



International Development Committee

Oral evidence: Parliamentary Strengthening, HC 704

Tuesday 25 November 2014

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Members present: Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Bruce (Chair); Hugh Bayley; Fiona Bruce; Pauline Latham; Jeremy Lefroy; Sir Peter Luff

Questions 56-132

Witnesses: *Anthony Smith*, Chief Executive Officer, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and *Dina Melhem*, Head of Middle East and North Africa Team, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, gave evidence

Chair: **Chair:** Good morning and thank you very much for coming in. Sorry to be just a few minutes late in starting.

Hugh Bayley: Could I just start by reminding colleagues that I was once, five years ago or so, the chair of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy?

Chair: Okay, thank you very much. First of all, for the record, I just wonder if you could introduce yourselves. We know who you are, but it is for the record.

Anthony Smith: May I introduce Dina Melhem, who is the Head of Programmes for the Middle East and North Africa in Westminster Foundation.

Q56 Chair: You are Anthony Smith, Chief Executive Officer since when?

Anthony Smith: Almost exactly three months, since mid-August.

Q57 Chair: That relates to the first question. You are obviously a newcomer to the role, but I know you have been busy and have obviously been meeting lots of people and so on. First of all, what is your take, having arrived in this post, on what we do well and what we do not do so well? What are the strengths and weaknesses of our parliamentary strengthening programme and how we present it?

Anthony Smith: My first impression in this field, which I have been engaged with tangentially in my career but never fully devoted to parliamentary strengthening or political party strengthening, so it is new for me, is that, in a sense, the UK is a bit under-promising and may be underperforming. As I prepared for the role before I started and since I have started, I have tried to talk to a range of people who are involved with

parliamentary strengthening internationally as well as in the UK. I have been surprised at the low profile that we have as a country in dealing with these issues.

As I look around those who have a higher profile, there are some, like the US, who have had a history of very strong congressional funding and support and the establishment of some organisations that have been very effective over the years. You have some countries, like Germany, that have a long history of political foundations, which have a big resource base and a big policy base domestically, which they also use internationally and have a lot of impact. We have huge strengths in this area as a country: our own democratic traditions, obviously, the Westminster tradition, but also the way in which the country has managed the political ambitions of four nations, has dealt with internal and external conflict and managed that; and the way in which our system delivers strong oversight of the executive but also enables the executive to deliver policies effectively. There is a whole range of strengths in our own democratic system, and we have organisations—our own, the CPA, the British Group of the IPU, the not-for-profit sector, if you like, and NGOs—that are active in this area. We have been a bit fragmented in the way that we have operated, and there is a real opportunity for us to improve on that and have a bigger impact.

Clearly, the thing that people like in the area of parliamentary strengthening when they work with British institutions is the peer-to-peer contact, the ability to hear about those experiences first hand and to get long-term relationships of support, which they can use to adapt in their own ways in their own countries. That is the most effective thing that I have seen.

Q58 Chair: That came out of our session last week, which I guess you are aware of. The other thing that came out of that was, basically, a distinction between DFID and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It was basically put as DFID does not do politics, whereas the Foreign Office gets it. We have had that sometimes in evidence from DFID—that they get a bit nervous when you talk about politics, but when you talk about Parliaments it is politician-to-politician engagement, to your point about peers. Do you think that is a fair criticism of DFID? The presumption is it leads to them commissioning agencies to do parliamentary strengthening precisely because they seem to be detached from politics and they are technical and international, but are they missing the point?

Anthony Smith: I do not think so. There is no doubt that DFID, insofar as you can look at it as a whole, is absolutely perfectly aware of the way in which politics interacts with all of the policy areas and objectives that they have. They have been pioneers in the development community in ensuring that that understanding is there within their own programmes. They have a huge cadre of specialists in governance issues, which is possibly bigger than any other organisation.

The way in which that plays out in their programming is a different issue, and you need to look at how much knowledge and evidence we have about what really works in this area. However, the combination of the Foreign Office and DFID is absolutely necessary to get a full understanding of the challenges of political evolution and reform, strengthening democracy and other skills as well. You need the rigour that is there in the way in which DFID works. You need the ability that you get in embassies to engage right across the political spectrum, target individuals and have influence behind the scenes as well, and

bring those together and try to learn more from the range of other organisations that work in this area to have an impact. As everyone here knows and as came out last week, it is an incredibly difficult area in which to make progress.

A huge number of factors interact and have an impact on whether or not a Parliament becomes effective at any of its particular roles, whether political parties do a good job in a multi-party system, the way in which the executive performs, the extent to which civil society is able to have a voice, and the role that media play. It is not an easy area in which to work.

Chair: No, we have discovered that too.

Q59 Fiona Bruce: Witnesses have criticised DFID because it commissions large projects run by international contractors and multinationals and, in particular, US companies. Of the top 10 recent contracts from DFID, none were with UK organisations. How might the UK Government improve the way it commissions parliamentary strengthening projects?

Anthony Smith: This Committee knows as well as any group some of the pressures that DFID is under in terms of managing a budget with increasing pressure on administrative resources, and I can understand the way in which that leads to a preference for larger programmes. Our organisation and many of those that you spoke to last week would like to get consensus on the point that, in this area at least, probably in some other areas as well, what really counts is not volume of resource going in but the quality of attention to the issue—the time that people are allowed in order to work to make a difference.

There is absolutely an issue about the size of programmes and how we can work together with DFID and others, for that matter, to get the quality right. Once we have consensus on the fact that small can be very effective and big is not the only way to be effective, there are practical steps that we can take to provide a better offer to DFID. At some point in the inquiry the Westminster Consortium has been mentioned, which is an experience we had of trying to gather together across the UK a range of institutions that work on different aspects of governance, including media and rule of law and Parliaments and parties. We, in the Westminster Foundation, have been talking to some of the possible candidates for a Westminster Consortium II, if you like. What I would like to achieve is getting a network of organisations that provide a better offer, which DFID and others could plug into, and that would be able to manage resources at a scale that they are comfortable with, but which we also are comfortable will have an impact. I do not think any of us want to be driven by volume in what we do.

Q60 Fiona Bruce: Thank you. That is very interesting, because what I am hearing you say is you think that more could be done with less. Are you nodding?

Anthony Smith: I am saying that more could be done with smaller parcels of funding. Obviously, it is a technique to bundle those up into a bigger programme, but what you have to focus on is the activity that is taking place and the impact it is having. I do not think multiplying it necessarily increases impact in the same way.

Q61 Chair: It must be frustrating for you to see tens of millions of pounds going to UNDP and a much smaller amount of money coming to the Westminster Foundation.

Anthony Smith: I have been in post three months, so I have not had time to get very frustrated yet. There is plenty to do. My ambition is to increase our programme, but modestly. We are not trying to compete with UNDP.

Q62 Fiona Bruce: How would you respond to the suggestion in the draft Triennial Review of a flexible fund to provide small amounts to respond to emerging priorities? Do you think that would be useful?

Anthony Smith: In our own funding proposals that have gone through our board and that we are going to take to the Government, we want to see ourselves as focusing mostly on a series of programmes that we think will have a big impact, but also reserving some funding to respond flexibly as an agency of the Government—we think that is the right thing for us to do—to needs that cannot be predicted right now.

Q63 Fiona Bruce: Finally—and you have touched on this—last week, Charles Chauvel of the UNDP told us that he felt DFID should make more of the Westminster brand. How do you think that could be achieved?

Anthony Smith: Again, this is going to be central to our new strategy. As we said in our written evidence to the Committee, the Westminster brand is hugely powerful, and it is powerful because it does not mean the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy alone. It means, as I was saying earlier, the rich experience that we have in the UK that is here in the Palace of Westminster, but also in the assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. That is, the way in which our political system works; parties that try to win a majority of votes of the whole country, on the whole, and that tend to be inclusive; the stability that we have had as a country in our political system; as well as the need to adapt and change. All of those things are part of the Westminster brand now and it is hugely valuable. The single word “Westminster” is known around the world.

Q64 Sir Peter Luff: Looking now specifically at the work of the Foundation itself, a big question: we have had the Triennial Review; what are you going to do differently?

Anthony Smith: Thanks. We have not quite yet had the Triennial Review. We have certainly had the review part, but the recommendations have not been published yet. However, our board has looked twice now at what was emerging. One of the inputs to the Triennial Review was an evaluation from DFID, which is public and which we have taken on board, and our WFD board has approved a response in four broad parts, one dealing with strategy. We want a new strategy that addresses one of the fundamental issues raised in the reviews, which is the fact that the two parts of our work, the sister party work on the one hand and the parliamentary work on the other hand, have not integrated enough and have not leveraged the change that is available.

The evaluation showed that the sister party work is hugely valuable in delivering strong, long-term relationships with partners. One of the great questions in development and in reform is how to get a relationship of trust that will leverage reform. The sister party work has been shown to do that. If you can combine that with the parliamentary work, then you have a real chance to address the democratic culture in countries. Parliaments are not just institutions with formal rules. They are places where politics happens, and we would like

a strong strand of our strategy to be working on the way that parties behave in Parliament: how they promote a tolerant culture with agreed rules of procedure while competing on policy grounds and on ideology. The first strand is a new strategy that helps us to bring the two sides together.

The second is on our programme quality. There were a number of critiques of the impact of our programmes and some of the plumbing, if you like, of the organisation and we are addressing that with a new programming manual and a range of other measures.

The third is on areas on governance, which is partly about the board, but also about the board working more at the strategic level and delegating some of the operational decision-making to me and the organisation.

The fourth area was a range of cross-cutting issues that were raised, including some of our information systems, etc.

We are responding to the review and we are making proposals for the strategy and the way in which we operate that will take on board the recommendations that we hope will be published soon.

Q65 Sir Peter Luff: That second part of your response, on programme quality, presumably you are strengthening project management skills.

Anthony Smith: Yes, indeed. That is absolutely part of it.

Q66 Sir Peter Luff: How will you do that?

Anthony Smith: We have a new M&E adviser who is writing a new programming manual based on good practice in the sector. We are not a DFID-sized organisation. We are a modestly sized organisation that has the ability to draw on programming standards, generally in the not-for-profit sector, that ensure good clarity about what impacts we are trying to achieve, and clarity about the connection between that objective and the activities. For example, if you want more women to be elected to Parliament, having a workshop on its own is not necessarily going to deliver that, so you have to be clear about the chain between the two activities and what really matters. We also monitor what we do—that is, what progress has been made—and go back and adjust when progress is not being made in the way that we want. In addition, there is collaboration with others. It is absolutely clear that, central though Parliaments and parties are to political life, they exist in a broader area of governance and politics, and we need to be clear that we understand the full spectrum in any country so that we can find the right place for us to operate and choose the right sorts of targets.

Q67 Sir Peter Luff: Thank you for that. The review says that you stretch yourselves too thinly. How do you respond to that and what changes are you making?

Anthony Smith: We are examining that and our strategy is proposing that we have a period between now and the start of the next financial year in April where we really drill down into what our capacity is and choose the right number of programmes to match that capacity. I have found in my first few months that some of our internal systems, which were criticised in the review, effectively waste quite a lot of internal time, so our ability to

manage a greater number of programmes could be there if we strip out some of the duplication, and we are doing that. As part of our programme, we are having a staffing review, which is looking at all of the responsibilities.

Q68 Sir Peter Luff: It is not the spread; it is the management of the spread.

Anthony Smith: I would say it is the management of the spread. The spread in the parliamentary programmes has been modest. In the sister party programmes, it has been bigger, but the way in which those are managed is different from the parliamentary ones. They are managed more from a distance. We focus on using field offices to ensure local knowledge and we need to get the number of those field offices right and the oversight of them.

Q69 Sir Peter Luff: My next question is about field offices. There is criticism in the review about them not being effectively co-ordinated with FCO and DFID and not having a relationship with headquarters as well. They are contrasting that with countries like the Netherlands and Canada, which have a better way of doing these things. How do you respond to that point on the relationship between HQ and field offices?

Anthony Smith: Some of the criticism is justified, clearly, and some of it depended on the things that were happening when the evaluation visits took place, but whatever the facts about any particular country, we take it absolutely seriously. As you know, I worked in the Foreign Office and DFID and with all of the ambassadors that we deal with we have been absolutely clear that, in the remainder of the current programme and the next programme, co-ordination with the embassy is absolutely fundamental. That has been rammed home in both directions—to me by ambassadors that it has to happen and by me to our staff and, in response, to the ambassadors. Our model is to use local staff.

Sir Peter Luff: Like the Foreign Office does.

Anthony Smith: On the whole, yes. Local staff have local knowledge, the language. They need to be able to deliver a Westminster brand by ensuring they stay connected with the UK system, both locally in that country and back to the UK, so it is absolutely fundamental to the way that we will operate.

Q70 Sir Peter Luff: There is a picture of little fiefdoms not responding to you at the centre and not responding to the rest of the group. Is that fair, do you think?

Anthony Smith: That is not the picture that I got or that I have. Clearly, communications between field and centre in any organisation is a challenge, but they do not feel like fiefdoms. The general issue for us is getting the level of skills right in the field offices as well as the communication.

Q71 Jeremy Lefroy: Good morning. Could I ask how you are trying to strengthen your links with the Houses of Parliament?

Anthony Smith: We already have a strong tradition of working with colleagues in the Commons. The most important new steps that we have taken are partly at the initiative of some of those who spoke to you last week, the Clerk of the Overseas Office of the Commons and, in the Lords, the CPA and the IPU. They have extended a co-ordination

mechanism that they have to include the Westminster Foundation and the NAO, who we work with a lot, and that is going to help us ensure that we maintain strong communications and also that we work at a strategic level to be complementary. One of the things that I looked at when I came in is whether there is pointless duplication between some of the organisations. My conclusion is no; that we are very different from the CPA and the CPA is different again from the British Group of the IPU, both in scale and also in their purpose and focus. There is some overlap, but broadly they are complementary. The co-ordination and collaboration that we will have will be to, first of all, try to ensure that we manage the resources properly. We all draw on you and your colleagues to help do the work in parliamentary strengthening and draw on colleagues from among parliamentary officials, and when pressures are arising on that, we need to be clear about the best ways of handling the demands that Members of Parliament and parliamentary officials have.

Q72 Jeremy Lefroy: Could I just ask about that? The nature of being a Member of Parliament has changed greatly in the last 10 or 20 years. I think all of us would say that the time commitments are very substantial if you are going to do your role properly for your constituents. Is that not going to mean that effectively there is going to be less and less time available, certainly from elected Members of Parliament, to work on things like WFD?

Anthony Smith: In the past three or four years, as we have expanded our parliamentary work, that has been the case, and it certainly is right that there is very strong pressure on Members of Parliament. We have still seen ourselves, but CPA and IPU say the same thing, a strong interest from many Members in doing this type of work, but it has to be rationed very carefully. That means ensuring that we have not just kept drawing on the same individuals who have done this work in the past, but also ensure that others who might have an interest and time have an opportunity to do it. It means looking at politicians from the other assemblies, because sometimes that works quite well with some of the countries that we are in; the Scottish Parliament has had strong relationships with certain countries that we work with. We are looking a bit at former Members of Parliament as well. The colleague from the French Parliament mentioned this when he was here last week and we had a meeting with him a few weeks ago as well. There is a limit to it, because you need to stay current, and those pressures that you referred to are one of the things that people are interested in hearing about in other countries—how one responds to those when one is in office. A mixture of techniques will be needed.

Q73 Jeremy Lefroy: The draft Triennial Review discussed the possibility of secondments between the UK Parliament and WFD. What is happening about that?

Anthony Smith: We have started to talk about it, but no concrete plans. We need to fund it. We are just at the point of trying to agree budgets for the next three-year period. We want to keep our overheads flat, we do not want to increase them, and so we would need to find a way of doing it. We are very willing to have exchanges of a variety of kinds, be they a full secondment for a number of years or shorter term ones. There are also staff challenges on the parliamentary side to get people who would be able to go in this direction. We do work with former parliamentary clerks quite a lot, a number of them on quite a long-term basis, who bring a lot of that knowledge from quite recently as well. The key point behind that recommendation was to ensure that we, as an organisation, had good, up-to-date knowledge of how Parliament works, and we will certainly make sure that happens.

Q74 Pauline Latham: How do you plan to work with other UK institutions on parliamentary strengthening and, in particular, Westminster institutions?

Anthony Smith: There are two parts to the answer to that question. One is that, in the way that we have just described, there is a core set of organisations in Westminster, some based in the Palace of Westminster, that we work with and will continue to work with, and that is fundamentally important to do. Again, the French colleague who was here last week has a very different position. When we met with him a few weeks ago, he was able to talk by himself about a whole range of international issues. It took about six of us on the UK side to respond with all of the aspects of our work, so it is fundamentally important to do that.

The other aspect goes back to the idea of building a stronger network of UK organisations that work in the area of governance and parliamentary strengthening and political party strengthening. The work that we would like to do is, first, to establish a network that has a commitment in these areas, and the obvious candidates to work with are the NAO, which has a huge reputation internationally and an ability to work on oversight issues. On the media side, we have worked in the past with Thomson Reuters, the BBC obviously is a candidate, and there is the British Council. In the legal profession, there are organisations that work on the rule of law as well as other organisations that focus on parliamentary democracy—global partners that we know well—and those that work in the electoral area as well. There is the academic community; we have some world-leading academics in the area of parliamentary strengthening and political strengthening. Together, we can provide an offer to the world, if you like, to tackle a range of related governance problems that is probably unmatched, and we need to do that.

Q75 Pauline Latham: Specifically, how do you think that co-ordination needs to improve? How can it improve?

Anthony Smith: It is very informal at the moment. My ambition is to have a network that is clearly established and has a membership. We do not have one at the moment. In the past, we had a consortium that was brought together for a specific purpose, to get some funding for certain programmes, and that funding is over. This time around, we want to get a commitment on the basis of values and objectives and then consider the range of ways in which we can deliver for HMG and for others.

Q76 Pauline Latham: Was that the Westminster Consortium?

Anthony Smith: This would be a new version of the Westminster Consortium.

Q77 Pauline Latham: Have you learned anything specifically from that?

Anthony Smith: With the Westminster Consortium we learned a couple of things. One is that it is not easy, with a range of institutions that all have their own funding requirements and administration and objectives, to co-ordinate effectively. Secondly, if we can identify common objectives and specific activities, we have a fantastic offer to make. We can be flexible, we can help in places where a funder or donor—the EU, for example—knows that there is a range of issues in a country that need to be tackled, and we would provide a range of institutions that could tackle the rule of law, media, civil society, as well as

Parliament and political parties, and we could operate more flexibly and appropriately, targeting our activity better.

Q78 Hugh Bayley: It might be helpful if you were to describe one or two of your projects, and talk about how you get them agreed and get them managed. Since Dina has been doing this for a number of years, could you describe one or two of the typical WFD projects in the Middle East and North Africa?

Dina Melhem: Yes, definitely. In terms of the work in the Middle East and North Africa, especially after the Arab Spring, there were opportunities that came up in addition to the difficulties. Working in Parliaments within the Middle East and North Africa has always meant working with changing circumstances, but I would like to describe one of our key programmes where we had very concrete achievements in Morocco, for example, where we have been working with the Moroccan Parliament for the last three years. We have been agreeing, working, and supporting the Parliament in the development of their strategic plan. They were planning to do a strategic plan where they set out all the reforms they wanted to deal with in their Parliament, setting the priorities. Our input, our support, has advised them on certain issues and areas, and they were inputted to the strategic plan. Later, after the strategic plan had been developed and agreed within the Parliament, we supported them in delivering some of the key areas.

Some of those areas resulted in the establishment of a Public Accounts Committee within the Parliament; it has been approved by the new rules of procedures in Parliament. We are supporting the formation of the Public Accounts Committee, which has been formed and has been functioning since April last year. They came to the UK to visit and learn about the Westminster model of public expenditure and oversight through the Public Accounts Committee, as well as seeing other Commonwealth countries who have done the same, through attending the CPA annual meeting last June, to learn about the different ways of implementing such a model, which is a model that works for the UK, and they inspired some of this model.

That is a concrete element where we supported the Parliament. It was always in consultation with the Parliament. In addition, we have the benefit of being located within the premises of the Parliament. Our local office and field office is inside the Parliament. The trust and the relationship-building that we have managed to have and the follow-up on a consistent level with the Parliament has been essential and instrumental.

Q79 Hugh Bayley: Thank you very much. This is for either or both of you to answer. The Triennial Review recommended that the Government should develop a cross-Government strategy with a pipeline of projects and special measures to help smaller bodies—smaller contractors like, of course, the Westminster Foundation—to plan and to submit bids. What do you think the Government strategy should say?

Anthony Smith: I will start on this one. I must confess I am a bit cautious about an HMG strategy at the moment. It would raise expectations of a significant new push by the Government on supporting democracy. The recommendation was around the area of democratisation more broadly rather than just parliamentary strengthening, and I do not know if there is a big new idea out there on democratisation that would match that expectation that might be raised.

On the other hand, there is a huge amount that could be done within the Government to help people working in embassies and DFID offices to understand where this priority sits of democratisation or parliamentary strengthening or political party strengthening, whatever aspect you like. What types of activities are going on at the moment to support it? Where is the funding for it? Who are the people within the Government system who are working on it? I would include the Westminster Foundation in that. How, for example, does the new work around the CSSF—the Conflict Stability and Security Fund—and the strategies that are being developed link to this area? What is the balance between promoting democracy and promoting other objectives: poverty reduction, stability, etc? There is quite a lot of information that could be brought together and clarified. If you want to work in this area, how do you do it? Maybe something about what I have been mentioning about a network in the UK of strengths in this area would be useful. Does that add up to a strategy? I am not quite sure it is a strategy, but it is certainly work that could be done to help all of us to operate more effectively. A pipeline of projects I am not sure about. There is a range of funding opportunities that come up, but a pipeline implies a level of predictability, which does not feel, to me, to match what is happening in this area.

Q80 Hugh Bayley: Of course, on your board you have, in effect, an advisory panel of MPs as well as other experts in this field. Do you think it would be useful if DFID had an advisory panel of parliamentary clerks from Westminster and possibly MPs to act as a sounding board when DFID is shaping its work in this field?

Anthony Smith: It is absolutely right for DFID and the Foreign Office and maybe others—the National Security Secretariat—to seek advice and consult about what works in this area, to ensure that they understand what the state of the debate is and what the state of knowledge is. It is an area in which it is clear from many conversations that evidence is not strong and that experience varies quite a bit. A standing advisory board feels, to me, like something that goes with a clear strategy and process where you need periodic input from the group of people to make sure it stays on the right course. Again, linked to my answer about a strategy, I would have thought some ad hoc consultation certainly would be valuable at the moment, but not necessarily a standing advisory board. We could certainly be among those that DFID consulted, and they do talk to us.

Q81 Hugh Bayley: Finally, from the draft review it appears that some other countries seek to support their own national capacity to do parliamentary strengthening, with the Netherlands Government, for instance, pre-notifying their own Netherlands' agencies of future opportunities, so that they are, perhaps, better able to bid and compete. I recognise that DFID and, I guess, the Foreign Office too, in most cases would want to award contracts by open competition, but do you think it would make sense for relative minnows like WFD or other smaller UK contractors to have a bit of lead time? Would that help to build and strengthen a UK capacity that reflects or delivers the Westminster brand? With great respect, I do not see your agency being capable of doing that.

Anthony Smith: On the last point, absolutely. There is no doubt that the UK institutions, including the Westminster Foundation, are the way in which you deliver the experience that we have in the UK, including in Westminster.

On the way in which funding opportunities are notified, it is very important for the Government to try, as far as possible, if it wants to get good quality bids and tenders, to give adequate notice to organisations anyway. That should be happening and it is important to happen. I do not, myself, think that pre-notification is the thing that is going to solve making the UK community have a better offer. There are other things that we need to do. If we can organise ourselves better, and build up UK expertise to be more coherent and better co-ordinated, then we will have something that will be much more attractive to the Government funders of programmes in this area, and we should take on the responsibility to do it.

Q82 Hugh Bayley: Could I ask just one final question? I hear what you say about, at the very least, it not being WFD's business to tell the Government what its strategy should be. However, you were talking about the experience from Assemblée Nationale; that they do everything, and when you were sitting down with colleagues to talk about the Westminster offer, you had to get half a dozen agencies together to talk. I guess that is leaving apart both DFID and the FCO, who presumably have to talk to decide on Morocco or on Egypt, whether it is a Foreign Office lead or DFID funding. How do you think that cross-Government and cross-Parliament co-ordination can best be done?

Anthony Smith: I am going to need to be very diplomatic. The issues of the way in which Parliament itself operates are clearly not for me to comment on. In the present organisational structure, the sort of effort to co-ordinate among the range of officials who have responsibilities in this area, working on behalf of the Speaker and the Lord Speaker, is extremely important. We need to do that in order to understand the range of opportunities and responsibilities and responses needed for events that are coming up.

Beyond the Palace of Westminster, into the Government, if you take parliamentary strengthening just as part of the governance area, we are at a stage where it is clear that there is more that could be done, but there is no obvious centre of gravity within Government or a central point within Government that focuses a lot on this area. As an organisation, we are working with a particular part of the Foreign Office and a particular part of DFID and that is, between us, where the expertise can be. It is worth us thinking through a little bit more whether or not we should promote some more formal co-ordination mechanism or more formal docking point, if you like, for this work. It is an idea for us to take away.

Q83 Chair: Could WFD be a vehicle for, if you like, apportioning some of the contracts? I appreciate the difficulty if you are doing it as well as delivering it—the internal competition—but you talk about the Westminster brand, you have the name attached and you could be a kind of clearing house that some of the smaller organisations could bid through as long as they were not top-sliced to the point it was not worth their while. We have also had evidence about dealing with the EU. A huge amount of money, much of which comes from British taxpayers, is being thrown into this, not always very effectively. More to the point, British organisations either say they cannot get it or, frankly, the process of trying to get it is not worth doing. Again, if the Westminster Foundation had that degree of co-ordinating role, you could help both deliver the UK offer and help UK organisations to get proper access to the EU offer.

Anthony Smith: That is right. Various phrases come to mind about running and walking and biting off more than one can chew. We need to take it one step at a time, but it is clearly right that accessing EU funds is a specialist skill, in a way. One of the reasons that we were meeting with our French colleague was to work together in order to access some of the twinning funds that are available, and we are doing some joint bids on that. Within the UK system, we certainly need a point in the network, if you like, in the community that is able to be very professional about accessing funding and working in a collaborative way with the other organisations to do that. That is something we are looking at. When I have spoken to colleagues at the British Council or NAO, usually they have said the Westminster Foundation is a good, central place to co-ordinate, but there is a lot of work to do on the mechanics of it. I would not, as you are implying, rightly, want to swamp our own internal reform efforts by developing a requirement for administrative co-ordination until we are ready to do it, which we can try to do.

Q84 Chair: However, if you are not ready, it is not clear anybody else is either.

Anthony Smith: I am talking about today, 25 November. Between now and the start of the next financial year is when we are going to accelerate our internal work to improve our plumbing, as I said, and our structures and our skills, and that can be part of what we do.

Chair: Thank you very much. We have the Minister and his colleagues after this, so that has been helpful to us to sharpen up the idea. Thank you very much indeed.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Rt Hon Desmond Swayne MP**, Minister of State, Department for International Development, **Jonathan Hargreaves**, Head of Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department, DFID, **Shiona Ruheemann**, Senior Adviser, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department, DFID, and **Rob Fenn**, Head of the Human Rights and Democracy Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, gave evidence.

Q85 Chair: Good morning, Minister, and welcome to what is your first appearance in front of our Committee, so thank you for coming along this morning.

Mr Swayne: Was there a choice?

Chair: No.

Hugh Bayley: I was most impressed to see the Minister listening in to our other evidence; we do not often see that.

Chair: Courtesy is a characteristic of this Committee.

Hugh Bayley: And the Minister.

Chair: Indeed. We know who you are, but I wonder, for the record, if you could introduce your colleagues and their roles.

Mr Swayne: Comrades, introduce yourselves.

Jonathan Hargreaves: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Chair. I am Jonathan Hargreaves; I am Head of the Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption Department in the Policy Division in DFID.

Shiona Ruhemann: I am Shiona Ruhemann in Jonathan's Department, and I lead the policy team that is responsible at the centre for supporting political governance.

Rob Fenn: Good morning. I am Rob Fenn, the Head of the Human Rights and Democracy Department in the Foreign Office, FCO.

Q86 Chair: That is also helpful, because clearly there is a lot of co-operation and co-ordination between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and DFID. In the DFID submission, you say only a small part of what you spend goes into parliamentary strengthening. You elaborate on that and say that it is small but perfectly formed. Not quite that, but what you say is that it does not necessarily cost a lot of money. However, you spend a lot more, for example, on elections or supporting elections than you spend on the parliamentary strengthening between elections. Our view is it is fine to ensure that elections work, but once people have been elected they also need support as well, so do you think you have the balance right? Do you really think that elections are twice as important for good governance as effective, functioning Parliaments?

Mr Swayne: Elections are an awful lot more expensive; that is undoubtedly the case, so that would certainly account for much of the extra spend. I do think that the status and importance and trust and all the things that are important about Parliament stem largely from people trusting the process by which they were elected, so I would not want to diminish in any way the important role of some of those more technical aspects, like elections. However, I am prejudiced; I am a Member of a Parliament. I do believe that overwhelmingly the most important thing is the Parliament. It is vitally important. A properly working Parliament informs so many other expectations within a society about what they can expect from their government. We are putting enormous diplomatic resources into securing, for the post-2015 agenda, the importance of governance in institutions, the rule of law, all of which, I believe, stem ultimately from a strong, functioning Parliament. I have no doubt that the most important element is the Parliament. Whether you would measure that in terms of money spent I am less troubled by. I want us to spend the right amount of money, but it certainly need not be the most amount of money.

Q87 Chair: We accept it is not just about money, but I suppose what we are going to tease out is whether we are doing it on the cheap and, in fact, what needs to be done requires perhaps a bit more resource. I do not think any of us are suggesting it requires a huge amount more resource, but maybe some more resource.

The other problem is you do not appear to know exactly what you do spend on parliamentary strengthening. You could not give us a proper analysis of where the parliamentary dimension was in some of the projects or what the staff time was that was attributable to it. Indeed, this is not just DFID. Other people have said, "How do you measure effectiveness?" and the tendency was to do it in a tick-box way—"We have had so many meetings and so many visits and so many seminars"—rather than, "We have some kind of measurable way of showing that we have contributed towards making the Parliaments more effective." Just on that point, people will sometimes say, "Even when things go pear-shaped you hang in there, because sometimes Parliaments go through a trough or there is coup or a crisis, but you need to be there so that, at the other side of it, you have maintained continuity." I have heard people say that, for example, about Iraq

and possibly even Egypt, although that is perhaps more difficult. I just wonder whether you would accept that.

Mr Swayne: On the first point, we spent £22.5 million in 2013 and 2014. I had spotted the difficulty that you clearly have about how you know exactly what you have spent, because the only way that we could get that figure of £22.5 million, as I understand it, is by going to each of our country teams and saying, “Exactly how much have you spent?” Many of the projects do span Parliament and other aspects of governance, and it is quite difficult, certainly with accounting codes, to determine precisely how much has been spent on any particular element. I appreciate that is a problem, but it is one that we have to wrestle with.

The third point that you made just escapes me. What was it again?

Q88 Chair: It was really more about effectiveness; how you measure the effectiveness of what you spend.

Mr Swayne: I recall when Mr Bayley was questioning my predecessor in February on precisely this issue when you were doing your inquiry on Burma, Sir Alan referred to this as “the mushy end” of what we do. It is very difficult to measure the impact that you may have made, particularly in a short timescale, and you have to be alive to that. Yes, you do have to hang in there, but you have to be very careful when you come up with the projects in the first place. The main effort must be into the contextual analysis that you do beforehand, so that you can work out what are the goals, are they realistic, are they achievable and will you get buy-in or, indeed, ownership from the Parliaments that you are attempting to assist? An investment in that end of the project will be much better at yielding some results.

However, I can understand entirely the belief that if we are measuring it by the number of seminars we have held on X, Y and Z, you have something that is definable and measureable, but how do you measure an effective Parliament? The CPA has a good list of things that you would want to achieve, but how do you get milestones along the way? I come back ultimately to what Sir Alan said; it is the mushy end and we have to use a great deal of judgment and intuition, and that judgment and intuition is best placed in people who have experience of elected institutions—people like us.

Shiona Ruheemann: You asked about when things go pear-shaped and staying in and not bailing. We see that a lot in our programmes. For example, in Bangladesh there is no functioning opposition following the elections this year, and so DFID has shifted its support to the secretariat and pulled away from the political parties, because there are all kinds of problems in doing that. However, it is ready to scale back in and re-engage when the situation changes, so we see our country offices coping with those pear-shaped situations quite often.

On the question about low spend, Kenya is quite a good example. It was mentioned by Crispin Poyser and how the House of Commons was supportive there. It was pretty low spend but very political work around the constitution and election reform and has had quite a big impact around a new constitution. Again, the money is not very significant, but the impact in change in Parliament has been very clear.

Q89 Hugh Bayley: I should probably just repeat that some years ago I was the chair of the Westminster Foundation. During that time, my impression was that the Foreign Office was better—I might say better at mushiness—at dealing with difficult political issues than DFID. One of the reasons for this may be that DFID inevitably needs a strong partnership with the government of the day if it is going to deliver a health or an education or a water and sanitation programme, and it is sometimes quite difficult when another Department of the British Government is funding the opposition. I remember Museveni shouting, “Why is the British Government supporting the opposition, who are trying to undermine the government’s programmes?” How can DFID operate effectively in parliamentary strengthening when it offends a government? In Ethiopia you have, in development terms, a good government, a partner you want, but a ruling party that is highly intolerant of the opposition having any real leverage on policy in the country. Might it make sense for you to pass a grant of whatever you are going to spend, £1 million a year, to the Foreign Office to manage?

Mr Swayne: My prejudice tells me that you should be right—that, hey, I am a politician and am quite prepared to get my hands dirty and get involved in the politics, and these are civil servants and they would naturally be reluctant to do so and will have all sorts of prejudices that are different from mine. However, in fact, I have not come across any evidence to support my prejudice, in that we do get involved with political parties. You have drawn attention particularly to what we are doing in Uganda. In Uganda, we fund the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

With respect to working with the Foreign Office, the two Departments work very closely together in these issues. I have certainly not experienced any tension or difficulty there, so that expertise is brought in, but I will let the civil servants defend themselves.

Jonathan Hargreaves: Chair, if I may, it is an interesting point. There are three things to say. One is that DFID has been making an effort over the last few years, in particular, to be thinking more politically in everything we do, not just when we are dealing with governance issues, but also in how we try to achieve results across the board. Most people see us as the market leader as a donor in being able to think and work politically. I was reading recently a study by ODI called *Politically smart, locally led development*, which is an interesting read, where they talk about three big examples of where we have been able to do that. The fact that they are pointing to these examples suggests that we have some way to go. Going back to your earlier point about measurement, there are some difficult things in there about how you measure success in that messy, mushy, politically difficult arena.

However, we think that we are becoming, as a donor, one of the market leaders in this area. We train all of our governance advisers across the world to engage in good political economy analysis in all of the work they do and we apply that analysis before we move into interventions. Does that mean that we end up working a lot more with political parties or with politicians? Sometimes, but not necessarily. Sometimes that politically smart analysis may lead us not to work with them because, for various reasons, we think that we may be able to get a better governance result through some other means. However, would we do that analysis that would help us to work that out? Absolutely.

On the second point—and I may bring in Rob Fenn from the Foreign Office here, if I may—I have certainly never worked in a country where we do not do this absolutely hand

in glove with the Foreign Office. It would be a misrepresentation to suggest that we are somehow over here and our Foreign Office colleagues are over there. I had the honour of being with you in Jerusalem, for example, where I hope you felt that DFID and FCO worked absolutely together on the politics as well as on the development. Similarly, when I worked in Somalia, we would sit together and do that analysis absolutely together. The idea that we are doing this separately is a bit of a misrepresentation, if I may say.

The third thing I might just add, if I may, is that we do a lot of work that is quite politically exposed and risky. We do quite a lot of work on political party strengthening, not just with the Westminster Foundation, although that is great, but in other examples. In Uganda, Tanzania, Bangladesh, for instance, we have programmes that do carry on between elections and work with Parliaments and parties, but, if I may, I will ask Rob to add the Foreign Office perspective.

Rob Fenn: Thank you. Mr Chairman, colleagues, I am very happy to confirm this rumour that the FCO and DFID work very closely together. I have been in the Foreign Office since 1983, and in those days there really was a different culture, a different approach, sometimes a physically separated office in whichever country we are talking about. During those years, the whole concept of sustainable development has come forward, and that has convinced the Foreign Office that if we are going to advance our own interests in the rule of law and human rights and political influence in whatever country we are talking about, we do have to tap into our DFID colleagues' understanding of the long term, of the development process. Similarly, for any Ambassador or High Commissioner, it is now his or her genuine instinct to feel that they are representing the whole of Government in that country, and in this area of sustainable development they will lean equally on their political analysts and on their DFID colleagues, who are, in some countries, rather more numerous than their Foreign Office colleagues. There is absolutely no sense that the head of post is there representing the Foreign Office separately or *primus inter pares*. I have been in innumerable meetings where a political analysis comes from a DFID colleague and a developmental one from the head of chancery. We have learned this lesson quite a long time ago now. It is just about how well we can walk that talk all around the world; we certainly try.

Q90 Hugh Bayley: Can I say you make a convincing argument that on the 90% or whatever percentage it is—perhaps higher than 90%—of work where you both have an office in the country and you both share objectives you work closely together, and I am sure that is the case. However, the Foreign Office, of course, has many more posts than DFID. It will pursue British Government goals for getting improvements in governance in countries where there is not a DFID programme, and sometimes these will be quite controversial politically. I am drawing from experience many years ago, and these are programmes from long ago, but I remember some work being done to fund civil society bodies in Belarus, which the government of the day was not warm to. I can think of work with people who were close to the Muslim Brotherhood in some North African countries. I find it difficult to believe that DFID would be the right sponsoring Department for work of that kind, so are there some things that the Foreign Office is better at doing and that you ought to take the lead on? If so, how should that be funded when your Department's funding is being so squeezed?

Mr Swayne: I am quite happy to deal with your question directly. My answer to that is, as the DFID Minister, I would need some persuading about the details of the projects to

which you are referring. I do not know the detail, but again it comes down to the analysis that was done as to what precisely it is that we are trying to achieve, is it realistic and do we have buy-in.

Q91 Hugh Bayley: Could I just ask, Minister, would you be consulted on a democracy-building project in a country in which, probably for very good reasons—perhaps a middle-income country—there was no DFID programme?

Mr Swayne: No. If we are not going to spend any money and we do not have a programme, I would not expect to be consulted. I certainly have not been so far.

Q92 Hugh Bayley: On Hong Kong, for instance. If the Foreign Office wanted to do some work on democracy-building in Hong Kong, that would be fine, but it would not be a joint DFID operation.

Mr Swayne: It has not happened yet, but my immediate reaction would be why are we involved in a country that does not qualify for overseas development aid?

Shiona Ruheemann: Could I return to the Uganda example you gave? That is a very good illustration of a lot of the issues. The Foreign Office sits on that steering committee as well as DFID, so it shows how closely involved we are in the programming. As you suggested, it is an intensely political programme and it also shows that politics is not avoided but dealt with very squarely, and strengthening the Office of the Opposition is included. One reason that that is possible is because the UK is in that with eight other donors. It is not just the UK supporting the opposition, but there is strength and safety in numbers and there are various other very sensitive things, like strengthening the human rights committee to scrutinise the anti-homosexuality bill, which is an incredibly sensitive area of legislation, so it is a very good example.

Also on the politics, the *How to note* that we have developed is completely founded on political economy analysis in which, as Jonathan said, we are seen to be the market leader internationally and it is very much challenging apolitical approaches, disembodied training or capacity-building that is not dealing with underlying politics.

Rob Fenn: We are talking about parliamentary strengthening and democratisation as the context for that, and I can imagine plenty of examples of how, even though an ambassador or a Foreign Office programme in country X does not have a DFID presence formally, the sort of analysis that they call London to provide to them would certainly cause me or the regional director or the responsible Minister in the Foreign Office to think very positively about consulting DFID. The generic expertise around democratisation is quite widely dispersed in Whitehall. It does not involve solely DFID and FCO. We have many colleagues in the Ministry of Justice and in the Home Office. This whole area of overseas security and justice assistance is so delicate and involves a lot of difficult political judgments but also a lot of technical know-how, and in areas like that our instinct is to work across Whitehall.

On democratisation, the more I work and will have to work in helping WFD, for example, to implement the review, when it is finalised and laid, it will be in very close co-operation with DFID, where a lot of the expertise on democratisation does reside.

Q93 Hugh Bayley: Thank you. I have one further question, which is very clearly directed at you and your Department, Minister. When we travel as a Committee to developing countries, it has frequently occurred to me that we, that is to say the UK and your Department, could gain considerably in the job of monitoring the impact of, say, an education programme or a health programme if we worked with the health committee or the education committee of a Parliament, who obviously look very closely at their governance policies and programmes in the way that our Select Committees do. I know Jeremy Lefroy, with the work he does with the parliamentary Network on the World Bank, is very keen to encourage dialogue between national Parliaments and donors. Would it make sense to build into, say, the education work in Tanzania a strand that says, “And a small part of our funding will go behind strengthening the capacity of the education committee of the Tanzanian Parliament to scrutinise what is happening in districts, regions, towns and villages”, so that the Government of Tanzania is better informed about how DFID’s budget support is being spent and how its education-specific funding is being spent and, indeed, so that DFID offices could learn more about the impact of their work?

Mr Swayne: That is a very interesting idea. One of the ways we get into parliamentary strengthening is through the Select Committee system, through strengthening mainly public accounts committees and financial management, but we have certainly been doing health committee work and education committee work. As to whether when we are doing a project specifically on education, as we are more and more in Lebanon and Jordan, we should be investing in their parliamentary process, that strikes me as a very good idea. Of course, it comes back to the contextual analysis: getting exactly what we are trying to achieve and what we are going to do. But building in a consideration of that sort strikes me as a very useful thing to do.

Shiona Ruhemann: Could I just add that that does happen in practice? There is a programme in South Africa that was working with a health committee, a high-performing programme, and it is a good example of the difficulty of disaggregating parliamentary work, because often a sectoral programme will link up with a sectoral committee, and then it is hard for us to check it. You had other comments on PACs, I think.

Jonathan Hargreaves: I was simply going to add to what the Minister said about that approach and particularly with public accounts committees, where we support many throughout the world, again often not badged as parliamentary strengthening but badged as public finance management, trying to deliver the whole range of the accountability chain, as it were. Very often, such as in Bangladesh, Nepal, Tajikistan, we have done work with public accounts committees as part of that wider public financial management approach, so your point is very well taken. No doubt there is more that we can do through a sectoral lens, but it is very much part of our thinking.

Q94 Fiona Bruce: Forgive me; this is a really mushy question. I want to ask how you work together with regard to what you might call conflict resolution; I would rather call it conflict prevention. The Minister talked about how you need to have a strong, functioning Parliament in which people have confidence. For people to have confidence in their elected assembly, they need to engage. In order for them to engage, civil society needs to work together and different groups in civil society need to talk together. It seems to me that if we can work on that end we can prevent, perhaps, the fallout from groups becoming warring

factions, becoming conflicted, so that DFID has to spend a great deal more money on food and refugee camps and so forth. Just to give a specific example, because someone asked for an example, in the Central African Republic I remember, it is probably a year ago now, a Muslim leader and a Catholic leader getting together and saying, "Please, somebody help us try to help our communities to live together more peaceably." How much work are you doing together on that kind of conflict prevention so that, in fact, you save DFID having to do a lot more work later when trouble breaks out?

Mr Swayne: If we take specifically Uganda, much of the emphasis has been on getting the political parties to be less confrontational and to work together. In terms of taking that beyond Parliament and out to civil society and different institutions, there is a huge amount of effort. Immediately Pakistan and the AAWAZ project springs to mind, but perhaps you can elaborate on that.

Shiona Ruhemann: In Pakistan, the AAWAZ project, a voice and accountability programme, is a very good example of exactly what you are talking about: another political systems approach where Parliament, civil society and media are all working together. It is working in 4,500 villages on exactly these kinds of issues: strengthening service delivery and operating caucuses around legislation, with some real impact on changing laws and requirements. For instance, 33% of members of decision-making bodies now have to be women. That is a very significant achievement. There is similar work in Afghanistan, trying to improve citizen satisfaction with elected bodies.

Q95 Fiona Bruce: With the Home Secretary saying today that global security is heightened more than ever, I wonder whether this is not something that DFID should be looking at as a greater priority than it is. The Foreign Office certainly seems to have picked up on this in the last year or two and now challenges governments, but often I feel DFID has the resources to do something about it.

Mr Swayne: Our target is to move to 30% of our spend being in those conflicted states and we are going to be driven by the National Security Council's priorities and the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, so I would say this is going to be an increasing emphasis of what we do.

Q96 Chair: Iraq seems to be a very good example, where the failure of the political system has got us into this mess. Obviously the Americans have been putting pressure on them to put their political and parliamentary system in order. My understanding is we are involved in that too, but that is through the Foreign Office, I guess.

Rob Fenn: Indeed, yes. In Iraq, a lot of problems were stored up by the dysfunctional and wholly sectarian previous Government in Iraq and we are now trying to help the new Government reach out to the whole of the population.

Q97 Chair: That is a point for the Minister, I suppose, because Iraq may not be a priority.

Mr Swayne: Exactly. Our spend in Iraq is humanitarian, because it is a middle-income country.

Q98 Chair: If there was a funding issue here, it would be in DFID's interest to support the Foreign Office as well.

Mr Swayne: Only if we could pass it off as overseas development aid, which is dependent upon the nature of the country. Undoubtedly, so much poverty arises out of conflicted states.

Q99 Chair: The humanitarian budget classifies as aid, so, logically—yes.

Mr Swayne: Yes, but it would be difficult. For example, we are spending significant sums of money in Lebanon and Jordan, which we would never ordinarily do in these middle-income countries, but we are able to do so because of the consequences of conflict, in order to prevent greater conflict. There is a feedback loop.

Shiona Ruhemann: FCO and DFID are working very closely on it. DFID is investing a lot in basic services, meeting people's expectations and security injustice—basic accountability for security sectors. Parliaments again might not be the front end of that, but they are part of that picture.

Q100 Jeremy Lefroy: When we were in Sierra Leone, we asked Parliamentarians whether they were aware of DFID projects in their constituencies and they said absolutely not; they do not get information. They would tend to come across them by chance. In this country, from a number of organisations, not least organisations like the National Lottery, we are told in advance what is going on in our constituencies. Would it not be one way of getting Parliamentarians more informed and more involved in development in their own constituencies if DFID was to say to Parliamentarians, "We are working on this with the government in your constituency"?

Mr Swayne: Yes, and I thought we did. We scored second out of all others in terms of transparency on the International Aid Transparency Index. Perhaps we need to do more to inform those people, but everywhere I go in those countries where we are spending a great deal of money on municipal projects, in order to get the buy-in of the host communities for the refugees that they are having to support, we shout about it. Perhaps we need to do more to make sure that they hear it.

Chair: We will move on to a series of questions about how you commission parliamentary strengthening.

Q101 Pauline Latham: Good morning. We have received criticism about how DFID commissions projects, your choice of large suppliers and lack of competition, largely excluding Westminster institutions. How can DFID improve its commissioning of parliamentary strengthening projects?

Mr Swayne: I just wonder if we are looking at the wrong end of the telescope here. When I was in business, if we lost a contract or we failed to get a bid, we would go back and think about what it was we had done wrong. We would not turn round and say it was the customer who was wrong—the customer was prejudiced. I do not think we do. The way we work is that we do the in-country analysis of exactly what it is we want to achieve, what is realistic, how we are going to go about it, and then we go shopping to see what is available. It is not a question of there being prejudice. Look, I have never bought a foreign car. If I have a prejudice it is for what is available here. Admittedly, I have not

been on any of these shopping trips recently; I have only just come into the Department. However, in terms of what we spend, in terms of that criticism, if we take 2012-13, of the £22.5 million that we spend, £3 million was spent in the UK public sector, WFD and the Arab Partnership, £5 million on private contractors, both UK and overseas, £5 million on the multinationals, which is effectively the World Bank and UNDP, and £9.5 million on NGOs, often local NGOs or international NGOs. If we look at UNDP, which much of the criticism has focussed on, we spent £2 million solely on projects managed by UNDP and £1.5 million on projects where they are jointly involved. I can understand there being a prejudice, but I would hate to spoil it with facts.

Q102 Pauline Latham: DFID apparently seems to prefer large, low-maintenance projects because of the low management cost. However, does parliamentary strengthening not need a different approach with higher management costs, because Parliaments require intensive brokering and co-ordinating between different stakeholders?

Mr Swayne: I can understand anyone wanting to have a large, low-cost project to manage rather than lots of little ones. It is very difficult to manage lots of little projects, but do not imagine for one moment that when we take on a big organisation like UNDP, because of its ability to manage lots of different donors within one project, that we say we have put it in that box and have pushed it over there. We are deeply involved in the management of those projects, and I would draw to your attention specifically what we have been doing in Afghanistan, where we have gone back and said, “No, we want you to hire people this way, more short-term experts rather than long-term employees.” We manage the costs, we call them in and we call the shots, so I do not think that is true. Do you want to add anything to that?

Shiona Ruhemann: It is not an either/or. What we need often is a very large organisation that can manage multiple donors, multiple inputs, has presence, has the relationships with government and other parties, and has a track record. That is why we go to big organisations, not to reduce our transactional involvement, which is very intense and ongoing. Through them, the smaller parties are brought in. We have lots of examples of that. For instance, in DRC, UNDP was selected for all of the above reasons and they managed to lock in and build up and scale up WFD’s initiatives around training and WFD’s work with the MPs. They took that to scale, so you have both working together.

On the point that you mentioned about this area of work requiring a lot of co-ordination, Uganda is an excellent example of that. There is a big Danish-managed programme but everybody leads it jointly; there are eight donors in there, so the co-ordination is working through that programme and, again, WFD’s investments are being scaled up through that. It is not either/or.

Q103 Pauline Latham: Going back to the US companies, we are told that a large proportion of British taxpayer funds used to strengthen Parliaments do go to US companies or other internationals with little expertise in Parliament. How do you feel you could respond to that?

Mr Swayne: I do not think it is true and I gave you the figures a moment ago. I do not think it is borne out by the facts. I can think of one or two US organisations that come to mind, but my perception is that that is not what we have done. As I say, we go in, we

decide what it is we need and then we go to the market. Are you aware of any prejudice for a US preference?

Shiona Ruhemann: No. Seven out of 37 have been primarily US contracted and that is entirely on credibility, and there is a business case that makes that case and that is transparent and publicly available, so all of that has to be justified through a business case.

Mr Swayne: So, there are 37 current projects, of which seven are with US organisations.

Jonathan Hargreaves: Of course, they are not fully implemented by those US organisations. As Shiona was saying earlier, we use them as the managing agent because we trust in their processes and their ability to manage things, but very often drawing on either local or other international sources of expertise. We contract somebody that we feel confident can do the management, but draw on a huge range of providers, including very often UK providers, within that.

Shiona Ruhemann: They can also often be very strong technically.

Q104 Pauline Latham: Would it be possible for you to give us a list of the top 10 suppliers for your parliamentary strengthening with the amounts awarded to them, please?

Mr Swayne: What, now?

Q105 Pauline Latham: No, not now, but maybe tomorrow—unless you do know it off the top of your head.

Jonathan Hargreaves: Over what time period?

Pauline Latham: Probably the last financial year.

Q106 Chair: We have a table that our adviser has done of an analysis of your own submission of the top 10 programmes over the last few years, and they are almost totally devoid of British content. Given we are discussing the Westminster Foundation and the Westminster brand, the American model is as competitive as it is, it would appear, because it is very well resourced by Congress and others. Is there not a chicken-and-egg situation here that you are going to buy foreign because we have not encouraged the development of a sufficient capacity within the UK?

Mr Swayne: I would say that that is for the Westminster Foundation and I sat and listened to their evidence and thought that was very encouraging—the plans that they have to make themselves more marketable. But hold on a minute. We have this UNDP project running in Afghanistan, but they are subcontracting bits to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, so I do not think it is a zero-sum game by any stretch of the imagination.

Chair: Maybe we can get a bit more information on that, because obviously what we have is just the heads-up. We do not know what the subcontracting arrangements are. If in the process of making the list you are able to give us any elaboration of that, it would be helpful.

Q107 Sir Peter Luff: I still do not sense that British content is high enough. This is an important soft-power opportunity for the UK and I do not think the British element is there

in sufficient detail. Apart from WFD, which is a big “apart from”, of course I accept, only three of the parliamentary strengthening projects funded by DFID in 2013-14 had a Westminster provider involved. It would be great to have more Westminster providers involved, it really would. They have an important and unique contribution to make in this programme that I do not think is being made. I suspect it is because your field offices do not really know how to involve them.

Mr Swayne: The best thing we do, the champagne of this, is the political party work that the Westminster Foundation for Democracy does. I am an absolute advocate of that, but I would be very wary of introducing, despite my own prejudice and my never having bought a foreign car, we have moved away from using international development aid to provide opportunities for our own commercial undertakings to profit. In other words, if you are going to provide some poor country with the finance to build a bridge, it is done on the assumption that a British company will build the bridge. What is the difference, in principle, I would ask, of saying that, because we need to do X, Y and Z to strengthen a Parliament, we are going to go for the particular British option irrespective of other things that might affect that decision? There is no policy imposed from the centre. These decisions are all made at the country level after an analysis of the needs in the country.

Q108 Sir Peter Luff: Is not the lack of awareness of the British option part of the problem?

Jonathan Hargreaves: The Minister is absolutely right that the first priority has to be focussed on what outcome we are trying to achieve, and we owe it to the taxpayer to focus on that above all. I was listening, as the Minister was, very carefully to what Anthony Smith said earlier in terms of the plans to improve the Westminster offer overall through the improvements to the offer of WFD itself, which we very much welcome, and we are looking forward to seeing the outcome of the Triennial Review and the response to that come through, and what kind of improved offer by WFD itself may emerge. That is very encouraging for us, but we are also interested in whether it is possible to link up better with other UK-based organisations and provide a more united and combined offer. That will be tremendously interesting to people in country offices who are looking for the best providers. We do need providers who can provide, as we have discussed, both long-term and flexible provision of assistance. That is just the reality of the kind of work that we need to do and the kind of work that we think is going to be effective. If there is a stronger offer coming from the UK that is able to provide that, then I think you are absolutely right, Sir Peter; that will be satisfying both a development outcome and possibly the more diplomatic win that is potentially there. Therefore, if we can get to a situation where we can satisfy both of those at the same time through having a stronger offer, that is fantastic.

Q109 Sir Peter Luff: Last week, Charles Chauvel of UNDP told us that they would like to make better use of Westminster organisations in their programmes. There is a willingness to make this happen. Can you specify that larger suppliers should look more keenly at the options and look at Westminster-based organisations? Are you able to do that?

Mr Swayne: From my own point of view, I would certainly want to point them in that direction. I wonder if they have to be pointed, because they have already been doing it.

Q110 Sir Peter Luff: UNDP seems to think you need to do more.

Mr Swayne: They have been using the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. Now, was that because we pointed them in the right direction? I suspect not. They are quite able to compete.

Q111 Chair: There is a mercenary element that comes in, because what some of the subcontractors complain about is that UNDP top-slices a great big management fee, which leaves them with a rather less interesting and less well-funded programme. That is where either a requirement as part of a contract or a way of having subdivided contracts so that they can be managed has been a point that has been made to us.

Mr Swayne: If the arrangements are driven by our analysis of what is needed, and let us say we decide that we need a large organisation to be able to manage multiple donors, I do not think that precludes us from saying “and we particularly recommend” or “we specify”, even, that a particular donor for a particular element ought to be X because of its outstanding expertise in this field. Is that right?

Shiona Ruhemann: Yes. On the management fees, they are really pressed on them and increasingly through the memorandum of understanding we are really bearing down and bearing down.

The *How to note* is an answer to a lot of things. It sets out a lot of the suppliers, and we can really elaborate that and make sure that tells a very clear story about the different options.

On UNDP, I would say Charles Chauvel is in a fantastic position himself to make more use of Westminster. He does not need to come to us to do that.

Q112 Fiona Bruce: Just continuing on WFD, you have partly answered this question, but we are interested to know what role you see for WFD in the future, its relationship with DFID, how DFID would work with it and how it would work with other Westminster institutions. Can I also just refer you back to Anthony Smith’s evidence, on behalf of WFD, when he did say that he felt that perhaps annual budgets in a single country in the thousands could be more appropriate than these big budgets and proportionately could provide better quality results? He also commented on the potential benefit of having perhaps a pot of money for small, flexible projects that could respond to particular political circumstances that could arise at relatively short notice. I would be very interested in your comments on his views there.

Mr Swayne: Specifically on flexibility, flexibility is built into each project from the start so that those opportunities can be taken account of when they arise. If there is no programme, however, in a particular country, then clearly a business case has to be made. The lead time will be longer because it is going to have to come to the Minister to approve, and I cannot see any way around that, but I was impressed by the evidence that was given and I certainly want to see Westminster Foundation for Democracy working in that way.

Shiona Ruhemann: On flexibility, programmes increasingly are very clear about the objectives of what they are trying to do in terms of oversight or representation. That is very firm, and then there is a lot of flexibility under that in terms of the activities, which is

able to respond to a very volatile and changing situation. Some programmes, like Uganda, have built in a very fast approval process for its partners, so they can quickly respond to opportunities that come up.

Q113 Fiona Bruce: On the specific point on DFID working with WFD and maybe WFD with other organisations, do you have any comments there?

Jonathan Hargreaves: As you know, with the Foreign Office, of course, we have been the main funder of the WFD over the years and will be looking forward to talking to Anthony and his colleagues about the next tranche of funding for that. Certainly we will look very favourably on extending that support into the future, and I expect we would do that in some shape or form together with the Foreign Office. The reviews that we have done and that the Triennial Review has done have, as Anthony has already articulated, shown some of the areas where we think the WFD can do even better. We think that they can be more focussed, and that there can be a better bringing together of the parliamentary and the political party work. We think that it will be possible to show greater impact and to have greater skills to bring to bear and, as Anthony also said, to bring in evidence from what works in this domain as a stronger foundation for their work. Therefore, we are very optimistic that WFD will be able to do an even better job in the future.

As to the question of working more closely with others, we have heard this morning Anthony talking about the possibility of revitalising the Westminster Consortium in some way. That is, of course, up to WFD and those partners, and it is very helpful that there is that conversation going on. We think that that would be a positive development. Anything that enables us to draw the full impact from the excellent resources that we have around the UK, both in Westminster and elsewhere, and package those in a way that enables it to access more funding, to have better skills, better knowledge, better evidence and to provide the better offer that I was talking about earlier can only be really positive, and we are very happy to play our part in that kind of conversation to help that along.

Q114 Jeremy Lefroy: We have received criticism of the way that DFID monitors the performance of contractors like the UNDP, for instance, in ACAI's 2012 report on DFID's electoral support through UNDP. It says that the UNDP has demonstrated an ability to deliver technically sound assistance but design processes are often rushed and budgets unrealistic. It does not have a strong culture of cost control and tends to support over-complex solutions. I wondered what you have been doing to ensure that things are improving in the UNDP programmes delivered under this category.

Mr Swayne: The fact is that we do lay down the law and we do get involved and we do roll up our shirtsleeves, as we have in Afghanistan with respect to UNDP's costs and secured significant savings. At the last Multilateral Aid Review, UNDP scored well in terms of value for money, but we do have reservations about the way that they evaluate results and, as a consequence, the Secretary of State called them in and laid down what it was that we wanted to achieve. We are active in getting improvements and pushing these operations in the right direction.

Shiona Ruhemann: You will see this in Tanzania, which is a good example again of a UNDP programme that scored a B. After two Bs you have to take action. Pre-emptively they called in the country team and they had a performance improvement plan, and at the

next annual review scored an A. We see a lot of pre-emptive programme management. DRC is another example where there was an in-depth management review before the programme started. That was using UK skills, PricewaterhouseCoopers UK. That created a very detailed results framework, a set of benchmarks, and funds were frozen when there were concerns about delivery, which was not in Parliament but in elections. We see a lot of DFID programmes being really on the case with UNDP as well as the MAR work at the centre and pushing centrally for the UNDP to have baselines and key performance indicators, etc.

Q115 Jeremy Lefroy: What about the EU? That is one of the main multilateral delivery partners, and we were told last week about the poor performance of EU parliamentary strengthening projects giving out large contracts to Brussels-based private companies with little knowledge of Parliaments, which is often required to be spent in short timescales. If that is true, it appears to me to be something that needs looking at.

Mr Swayne: That is the question that I was about to answer a couple of minutes ago before I stopped myself. I was summoned before the European Scrutiny Committee to deal with our reservations about the way that the EU measures its results. We have a large agenda and we are pushing it in the right direction.

With respect to the specifics of it handing out contracts on governance, I am going to parry that. Are we aware of any such criticisms?

Shiona Ruheemann: No, we are not. In a similar process of pushing the EU on its effectiveness, we got 20 DFID secondments into the EU to make sure that it is delivering.

Q116 Chair: The evidence we got was from the Clerk of the Assemblée Nationale, who gave a fairly graphic account of what he thought was really just appalling bureaucracy costing an awful lot of money and buying pretty well second-rate stuff.

Jeremy Lefroy: This is the French criticising the EU, we have to point out.

Jonathan Hargreaves: It is worth examining the evidence behind that. I would also say that of course there is something of an industry around accessing EU funds and some people are extremely good at it and invest an enormous amount in it. Our UK Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels is there to help with that. They have an EU aid project team, which is there specifically in order to help British contractors and no doubt public sector bodies too, if relevant, access EU funding, and that is absolutely as it should be, given the amount of UK money that makes up a part of that. Therefore, given the ability to invest resource in finding out how to access that, there are ways to be able to do that.

Mr Swayne: I would jump at any opportunity to criticise the EU, but I confess to having not found that many opportunities in this particular role. They do score quite highly and are internationally well thought of, but I would certainly be interested in the evidence that you have.

Q117 Chair: Have a look at the evidence; it does suggest that something could be done. I just wondered if I could briefly ask you about the Conflict, Stability and Security

Fund and how this is going to affect the outcome. I know it is not entirely clear at the moment how it is going to operate, but it has been suggested to us that the focus is more on conflict than stability. That implies that instead of investing on the points that Fiona Bruce was saying about working with Parliamentarians even in conflict situations to try to work through, the focus may go away from that. I quoted Iraq as a particular example, but my guess is that that would still be true of the DRC or Somalia or what have you. However dysfunctional, the ultimate objective has to be to have some accountability and some functioning Parliament, so it would be a little concerning if the focus was moving away from that within this new fund. Is there anything you are able to say about that?

Mr Swayne: I would certainly be alive to any such possibility. My focus is that we should be working to preserve stability so that we do not have conflict, and I am certain that that will be the focus of the National Security Council. Yes, there are countries that are in conflict and what can we do to stabilise them, but equally there are many countries that are on the brink of conflict where we have to work to preserve stability. Is there anything that you can add?

Jonathan Hargreaves: That is absolutely right. Of course, it is for the NSC to prioritise which countries they want to particularly focus on, but within that, having done that, we are able to provide advice to those implementing the CSSF strategies in how best to tackle the kinds of issues they want to tackle. We have done something called a “Thematic Information Paper” specifically on supporting inclusive political systems, which is designed to inform officials who are developing CSSF strategies overall, drawing heavily on our draft *How to note*. We are trying to make it as easy as possible for people who do not necessarily spend their entire day job thinking about how to support political systems to be able to think about what we know about what is likely to work in that. We are very aware of your concern, Chair, and are trying to make sure that there are things in place to help people through that.

Q118 Chair: Certainly the practitioners say to us that working for the long term and working through reversals and downsizes is important. In other words, they are saying if you are trying to work through a conflict situation to post-conflict or conflict prevention, you have to think in terms of 10 or 15 years or even generational, so it is whether it is trying to help the political process to lead them out of conflict or help to stabilise the situation so it does not drop back into conflict. Given the timescales, the budgets and elections and everything else domestically here, is it possible to work to those longer term horizons? With no criticism whatsoever of the likes of the IPU and the CPA, they do not usually have the capacity to think of a five-year project. It tends to be relatively short term.

Mr Swayne: That is why we have multi-year, long-term commitment, big projects and are criticised: “Why have you got so many big projects that last many years instead of being more nimble and being able to get quick wins?” You have to get a balance between the two.

Shiona Ruhemann: That is very much long-term horizons in everyone’s mind. You have a length of a programme, but people are thinking beyond that where they are tackling regime change politics or personality politics and trying to shift that to the politics of alternative policies. That is a big task and, in some contexts, it is fairly predictable what the election is going to deliver in 2021, so all of our programmes are thinking in long-term horizons.

Q119 Fiona Bruce: The question of the possibility of a cross-Government strategy with a pipeline of projects was referred to in the earlier question session. This could perhaps co-ordinate practice between Departments and help smaller bodies plan. In our earlier evidence session, Anthony Smith said that there is not an obvious “centre of gravity” for applications or perhaps a more formal stopping point for this work is an idea to take away. I wondered what you thought of that, having heard his evidence.

Mr Swayne: It is horses for courses at the moment. There is no central strategy other than it is, for each country where we are working, for us to analyse the political economy, see what we need to achieve, what is realistic in going about how to achieve it and then going to it. Since I believe Parliaments are the most important thing, which is why I sought to be a Member of one, my prejudice would be to say you must always, whenever you work in a country, have a parliamentary programme. The danger of that would be that you would end up with a tick-box mentality; you would end up doing something just to do it. Equally, there are places where you cannot work with a Parliament, because of the nature of that Parliament or the nature of the country and you have to find other ways of getting at other institutions in civil society. Beyond that, what strategy could one have?

Jonathan Hargreaves: Maybe our colleague from the Foreign Office would also like to say something about this. I tend to agree very much with what Anthony Smith said earlier—that a grandiose strategy expressing our big picture aims in the world on democracy probably is not going to serve a particular function. However, is there space for a conversation, particularly with WFD and its collaborators, about how HMG sees its role, how that might respond to HMG priorities, either geographically or thematically, and how we can work better together to make sure that that offer is known and taken up? Yes, that is certainly something that we can work on together.

Rob Fenn: I would simply add the slight caveat that the review as a whole is before Foreign Office Ministers at the moment. However, I, too, listened very carefully to what Anthony said this morning and, of course, have facilitated his access to senior officials in the Foreign Office and the travels he has already embarked upon to see some of our more critical posts—his customers, as it were. Whether or not it ends up being called a strategy we definitely do have to leave on one side, but we can easily see that what WFD needs is a really effective, real-time relationship with the Foreign Office and its networks. Therefore, we are already, for example, helping WFD, Anthony and his team, draw up their strategy, which is very important work, immediately to do what they can do in light of the emerging findings from the review. I think they need access to regional directors at the right time in the planning cycle of the Foreign Office itself. We need to make sure that, for example, when country business plans are crystallising, there is good communication between WFD and those regional experts in the Foreign Office about the opportunities, both the short-term and the long-term trends.

I would say—and this comment does hark back a little bit to the British brand that you were probing earlier—there are two clear opportunities over the next few months to raise the profile. One is when the review is laid we can use that to raise the profile of WFD itself right around the Foreign Office network, so that it becomes more instinctively the first resort of the British representatives around the world. We have this fantastic, unique organisation, which they need to think of first, not solely, and what was said also around the idea of a Westminster Consortium is very interesting. There are other horses for

courses, as the Minister says, but there is only one non-departmental public body of the Foreign Office in this area, and that is WFD and it is our flagship.

The second big opportunity, more nebulous but quite interesting, is next year's Magna Carta celebrations, which I think are going to raise the profile of the British brand. What the Palace of Westminster is doing is going to be extremely empowering for the Foreign Office itself in our soft power and public diplomacy, and we are certainly already planning to make sure that WFD benefits from that, as it were, benign and interesting context.

Shiona Ruhemann: If I understood Anthony correctly, he was talking about something quite practical and operational, and a lot of that thinking across FCO and DFID has been done through the *How to note*, which is agreeing an overall approach.

Just to close off an earlier issue about DFID and FCO overlapping in a certain number of countries and then the rest is left to FCO, the *How to note* sets out an approach across all of the countries, and through WFD we are also working jointly in countries where DFID may not have a presence but, through WFD, we have a common approach to how we do that.

Q120 Fiona Bruce: You talked about a joint approach on strategy, Mr Fenn. I am interested in the fact that the Triennial Review recommends that FCO and DFID should develop a joint approach on impact assessment on evaluating and monitoring programmes, because the differences in the way that you are monitoring projects are, apparently, causing problems for some Westminster organisations. I wonder if you could let us know how you respond to that, and perhaps the DFID representatives as well, on the joint strategy on impact assessment.

Rob Fenn: We certainly do, in the Foreign Office, regard DFID as the centre of excellence in Whitehall when it comes to monitoring impact and evaluating how projects work. So, in an informal way, our first resort is to talk to DFID about how to evaluate our impact when it comes to programmes and projects. In my own Department, we have a programme fund, which is mainly there to promote the six thematic human rights priorities that the Foreign Office has, but there are two additional priorities. One is the work around sexual violence in war zones, which has become another priority for our fund. The last is democratisation itself.

Our work on running, as it were, FCO projects on democratisation, which is over and above the grant in aid given to WFD, is very much part of the Foreign Office's overall attempt to do projects better and to be professional about programme management. A lot of that expertise has leached into the Foreign Office from DFID down the years, and we are now much less apologetic and timid about saying we can do projects and we can evaluate them. Certainly I would hope that my Department's fund stands that test.

The last thing I would say is that the Triennial Review process itself is part of the evaluation. That is why the Cabinet Office imposes this discipline on us, so we will, of course, study very carefully—and Foreign Office Ministers are doing that right now—how WFD has scored and, like my DFID colleagues here, we are very encouraged by what we are hearing from the new CEO and from the WFD board.

Chair: Sir Peter Luff, I am sure you will want to pick up on the Magna Carta references.

Sir Peter Luff: As Co-Chair of the Speakers'—and that is both of them—Advisory Group for the 2015 Anniversaries, of which Sir Malcolm is also a member, I must welcome Mr Fenn's comments about Magna Carta unreservedly and think what a good point he makes. I also emphasise it is the 750th anniversary of the De Montfort Parliament as well next year.

Chair: As a supplement to that, our report will be published in time for the 4 February CPA conference on that event and, indeed, we will be presenting our report at that conference.

Q121 Sir Peter Luff: I will go back and rethink whether we are doing enough work to exploit this particular aspect of our celebrations next year. Thank you for that, Mr Fenn, very much indeed.

On the subject of implementing lessons, we have heard that everyone knows what needs to be done; it just does not get done for some reason. Do you think you are learning the right lessons about parliamentary strengthening?

Mr Swayne: Certainly the projects that have been recently working I have very good impressions of. Clearly things go wrong. With the project in Bangladesh the decision by the Opposition not to contest the election rather buggered the project, but other than that, in particular, I would draw attention to the work that has been done in Uganda and there are other high spots. I think it is going well. I have been in the Department too short a time to have learned any lessons.

Q122 Sir Peter Luff: Let us help you. Rachel Kleinfeld of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace gave a very detailed account of the kinds of lessons that are not being learned by donors generally, not just British donors.

Jonathan Hargreaves: We certainly found that evidence extremely interesting too, and she makes a good point that a lot of work has been done in hoovering up the lessons from around the place and that new primary research on learning those lessons probably would be of limited value. The big game is in making sure that they are applied, absolutely. We do that, as you know, chiefly through our network of governance advisers and the tools with which we provide them. In process terms, our draft *How to note*, which we are hoping to have your advice on before we finalise it, is the place in which we have tried to bring together those lessons, and we invite all of our experts and offices around the world to draw on those. We also gather them from time to time, as we did last week, where we had a specific session, including some of the people who gave evidence to you, on helping those advisers to think through what we know and what we could do better on parliamentary strengthening.

We certainly have good mechanisms in place for learning and sharing lessons. The fact is that the challenge that Rachel lays down is a tough one: find the places where Parliaments have really and visibly become significantly better at providing oversight and helping citizens to have their views and needs taken into account, and then work out how that happened. There are good examples of that around the place, and I do agree that to work out the political economy, to come back to that word, of how that happened and then to

bring that back into our lesson learning would be a very valuable thing. However, in terms of the lessons about where donors have done well and not so well, we have learned those. The issue is to apply them, both in designing programmes, which is primarily our job, and also to help our various implementers, not least WFD and perhaps its colleagues in the UK, to draw on that evidence and apply it when they are implementing.

Shiona Ruhemann: Just to reinforce that, Rachel put the lessons very succinctly. She has boiled them down to four lessons and in all of the programmes that are active right now the leads are very aware of those and are definitely trying very hard to apply them. For example, co-ordination is one of the four and the need to be working in concert with other donors, but several others we have been talking about and everyone is grappling with those.

Q123 Sir Peter Luff: What we have heard as well, when we took evidence from the ODI, was that the wrong incentives are in place for donors in general. They want money out of the door quickly, to achieve quick results. Do you think you have the right incentives in place for your staff to make the right decisions?

Mr Swayne: Every project has reviews throughout the year, but the culmination is the annual review, and if a project is not performing, the officers have to take steps to get it back on track.

Q124 Sir Peter Luff: Are they performing against the right criteria?

Mr Swayne: I do not perceive the problem in that way. The system is working reasonably well.

Jonathan Hargreaves: It is an art not a science designing the dreaded logframes, as one of your witnesses called them last week and, absolutely, we are getting it wrong if we are providing incentives for ourselves that tend to short-term, activity-based results or at least that can only be a part of monitoring performance. We need certainly to be very smart about the kinds of results in terms of outcomes and what is really changing with regard to the objectives that we are setting ourselves about responsiveness and accountability.

No one says that is easy. We have some good input from USAID, for example, who are sharing the same kind of thinking that we are on how to do this better. The piece of work I mentioned earlier by ODI on being more politically smart and locally led also makes the point that we need to find ways of building in both attention to what outcomes we are trying to achieve and also enough flexibility to be able to change and adapt as we go along, as things become difficult, as we hit difficult territory. Our new Smart Rules in DFID help us with that quite a lot. It is giving us a lot more flexibility to be able to focus on what we are trying to achieve in the end, how we manage the risk of getting there and to be able to adapt as we go along to being able to make sure that we adapt to circumstances and to events, so that we can get to the end goal but not necessarily by the most direct route. Our quite big emphasis on better delivery over the last few months is helping us to be more adaptive and flexible.

Mr Swayne: It comes back again to the key to the *How to note*: the importance of the initial analysis of what is achievable and how we go about achieving it. That must be the guard against absurd measurements of how many seminars you have held and how many

training courses or, indeed, measuring the output at the end of that process by saying how more effective the Parliament has become by how many more laws it has passed or how many more parliamentary questions have been put down. These things are difficult to measure, but they are measurable and we have to be much smarter about it.

Q125 Sir Peter Luff: Talking about measuring things, how do you measure the skills of your staff in this area?

Mr Swayne: I can measure the staff, because we have 120 governance officers, of which 86 are deployed in-country, of which 25 have been employed locally because of their expertise. They are all required to have a thorough understanding of governance issues. We provide an online library of the latest evidence and learning abilities. We have just had the professional development conference, one of the sessions of which was largely based around your own findings in Burma. We are alive to the need to keep our people up to speed all the time. However, what they do not have is what we have in this room here: that direct experience of having been a Member of Parliament, being involved and that is a key element of the mix.

Q126 Sir Peter Luff: Well anticipated, Minister. My next question precisely is what can you do about that? How can you improve their understanding of Parliament effectively?

Mr Swayne: Well, you have this Committee as part of that and you have Ministers in DFID with their political experience and their political nous. I heard the exchanges that took place in the session beforehand in terms of whether there should be a board. I am all for seeking advice about particular projects and getting input from Members of Parliament who have expertise. Inevitably, whatever their experience and knowledge of a political economy, for people who have not done it—been an MP—I can see the advantage of having that available to you. However, I would not formalise it on a board because, equally, Members of Parliament will not always have the expertise and knowledge of a particular situation.

Q127 Sir Peter Luff: If you think a board does not address the strengths and qualities of your governance advisers, how do you get them to feel what Parliament really is?

Shiona Ruhemann: None of them have been elected; I think that is true. The advisers have not been elected. However, to get through the door either as a governance adviser or a social development adviser you are tested on your social and political analysis, and a lot of people work directly with political systems. The majority would have first-hand experience in overseas countries and some of us, including me, have worked in this Parliament. I was not elected, but I was an adviser to a frontbench MP, so a lot of us know a lot about the House of Commons as well. You do not even get through the door if you do not have that experience.

Q128 Chair: Just one final question: there is a huge turnover of MPs in some countries, but the biggest problem in many of the countries that we operate in is endemic corruption. It seems to me that there are two approaches to that. One is to see MPs and Parliamentarians as part of the corruption process. The other is to see them as part of the solution, which is giving them more information, making the system more accountable,

giving them the capacity to confront their own ministers and also to relate properly to their constituents in ways that can clean it up. Is that not something we should be aspiring to achieve? All of us have this problem of MPs saying, “Wherever I go, my constituents say they want money for weddings, funerals, hospitals, schools.” Our retort to that is, “It is not your job as an MP to do that, but unfortunately that is the perception. Your job is to fight for a system that delivers it for you and not to be part of the process that, in order to deliver that, you have to have your own network of bribes to fund your re-election.” Is all that not absolutely central to what parliamentary strengthening is all about and changing the culture? Otherwise if Parliaments go on operating like that, they will never, ever deliver proper democratic accountability.

Mr Swayne: That is absolutely right and a good and well-functioning Parliament operates to civilise the people they represent to change those attitudes about, “Your job is to provide X, Y and Z”—that sort of politics. We do an awful lot of work, and part of it is in the mechanics of strengthening scrutiny, the investment we put into public accounts committees and financial management, but it goes much beyond that into expectations of civil society. Again, I go back to the AAWAZ project that we have running and the project in Pakistan particularly, where you have communities working at community level to educate them as to what their legitimate expectations are of their representatives, both locally and at parliamentary level. Do you want to add anything to that?

Shiona Ruhemann: Nigeria is another very good example of that. That is exactly the approach that we are trying to work with, and the *How to note* is all about that. Rachel Kleinfeld’s paper is about that. The lessons that we have all drawn and drawn and drawn are about understanding the context, the informal institutions, the incentives and working on the basis of a very strong understanding of that.

Q129 Chair: Can I give you a piece of homework, Minister? In response to Jeremy Lefroy’s question, you said that DFID is highly rated for transparency. I can say that the Committee’s experience does not quite bear that out. Generally speaking, we find MPs and, indeed, other institutions in countries say they have little or no idea what donors, including the UK, are doing—people who perhaps ought to and ought to be given that knowledge. It may be partly their fault, but it must also be partly ours. I just wondered if you could check on that.

Mr Swayne: Certainly. We have just been through the process of what we call challenge meetings, where every team for which I am responsible has to review their programmes with me, and the question I ask, which is the question I ask every time a submission is put to me, is: how is this badged? How will people know that this comes from the United Kingdom? It is absolutely vital. We have to sell it to our constituents, so that they will support international development aid, because they know that it is making a difference. If the people we are helping do not know that it is from us and it is making a difference, clearly that is something we have to address.

Q130 Chair: It helps MPs to ask their Ministers what they are doing with the money; I think that is the point. The second thing, which is not directly relevant to this, is we found a contrasting situation in Liberia. DFID went out of its way to think of every conceivable bit of spending that was attributable to Liberia to give them the maximum total. In Sierra Leone, they did the exact opposite and held back quite significant chunks of spending, which they

did not add into the total and which we only found out afterwards. It is really helpful, I would say, for everybody to know what the bilateral programme is and what our contributions to the multilateral programmes are and, frankly, certainly for the Parliamentarians in those countries to be fully informed, because they waste an awful lot of time and energy just questioning who is doing what and why.

Shiona Ruhemann: Can I just reinforce what the Minister said earlier? We are number two on the International Aid Transparency Index.

Q131 Chair: It does not say a lot for the rest if that is the case.

Shiona Ruhemann: The USA is number 31. They may not know where to access it, but the information is getting out.

Mr Swayne: I take the point though.

Chair: It is a serious point, because we just do not feel that that information is there. If you agree with that point, Minister, the better informed people are, the more transformational parliamentary strengthening can become. Thank you very much. We have covered a lot of ground. I guess we have to declare a vested interest, as Parliamentarians, in that role. I do not think we are suggesting that the Government should spend huge amounts more money or huge amounts of money on it, but we do think there is more that can be done and, if you are making longer term commitments, it probably does require more money than is currently being put in. Ad hoc arrangements are all very well, but sometimes you have to make a commitment for the longer term. The role of WFD is interesting, coming from every direction. One way or another, it seems to me to be crucial to provide that connecting link that can raise the game and ensure smaller institutions, who do a very good niche job but complain all the time that getting in on the game is quite difficult, find it more accessible. That will be reflected in our report eventually. Thank you very much indeed.