

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: [Sustainable Development Goals](#), HC 337

Monday 11 January 2016

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Department for International Development](#)

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Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Fiona Bruce; Mr Nigel Evans; Mrs Helen Grant; Pauline Latham; Jeremy Lefroy;

Questions 152-193

Witnesses: **Rt Hon Justine Greening MP**, Secretary of State for International Development, **Gwen Hines**, Director, International Relations, Department for International Development, and **Neil Jackson**, Chief Statistician, Department for International Development, gave evidence.

Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. Secretary of State, Gwen and Neil, thank you very much for being with us, not least at a rearranged time, because of events in the Chamber. I think I speak on behalf of the whole Committee in welcoming the strength and content of the response that you gave in the House to the urgent question from my colleague regarding the situation in Syria. We have quite a large number of issues we want to try to get through with you today, and my aim is to run for about an hour and a quarter, until about 6.45. We have 17 questions, so I think we are going to need us to be quite concise and reasonably concise answers as well. I am going to go straight to Nigel to ask the first question.

Q152 Mr Evans: Thanks very much, Chairman. We were in New York at the time of the signing and we saw how hard you and your team were working during that period. The SDGs became effective on 1 January. Is there going to be a national action plan in the United Kingdom?

Justine Greening: There will not be, per se, an action plan for the UK, in that the action plan we have is actually delivering on the manifesto, on which we were elected. Predominantly our effort within DFID will be to work with other countries around the world to help them to deliver on the SDGs for us. We will go through a process of understanding how we can be transparent, nevertheless, about how we are putting into practice the fact that these SDGs are universal, which was an important part of them.

I should at this stage also introduce the two officials who we have with us, who are here because they can, in part, help explain some of the more detailed discussions at the UN, but also, Nigel, some of that tracking that we will need in place domestically to look at how we are making our own progress as a country on the SDGs. Perhaps I can ask Neil and then Gwen to introduce yourselves and your roles.

Neil Jackson: My name is Neil Jackson. I am Chief Statistician at DFID, and have been there for about three years. My role is really leading DFID's engagement with the indicator process, working in very close association with the ONS, the Office for National Statistics.

Gwen Hines: I am Gwen Hines. I am International Relations Director at DFID and I am very much engaged in the discussions with the UN, the EU and other development partners on how we take forward the goals.

Q153 Mr Evans: Taking your first answer, I will leave the international aspects to somebody else and just concentrate on the domestic side. Without a national action plan within the United Kingdom, how can you be absolutely certain that there is going to be a proper cross-governmental approach to achieving the SDGs in the UK?

Justine Greening: I will give you an initial answer and then I will ask Neil perhaps to follow up on some of the statistical discussion. First of all, we are accountable for delivering on our manifesto, which covers a huge range of what is in the sustainable development goals, obviously. Just to take Goal 8 on employment, one of the things that this Government have very much focused on has been sorting out our economy and creating jobs. I do not see any contradiction, frankly, between what we have in our manifesto and delivering on the SDGs.

The process that we are now going through is understanding what tracking we already have in place. Where there is already a natural crossover there between what we need to track for the SDGs, which is not quite bottomed out yet—there is a process happening at the UN that will probably finish around March time on indicators—then it is about understanding how that translates into what we already track here in the UK and where the gaps are. The ONS has very much led on that process within the UK, which will then take the final indicators that we get out of the UN and understand what the tracking is that we need here in the UK. Neil, do you just want to talk about the leadership role John Pullinger has had on the UN Statistical Commission, that piece of work happening at the UN and the work that is now underway here in the UK to make sure that we can do our own domestic tracking of SDGs?

Neil Jackson: Yes, certainly. The UN Statistical Commission is leading on setting the indicators that allow the decision to separate out the political process of setting goals and targets from the technical process to identify a set of indicators that could be used for global reporting of progress. John Pullinger, the UK National Statistician, as Chair of the UN Statistical Commission, has been overseeing that process.

The work is still not complete; the UN Statistical Commission is due to consider a proposal for a set of indicators at its meeting in March. At the minute, there are something like 229 indicators in the frame, of which around 149 are more or less ready for signing off. They are classified as green, but there is further work on a further 80 that is still taking place. This is a very big challenge in terms of identifying these indicators. Not

everything within this broad agenda are the ready measures. The UN Statistical Commission is making progress on that.

Within the UK then, the Office for National Statistics represents the UK on a working group that has been developing this proposal for indicators and they are starting to think now about domestic implementation. The UK will need to report from a UK perspective on all of these indicators. Some of the indicators are more relevant. Although it is a universal agenda, some of the indicators are less relevant to the agenda here as in other countries, if you compare the challenges in the UK to a landlocked country in Africa. Therefore, one of the questions is whether there should be national indicators to go with that. We are consulting across UK Government Departments about whether there are indicators that would be aligned to the Government's own plans and priorities for the next few years to see where there would be national indicators, but this is still fairly early days in terms of how this will play through.

Q154 Fiona Bruce: Good afternoon, Secretary of State. In September, you told the Committee that you will be working with the Cabinet Office to develop a cross-government response to the goals. Beyond 2015 has called on the Government to create an implementation task force, chaired by the Prime Minister and co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office, to ensure effective collaboration on SDG implementation. What are your plans to put a formal mechanism in place to facilitate this co-ordination?

Justine Greening: We are in discussion with the Cabinet Office about how to now make sure that the cross-government response to the SDGs is in place. Neil has talked about some of the accountability mechanisms and the reporting mechanism. If I just step back one step, internationally, the initial plans are that there is likely to be some kind of an annual high-level political forum meeting, which looks at progress and might look at particular elements of the SDGs, different elements each year, and then a four-yearly across-the-piece review. As Neil is setting out, we want to be able to talk about our UK progress and delivery.

When the SDGs were put in place, it was with the understanding that they will be country-specific. There is an SDG on oceans and, of course, if you are a landlocked country that is less applicable to you. There is a clear sense that we now need to take what was finally delivered, work through what those actual indicators are going to be, which will probably be finalised in March, and then understand how it relates back to our agenda. We were one of the countries arguing for it to be universal, so we think that that is one of the strengths of the next set of goals. We fully expect that there will be a cross-government approach to ensuring we can demonstrate that we are delivering on those goals themselves.

Fiona Bruce: Thank you. What I was really seeking to draw out was this cross-government approach and accountability, how Departments across our UK Government are going to be held to account to fulfil their roles and what DFID's role, and indeed your individual role, would be in working with the Cabinet Office to do this.

Justine Greening: Our role will be working with the Cabinet Office to ensure that there is a cross-government structural process in place that can be used to ensure that we are tracking progress. Of course, the majority of DFID's effort is understandably going to be on working with other countries that are developing to help them to deliver their SDGs. Of course, domestic Departments will take a lead on domestic delivery.

Fiona Bruce: At the moment, there is not perhaps a specific plan to create an implementation task force in the way that Beyond 2015 has suggested.

Justine Greening: There is not per se, but we are in a process of working out what we will need to have in place as a Government, in order to be able to take whatever the indicators are, which themselves are not finalised yet, and then show some delivery against them.

Q155 Jeremy Lefroy: Thank you, Secretary of State. Clearly there are areas, such as taxation and international trade, where decisions taken in one part or the UK Government, or by the UK Government as part of the European Union in the case of trade, could have substantial positive or negative implications for other developing countries. What is DFID doing to ensure that, where there are such concerns, they are flagged up at an early stage with the Department, whether it is BIS or Treasury?

Justine Greening: We are part of the write-arounds that happen across Government. One of the things that happens in the background that is very rarely seen, but obviously, Chair, as a former Minister you will also know, is the work that happens at officials' level in order to broadly ensure some kind of policy coherence across the piece and, where there is a requirement for trade-offs, understanding what they are and effectively decisioning them with eyes wide open.

At the EU level, you are right to flag up that this issue of policy coherence does matter. We are preparing for the Syrian conference right now and one of the things, at an EU level, that we could have happen that would help create jobs in Jordan would be a more flexible interpretation of rules of origin. This was something that we had had on the EU agenda for some time and it was discussed at the last ministers' meeting in mid-December, about the need for taking these SDGs and frankly ensuring that EU member state policy aligns to push us in the same direction consistently.

There is a recognition that, perhaps too often, there have been different commissions and parts of the EU that have pulled in different directions. Getting them all working consistently is going to be important if we are going to see some progress. I would point to trade and making progress on freer trade as a critical area, particularly for developing countries in creating jobs and Goal 8, for example.

Q156 Jeremy Lefroy: One suggestion that this Committee made in its report on refugees, which was published last week, was that, for instance, there could be greater co-ordination, even within DFID, in respect of CDC and CDC perhaps expanding its remit to enable it to make investments in Jordan, Lebanon and other countries which desperately need investments to create jobs, both for their own citizens and, I hope, for the refugees if legislation is passed there so that refugees can take up employment. I obviously realise that there will be a Government response to our report, but I wondered if you had any early indication of what that might be.

Justine Greening: Thank you for the report, which I thought was very broad-ranging and characteristically constructive in its nature. We will respond to that. We recapitalised CDC for the first time in 20 years, because we have recognised for some time that this issue of jobs and employment is critical. We have seen how that also applies, dare I say, to refugee and humanitarian situations, as well as more day-to-day development. CDC has an investment

framework, and you are right to flag up that, over time, we need to continue looking at that framework to see how it should evolve to be successful in today's world, as well as being in the past. It is worth pointing out, though, that in the past year CDC investments have helped create 1.3 million jobs, which is a huge amount.

You talked specifically about Syria and the Jordanian challenge. The only other point I would make there is that some of the barriers to job creation are reforms within Jordan itself, and those are being discussed at the moment within Jordan, which we very much welcome. There are also reforms and changes at the EU level. There is investment there that we can harness from the international community and from multilaterals for example, I think like the World Bank, but actually if it is going to have a chance of making an impact on the ground and be able to flow in, it is actually policy reform as much as anything else that we need to see for jobs to be created and, to take a very simple example, enabling Syrian refugees to work legally.

Q157 Jeremy Lefroy: I have just one final brief question. The International Development (Reporting and Transparency) Act of 2006 requires DFID to report on policy coherence in its annual reports. Are there plans to strengthen this reporting mechanism and perhaps update it, in the light of the SDGs and their implications for cross-government working?

Justine Greening: We are looking at whether we need to update that and, perhaps following this, I can write formally to the Committee to set out the situation. I know you had also been looking at this area and whether we needed to make any changes.

Gwen Hines: The Act is wide-ranging. It does include these commitments on policy coherence and transparency. It also very much talks about the Millennium Development Goals, so we are looking at the moment at the best way to update it without causing a lot of process, so that we can actually focus on the delivery.

Q158 Mrs Grant: Good afternoon, Secretary of State. You may have just briefly answered this in part a little earlier, but are there any plans to produce some sort of departmental strategy on the actual implementation of the goals? If so, when will it be published and what will it look like? If not, why do you think you do not need one?

Justine Greening: You are right that the starting point for our work is this new set of SDGs, and we now also have our newly published UK aid strategy, which very much talks about our strategy behind how we want to invest our ring-fenced money, our 0.7%. It talks a lot about how we want to work and see that strategy delivered more across Government in the future than it has been in the past, and have other Departments working alongside DFID in helping to drive development. We now take those overarching strategic objectives, the SDGs and our UK aid strategy, and we will now go through and are in the middle of the bilateral aid review process and also the multilateral aid review process to understand practically what that will mean in relation to where we are working, our geographical focus, but also what we are doing. Of course, our manifesto makes some specific commitments in specific areas, which we want to ensure we deliver. We are in the thick of those processes.

We will reach a conclusion over the next few months and that will then take the overall strategy and work out what the plan is that sits behind it. Of course, as in the past, we

have been very transparent about publishing country operational plans. We also have Dev Tracker as a website telling people what is going on. That level of transparency has been important to us in the Department and we want to see that continue.

Q159 Mrs Grant: Am I right in saying that there will be an all-encompassing, inclusive written strategy or document that we can refer to and look at, or are you just saying that, together, if all the various documents that you have been producing and you have put on your website are read, they will suffice and they will provide the information you need?

Justine Greening: We are just looking for the best way to ensure that, when we get through these important processes, we can package it up so that it is accessible. In the past, what we have tended to do is country-by-country documents, so that people who are interested in particular areas can look at what the strategy is for that country. Again, we are getting through a process. I am interested to get the Committee's views on whether you feel how we have presented things in the past is the best that we can do. We have always been committed to being very transparent, so we are continuing to ask ourselves whether we can do a better job of setting out how what we are planning to do is there and also transparently setting out how we are then delivering against that.

Q160 Chair: Could that be a new White Paper? Is a possible outcome of the process a White Paper?

Justine Greening: We feel that we have set out the overall strategy. The key is getting through the bilateral and multilateral aid review processes to be more specific and concrete about what it means for our portfolio of investment going forward and some of the differences in how we are delivering it through other Departments.

Q161 Mrs Grant: How will you be able to ensure that progress towards achieving the SDGs is pursued uniformly, not just by Department officials but by DFID-funded partners and contractors?

Justine Greening: First of all, the multilateral aid review gives us a very structured process for looking at whether the partners that we work with in the multilateral system have the same strategies and share the same levels of priorities, as well as representing value for money. That is a core process for us. Whenever we are deciding to make an investment in a particular area, for example a commitment to get 11 million children into school and keep them in school, we will always look at what is the best way we can deliver that in terms of reliability, value for money and impact on the ground. Sometimes that will be through multilateral partners; sometimes it will be through other partners, for example NGOs. We have a very structured process, particularly in our procurement team, for driving good value.

Standing back from that, all of it matters, because development really is a team game now, more than it has ever been before. The most effective models for development are those that pull in the private sector, donor countries like the UK, countries themselves, civil society and philanthropists. Getting those corralled together is, as much as anything, the name of the game, which is why SDG 17 on partnership is very important to see delivered.

Q162 Mrs Grant: The plan sounds really good, but it is not easy. We see that. How will you monitor it? How will you actually check progress and see how it is happening?

Justine Greening: Wherever we are investing we will, wherever we can, set very clear, specific results that we expect to get. We then track programmes on an annual basis. I also have a key supplier management programme in place, which enables me to track not only the countries, but the kinds of suppliers that are delivering for us. That means I can see who is consistently doing a good job and who is not. We are now working with some of our NGO partners to look at how we can have another similar approach. The reason that that is important is that sometimes means we have to change to get better. That is a good challenge for us and that is what we have done working with our private sector suppliers. It has unlocked better value and we think we can now take a similar approach with our NGOs. That is a very positive step for us.

Q163 Chair: The timeframe for the SDGs is a 15-year timeframe, with some very ambitious targets attached to it. A lot of the DFID programmes, for understandable reasons, tend to be much shorter-term, perhaps with a three-to-five-year period. Are you looking at whether we could have longer-term country programmes? We will come on to the aid strategy more broadly in a moment but, with the renewed emphasis on fragile states, is there a particularly strong case for programmes that last longer than five years?

Justine Greening: You are absolutely right. Indeed, this question of how we now take and deliver on the SDGs is framed for us as a country. They are over a significant time period. In a sense, you have two halves of a 30-year plan. We have got through the first half and are now on the second half. There is a long way to go, but we have also come a long way. That obviously applies to the UK too.

Many of our programmes have a long-term nature to them. I am going to ask Gwen to give her perspective, not least because she has been in country at earlier stages of her career, so it would be good to get Gwen's reflection. I am constantly trying to strike this balance between long-term transformational impact and an exit plan. We should not necessarily always be committing for long-term involvement; what we should be doing is committing for long-term impact, perhaps through initial seed funding that allows systems and programmes to be delivered, but with a clear sense that, at various points in it, they will then start to be country-owned. Yes, there are some programmes that, just by their nature, are short-term. Gwen, do you want to give your sense of that?

Gwen Hines: I would be happy to. One of the big focuses at the moment is on the diagnostic stage. This is something that DFID has already introduced. We have done poverty diagnostics and growth diagnostics across all the bilateral programmes. They are very much informing the business plan that the Secretary of State talked about for what we, as DFID, do next. It obviously takes account of the challenges within a country and what others do. Even if a programme sets out maybe three to five years, you do it with a long-term perspective.

When I was head of Malawi, for example, my predecessor took over a big health programme. At the time, there were 10 doctors in the whole of Malawi. It took five years to train doctors, so you knew that you would not get an increased number of doctors for five years but, from then on, obviously you see an increase coming through. Although the

first batch of funding is linked to a specific time period to make sure it is really accountable and very clear on the objectives, there is then a handover between heads and between programmes to make sure you are continuing to pursue those objectives and also to take stock.

With the Smart Rules and the other changes in DFID, one of the big focuses has been on adaptive programming. As this Committee has said, we are very much learning as we implement the programmes and we can adjust to new circumstances, if governance or other things change. It is also something that other international donors are looking at. What is the right length of time for a programme? There is nothing that says it has to be two years, three years or five years. It can very much be fixed on the goal you are trying to achieve.

Q164 Chair: With the greater emphasis on fragile states, if we move to a post-conflict situation in countries like Yemen, Somalia or indeed Syria, do you have a sense of how then we could look to a programme that would perhaps be more in the 10-to-15-year timeframe than three-to-five?

Justine Greening: We have looked at longer timeframes, where that has been appropriate, but the reality is that it is often very hard to plan out financially in any meaningful way, not least because my budget is fixed by the Spending Review. I am not sure that I would be comfortable projecting what cash I should plan on beyond that. That is a matter for the Chancellor to run the next Spending Review beyond that. The bottom line is that we are always looking to have long-term transformational impact.

What is increasingly apparent for me is that, if you look particularly at some programmes in DRC, we are learning that they need to be flexible in nature. Depending on whether progress is slower or faster, we can maybe scale up one bit and pull back perhaps on the humanitarian piece, because actually we have seen progress. It is really making sure that we have built into those programmes a clear sense, frankly, of what might happen and whether we can reorient them easily if we do well. In the case of other countries, is there an ability to tone up the humanitarian piece of it, if that is what is required?

It is about flexibility, I would say, Chair, more than the term, in a way. What you are doing is constantly making sure that you are keeping up the options for future programming, whilst also never giving a sense that, somehow, it is entirely unconditional on whether results are achieved on the ground. Of course it is not; we want results, we want value for money and we do not want the countries we are working with to ever just simply assume that the UK will continue putting in resources, irrespective of the context.

Q165 Mrs Grant: You have spoken in earlier evidence, not today but prior to today, about the challenges of raising trillions of dollars in order to satisfy and implement the goals. How will this affect DFID's approach to that implementation?

Justine Greening: The Addis Ababa conference that we had in July last year was vital, and it could not have happened five years before. What you saw was a recognition that development is so much more now than frankly aid money and ODA spending by countries like the UK. Although that is important, increasingly it is about the private sector and also

about so-called domestic resource mobilisation. It is about countries themselves putting in place the tax systems, so that they get the benefits of growth financially. It is about them managing their natural resources effectively.

For us, increasingly over recent years we have looked at leveraging. In other words, how much, with our money, can we pull in from those other sources to sit alongside our own efforts? For example, one of the things we will be doing over this Parliament is doubling our investment in tax capability because, actually, as we have seen in Afghanistan, every £1 we have put in has created a huge return on tax dollars that that country has been able to raise. We increasingly look at financing in terms of a team game, as well as how we actually achieve things on the ground and with what partners.

Q166 Mrs Grant: I hear what you say in terms of leveraging. Clearly, it is going to be absolutely essential, but we also know that there has been a failure of the markets to incentivise private investment in the sustainable goals. Is that a concern? Have you any thoughts on what we can do to deal with that?

Justine Greening: There was a time when the private sector did not really see where its role was in development. They saw it predominantly as almost a government-to-government relationship. Now that is changing. If I went back to innovation and the early adopter, the corporate sector is in that innovation. There are some early adopters, but what we have not seen is a mainstreaming of development through the corporate world, which we will need to if we are really going to get all of the innovation and the investment that the private sector can bring. That is the next stage.

If you talk to people like Paul Polman at Unilever, who has been very involved for some time now, that is the big debate. In fact, increasingly companies that have already taken steps into this area—welcome steps in my view—are looking at how to work together more effectively. They have actually set up a commission to see how they can mainstream this within the corporate world more in the future than they have in the past. That is going to be critical if we are going to deliver on the next set of SDGs. That is the reality. If you are going to do water and sanitation, if you are going to jobs or energy, a lot of these goals require private investment, just as we see here in the UK, if they are going to have the same kind of a developed country that we have here.

Q167 Mrs Grant: Are you confident that we will get that corporate private sector buy-in?

Justine Greening: We are on a path that means that, over time, we are getting more buy-in. Does that level of buy-in and the ability of the private sector to go into brand new markets ebb and flow? You see commodity prices. I know, from my time in industry, there is a whole range of things that might mean that you do or do not invest. What we have to do is, wherever we are in that cycle, have the highest potential outcome. That means fundamentally winning the argument with businesses about why they have a role to play, but also that there are opportunities there from investing in some of these newer countries.

The last thing I want to say is that a lot of our work is about domestic investment, job creation and local entrepreneurship. My comments have focused around inward investment but, fundamentally, a lot of our work—most of our work—is focused on unlocking access to

capital in countries themselves and improving value chains in countries themselves, helping agricultural product to get better for the many, many smallholders who form the bulk of that sector of the economy.

Q168 Fiona Bruce: You have touched on some of the points I wanted to raise, but perhaps you could augment them. The conclusion of the World Trade Organization Conference in December marked the end of a landmark year for international development, where the UK made a number of global commitments. Can you talk us through the processes underway at DFID to consolidate the outcomes and their implications for the Department?

Justine Greening: I will get Gwen to chip in at the end but, for us, this has been important. Actually, we have a joint unit with BIS, a trade unit, which brings together DFID and BIS officials to look at how we can use trade for development. Of course, that original agreement in Bali is potentially transformational. It was then followed up at the end of last year. There was an estimate that, for sub-Saharan Africa, it could potentially deliver \$10 billion a year of economic growth, which is a huge prize if we can get it.

What do we now need to do? We have the International Growth Centre and a suite of other projects that are about helping to provide the advice for developing countries to be able to make the most of those trade deals. Indeed, we have provided support for those countries, so that they were able to better negotiate at those WTO talks in the first place, so that they could have a stronger voice around the table than perhaps they had had in the past.

The final point is on tax. When we had the presidency of the G7, we put tax, trade and transparency on our agenda. Now, working with developing countries to help them make the best of those better international tax rules and tax agreements is quite important, if again we are going to see developing countries reap the rewards of inward investment and growth, as it takes place.

Gwen Hines: I may just add a couple of points if it is helpful. As the Secretary of State said, there is a joint unit between BIS and DFID that takes this forward. A lot of trade policy work is done across the EU as well. The progress on agricultural subsidies is something we have all wanted for a long time. There was also progress on technology, which is really important and a huge opportunity, but, as the Secretary of State said before, the key is to help developing countries make use of this new access. Access by itself does not actually guarantee that people will trade more; we have seen that in the past, with all the agreements we have done for duty-free quota-free access for least-developed countries.

DFID is doing work on economic development, making sure that SMEs have access to finance, pushing skills development for people, so you actually have the skills in country, those kinds of business environments, regulation and tackling corruption at the local level. All of those things are also very important, and very much part of the future DFID business plans at the country level, where again we work very much with multilateral partners like the EU, the World Bank and others.

Q169 Chair: Moving on to the aid strategy, which the Secretary of State referred to, the new strategy was published in November, we started this inquiry before that and the SDGs were

adopted in September. We have received quite a lot of evidence on this from interested parties. If I can quote two, Beyond 2015, the Bond organisation, have expressed concern that “the SDGs are not expressly referenced in the four strategic objectives in the new aid strategy”, and they say, “We are concerned that the low profile given to the goals will make it difficult for the UK to be a leader in their delivery.” Slightly more bluntly, Owen Barder in the Centre for Global Development said, “This is very much an aid strategy written in the Treasury.” Can you provide us with any reassurance of your own and DFID’s role in the shaping of the aid strategy?

Justine Greening: I can, Chair. It is a joint document. It is important for my Department, at a time when we are taking difficult decisions across government, in the context of the Spending Review, to set out very clearly to taxpayers what our strategy is, but also why I passionately believe it is in the national interest. I do not accept that there is some kind of either/or discussion about whether we should help other countries develop or invest here in the UK. I actually think that UK success, in the long term, is contingent on having a more prosperous, more stable world and that is what this is helping to deliver.

I do not think that the Committee should put over-store on the numbers of times we refer to the SDGs. The reality is that we have been as committed as any country to development in recent years, more so in reality. We are the only G7 country to have met our 0.7% commitment. This is a document that set out our broad strategic objectives but, frankly, if you judge us by what we are doing, you can see our level of commitment on development. Indeed, if you look at what happened in Paris again, this is a global challenge on climate change. We were one of those leading countries there, shaping a positive outcome, which again is critical for development. That is why they were the sustainable development goals. It was about pulling together those two agendas. No, you can be absolutely assured of our ongoing commitment. Indeed, what this sets out is how, frankly, this is going to be in the UK’s interest. That is an important argument that we need to make to the UK public who, in the end, are the taxpayers that are funding this.

Q170 Chair: You are absolutely right to say that we should not see any contradiction between the national interest and what is in the broader international interest. Do you think perhaps it was a mistake, though, not to mention the SDGs more prominently in the strategy?

Justine Greening: We were very clear about our desire to finally eradicate extreme poverty, which will be the first time any generation can say that they have done that. We were very clear to talk about this need to leave no one behind. There were some very clear threads that ran through this document that ran through the SDGs. Let us not forget that it was our Prime Minister who was one of the co-chairs on the high-level panel that did one of the key documents that informed the SDGs. I actually think that this was a fantastic chance for us to pull all of that work together, but then present it to a British public in a way that, hopefully, could make the case about why we believe that this is in our interest as well. Doing the right thing is also doing the smart thing for Britain.

Q171 Mrs Grant: A growing amount of the ODA money is going to be spent by other Government Departments, subject of course to the same monitoring and standards that DFID spending is subject to. Will you be able to encourage an ongoing focus on the SDGs across all ODA expenditure?

Justine Greening: I expect to see other Government Departments delivering on the SDG agenda as we are. It is important to me that this is a cross-government effort on our development strategy. I did not want this to be a strategy that was simply siloed in DFID because, in terms of what we have talked about, for example trade, clearly we needed to marshal the talents, the resources and the expertise across Government.

If you look at the tax capability unit that we have set up jointly with HMRC, all of that is telling us that, if we are going to have a successful strategy, it needs to be owned by the whole Government and that means delivered by the whole Government. Of course it will be rooted in and led by DFID, but this strategy has set out that more of that will be delivered by other Departments, which is what I want to see. We will work with them to make sure that they can achieve value for money. We will also set ourselves the challenge of continually doing better on value for money over the next five years, and we will make sure that there are strong processes in place to ensure that there is an overall alignment of effort, whichever Department aid money is being spent in.

Q172 Mrs Grant: Might that process, which I think is very important, include some sort of monitoring or measure of ODA or DFID expenditure, as against each and every one of the goals?

Justine Greening: We are updating our internal systems within DFID, so that we have a much better chance in the future of doing the different kinds of cuts of data that can help us understand what our programmes are delivering. Clearly there are many now that we have ensured do not just deliver on one objective, for example jobs, but might also particularly deliver on women and girls. They might particularly deliver on tackling corruption. They can do all of those things simultaneously, so we have been quite keen to make sure that we can better track the breadth of our work.

Going back to your earlier point, Helen, there are some cross-departmental funds like the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund that of course have a cross-departmental structure to make sure that they are properly administered, properly tracked and accountable to those different Departments that are doing work through that kind of a fund. For the CSSF, it is NSC-overseen.

Q173 Mrs Grant: There will be a measure of the expenditure against the goals. Is that right?

Justine Greening: I would expect that that is the case. We have to get through the indicators but, broadly, if you look at things like the Darwin fund it is clearly focused on perhaps one or two of the goals, in particular on oceans and ecosystem. You can start to see how we can notionally align. There is always a question about whether we can get 100% accuracy of every single pound, but it is our intention that we do broadly track the weight of where our spend goes. We need to.

Q174 Fiona Bruce: You and your colleagues in DFID have always been very co-operative with the Committee. Presumably you would think it reasonable, in light of the ODA money

being spent by other Departments and the SDGs having a degree of responsibility now for delivery on the part of other Departments, for us to call, if we wished to, for evidence from Ministers from those other Departments to account to this Committee.

Justine Greening: I think it is important. I have always felt that the Select Committee system plays a vital role in accountability for all ministerial Departments. In this case, where you have an overall strategy that is principally delivered by one, but of course has a significant but smaller element delivered by others, there is, it seems to me, a need to work out, through the Select Committee system, how that piece of it that is outside of DFID can be held to account effectively.

Of course, ICAI is something you set up, the independent aid watchdog. Alison Evans has set out clearly in her statement of intent that she will make sure that ICAI plays its role in scrutinising aid spend across Government, not just DFID. That can hopefully provide some additional accountability mechanism for ensuring that there is value for money and strong strategy behind aid spend.

Q175 Pauline Latham: First of all, I apologise for being late, but I had another meeting, so I apologise for missing the beginning. How will DFID support developing countries to conduct baseline studies and monitor progress against the SDGs?

Justine Greening: I might ask Neil if he can talk a little bit about the UN process around this. It is important. It is informing the indicators exercise. Of course, if you cannot measure things, it is very hard to track.

Pauline Latham: If you do not know where you have started from, you do not know where you have got to.

Justine Greening: Indeed, when you look at some of the weaknesses of the original MDGs and you talk to people who were involved in setting them up, they will say that it was the lack of baselining in some areas that made them so hard to track. Actually, we then started from scratch, having set ourselves a target, to work out how to put in place the tracking as well. That is a challenge at country level.

Some of the capacity-building work we do is with statistical agencies—organisations like the ONS in other countries. We will continue to do that work. It would be interesting just to get a sense from Neil of how big a challenge it is seen at the UN, in terms of some countries' ability to simply track their own progress.

Neil Jackson: This is a big challenge. There are lessons we can learn from the process with the MDGs, where we saw quite a lot of progress. The MDGs were set and they had to go back 10 years before the baseline was set whereas, for the SDGs, we want to baseline for 2015. Under the MDGs, there was progress in terms of different countries being able to report on an increasing number of the MDG indicators. The challenge of the SDGs is much bigger, with a lot more indicators to report on and therefore that much more of a challenge. At the minute, we are taking stock in terms of what needs to happen to allow countries to report on that. How can the international community support that?

DFID has been a long-term supporter of statistical capacity-building in countries. One of the challenges is actually joining up support through the international community.

Sometimes international support can be fragmented, and we traditionally work through the PARIS21 partnership to join up the approach, where the principles are working through national systems. That process for reporting should be nationally led and, within the countries themselves, there is a need to join up their own systems between their own national statistics institute and the line Ministries, but there is also a need to co-ordinate donor support.

The other dimension that is new with the SDGs as well is the opportunity to draw on support from a wider set of players, in the private sector and civil society. We are looking to the new Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, which DFID is an anchor partner of, to help bring in a wider set of players to report and to help with this process. It should be country-led. It is a big challenge, but this is an important area where we think we can make a lot of progress.

Justine Greening: That global collaborative effort, which Neil has just talked about, was what we launched our partnership on at the UN General Assembly last September. We are very much one of the founding members trying to make sure that there is this more international approach to having good data. It is critical; otherwise, with all the plans in the world, we will not get down the track five, 10 or 15 years and be able to properly see whether we have moved forward. If this was the *Week* magazine, it would be in the “Boring but important” column. You need good data and you need disaggregated data, even in terms of gender, age, etc. This is a huge part of this, which is very easy to miss in the discussion on how important, for example, health, education or jobs are, but we are on it.

Q176 Pauline Latham: In terms of something specific—pick a country, any country—how would you measure health? How would you help them to get the baseline on their health statistics? What would you do? Would you look at how the hospitals are set up? Would you look at how many doctors they have, how many nurses, how many patients they treat or what type of illnesses they treat? What would you look at to see what the progress would be?

Neil Jackson: The starting point is the indicators. Insofar as there are indicators against some of the health targets, the aim would be to identify how we measure those indicators. In terms of how you do it, in a sense, the World Health Organization has been one of the organisations to which we look to help push this forward. They are part of a health data collaborative, which has tried to look at some of these indicators. One of the things that they have done is to simplify the number of indicators for health. At one stage, there were something like 900 indicators, which is vast. They have now distilled that and identified 100 indicators that they think are important.

Nevertheless, that is just the starting point. Once you have indicators, the question is how you measure. The challenge there is seeing, in some ways, improving the health data as an integral part of how you strengthen the health system itself. That is challenging. DFID obviously has different programmes that are working in this space but, internationally, there is a need to work collaboratively with others on this health data. That is quite an early stage, but that is the sort of initiative that could help to make progress.

Justine Greening: It is understanding where the priorities are. If you are not registering deaths and the cause of death in a country, it is very hard to understand where to prioritise your health budget. If you have not even done a census for the last 20 years, which is often a

challenge in some countries when they have been unstable, it is very hard to know how many people you are having to deliver any kind of public service for. The data bit is important but, as Neil says, it is a complex process to make sure that we can really deliver on that data revolution that we talked about in the high-level panel report that we set out following the Secretary-General's panel of experts.

Q177 Mrs Grant: You have touched on it, Secretary of State and Neil, but I would like a little bit more. The question is: how will you be able to assist developing countries in achieving their goals? I believe you have touched on it in relation to data. How will the effectiveness of that assistance be monitored and evaluated?

Justine Greening: Broadly, it will come out of the bilateral aid review and multilateral aid review process, which will, alongside the diagnostic work that Gwen has talked about, help us to work out what the needs are, but then what our role can be as a country in helping to meet them alongside other actors' efforts as well. That then gives us our plan of action, if you like, against which there is a results framework. We then have an annual process of monitoring the performance of programmes. If they are outside the tramlines of what we have set them, in terms of what kind of variation you might expect normally, then they end up being escalated for decision. How can we improve them? Can we improve them? If we cannot improve them, do we think they are they still value for money to go ahead with?

One of the things I have been really keen to put in place in DFID is a rigorous set of processes and management information, having staff very clear on who owns programmes. Every single programme in that Department has a senior responsible officer or we are going through the process of making sure that there is a name against every programme, so that people know which ones they are responsible and accountable for. Fundamentally, that then means we can put our time into fixing the problems, especially when we are going to be spending a significant proportion of our time in fragile and conflict states, which are innately very hard and complicated places in which to work.

Chair: We will move to the final section of questions, which try to focus a bit more on a sense of what the priorities will be and how they are going to be set, both the substance of that and processes to achieve that. You have touched on most of that, but we want to develop it somewhat in questions.

Q178 Fiona Bruce: Initially, in September you told us that you did not want to see the cherry-picking of goals, but it is a vast agenda. How is DFID planning to strategically focus its resources to achieve progress? What will be different now from previously?

Justine Greening: The reality is that the goals are the starting point for where we act as a Department. It is also fair to say that we very much played our role in trying to make sure that they were the right set of goals that reflected what we felt was required for a successful development strategy globally. What that meant was they reflected a lot of the shifts that we have already put into the Department in recent years, for example women and girls, the importance of jobs in employment and skills, climate and sustainability, and the increasing focus latterly on youth, recognising that many of our programmes are focused on people who are young. We are identifying those as specific targets, but also mainstreaming those across the whole portfolio, so that we do not have siloed projects. Wherever possible, we are looking at how they can deliver on a whole range of priorities that we have.

Our portfolio will range broadly across the SDGs, but there will be some areas, as I noted earlier, where frankly other Departments play a much bigger role. Of course, we are working alongside DECC on the International Climate Fund and Goal 7 on energy. We are working alongside DEFRA on the Darwin fund. We are working with BIS on trade and some of the research investment that we will be putting through some of our best institutions to help us understand how we can rise to the challenge on global health security. We will have a broad range in DFID, it is fair to say, but there will be some Departments that are particularly focused on certain goals that come out of it and play a bigger role on delivering those for us, as a Government.

Q179 Fiona Bruce: Thank you. Am I right that you will certainly continue to focus on areas where you have a proven track record or comparative advantage, like the ones you have mentioned—women and girls, jobs and livelihoods, and young people? Will you be looking in a focused way at any SDGs currently not addressed in the DFID policy?

Justine Greening: We do have a very comprehensive aid programme. That has perhaps reflected the fact that we have achieved 0.7% and that has enabled us to look more in the round, as a country and as a Department, at the different elements of a successful aid strategy in a country. I guess what I am saying is that I expect other Departments now to play a stronger role in delivering some of the SDGs in the future than they perhaps had the wherewithal to do in the past.

The key for us is making sure that we do not duplicate, but also that we perhaps still sometimes step into areas where we have not had as much experience, but where we think there is a gap. That is what we have done in jobs and also what we are doing now, if you look at the Syria conference, in the context of education, in protracted crises and jobs. These are not areas that anyone has really acted in, at any kind of scale, but that is what is required. As the needs change, Fiona, then we will go into some new areas.

We have been at the forefront of that No Lost Generation initiative. It was set up by the UK, working with UNICEF and the EU, but it has turned out to be quite a pivotal pilot programme. Hopefully, if we can scale up at the Syria conference at February, it could mean that we get every single child affected by that crisis into school by the end of this forthcoming school year. That is quite new and we are still learning what works and is value for money. There will be those areas that we continue to step into.

Q180 Fiona Bruce: As the SDGs provide an opportunity to focus on global public goods, you see that as an area that DFID would increasingly concentrate on.

Justine Greening: I see us focused on it, of course, and Ebola showed us why. I should also say that we will not be delivering on all of these ourselves. If you look at things like the Global Fund and GAVI, they have been extremely successful in allowing us to procure cheaply and achieve more from each pound. When I talk about not duplicating, we will take a view on broadly where we think the best channel is to get our impact and then go with that. That might be ourselves working bilaterally but, in some areas, it might be us working through multilaterals.

Q181 Pauline Latham: Obviously DFID's partnerships are going to go a long way towards achieving the SDGs. What influence do you think that the global goals have had on the BAR, the MAR and the CSPP processes that are currently under way?

Justine Greening: Can you just elaborate on your question, Pauline, just so that I do not go off at a totally different tangent?

Pauline Latham: Obviously DFID has lots of partnerships with lots of people but, at the moment, there is the BAR, the MAR and the CSPP. Global goals are going to have an impact on that. How has that influenced the way you have gone about the MAR and the BAR?

Justine Greening: In a sense, it is setting the strategic context for where we are focusing our efforts. The MAR and the BAR are about saying where we want to focus. As you have talked about, the Civil Society Partnership Review is about saying how we want to keep evolving and improving our relationship with NGOs, which have been a key route through which we have often delivered on the ground. If you look at the work that, for example, Save the Children did with us in Sierra Leone on Ebola, it was critical, alongside many other actors.

Q182 Pauline Latham: That is particularly where you cannot necessarily always work with Governments.

Justine Greening: That is also correct. If you look at some multilaterals, they would be able to operate in countries where we simply do not have country programmes. It is effective for us to work through them. There will be some NGOs that have a particular specialism in a particular area, and we can harness that without necessarily having to develop it within the Department, so it is more effective. It is this combination of understanding who is best in class, who can give us value for money and also whether they are operating where we want to be able to have a development impact. Where we have an alignment through that, we can go ahead. Sometimes it is also about scale. Can the multilateral we may work with or the NGO we want to work with deliver the level of activity that we want to be able to have the kind of transformational impact that we want to see take place on the ground?

Q183 Pauline Latham: Do you think that is likely to be more partners or fewer partners than before?

Justine Greening: That is a very good question. I would not particularly see success or failure as about having more or fewer partners. For us, it is about having the right partners in the right circumstances. I have been quite clear with our civil society that I would like, at the end of the Civil Society Partnership Review, for us to perhaps play more of a role working with almost our SME sector here in the UK. It is very innovative. Britain is marked out as a country that has an interest in the outside world and is willing to play a constructive role in helping to solve some of the biggest problems our planet faces. I think that DFID can play a role in working with some of those upcoming innovative charities, which may be in some of these new areas, developing specialisms.

We should not assume that our relationship should just be static. You will see a combination of us working, I hope, with more southern NGOs perhaps, and with civil society on the ground in the countries where we are doing our bilateral programmes. It is going to shift. You actually see that shift happening in the NGOs themselves, looking at where they can headquarter and where the locus of their organisations is steadily shifting to. In a way, our thinking is mirroring that as well.

Q184 Chair: Secretary of State, you spoke about the No Lost Generation initiative, and I think it is a very exciting and innovative initiative, and welcome what you said about it today. Would it be fair to say that, if that continues to be given the priority that you have suggested it will be, it is likely that a bigger part of UK aid is going to be devoted to education and support for projects for young people in the future?

Justine Greening: I cannot answer that with a simple yes or no, but you are right to observe that, for us to put a child into school, for example in Lebanon or Jordan, is more complex and more resource-intensive than for us to simply scale up some existing programmes that we have in other countries. Those are some of the challenges that we face as a Department, in getting value for money, but critically delivering on where need is greatest. If you were to look at lifetime value and the kinds of experiences that these children have gone through, it is disproportionately vital that they do not miss out on their education.

Our challenge now, within our Spending Review settlement, is to make sure we deliver on all of those things and deliver on making sure, in my opinion, that children who are caught up in these conflict situations do not lose out. It is not just us doing it. Actually, part of it, as you said in your report in the last couple of weeks, is about us chivvying, lobbying and making sure that the rest of the international community picks up these priorities too. You see the Syria conference; that is a good example of us getting on and doing that. Part of our success is bound up in how much we can get the international community to step up to this plate. You are right to say, “What are we doing?” We are also challenging ourselves to say how we can increasingly get other countries to share this agenda and to take more of the weight.

Q185 Chair: You are absolutely right to do that, and that is why we placed great emphasis on that issue in our report on the Syrian refugee crisis. We will support all of those arguments to be made. Just to press you slightly more on it, even if we get the other countries to sign up as we want to, the implication rightly is that we will be spending money on education in the region around Syria for a significant amount of time. I do not think any of us on the Committee, nor you, would want that to be at the expense of education programmes in sub-Saharan Africa or other parts of the world. Indeed, the global goal rightly not only reaffirms the importance of access to primary education, but extends to secondary and tertiary and emphasises quality. Therefore, taking those things together, is it not a likely outcome that we will be spending more on education?

Justine Greening: It is possible, but again I would go back to the point I have just made, which is that, actually, what I want to see in the end is countries themselves taking responsibility for education programmes and transitioning. It is why the work we are doing on jobs and economic development matters. It is why the tax work we are doing matters.

It is hard to look at any of these things in isolation, in the end. That is what I have found from doing this job. You have to have a systemic approach. It is the same with women and girls. Maybe I would analogise it; it is a bit like a wheel with lots of different spokes. Sometimes, in a way, it is less important what spoke you are spinning than the fact that you are grabbing the wheel at different places and giving it a shove. It is all momentum. Actually, you are entering the system of development at different places but, fundamentally, it is all shifting it in the same direction.

We might do some work on child marriage that is as pivotal and transformational for schools, girls in school and education as any of the work that we do funding teacher training. Somehow, in spite of that complexity, we have to take a look back. That is why I would simply caution us sometimes looking at one number against another number. I wish life was that simple but, actually, I have discovered from doing this job that it rarely is. In the end, what I need to do is to help us be successful in the real world, on the ground. In a way, I have been less focused on a number going up or down and more on, in aggregate, whether I think we are having the biggest possible impact with this budget as we can strategically. That is the aim that I have set ourselves and that is what the national aid strategy that we have published is all about.

Q186 Chair: Following that up, obviously we have the national aid strategy. We have the various reviews that have been referred to—BAR, MAR, etc. You rightly reminded us that you have manifesto commitments that you need to implement. How far is the strategy any different because of the SDGs?

Justine Greening: In some areas, the SDGs formalise a shift that we had already set ourselves. I would particularly point to jobs, which were absent from the first lot. In other areas, we are on a transition that we need to continue. I would particularly point to the SDG 16 on peaceful societies. Actually, what you see in Syria is a good example. It was a middle-income country but, in the end, issues of governance around rule of law and accountability have turned the clock back on that country.

For the development community as a whole, and indeed for countries, we need to look and learn those lessons already. What they tell us are that perhaps the more traditional aid matters but, actually, there are these other areas that we have called the golden thread that are pivotal. In a way, we are seeing that development can happen but, if you do not have good governance, it is a bit like a millstone around a country's neck and around the people's neck. You can never quite get as far and as fast if you have corruption.

That is why, as hard as these issues are to tackle and perhaps as long-term as they are at times, we have to work on them. It is not always easy, Chair, to track progress and the results. Of course we would like to be able to say, "This is what we have delivered—a child in schools or a vaccination." On capacity and governance, it is less easy, but that does not mean that a part of our efforts should not be aimed at improving it. That is the challenge for the overall development community.

I should say that what it also tells you is that, in the end, countries have to own their development and be politically committed to it. There is only so far we can go with our improvements in capacity-building and our investment. In the end, it absolutely has to be country-owned. If you look at the change in Sierra Leone on tackling Ebola once there

was the political will to deliver a successful strategy, it was transformational in us being able to work with that government, because it was a government that wanted to achieve eradicating Ebola, which we finally seem to have done.

Q187 Chair: Just so that I am clear, are you in part saying that there are commitments that this country has anyway, regardless of the SDGs, for example on jobs and livelihoods, or on rule of law and governance? Part of the value of the SDGs is to get the international system signed up to those things as well.

Justine Greening: It is both, I would say. Of course, I have to mention SDG 5. Simply being able to go to the UN for the first time after September and say, “Look, child marriage is there, FGM and eradicating all harmful practices,” for me, in my role, is incredibly powerful. I cannot overemphasise how important they are. Of course, there is the delivery piece and there is the tracking piece, but this is the starting point in some areas that we have never had before. Actually, we should reflect on what an achievement it is to get Goal 16 in today’s world. It is an achievement, but it is there now. It is in black and white, and it is something that we can come back to and work from.

Q188 Fiona Bruce: With reference to Goal 16, when this Committee has looked at DFID’s private sector work, there was an acknowledgement during our inquiry that additional capacity, in terms of skills and experience, was needed within DFID to strengthen the private sector work. Looking at Goal 16, which is so different really, “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels,” I am very interested to know if DFID—and, if so, how—is looking to bring in this wholly new, in some ways, extra dimension of expertise to help do this and what particular individuals, backgrounds or organisations they are seeking to work with.

Justine Greening: It does matter, Fiona. Just on the private sector, we actually doubled the numbers of sector experts in the Department in governance. I would argue that the UK probably has some of the best golden thread in the world, and that is why we have increasingly reached out to the legal profession in the UK. I was at the conference earlier this year, the Global Law Summit. It is why we have reached out to the accountancy profession. It is why we are working with people like HMRC. This is the element of the agenda where we can really bring a “best of British” hue to it.

Actually, whether it is our civil servants, whether it is the Met Office going in and helping countries like the Philippines set up early warning systems, whether it is Kew Gardens and the amazing botanists and experts they have there working with the Government of Ethiopia on how to project their coffee and cocoa growth over the next 30 or 40 years, so that they know how that is changing as the climate is likely to change, whether it is us talking to the Law Society; this is the area, for me, where we can really put a fundamentally “best of British” stamp on our development strategy in a way that other countries really value. It will go beyond the fact that we are doing a lot to really giving them access to our best and brightest.

We had the London Stock Exchange out working with the capital markets agency in Tanzania. That is how we take our programme from just being a comprehensive large

one, where we have met our promise, to one that fundamentally feels like a UK offer that is out there in the world and brings the value that we can really bring to development in a unique British way, which I am very proud of. Of course, there are parliamentarians going out. We had the clerk from the Speaker's Office out there in Burma. It is very broad-based, and we should use all of our institutions, heritage and experience to help other countries build their golden thread, so it can do as much for them as it has been able to do for us as country.

Q189 Fiona Bruce: If I may say, it can inspire a whole generation of young people who might not be in the traditional areas of teaching or medicine to think that they have a contribution to make.

Justine Greening: Indeed, and of course we have the International Citizen Service, which gives them a wonderful chance, which I would have loved to have had at their age, to actually go and be part of the UK development effort, and be ambassadors for our country.

Q190 Chair: You have rightly put great emphasis, both today and more generally, on the “leave no one behind” agenda, Secretary of State. One of the areas of evidence that we have taken from a range of organisations is about those groups that are often left behind, on the basis of characteristics like gender, disability, sexuality and membership of a religious faith or another social group. In many societies, of course this is due to social norms. Indeed, our own society has and has had in the past many of the same social norms, but these things change. Do you have a view about how effectively DFID and other parts of Government, and indeed perhaps Parliament and civil society, can work with countries to make changes to forms of exclusion that are rooted in longstanding social norms in those countries? I am just finishing with an easy question, sorry.

Justine Greening: The work that we have done in areas like FGM has really helped us start to understand more effectively just how important this issue of social norms is and the context against which we might be trying to work with countries. What it is telling us is that, if you look at countries like Ethiopia, where perhaps there has been more progress on tackling child marriage and tackling FGM, what you see is that, if you are really going to change social norms, you really do need all parts of society and a country pulling in the same direction. That means a country-owned strategy, where the laws are changed that need to change, where at a district level those laws are also mirrored. When I was in Ethiopia, I met a group of girls who were at risk of child marriage. Of course, one of them told me how she had actually been able to go to the district office when her parents were initially saying, “You have to get married.” There is the setting of the legal framework and then how it is delivered on the ground by the Government.

There are then community and religious leaders. One of the reasons why we were finally able to eradicate Ebola and make progress was religious leaders, community leaders, weighing in behind the need to do safe burials. You then need the education system picking up those same messages. You need grassroots civil society in place to provide support, in the case of FGM for girls who are at risk, and indeed their parents. If they say, “Actually, I do not want to do this,” to the wider community, it might mean they themselves suddenly find

themselves at the end of attitudes. That then can be backed up by UK efforts harnessing that momentum.

It is the most complex thing to steadily change, and we of course have our own experience here in the UK of what it takes to change social norms. It is incredibly complicated. What I do know, though, is that it is about getting every single touchpoint on development at least pulling in the same direction. It needs to be sustained and long-term. If you look, for example, at how you improve social mobility here in the UK, it is the same thing. You need generational long-term policies that have the chance to succeed, as people literally go from being a child to an adult and then have their own children. That is no easy task and it requires superb organisation and political will.

There you go; I am afraid there are some issues that, for us to make progress on, have to be tackled in that way. Particularly on women and girls, it will take an unprecedented single-mindedness of decision-makers, policy-makers, development agencies and communities, if we are to get significant and huge steps forward over the next 15 years. I look forward to the UK and my Department, working across Government, playing our role in making sure that we do get that huge step change and that we do not just have another 15 years of minor improvements, when we could have 15 years of massive, transformational improvement in the prospects for women and girls, around our world, which I believe passionately is the greatest unmet human challenge that our planet faces today.

Q191 Chair: The examples you have given are really powerful. None of this is easy. Where it can be particularly difficult is when there is a strong social norm against a minority. We met with the Dalit organisation, for example, when we were in New York. You think of the Rohingya in Burma/Myanmar or, in many countries, LGBT people, for example in Uganda. That is quite a challenge. Everything you have said is right in terms of local ownership. How do you best take that forward in the context of development and humanitarian assistance, where there is a set of universal rights to which countries are signed up and yet, in some of the countries that we are rightly supporting, there are strong social norms against religious or sexual minorities in those countries.

Justine Greening: In a nutshell, where there is movement in the right direction, let us harness it and help it to get further, faster. Where there is not, let us nevertheless still look at how we can work at a grassroots level and at least keep the drive alive for the day when, actually, there is some momentum.

I would point to the example I gave of Syria where, actually, there is increasingly a growing body of evidence that says that, when we do not tackle human rights, they are this early warning system. We should recognise that. This is a point we discussed in the Security Council when I was there in October last year: we should more effectively recognise this as an early warning signal, and countries themselves perhaps need to recognise that and recognise that, in today's world, it is less easy to commit human rights abuses behind closed doors.

Q192 Chair: If you think of Rwanda, the signs in the run-up to 1994 were there. There were a lot of early warning signals.

Justine Greening: These are the areas where we need to learn from so that, as an international community, perhaps we can have a more systemic effective way of approaching understanding when something is a more isolated issue or when it is more underlying and perhaps more deep-rooted in nature, and is getting worse.

Q193 Mrs Grant: What you have been saying is so impressive, Secretary of State. You clearly get the big picture. I just thought, honestly, if you think there may be too much pressure to satisfy metrics, numbers and figures with these goals that could lead to a situation whereby you cannot really have a go at changing those social norms, the behaviour change and the culture change, which we both know is really the only way we are going to get sustainable change and that pendulum to swing forever. It is a bit like a trade-off, because we are all accountable, but we know in our heart that to really get the big picture, to get the shift, you have to do things slightly differently sometimes. Is that a problem?

Justine Greening: As ever in life, you have to have the right balance. There is a part of this where what gets measured gets done. Thank heavens that we have the metrics that we will around FGM and child marriage. At the same time, as I said, some of the challenges around capacity-building are quite hard to measure. Maybe we will get better at doing that over the next few years, but we are very conscious of it. I am determined to deliver on the clear manifesto commitments, which have some hard numbers in them.

At the same time, though, we are very conscious of the fact that we need to have a balance. There will be some element of our work that is, by its very nature, harder to track, but still hugely valuable. It may be that only now are we seeing the real value of education that has been happening for the last 15 years, as children come out of school, for the first time in numbers, having been through primary and secondary. We are at the beginning of potentially seeing the advantage of all of the investment that has gone in. It is just that we are not always that able to put a number on it upfront. What we have tended to do is measure simple things that we know we can get reliable data on. Do we need to be conscious of the rest of it and not lose sight of it? We should not not be doing things just because I cannot measure it perfectly. I am very clear on that too.

Chair: Secretary of State, Gwen and Neil, thank you so much for your evidence here today, in particular because we did have to rearrange the meeting, which is partly why we have had a little bit of movement amongst the Committee Members. Can I particularly thank my three colleagues who have been able to stay right through to the end? Thanks for coming to give us evidence here today. See you again soon.