funds of the FCDO.

**Kate Tench:** Yes, it is now. Prior to the merger, it was cross-Government.

Q20 **Mr Bacon:** Is the Prosperity Fund also FCDO now?

**Kate Tench:** Yes.

Q21 **Mr Bacon:** Is Global Britain part of the BEIS/international trade/UKTI space? When you go into an embassy abroad, you often see a “Britain is



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GREAT” sign with a Union flag, promoting exports and whatnot. Is that what Global Britain is?

**Kate Tench:** I think so. I am afraid you might need to follow up with the Government on the precise intricacies of that fund.

Q22 **Mr Bacon:** Those are the three components of the non-DFID programme. It was called the UK Lebanon Tech Hub and it got £3 million. In your report, you say that FCDO was not able to provide complete documentation for it within the review period. Does this mean that you do not know what that £3 million was spent on?

**Kate Tench:** Correct. We were unable to triangulate. We conducted a number of interviews with people who had some knowledge of it—so the country programme, for example—and we were referred to some private companies that had been involved in the spending of it.

Q23 **Mr Bacon:** What was it spent on?

**Kate Tench:** It was my colleague who looked at this programme, but as far as my understanding goes, it was supporting a number of activities around building entrepreneurial skills and technical assistance to people in Lebanon. The issue we had was that we had only very superficial information about it. It was formally FCO who owned the space, even though it was a combination of funds, and their knowledge management system had no documentation on this programme.

Q24 **Mr Bacon:** It is only a small example, but small examples can often be very illuminating, which is why I am labouring the point. Was this money spent on computer hardware and laptops, on the most basic computer training or on hiring software engineers and computer programme writers? What was it spent on?

**Kate Tench:** I am sorry; I cannot tell you the detail. I can tell you that it was support to entrepreneurship, so that would have included advice and coaching to those entrepreneurs. Whether it included the provision of laptops and things like that, I am not sure, because, as I say, we were not able to look at the documents that told us what the detailed spending was on this programme.

Q25 **Mr Bacon:** Can I just pursue that point? Why did you not have access to the documents?

**Kate Tench:** We requested the documents a number of times and the offices were unable to provide them.

Q26 **Mr Bacon:** When you say “the offices”, do you mean the UK office in the embassy in country?

**Kate Tench:** Correct, and London. Just to be fair to the Government, this was also at a time that was just after the explosion in Beirut last year, if you recall. The embassy was rather focused on trying to deal with the fallout of that, and London was trying to assist us in finding



documentation. We asked a number of times over a period of several months, including when we did interviews with people in Lebanon.

**Q27 Mr Bacon:** I understand there was a particular very big problem—it was a horrid, awful incident, and a tragedy—but the phenomenon that this characterises is one that you are saying is quite common in various parts of the Middle East and north Africa. There is not the technical expertise to do the right kind of oversight and you do not always have access to information of the quality and timeliness that you would like. I am not putting words into your mouth, but is that roughly a fair characterisation?

**Kate Tench:** It is certainly true to say that we found a number of examples across countries and projects where the institutional knowledge of the project was weak, where documents were missing—that example is the most extreme example we found of documents missing—and also where new staff had come in and did not know the detail of their programmes.

We had an example in another country office, for example, whereby the UK Government told us that they were not working on youth employment in a particular programme, and we knew from documentation that they were. When we spoke to the people implementing the project, we found out that they were, so there were certainly examples where the UK's oversight of its portfolio was relatively weak.

**Q28 Mr Bacon:** That is a very interesting insight indeed. In your report, you talk about programmes that the FCDO is running for Syrian refugees to help them secure work permits in Jordan. You say that they fell short of the target. Why was that?

**Kate Tench:** Again, I will give a slight bit of context to make it clear that these programmes were joint programmes, where the UK was one party, implemented by multilaterals, so the World Bank or the UN system. What we found was that the work permit commitments and targets in these programmes were consistently not met. The programmes were extended a number of times, but the targets were still always slightly out of reach and not met on an ongoing basis.

There were two principal reasons for this. Everybody who we spoke to knew those principal reasons, including the UK. The principal reasons were that work permits were not designed in such a way to meet the needs and requirements of the refugees, which is what I mentioned to your colleague earlier. For example, they were offering agricultural work permits to IT specialists who had no interest in working in agricultural sectors.

**Q29 Mr Bacon:** Just so I am clear, this was down to the Jordanian Government making a decision that, "They can work in the fields if they want to. We need more people doing that, so here is a permit for that", even though they were computer engineers.



**Kate Tench:** Correct. Again, there is a very strong political issue around that, of course, with the Jordanian Government, over which we have very limited influence. The second reason was that the refugees felt that, if they took up a work permit, they would be denied access to benefits under the UN family that they were accessing as a family unit as a result of being a refugee. That was not true, but that was the perception of refugees.

Everyone told us this, from the refugees who we consulted to refugee groups, the UK Government and other civil society. They all knew that these were the challenges but did not do much about them. Partly, of course, that is political and they cannot do much about them, because it is a Jordanian political issue, but there were technical things that could have been put in place to have mitigated that or, indeed, to redesign the programme to target something where you can achieve the impact that you want to achieve. We were surprised that the UK had not taken those actions, even though they knew the primary reasons for the programme not delivering on its objectives.

Q30 **Mr Bacon:** I have two more questions, one of which returns to this question of technical expertise. Is there more that the FCDO could do—and, if so, what?—to hire and retain specialist technical expertise?

**Kate Tench:** That is interesting. I should say that we did not explore this, so this is really my take on it rather something that we considered in the report. I would say, however, that it was very clear to us, from everybody who we interviewed, that the UK's technical expertise is very strongly valued by its partners in all the countries that we looked at. Particularly the historical DFID technical expertise on development issues is well recognised and valued by its multilateral, Government and civil society partners. All of them know that the UK stands for strength in that.

A number of stakeholders we interviewed expressed a concern that they had not received more of the benefit of the UK's technical expertise. They expected to receive more. For example, where the UK was working with the World Bank, they had provided finance but often not the technical expertise that the World Bank had anticipated they would have provided, in part because they did not have the skillsets in country. They did not have the former DFID technical staff staying in their offices.

How can they encourage them to stay? It is a question of whether there is a value associated to that technical expertise internally in the organisation in the way that it is valued by the partners. I suspect that that might be partly the challenge, because the partners emphasised that very highly.

Q31 **Mr Bacon:** Out of the 115 programmes, worth a total of £2.4 billion, you looked at 19. This was, as I understand it, £2.4 billion of expenditure on 115 programmes. In each of those 115 programmes, there was some element of youth employment, so it was worth coming within your ambit. Is that right?



**Kate Tench:** Yes, correct.

Q32 **Mr Bacon:** We are not saying that the whole £2.4 billion was necessarily on youth employment programmes, but there was an element.

**Kate Tench:** Correct.

Q33 **Mr Bacon:** Of the £2.4 billion, what is the value that is ascribed to youth employment programmes across the portfolio?

**Kate Tench:** Unfortunately, we are not able to say what the share of that portfolio is which is spent on youth employment.

Q34 **Mr Bacon:** What about the 19 that you looked at in detail? What is the total value? If the £2.4 billion relates to the 115 programmes, what was the total value of the 19 programmes that you looked at in detail?

**Kate Tench:** It was around half. We looked at about £1.2 billion worth of programmes.

Q35 **Mr Bacon:** They were some of the larger programmes.

**Kate Tench:** Correct.

Q36 **Mr Bacon:** Of that £1.2 billion, how much was related to youth employment programmes?

**Kate Tench:** Again, we tried to explore exactly that question but were unable to, because the budgetary information is not recorded by Government systems in that way.

Q37 **Mr Bacon:** When you say "Government systems", do you mean UK Government systems?

**Kate Tench:** UK Government systems, exactly—DFID as was, FCO as was, and FCDO now.

Q38 **Mr Bacon:** So we are spending the money but we cannot say what it has gone on.

**Kate Tench:** It is slightly different. They do have a system that tells you what that money is spent on, but youth employment is not one of their categories, so it is not possible to say which share of that programme is spent on youth employment. If we had selected one of their categorisations—such as, for example, economic development, which is a much broader category—they could give us a total spend on economic development. We selected youth employment, which is not something that they categorise within their system, so they could not tell us.

We know that we selected some of the larger programmes—some of these big refugee programmes—that are billions and billions of pounds over time, and that only a small share of that is a youth employment component. There is lots of humanitarian effort, etc., within those figures. We do know that it is a smaller share, but unfortunately the



budgetary information was not available in a way that we could calculate the share attributed to youth employment initiatives.

**Q39 Mr Bacon:** That gives us a problem. You are the Commission on Aid Impact. If we do not know what went in, it may be possible that it had very little impact because the proportion of the totality was very small. If you cannot tell us what was spent, it is very hard to gauge what the impact was, is it not?

**Kate Tench:** Yes, absolutely, and I agree with you that the system for recording expenditure could be stronger.

**Tarek Rouchdy:** If I could just pick up on the very important questions that you have raised and refer to some of my multilateral experience over the past 20 years, a big weakness in multilateral programmes is monitoring. Essentially, what multilaterals like to do is get the money out the door. The programme is approved by their committees, and once the money goes out, that is recorded against the commitment, either for the country or for the sector.

In this particular case, we mentioned in our report that we found a weakness in the monitoring. One of our recommendations specifies that, in order for us to achieve youth employment, we have to articulate exactly how youth employment will be benefiting from this programme. Therefore, it links very much to Kate's point that, when we looked at a programme, we could not determine what the youth employment component was.

You could also argue that, when you add the words "youth employment" in a programme or in a business case going up to the management committee of the FCDO, it is one that would attract an immediate, "Yes, let us do it". This is where our recommendation to make sure that the outputs are measured against what we hoped to achieve, and that we monitor that, will answer your question in the future in terms of knowing exactly how much went towards youth employment in that region.

**Q40 Chair:** I am conscious of time, so I have a very quick final question, if you could just each have one minute. Would the Government benefit from having a dedicated strategy for youth employment?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** We have not recommended that in the report. There are pros and cons. As I mentioned previously, there is no one strategy that fits all. There are many contexts, countries and types of youth employment strategies involved. There are pros and cons, and it is up to the Government to decide whether that is something that they wish to do.

In our particular case in this report, we would probably say that it would aid transparency, in that, once we have a strategy, you can measure your achievement against that strategy at some point in time. It really is up to the Government as to whether they would like to have a strategy. For us, there are pros and cons, and one size does not fit all.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

**Kate Tench:** I agree with what Tarek has said. We felt that it was rather more important that the Government dealt with the issues in our recommendations, rather than including them in a written strategy that may or may not be implemented. It was more the substance of the recommendations that we hoped might be addressed in terms of making sure that the evidence is learned from, that design is informed by consultation and that women's issues are taken seriously through design and implementation rather than just in analytical works. It is about making sure that the recommendations are implemented rather than writing a strategy that then might not get implemented.

Q41 **Chair:** What was the cost of this report?

**Tarek Rouchdy:** In terms of monetary cost, I believe the contract was around the £320,000 mark, if I am not mistaken. I will have to come back to you with an exact figure, but I believe that was the budget for it.

**Chair:** Thank you, if you could write to us following this Committee meeting. Thank you very much to all of our witnesses.