

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: [Syrian refugee crisis: follow-up](#), HC 796

Monday 14 November 2016

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Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Fiona Bruce; Dr Lisa Cameron; Stephen Doughty; Pauline Latham; Jeremy Lefroy; Wendy Morton; Albert Owen; Paul Scully.

Questions 1 - 89

Witnesses

I: Anna Farina, Head of London Office, Syria Relief; Helen Stawski, External Affairs Manager, Islamic Relief; Martha Mackenzie, Deputy Head of Government Relations, Save the Children.

II: Rory Stewart MP, Minister of State, DFID; Matthew Wyatt, Deputy Director, Middle East North Africa, DFID; Mr Robert Goodwill MP, Home Office Minister for Immigration; Paul Morrison, Director, UK Syrian Resettlement Programme, Home Office.

Examination of Witnesses

Anna Farina, Helen Stawski and Martha Mackenzie.

Q1 Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. This is a one-off evidence session following up the Committee's first report of this Parliament, which was on the Syrian refugee crisis. We have a two-hour meeting planned. We have our first panel—you are very welcome—for about an hour and then we have the two Ministers to follow in the second hour.

Our usual practice, as a Committee, is that we go straight into the questions and we invite our witnesses, when giving your first answer, to introduce yourselves as part of that answer. Our aim with the first panel is to cover nine areas over the next hour. To get a flavour of how much time we need on each subject, we have nine subjects in an hour. For some questions it will be appropriate that each of you answers but sometimes the questions will be directed at one particular witness. Thank you very much for being here with us.

Let me kick off with Save the Children, with Martha. Last year you recommended that the UK Government should take in 3,000 unaccompanied children from Europe. What is your assessment of how that has unfolded since you first made the proposal?

Martha Mackenzie: Just to give a bit of an introduction, I am Martha and I am deputy head of government relations at Save the Children. Most of you will know that Save the Children has been very actively involved in the refugee crisis, in terms of being both present in the countries where refugees are fleeing from and active all along the route. That is the context that we bring to this.

It is fair to say that it has been a mixed year. I would like to strike a bit of a positive tone and say that, based on where we were when we gave evidence to this Committee back at the beginning of the year, things have come a long way, and we have seen the UK Government actually bring in far more refugees than in recent history. We have seen the vulnerable persons resettlement programme, the MENA children at risk scheme and the Dubs amendment. Largely thanks to parliamentary scrutiny and a lot of public support, we are in a position where that has been possible. As we end the year with a lot more to do, we would like to say that there have been some positives to reflect on.

In terms of where we are at, we think that about 300 children have been brought across, which obviously falls far short of the 3,000 that we called for back in January. There have been some frustrating delays, particularly in Greece and Italy. Quite a positive system has been set up in Greece—a system that is working well with the Greek Government and with NGOs on the ground—but still only a small number of children have been assessed. In Italy, no children have been brought across through Dubs and we think that there is a lot of need there. We would like to see much more activity in Italy.



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Obviously in France, as a result of the demolition, we are now seeing hundreds of children come across, and that is a positive but the conditions under which they came across were deeply frustrating. The way that the Calais demolition was carried out did not put children at its heart and caused some quite unnecessary children's rights violations and real trauma to those children.

Q2 **Chair:** Can you say a little bit more about Italy? What is happening and what can the UK, if anything, do to influence that?

Martha Mackenzie: We would like to see more of a Home Office presence in Italy. Save the Children now runs a search-and-rescue vessel, the Vos Hestia, and, as a result of running that vessel, we have far more time with children than we previously did. The number of children coming through that route who have been trafficked or are extremely vulnerable is pretty shocking. Although they will not necessarily fall into typical refugee countries, their experiences would actually warrant assessment under the Dubs amendment, we think. We would like to see more of a Home Office presence there, stepping up to respond to the children coming in via the Italy route.

It is fair to say that Europe is really failing Italy. There have been no transfers of children from Italy under the EU relocation scheme either and no Dublin transfers. Although it is a hub for very vulnerable children, we are seeing very little action in terms of getting those children out of there and somewhere safer.

Q3 **Chair:** Of the 300, are the majority from France?

Martha Mackenzie: Yes.

Q4 **Chair:** And next is Greece. Are there any from anywhere else?

Martha Mackenzie: No, it is France and Greece. We started to see the first Greek arrivals come over this month, largely overshadowed by what was going on in Calais. One thing we are keen to stress, however, is that the system that has been set up in Greece is a good system. If we can start to get more children assessed through that system and we can get the Greek Government and the Home Office out of the official shelters and into those children who might be in detention centres or not in any kind of centres, there is a lot of hope for Greece. The rest of Europe could learn from that scheme. However, progress has been slow.

Q5 **Chair:** That is where they are coming from immediately. Do you have an analysis of where they were from originally? What is the mix between Syrian, Afghan, Eritrean and other children?

Martha Mackenzie: It has been a really broad mix. As you said, Eritrean, Afghani, Syrian, Iraqi and Pakistani are, we understand, the top five nationalities coming through, which is a really positive thing because the EU relocation scheme is now only accepting Syrian children. Again,



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other countries could learn from that in terms of having a wider pool of children to bring in.

Q6 Stephen Doughty: Just specifically on this point, you mentioned Greece. What is your understanding of the UK Home Office effort there at the moment in terms of making the scheme work? Somebody told me that 58 Home Office staff were there dealing with the EU/Turkey deal but only one was dealing with relocations of unaccompanied children. Is that your understanding of the effort and do they need to be switching some of that effort to help make the system work properly?

Martha Mackenzie: There was some miscommunication very early on when the Home Office lumped in statistics around the number of people who had been put in Greece to deal with the scheme and to deal with Dubs, and actually only about one or two staff are dealing with Dubs and Dublin relocation. We think that that could be stepped up. However, that one staff member in particular should be applauded. They have really gone in there with gusto. They have been very collaborative. Save the Children has worked very closely with them in Greece. They have pulled NGOs together and actually established a really good, functional scheme that could work well if more effort is put into finding the children that are hard to reach. That is why we need to see a stepped-up effort.

Q7 Stephen Doughty: How many have come under Dubs and Dublin from Greece?

Martha Mackenzie: We think that around 50 or 60 have been assessed and are ready for transfer; the number of those who have actually been transferred is only in the tens. However, that is through those formal shelters and, for a lot of the children who are in the formal shelters, it might not be in their best interest to come to the UK because they are already being supported in Greece. It is the children in detention centres and out on the street who we now need to reach, in whose best interest it really would be to come to the UK.

Q8 Albert Owen: I just wanted to say congratulations to Save the Children for putting a figure on it. It was very helpful at the time. I do not know how many local authorities there are in the UK but certainly, if it was constituencies, there were only five children per constituency. It was able to frame people's minds on the problem of how we could deal with it in a managed way. It is disappointing to hear that a figure of just 300 has materialised from that.

My question is on local authorities. Do you think they have the resources in place to deal with this? Are they having difficulties and challenges finding homes for unaccompanied vulnerable children? In particular, is there a shortage of foster families, exacerbated by some negative publicity?

Martha Mackenzie: We do less in the UK but our understanding is that there is a shortage of foster carers. We have been working with the organisation Home for Good to encourage people to come forward and



register to fill that gap, not just for asylum-seeking children, because there is a shortage across all children. We would keep saying that we want the Government to properly resource this promise and make sure that they are really working with local authorities to make it viable for them to come forward.

As a knock-on impact of the Calais demolition, we have seen much more willing from the Government and local authorities to come forward and put resources behind that; but we need to keep pushing for that and that is certainly an area for development.

Q9 Albert Owen: Can I just ask about the written evidence that was given with regards to children reaching the age of 18 years and that they could be deported back to the countries that they fled from? Will this be the case for unaccompanied children provided for in the Immigration Act and, if so, what are the implications?

Martha Mackenzie: We think that the Government are building the implications of that into the “best interest” assessment that they carry out before children come here. If the children come from a nationality group that is much more likely to be deported or to not have access to asylum post-18, it would not be in their best interest to come here in the first place. However, we have not yet had full clarity about exactly how it will impact Immigration Act children, particularly the ones coming over from France. The two areas that we consistently push for progress on regarding the asylum rules are leave to remain and the right to family reunion once children have been settled here. At the moment, under-18s do not have a right to bring their family over here if they are subsequently located, which means that it is less in the children’s best interests to be resettled here. We would therefore keep pushing on both of those areas.

Q10 Albert Owen: We have seen some cases in the media—and I know, Stephen, in your area—about young people being deported: going through the whole education system, even getting places in good universities and then being told that they have to leave the country. Does this concern you? How can we, as parliamentarians in this new Act, tighten up on that?

Martha Mackenzie: It does concern me. It was a difficulty we had when we were going through the Immigration Act process because the legislation is not there within that Act. It is something that we all need to keep talking about, raising awareness about and pushing for, at the very least in terms of promises under the Immigration Act that children who have been brought here under Dubs will not just be deported at the age of 18, but also, in the longer term, reforming our asylum rules so that those children who are particularly vulnerable do not immediately flip out of the system when they are 18, which is what currently happens. It is a concern and we should all keep raising it.

Q11 Fiona Bruce: My question is addressed to Ms Stawski. Your recent



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report on the Syrian refugee crisis, "Invisible Lives", highlights underfunding of the UN appeals. You also say that, even if the appeals were fully funded, only 76% of need would be covered. What would be the consequences of this underfunding?

Helen Stawski: My name is Helen Stawski. I am the advocacy and external relations manager at Islamic Relief UK. We are part of the global family of Islamic Relief Worldwide, which is a humanitarian agency. We are inspired by our Islamic faith but serve all people regardless of faith, ethnicity or anything else.

We have been working in the region for decades and we have been working in places like Lebanon before the Syrian crisis, which has positioned us well to understand that, while they have been exacerbated by the Syrian crisis, some of the issues that we see within the host countries predate the crisis. It is important to remember that as we talk about some of these issues.

What are the implications of under-funding? Thank you very much for bringing up our report, "Invisible Lives". I am happy to leave a copy for everybody on the Committee. In this report, we looked specifically at women and women's livelihoods. We were really concerned that, naturally, policymakers and funding are focused on the conflict areas and what is on our doorstep in terms of the European refugee issues. However, the situation in Lebanon and Jordan is not stable. We are very concerned about growing tensions between Syrian and local populations, and about the long-term economic sustainability of Syrians in the region.

Women-headed households make up at least half of the refugee households in Lebanon and Jordan. We looked particularly at how women went out to try to find resources for their family. I have a few figures to contextualise this. Family household debt has doubled in the last couple of years. People's resources are going down to nothing. Women are having to resort to negative coping strategies in order to raise money, such as taking children out of school or child labour, and working largely in the informal sector. Before we get on to the funding, there are a lot of issues around what work is available for women.

There seem to be two major barriers. The first is the issue of work permits. Even when Lebanon has relaxed its work permit issuance, we still find that there are huge administrative and financial obstacles to overcome. Having to renew one's entry visa every year is something that is beyond the financial capability of most people. Glossing over any number of issues there, it has forced a lot of women into the informal sector.

The other big issue that we raise in this report is gender-based violence and how it is stopping people from being able to access job opportunities. For example, taking up a job in a restaurant, which is a very common opportunity for Syrian refugees, is often not an option for women because they feel it is far too dangerous to go out or, even if they do not



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feel it, their family or their male relatives feel it is. Some of the statistics reveal that only 18% of women in Iraq say that they have not faced some form of physical or verbal abuse. The reason that the figure has flipped around like that is that, as we know about gender-based violence, people are very ashamed to admit when something has happened to them, so you only get those people who say that they have not faced it.

There are problems from family members, religious leaders and community leaders who have tightened up expectations of women who had a huge amount of freedom in Syria. I would love to have the time—but I do not here—to raise some of the voices directly that we have in this report. Syrian women talk about being in Iraqi camps and feeling like it was a prison, having not left the camp for three and a half years and not being able to go out to the dentist, get a haircut or other things that are part of our dignity as human beings. They have great fears for their children: if they go to work, who will look after their children? We address the issues of education in this report as well. Half of refugee children are out of school.

We address the issue of perhaps missing opportunities to match up the skills of these professional women. We interviewed a number of women who were teachers and yet we know that there is a shortage of teachers. There is the mismatch at the humanitarian organisational level on the ground, where we should definitely see populations as resources, not as burdens. I could go more into many of those dynamics. We would recommend greater funding for gender-based violence; sensitivity training for security services; and for gender-based violence to be integrated more into response programming.

Back to your original question about the funding, it can be quite difficult to track to which specifics funding is allocated, because it is allocated to these big funds. If you look at the DfID breakdown, it says that they are allocated to the 3RP, the broad refugee and resilience programme. When we did some analysis, we found that only about 5%, as of June this year, was allocated to livelihood work. We think that that has now increased to about 10%. We saw almost nothing allocated specifically to gender-based violence and we think that this is a growing problem, and not an optional extra. We are concerned about protection more generally.

Q12 Fiona Bruce: You have ranged widely there; thank you for that. Can I ask you very briefly about one specific issue? In the report you say that, even if funding targets were met, there would still not be enough jobs and school places for Syrian refugees in the countries that you have talked about. It is critical for more refugees to find new homes in other countries. What do you think needs to happen for this to be addressed?

Helen Stawski: It is a very difficult issue and I do not have a simple answer to it. Clearly, there are the push-pull factors. Very obviously, unless we have peace in Syria, the problems will continue to grow, and I do not believe we will have enough humanitarian aid to be able to solve



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those problems. OCHA has suggested that, on aggregate, 50 families an hour continue to be displaced from Syria, so they have to go somewhere.

We know that, as soon as families have enough money to leave places like Lebanon, they will leave. They are in a desperate situation there. They want to go home, which is not an option, or to move to a third country. We would be interested in doing more analysis with other organisations to see those routes: where people are coming from and where they are going.

The inter-communal tensions, as I have indicated, are growing massively. Even if there were very specific programmes just focused on job creation for Syrian refugees, we have to do the same for Lebanese citizens. This is the real worry: too much focus on the refugee population and not enough on the host population. Islamic Relief, like many other organisations, is trying to offer programmes for both. At the moment we are doing a livelihoods plus integrated gender-based violence programme in Jordan that brings both together and allows women to talk to each other and build those relationships. It is a very small thing but we need more of that.

Q13 Pauline Latham: You have answered some of my questions. Going back to “Invisible Lives”, you have shown and illustrated the particular challenges that women refugees have. Can you point us to any successful programmes you have seen that tackle these issues of sexual violence and all the other things that we have seen in Syria and in the refugee camps?

Helen Stawski: Yes. At the moment, there is a dearth of these programmes. I can list three things, from the work that we have done in other places, that we know really do work.

The first is the training of security services, whether they be army or local police, to understand how you support a woman who has faced violence, because that is one of the huge things that stops women seeking justice and continues to allow impunity. That is the legalistic side. I am not aware of any of that work being done in and around the camps, but I would be interested to know from other organisations. We certainly have not been able to do that. I would imagine there needs to be greater discussion with Government about that.

The second would be challenging cultural attitudes. There the role of religion and faith leaders is important. It is not the only thing but it is important. Islamic Relief has done some work on those kinds of issues in Jordan and Lebanon, specifically from an Islamic perspective, showing very clearly that Islam does not support domestic violence or violence against women of any kind. When we can work together as faith-based organisations—we have done work, for example, with World Vision and CAFOD in the past on these kinds of issues—it can be very successful.



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The third thing is empowering women themselves to know their rights to have education and job opportunities, because you cannot take gender-based violence in isolation; it is linked to a whole raft of other economic and social issues.

Q14 Pauline Latham: In many places in other countries where women are vulnerable, they are being abused by people like the security services and the army. Have you seen any evidence of that here or of any NGOs, for instance, abusing women?

Helen Stawski: People are very reluctant to talk about specific issues that have happened to them. What we found in interviews is that people would say, "This happened to somebody else but I am not going to mention it".

Pauline Latham: "My friend".

Helen Stawski: Yes, exactly. I will give you a concrete example. There are unlit areas of refugee camps or areas with bad lighting. There are mixed toilets or not sufficiently separated toilets and washing facilities for women and girls. There are a number of unattributed reports of girls and women being sexually abused, across the whole range. I do not think it is appropriate to bring up specific issues, but it is very concerning that people using the toilet in their daily lives feel that they are vulnerable to that.

Some of the women indicated that they would not feel comfortable sending their girls to secondary school because they were at the age of puberty.

Q15 Pauline Latham: Is this women within the camps?

Helen Stawski: Yes, and within Lebanon.

Pauline Latham: This is where they are supposed to be safe.

Helen Stawski: Yes, exactly. There is a concern about whether they would be safe with the teachers. How much of this is perception and how much is reality? It is very hard to put down concrete figures on these things but it is an issue.

Pauline Latham: If you are a mother, you are not going to put your daughter into that situation.

Helen Stawski: Absolutely. How do we bring out these issues to be spoken about more openly and in a way that does not stigmatise the victim?

Q16 Chair: Before we move to the next question, does Anna or Martha want to comment specifically on this issue of gender-based violence?



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Anna Farina: I am Anna Farina. I am head of Syria Relief here in London. We operate inside Syria, so I cannot comment on any topics that relate to what happens here or in neighbouring countries.

With regards to what Helen said about gender-based violence, we have GBV programmes inside Syria and I cannot agree more with what she said. What she has explained about Lebanon is exactly what we are facing inside Syria, perhaps even more aggressively than what is happening in the neighbouring countries.

We have three projects in Idlib, which is quite a populated area, and the number of GBV cases that we have seen over the past year and a half is dramatically increasing. The problem is how to address this, because there is a lot of reluctance from the women to come out and say, "I have a problem and I need someone to help me". The way we are trying to address the situation is to include counselling groups and GBV centres within health facilities, so that the women can have the excuse to visit the health facility because they have a health issue, and then they can be supported through specific counselling sessions. These are sometimes group sessions and sometimes one-to-one if the situation is particularly difficult.

As Helen said, another issue is the lack of empowerment, because a lot of women in Syria are now widows and have children to support, and perhaps they have not been educated to the level where they can find a proper job. We are also trying to give them the chance to learn a job, to make themselves self-sufficient and independent again, so that they can support their children, rather than using coping mechanisms that are not absolutely what they want.

I join Helen in saying that there should be more funding in livelihood and protection. Livelihood is a difficult sector in humanitarian aid, because the evidence of the results is much more difficult to see than the distribution of food baskets and so on. However, the impact that you can have on a population when you implement livelihood projects is immense. It is what we want to see in the long term, to provide empowerment to people on the ground again.

Q17 **Fiona Bruce:** I have a very quick question, Ms Stawski, if I may. You talked about gender-based violence, which I am assuming is happening in the informal camps in Lebanon. Were you also referring to camps in Jordan like the Zaatari camp? I am very keen to understand where you are saying that this is happening.

Helen Stawski: The report does not cover Jordan, but I understand from our office in Jordan that there are similar issues in all three countries. Whereas Iraq and Jordan have physical camps, in Lebanon the refugees are in more dense informal settlements within the urban areas. Similar problems manifest in different ways but, for those trapped in the camps, there are issues of lighting, the security services managing those camps



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and whether they feel safe. For those living in urban areas, it will be more diffuse. It will be more about whether they feel safe on the streets.

In both contexts, we have heard from the women about a tightening up of cultural and societal values around women because that is the men's way of thinking that they will be protecting them. Of course, in many ways, they are trying to protect them by saying, "Do not put yourself at risk" but for those women not to put themselves at risk and not to be protected from that risk is not feasible and not right. It will not allow these women to survive with dignity and to look after their families.

Q18 **Fiona Bruce:** In other words, this is a problem happening everywhere where there are women refugees, in all types of settlement.

Helen Stawski: Absolutely.

Q19 **Paul Scully:** Anna, can I ask you, first of all, what is being done, and what more can be done, to register the birth of stateless children in and around Syria, both those born in Syria as IDPs and refugees in neighbouring countries, so that they can access basic healthcare and so forth?

Anna Farina: As I said, we work inside Syria so it is not something I can comment on.

Q20 **Paul Scully:** If you have IDPs that are coming through Syria, obviously there is a problem with registering births in Syria as well. I know there is an issue there.

Anna Farina: Yes, there is.

Paul Scully: I am wondering if you can comment specifically on Syria.

Anna Farina: The problem in Syria is that there is a lack of structure at the moment. The problem with new people is that they are extremely movable, so they move from one area to the other according to the danger of the situation. When people move from one area to another, it is not easy to keep track of where they go and under which jurisdiction they should be registered.

The other problem that we often see is the lack of involvement of the local authority on the ground, because people moving around means that the council in the area should be responsible for registering these people in their jurisdiction. Sometimes the migration is so quick, and it happens with so many people, that the local council do not know exactly which people are in the area. The way that this should happen is that the refugees who move around should go and register themselves with the local council in order to have their children register and to have access to documents so that they can be registered as Syrian.

However, this is not something that we are experiencing a lot of at the moment. Not many people who have children and move around Syria decide to register their children with the local authority. We work a lot



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with communities, so it is quite difficult to tell you exactly what is happening with IDPs around Syria. We work with communities in specific areas. This is one issue that we see: people move around, so it is quite difficult to understand where they will be located.

Q21 Paul Scully: Helen, I wonder if you have a view on IDPs in countries surrounding Syria.

Helen Stawski: We are not working on the issue of birth registration specifically but I understand that, certainly in Lebanon, there are more challenges because of the expense that comes with renewing the visa annually. It is something like \$500 every time you do it, which is completely out of the reach of most people. That is the only context that I would have and I am not quite sure what the impact of that is without further investigation. I would imagine that it was a deterrent if there was some cost attached.

Q22 Paul Scully: Martha, what do you think the extent of the problem is within Europe?

Martha Mackenzie: We have not been looking so much at the issue within Europe but this is something that deeply concerns us, particularly in Lebanon. We think that about 70% of the 60,000 Syrian child refugees born into Lebanon have not been registered. Registrations across the country are having an extremely detrimental impact on refugees' ability to access key services. One of the things that came out of the London Syria Conference was a promise to move forward with registration and allow refugees to access those services, but we have not really seen that materialise yet.

As Helen has already mentioned, that—alongside the fact that the UNHCR has stopped registration altogether—is partly due to huge renewal fees and the need to have a sponsor or a valid address to even get close to registering. This means that refugees in Lebanon are subject to exploitation and cannot move around because of checkpoints and fear of deportation or refoulement. There is a potential opportunity with a new President elected, after two years without a figurehead, that we could actually start to see some of those London Syria pledges bear fruit. We have seen movement in Jordan and quite a lot of progress against the Jordan compact, but much less movement in Lebanon, and this issue of registration is the one big issue holding refugees back from accessing those services.

Q23 Stephen Doughty: I have a question to all of you about humanitarian access in both the north and the south. I want to ask specifically about your understanding of the situation at the berm in the south on the border with Jordan. We have had assurances from the Jordanian ambassador and others that there is a plan in place now to allow access. Is that happening? Has there been any progress?

Secondly, in the north, there is concern about the access through the Jarabulus crossing. What is your understanding of the current situation



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there? I know it has been discussed in New York as part of the UNHCR discussions this week, but can you tell us about what is practically happening on the ground in both those places?

Martha Mackenzie: I can talk to the berm very quickly. Our understanding is that the situation has moved on from where it was a couple of months ago. There is now a plan in place and the Government of Jordan's plan is to put specific drop-off points and a specific water hole in the berm so that refugees have access to those services. They are still not allowing any refugees into Jordan and we are quite worried about the placement of those services in terms of forcing involuntary relocation closer to Syria and closer to more dangerous places.

There are still two big humanitarian issues for us. Azraq, the refugee camp in northern Jordan, has the facility to hold more refugees and the facility to screen refugees, to check them for security status, but they are not allowing anyone in. They do have the ability to do that. Equally, in terms of where those services are being put, it is about not pushing refugees into more dangerous places or forcing them to move against their will. We understand the security situation and the situation that the Government of Jordan are in, but we want to keep pushing those two points specifically where more can be done.

Stephen Doughty: That is very helpful.

Anna Farina: I can comment on the access from the north, from Turkey. The issue we are facing at the moment in terms of access to go in and for people to come out is that the organisations that operate from Antakya and Gaziantep have to register with the Turkish Government the name of their staff who can cross into Syria. The problem is that this number is really limited. Five people were allowed until last week.

Q24 **Stephen Doughty:** Is that five people per organisation or in total?

Anna Farina: Five people per organisation. This includes both staff going in and internal staff coming out. If we needed to bring a person out for training, that would have to be within the five people. I know that these names could be changed every month. I heard from our deputy country director last week that this number has been brought down to four, and we have been requested to stick with the four names for a year. This creates problems, because we do not have enough access for people from our office in Turkey to go to Syria and deal with the heads of offices inside Syria. We mainly use the border at Bab al-Hawa. It would be helpful to be able to use the border in Kilis as well, which is a bit less regulated, so the border at Bab al-Hawa is the one that is preferred at the moment. Obviously this limitation on number is quite stringent.

Q25 **Stephen Doughty:** That applies to all the crossings.

Anna Farina: Yes.

Q26 **Stephen Doughty:** You register four names and then, if they are not on



the list at those crossings, they cannot cross.

Anna Farina: One issue we face is that, in some of our projects, we would like to bring people out for training. For example, in education, we would be able to bring out some of the teachers who deal with particularly traumatised children to help with appropriate training because these are qualified teachers but maybe they are not qualified to teach children that have witnessed what the Syrian children have witnessed.

Stephen Doughty: But you cannot bring anybody at all.

Anna Farina: No. The people who we can bring out are only registered Syria Relief staff members with valid Syrian passports and within this number.

Q27 **Stephen Doughty:** Helen, what is the experience of Islamic Relief?

Helen Stawski: We share exactly the same problems as Anna has spoken about with the border crossing. I do not want to reiterate all of those things, but just to highlight some solid negative impacts. Massive stocks of food have had to be left at the border. Some of that food can last for a while, where it is dried food, but some of it cannot. There is a real waste there. People are dying of starvation if we cannot actually get into Syria and deliver those vital supplies.

It is worth mentioning that it is not just about getting into Syria; it is once you are in Syria. I would highlight the huge dangers that humanitarian staff are putting themselves in at the moment. Just in the last six months, we have had two of our local staff killed. When I spoke to somebody from the field the other day, they said, "Every time we go to work, we feel it is 50/50 that we are going to come home." In particular, there is the psychological impact of when the UN convoy was hit. People do not feel that they are safe at all. Understandably, many NGOs have had to withdraw their operations. We have had to drastically reduce ours. We are still trying to get into Aleppo. We are one of five organisations still trying to do that, but it is very, very challenging.

Q28 **Stephen Doughty:** That is very frustrating then, if you have only five people on the list. You cannot even give people R&R time to come out and put others in.

Helen Stawski: Absolutely.

Q29 **Stephen Doughty:** You are raising this operationally with the Turkish Government. What is your understanding of what the UK Government have been doing? Have you raised this concern with them to raise with the Turkish Government?

Helen Stawski: It has been mentioned at internal DFID meetings before. I have been out of the loop for a couple of weeks so I am not sure whether there has been any progress.



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Anna Farina: I mentioned the same thing in September, so I would like to have a follow-up on this. It would be really helpful if the UK Government would apply some pressure. Ultimately, we all know what the NGOs are doing on the ground. It is not a secret. If we could make it easier for everybody, it would be fantastic, because there is a lot of work to do and having all these roadblocks does not help anyone. It does not even help the situation in Turkey, to be honest, because we will not be able to bring more aid into Syria and therefore more and more people will try to come out of Syria. It would be better for everybody to make things slightly easier. I understand that there are issues with going inside and I am fine with all the due diligence, but it should be a bit more relaxed.

Stephen Doughty: We have the Ministers in next, so we will certainly ask them.

Q30 **Chair:** Can I move us on to the issue of banks and access for NGOs working in Syria? We took evidence earlier this year from two former Secretaries of State, Andrew Mitchell and Clare Short, about a number of issues, including the difficulties that many NGOs in the region are facing in terms of transferring money, both from banks in the UK to offices in Turkey and then on to Syria. If I can start with Anna, you have raised with us the issue of delays in transferring funds from UK banks causing damage to your humanitarian work. Can you tell us a bit more about it, and in particular how you could see this situation being improved?

Anna Farina: The two problems are very connected, and a third connected problem to bring into the conversation is the registration of international organisation offices in Turkey. The banking problem is an issue in some cases because there is not enough transparency. We do not see why we sometimes have a problem and why sometimes we do not. It is very random. We have some transfers of money from here to Turkey that are blocked for weeks, and some other transfers that are not blocked. It is a bit of a random process. Sometimes we are asked to provide documents and these documents are analysed for weeks; and sometimes we do not and we can send money that is received by our offices in Turkey.

It is problematic for us. We keep saying to our bank, "Please, tell us in advance what you need to see and we will be very happy to provide all the evidence possible". We have understood that the problem occurs especially when we transfer dollars and the money goes through clearing banks in the US. We cannot engage our banks enough to make them resolve these issues in a reasonable amount of time. We had cases in the past where funds were really delayed.

This is connected with the situation that we have in Turkey to then move money into Syria, because there is no official way to do that. The way that the Turkish Government have asked the organisations to do this is bank-to-bank from Turkey to Syria, which is obviously not an option because there is no banking system in the north of Syria, or via cash



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through the border with a limitation of 5,000 Turkish lira per day, which is less than £2,000. This is a massive problem that we face. Most of the organisations on the ground, if not all, use money transfer agents, which are not recognised by the Turkish Government. They are perhaps tolerated, but not legally recognised.

This does not help anyone. When you deal with a bank here, they ask you, "When you transfer the money to Turkey, what do you do with this money?" and we say, "We transfer it into Syria". They then ask, "How do you do that?" and most of the organisations will say, "We use a money transfer agent". Then they start to look into this system and they do not find enough evidence to be comfortable with this way of transferring money. A few weeks ago, we had an application to open an account with a big money transfer company in the UK declined specifically for this reason, because they told us, "We cannot see enough evidence of the way you transfer money inside Syria".

We know that the money we transferred arrived at the destination because our office inside Syria receives the money first and then we pay the transfer agent in Turkey. We are 100% sure. The problem is that we want this system to be appropriately regulated by the Turkish Government.

Chair: Presumably you have raised this with the Turkish authorities. What reason do they give for not recognising them?

Anna Farina: It has not been formally raised, because, if it was formally raised, there would be lots of controls, which, to be honest, there are because there are already organisations that have been controlled and fined.

Fiona Bruce: Did you mean, "Have you raised this with the Turkish authorities?" rather than raising money for it?

Q31 **Chair:** Yes. Has this question been brought to the attention of the Turkish authorities?

Anna Farina: It would be great to have some intervention from the UK Government, to ask the Turkish Government to look into these things and to regulate this sector. They could even take control of it. They could even say, "We will transfer the money inside Syria on behalf of the organisation with a network of money transfer agents". It really should be regulated. The Turkish Government cannot keep saying, "The only way you have to do it is transferring cash through the border".

Q32 **Chair:** Your recommendation to us would be for the British Government, using its good offices, to raise this matter with the Turkish authorities.

Anna Farina: Yes, absolutely. It is really needed.

Q33 **Chair:** If I heard right, you used the word "random" as to when things moved quickly and when things moved slowly. So I am clear, there is no



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pattern to it and it is not dependent on the nature of the project in Syria or the different parts of Syria where there may be greater nervousness.

Anna Farina: No, because some money is stopped from the UK to Turkey—transfers of money that we do with our bank here in the UK to our bank in Turkey—and sometimes these transfers are massively delayed. We are never given a reason for this. We have been told that, “It is because you have ‘Syria’ in the name. You should change the name of the organisation”. That is fair enough and we can look into doing it, but is that a good reason? What is the difference? I doubt that everything will be fine if we change the name.

Q34 **Chair:** Sometimes you have been told that but other times it has been perfectly alright.

Anna Farina: Exactly. My point is that there should be a protocol that organisations working cross-border in Turkey have to follow to move money from the UK to their offices in Turkey. If there is not, why can we not look into it, considering the scale of the problem? This is not something that will stop in six months or in a year; it will keep going unfortunately. Can we try to make it work smoothly?

Q35 **Chair:** Presumably, similar problems arise for organisations that are transferring money from the US to Turkey for Syria.

Anna Farina: Possibly.

Helen Stawski: It is very helpful to talk about the specifics, but this is a much wider problem about how international banks are engaging in risk analysis. This has been mentioned before in the other Select Committee but, as Anna says, part of the problem is that, when banks stop transfers or even close accounts, there is very little transparency from the international banks’ side to the client as to why this has happened, so it is very hard for the organisations to then make the necessary improvements. All of us as humanitarian agencies would say that we go through very strict due diligence to ensure that funding gets to where it is supposed to. The irony is that, the more that we are not allowed to use the formal international banking systems, the more vulnerable the money is. The other irony is that the need is greatest in conflict-affected areas where we are operating in close proximity to proscribed groups.

There is a role for the UK Government. A cross-Whitehall group has been asked to be convened and we look forward to that being convened. We would love the Home Office, Treasury and DfID to do more to put pressure on the banks and to have a more appropriate risk analysis. There is always risk in everything and you cannot eliminate risk, but it is about having an appropriate risk analysis for humanitarian agencies operating in complex, dynamic conflict environments. We can, absolutely, share best practice between each other in the NGO sector, but there needs to be some pressure to be more reasonable and not to close bank accounts where people are dying.



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Martha Mackenzie: I agree with most of what has been said, and it is particularly important in the context of DFID pledging to scale up in fragile and conflict-affected states. That is a decision that we applauded but, if it is to be made a reality, we need a bit of a reassessment of what risk is and what due diligence is under those circumstances. For a lot of those particularly risky areas, it is only the NGOs that are there. DFID cannot get there, so we have to be able to operate if we are to meet that reality of scaling up in fragile states.

Q36 **Chair:** Does Save the Children have similar experiences to what Anna has described in terms of the random sense that sometimes it works and sometimes it does not?

Martha Mackenzie: Yes, the randomness and the lack of transparency.

Chair: Having "Syria" in your name is not necessarily the explanation because organisations with "Children" in their name still get the same.

Anna Farina: That will not solve the problem.

Chair: Yes. This is a very, very big issue that we will want to pursue further. The evidence from all three of you has been incredibly helpful to us. Thank you.

Q37 **Albert Owen:** The then Minister for Syrian Refugees, Richard Harrington, told this Committee last year, when we did an inquiry into Syrian refugees, that his role specifically was to ensure that the Syrian refugees were brought into the UK in a way that was as "efficient and expedient as possible, with the emphasis going on what happens to the refugees in the process." In your view, is this happening? Is it efficient?

Martha Mackenzie: It is efficient insofar as it is great that we found 20,000 places quite quickly. There are now 20,000 places secured for Syrian refugees through the vulnerable persons resettlement programme. The funding allowance that is following those refugees is generous and is there for that first year, so that is to be welcomed.

Longer term, and it is not an area that we work on as much as some of our UK-based colleagues, it is about what more we can do to integrate those refugees after the first year. It will be critical to make sure that they have ready access to employment and education. Equally, there is a question mark around whether, now that the 20,000 places were found quite quickly, we could look at expanding that scheme and bringing in more refugees through the Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement programme, particularly given that the community sponsorship scheme was set up to allow others, not just local authorities but community groups, to come forward and support refugees. That is an area that we urge the Government to look at.

Q38 **Albert Owen:** You seem very happy with it. The issue was that there was a specific Minister with responsibility. Do you think that that work is done and are you now quite happy for there not to be an identifiable Minister responsible for this? Has there been slippage?



Martha Mackenzie: We were also quite alarmed when the Minister was not reappointed after the Government reshuffle. However, our experience of working with the Home Office and DfID on this issue is that it has not slipped down the priority radar since then. The team that was established within the Home Office to support that Minister still exists and its remit has been broadened to think about the various different refugees that are being brought in—not just the vulnerable persons resettlement programme ones, but also the children at risk scheme where the Government pledged to take 3,000 families with particularly vulnerable children from the Middle East region and the Dubs scheme.

It is something that we are quite vigilant about but we have seen a recognition that this is a cross-Government issue. Civil servants, officials and Government Ministers working together seems to have carried on even though that ministerial post does not exist anymore.

Q39 **Albert Owen:** So you think that the pivotal role will not make a difference because others are up to speed in other Departments.

Martha Mackenzie: That Minister did a really good job of securing those 20,000 places, so he made it his priority to go around, touring the country, talking to local authorities and getting local authorities to come forward. We have that 20,000 and having that figurehead there really helped. If we were looking at expanding this or looking to the national transfer scheme for unaccompanied children in particular, we would be interested to know which Minister's portfolio that falls into. So far, we have not seen a detrimental impact from the loss of that ministerial post.

Helen Stawski: The only thing I would add to that is the role of communities and faith groups in helping to integrate Syrian refugees and all refugees. When we spoke to some people from local authorities and other citizens, they wanted to host refugees but they told me that, when refugees had landed in a certain area, there was no sense of integrating people to tell them how the rubbish works. They are very simple things that annoy people and build up tensions that do not need to be there. There is a role for mosques, churches, synagogues and temples to work together to offer spaces, accompaniment and a way for people to integrate.

Q40 **Albert Owen:** Sorry, I am not clear. Are you saying local authorities are not engaging with the religious groups or that the religious groups are not coming together and taking it on?

Helen Stawski: Religious groups are definitely coming together. There are some very interesting schemes out there, like the bikes for refugees scheme, where churches, mosques and others work together to repurpose bikes for refugees. It is a very simple thing. There is lots of accompaniment going on by religious groups of refugees that are coming in from all over. There should be a greater acknowledgement of that by local government and Government, and greater links between the formal resettlement and the informal soft stuff that needs to go on to make sure



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people can have good lives here and there is peace and harmony in communities.

Q41 Chair: We are about to have evidence from Ministers from DfID and the Home Office on this issue. Can I give you a minute each to raise whatever issues you think we should be putting to the Ministers?

Martha Mackenzie: The big issue for us is that, although we have seen some progress on the Dubs amendment and child refugees, our work is by no means done. There are a lot of children still in Greece who would be eligible to be housed in the UK. There are a lot of children in Italy who would benefit from coming to the UK. What we were really struck by this year, and remain struck by, is the strength of feeling among the British public: our supporters coming forward, volunteers coming forward and how much appetite there still is out there to support the bringing of very vulnerable children here to the UK.

I would not want to lose sight of that, even though there has been some negativity towards the end of this year. We have made progress. We have established systems. We have proved it is possible. Now, let us keep plugging away and pushing to make sure we fulfil those promises.

Anna Farina: On top of the issue about transferring money into Syria and access to the country, I would like to raise a point about a need that we see on the ground that is very close to what we are trying to advocate for, which is the need for funding in secondary education and livelihood in an integrated way. We see a lot of children dropping out of school at the age of 12 or 13 and being forced to work because the family does not have access to a job and they cannot provide for their children. I would really like to see the UK Government dedicate more funds to these two areas in an integrated way, providing secondary education to teenagers inside Syria and livelihood opportunities to the families.

Helen Stawski: It is important that the Syrian crisis in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq is not forgotten. These are not stable situations. The 3RP fund is only 53% funded as of September. DfID has not fulfilled all its commitments but it is doing far better than most. Twenty-eight out of 47 donors made no humanitarian pledges at all to this fund, so there is a real need to use our diplomatic pressure to ensure that funds are met. There is a real need for DfID to use its expertise to make the case for why livelihood and gender-based violence are essential parts of spend within that. In addition, we must continue to have conversations with the new Lebanese President and with the leaders of Jordan about the very complex issues that are now emerging, which will not be sorted simply by humanitarian aid, but will require looking at trade and boosting the economies of those countries.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. We are grateful to all three of you for your evidence today; and please feel free to stay in the public gallery for the ministerial evidence, if you are able to. Thank you very much.

Examination of Witnesses

Rory Stewart MP, Matthew Wyatt, Mr Robert Goodwill MP, and Paul Morrison.

- Q42 **Chair:** Welcome. It is great to have two Ministers. Thank you both and your officials for being with us. This is a one-off evidence session following up the first report of the Select Committee in this Parliament on the Syrian refugee crisis. We have just heard from a panel of non-governmental organisations. We have about an hour and we are seeking in that hour to cover eight areas, just to give a sense of the rhythm and timing available. We are seeking to get through eight questions across the hour and clearly some of them will be directed more to one Minister and some to the other.

Let me start with a question to Robert for the Home Office. We have taken evidence from a number of different NGOs regarding progress on the various elements of resettlement of refugees, including child refugees from Syria but also from elsewhere. The previous Minister, Richard Harrington, told us when he gave us evidence that getting Syrian refugees to the UK would be as “efficient and expedient as possible”. Do you think it has been?

Mr Goodwill: Yes, in terms of the Syrian VPR scheme—the 20,000 headline figure scheme—I am confident that we will meet the target of 20,000 by the end of the Parliament. The last figures we published were two thousand, eight hundred and something. The next lot of figures will be on 1 December and I am confident that we will demonstrate with those figures that we are on track to meet that target. On the 3,000 number—the children’s scheme from the wider area—we are just getting started on that. We need to continue to make progress. As I say, that scheme started later, so one would expect less progress to have been made. We have started on that scheme and will be making further progress and publishing figures when appropriate.

- Q43 **Chair:** What about the children who arise from the Immigration Act from the Dubs amendment?

Mr Goodwill: You would need to view the Dubs children together with the Dublin III children. There is an argument as to whether Dublin III children should also count as Dubs children, but there is no point having that argument. Last year, we had about 20 who met the Dublin III requirements. This year up until the summer it was about 140, including 80 from France.

Subsequently, we have made tremendous progress with children from Calais. Since the beginning of the Calais clearances, we have had just over 300. We expect both Dublin and Dubs children to be several hundred more than that. We need to conclude that in the next few weeks. As you are aware, the Dubs amendment makes it clear that this is a scheme with a beginning and an end. We are currently talking to



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local authorities as to how many they feel they can accommodate and we will then be able to conclude that process.

- Q44 **Chair:** We will come back later to the issue of the local authorities. In terms of the Dubs and Dublin children who are coming, we heard evidence from the NGOs that essentially they are predominantly from France, for the reasons that the Minister has just given, and from Greece, but there is a specific issue about Italy and difficulties giving access for children who are in Italy.

Mr Goodwill: We have Home Office staff both in Greece and in Italy, and continue to make progress. In terms of Dublin children, that does depend on children claiming asylum and then coming forward under the Dublin process. In terms of pure Dubs children, we rely on the UNHCR and others to identify those children whose vulnerabilities would single them out for consideration under Dubs.

To give you a small update, following the camp clearances there was a pause as the children were transported from the secure areas to reception or welcome centres, as the French call them, around France. We have made the first transfers of, in this case, vulnerable girls. A group of 19 have been transported, flown from Bordeaux to Edinburgh, and are now in Glasgow. We have started that process.

- Q45 **Chair:** We would all welcome a number of the answers that you have given on that. On Calais specifically, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights criticised both our Government and the French Government for the treatment of children during the clearing of the Jungle, saying that the best interests of the child had been "completely disregarded". What is the Government's response to that?

Mr Goodwill: I cannot speak for the French Government and Calais is in France now. It was important that the French led that particular operation. I have to say that some of the forward planning we were party to indicated there could be a lot more violence there. It could have been a much more difficult situation, but the priority was to make sure that the children were protected. They were put into the secure shipping container area. Some of them were also put in the Jules Ferry area.

Part of the problem was that some children arrived at the camp who were not there previously. They heard that the clearance was starting and that children were being chosen to possibly be relocated to the UK. Some of those arrivals from places like Paris added to some of the confusion.

By and large, given how bad it could have been, it was handled very well in the way the situation was dealt with by the French. I was very pleased that my officials from the Home Office and Border Force were fully engaged in that and in the transportation of the children from the secure area to the welcome centres. We had people travelling on buses and coaches. We had people following. Now we are fully engaged with the French to ensure that the children who do qualify under Dubs and any



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remaining Dublin III children can be dealt with and brought to the UK as quickly as possible.

- Q46 **Albert Owen:** I am still with you, Minister; you are in full flow now. You recently commented with the Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families, Edward Timpson, that a strategy will be put in place by May 2017 for safeguarding unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugee children. This is a year after the Dubs amendment to the Act. Why has it taken so long to announce a consultation on a strategy?

Mr Goodwill: We need to get it right. Currently I have no serious concerns about the welfare of children who come to the UK. The local authorities are very much aware of their responsibilities with unaccompanied children but also the Dublin children who are being placed with families, many of whom they may not have been living with before. I was pleased by the very positive way that local authorities have stepped up to the mark.

I have met with LGA members. In fact, I spoke at their conference two weeks ago. They understand their responsibilities. We also understand our responsibilities in terms of funding for those children. We have increased quite substantially the funding for the children and care leavers to ensure that local authorities do not have a resource issue, in terms of making sure these children are properly looked after in their particular local authority area.

- Q47 **Albert Owen:** So you do not have any concerns for the welfare at this moment in time, but you want to have a strategy in place. There are concerns as to whether those who have already arrived will come under this new strategy? Will you be embracing all?

Mr Goodwill: Do you mean those who come out of the back of lorries? We had last year around 3,500 unaccompanied asylum seekers who arrived not in an orderly way. We have a lot of experience in processing and dealing with those. Any lessons that can be learnt will be learnt, and, working with other Departments across Government, including Education and Communities and Local Government, we will ensure that, if there are any shortcomings, which I am not aware of, we can address those.

- Q48 **Albert Owen:** How long is the consultation period and when do you hope to have a new strategy up and running?

Mr Goodwill: I am not sure, to be honest. Do you know? I am not sure.

- Q49 **Albert Owen:** That is very honest. I am sure you and the Minister for Vulnerable Children will be working on that. Could you supply a response?

Mr Goodwill: We will.

- Q50 **Albert Owen:** You mentioned the local authorities. I do take your point that many of them are doing excellent jobs and are working with it. The



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Association of Directors of Children's Services is concerned about the lack of foster homes at this moment to place these children in. What will happen between now and before May 2017 to encourage more foster carers? What are you doing as a Government to encourage this?

Mr Goodwill: I am aware that a number of local authorities are placing children out of area. Kent would spring to mind: it is placing children in Essex and elsewhere. That presents a double challenge, because social workers often have to travel out of area to check on those particular children. We have had to step up to the mark in terms of better funding, and we have increased the funding: we are currently paying £114 a day for the under-16s and £91 a day for the 16 and 17 year-olds. That is in recognition of the fact that there are limited resources in terms of fostering. Local authorities are very keen to recruit more foster parents and I hope that process will continue. There can be no doubt that those who have to use fostering agencies have had considerably more expense than those using their established foster partnership.

Paul Morrison: All the schemes that we are talking about require local authorities to provide care to children who arrive in Kent or through the different schemes. When we have been talking to them about a national transfer scheme, which was implemented by the Immigration Act, we have been very clear that we want to go at a pace that the local authorities are able to deliver against. While there is under the legislation the power of compulsion in all of this, we do not want to do that. When the foster carers are available in the areas, we are trying to go in at that pace. We are working very collaboratively with the local authorities on all those issues.

Q51 **Albert Owen:** We have just had evidence from Save the Children and others. Save the Children specifically raised concern with the stress these children are under due to long asylum applications, the process on leave to remain and the fear of deportation when they reach the age of 18. We have seen some cases in the media of this. Is there anything you can say, Minister, to allay these fears?

Mr Goodwill: In cases where children arrive in the UK out of the back of lorries, for example, when they reach the age of 18 and they claim asylum, that will be considered. If they do not meet the requirements, they will potentially be removed from the UK. In the case of the Dublin children and the Dubs children, we are selecting the most vulnerable children, and, in terms of the children coming from Syria, these would tend to be countries where we have low return rates anyway. While some of those who arrive beyond our control may well not have their asylum claim granted, the way the selection process works would indicate that many of the others are likely to be people who could claim asylum and be allowed to stay.

Q52 **Albert Owen:** Do you wish to comment on the concerns about the length of the application process in itself for leave to remain? I am sure individual Members of Parliament have this concern as well. Do you wish



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to say anything on that specifically? I know you are relatively new in the job.

Mr Goodwill: The process of claiming asylum, followed by the appeals, followed by the judicial review, followed by some last-minute claim, does take a long time. Much of that is out of our hands because it is the legal system. I find it very frustrating that we cannot get closure on some of these cases more quickly. To give an example, we have 18,000 judicial reviews per year, of which we win almost 18,000. There are a lot of legal processes in place beyond our control. We have sought to fast-track some of these schemes and then have been frustrated by the courts.

In the vast majority of cases where we have children under the Syrian VPR scheme, they are children who will qualify to remain in the UK. They will get five years' humanitarian protection and then, at the end of that, they can apply for settlement.

Q53 **Stephen Doughty:** To briefly follow up on what Albert said, I know you will not comment on individual cases, but I will reiterate the concern there is cross-party, cross-community about the case of Bashir Naderi in Cardiff. I know it has had a high media profile, but it is also about what that case throws up. A lot of us are very concerned about his welfare and his future. I have to say, having dealt with multiple such cases every week, I share the frustrations that Albert has pointed out there. What reassurances can you give that some of these more specialist cases are given the attention and the speed needed, because that is where we have some really difficult issues for the individuals involved?

Mr Goodwill: I am reluctant to add to colleagues' caseload in terms of constituency casework, but there is a good process in place where if a Member of Parliament raises a particular issue they are dealt with as a matter of urgency. I have a number of colleagues who not only raise cases they feel they have to raise because the constituent has been to see them, but make a personal representation either by letter or personally to me. We always make sure we deal with those as sympathetically as possible, but I cannot comment on specific cases. There is a degree of discretion that I as Minister or the Home Secretary can use, and we try to use that both sparingly and compassionately.

Pauline Latham: I am sorry I do not have a DfID question. I have another immigration question.

Chair: We will come to you, Rory.

Q54 **Pauline Latham:** I am acutely aware that Rory is sitting there; your time will come. The NAO analysis of the Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement programme was pretty critical. For example, it said, "The future of the programme could be put at risk by local authorities' lack of suitable accommodation and school places". The Government announced that 20,000 local authority places have now been secured. Does this mean that arrangements for receiving refugees are now complete or is



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there still a need to find accommodation and school places?

Mr Goodwill: We are confident that we have the places for the Syrian VPR scheme. There are still some pressure points within the system, especially with the unaccompanied children who arrive adventitiously, particularly in Kent. I am pleased that we are making further progress. I am working very closely with local government colleagues.

On the national transfer scheme, 118 local authorities are participating¹. In terms of the children coming in under Dubs and Dublin, we are getting more and more local authorities signing up every day. With the additional funding we have made available, it makes a lot of sense for them to participate in the scheme. There is no prospect, at this stage at least, of any sort of compulsion in any of these schemes. Local authorities are doing tremendous work, not only in providing capacity but also in the professionalism that they are using in terms of looking after these children and applying appropriate settings for their care.

Q55 **Pauline Latham:** When we took evidence this time last year on the Syrian refugee crisis, there was a great outpouring of people saying, "We will take them. We would love them". The churches volunteered. They all wanted to help and we recommended that you took this up. Since then, the goodwill seems to be waning. What is your analysis of why this has changed?

Mr Goodwill: I would not say the goodwill is waning at all. We have the community sponsorship scheme, which was launched by the Home Secretary and the Archbishop of Canterbury. In fact, two families are in Lambeth Palace. We are looking to work with local authorities in conjunction with groups, including faith groups, to participate in that scheme. That is not a scheme for individuals to make their spare bedroom available. It is not really what that scheme is about.

I must stress that, although we are talking about schemes to help refugees here in the UK, the primary need for help is in-region. Whatever we do, we need to be careful that we do not create any of those pull factors that would encourage families to send sons and daughters, usually sons, with the people traffickers across the Sahara, the Mediterranean or the Aegean and put their lives at risk. Our primary objective is to make sure we can help those people in the camps. I was in Jordan last week visiting one of the camps. That is where our overseas aid budget is really playing a part.

While we are very proud of the work we are doing in the UK through the various schemes, and we have not mentioned Mandate and Gateway, which are other long-standing schemes, the primary objective is to make sure that we can assist the people in region. We cannot create, even accidentally, a pull factor that would encourage more people to put their

¹ The Minister has since corrected this with the following 'it is 118 local authorities which are taking part in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.'



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lives at risk or drown and be washed up on those beaches in North Africa or Turkey.

- Q56 **Pauline Latham:** In fact, some celebrities have expressed sympathy for the Syrian refugees and they have had hate mail and unpleasant social media messages. Are the Government putting anything in place to help refugees when they are settled, so that they are not attacked by people because they have heard about them and they are being negative about the Syrian refugees coming over here?

Mr Goodwill: As MPs, we all get some pretty horrible mail from certain individuals. That is not representative of the British people. It is certainly not representative of people in my part of the world, who have demonstrated that they understand the very real need to help people who have come here. Maybe some of the press have fuelled that a little bit at times, but generally speaking I have great confidence in the compassion of the British people and that they understand that these people are in need. We have stepped up to the mark to help people, not only here in the UK but most importantly, I must stress, in-region, where they really are up against it in many ways, not only in the camps but also some of those living in cities around the area.

Paul Morrison: I will just add to a couple of points that were raised in those questions. You asked whether there are 20,000 confirmed arrivals with accommodation lined up. The answer to that is no, because that is a commitment over the full five years and we would not want to line up accommodation that would only be required at the latter end.

One of the reasons why we are taking a more considered approach and allowing a lead-in time between a person being referred to us by the UN and arriving in the United Kingdom is precisely so that the local authorities can do some of the work with communities and prepare them for the arrival, so that we can address concerns that might arise around the reception the refugees receive. The answer to the question is absolutely yes. It is one of the things on which we work with local authorities, to make sure that there is that support there and provide that protection around people so that they are not just brought over here and left to fend for themselves.

- Q57 **Pauline Latham:** If I could come back to you, Minister, there have recently been a lot of negative headlines. Is there more the Government could do to rebut those negative headlines?

Mr Goodwill: The short answer is yes. I think, as families start coming and engaging in communities, we are going to see a lot of good news stories about the way they have integrated. I read an article about a family that arrived on the coast of western Wales, who were in a community with no one from their own indigenous community there. They were really being helped by local people with their language skills.



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As more of these refugees are placed in various communities up and down the country, people will understand how important it is that we help them, and their children will be at school with them. Certainly I hope every part of the country will participate. If you look at what we are doing compared to, for example, the United States scheme, it is an 18-month process to be accepted to go the United States. That is an intolerable time, but that is the system they have in place.

Similarly, we met some of the people from the Canadian government in Jordan. They had a scheme where they took 25,000 all in one big go. I do not know how they are getting on with that, but, as Mr Morrison said, doing it in an organised and orderly way allows local authorities to have the capacity there, so we do not get some of these pressures being put on schools and other local services that a big influx all in one go would present.

Q58 **Albert Owen:** It does not surprise me that west Wales is very welcoming. The question I wanted to ask is: both you and Mr Morrison talk about the placement through local authorities. You are talking about England, I take it. What is your relationship with the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland devolved Administrations, or are you dealing with local authorities across the UK? I know that each of those devolved Administrations wants to do more, to be absolutely frank?

Mr Goodwill: As I mentioned, the first group of girls coming from France are in Scotland. I am pleased that the devolved Administrations are also keen to help in this—all credit to them. Any offers of help from the devolved Administrations will be gratefully accepted.

Q59 **Albert Owen:** I am saying it is there. I am telling you it is there. Can they help in getting them more quickly into this country, in an orderly manner, yes, rather than the Home Office dictating the pace? Are you talking to those Administrations so that they can help and advance the movement of more of these? The figure that you have quoted now is pretty low and the Parliament clock is ticking. These can help and enhance the process.

Mr Goodwill: I have already met with Ministers from the Scottish Administration, but I look forward to meeting with Welsh Ministers as well.

Paul Morrison: In answer to the question, this is an entirely UK-wide scheme. For example, tomorrow I will be meeting, as I do every month, with my counterparts in all the devolved Administrations in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast. All the engagements with local authorities on the Syrian scheme have been done, not just with the LGA here in England but with the Welsh Local Government Association, COSLA in Scotland and in Northern Ireland as well. The offers are entirely across the whole of the United Kingdom. We are not dictating the pace from the Home Office in Marsham Street. We are doing this in collaboration with local



authorities right across the spectrum—rural, urban and in all parts of the United Kingdom.

- Q60 **Jeremy Lefroy:** I visited a school in my constituency in Stafford three or four weeks ago and was delighted to see some children there from under the VPR scheme and doing well, and a lot of good co-operation from the local education authority and council.

Mr Goodwill: I got a lovely letter from a gentleman called David Cameron, whom you may remember, about some Syrians who have settled in Witney. It was great, not only that he had a bit of time to go and visit them—do not read too much into that—but that he had seen that. I am hoping to meet some Syrians in Harrogate in Yorkshire very soon, to see how they are coping with life in the cold north.

- Q61 **Jeremy Lefroy:** If I may turn now to DfID and to Rory, could you perhaps update us on what DfID is doing within Syria to ensure that children and young people are able to stay within school and then, after they leave school, to have access to livelihoods?

Rory Stewart: First, Mr Chairman, it is a great pleasure to appear here for the first time in front of your Committee in my new role. The first thing to understand about assistance within Syria—and I will come on to the details of that assistance—is the very significant challenge that we face delivering it. As you will be aware, in the opposition areas of Syria, it is effectively impossible for any internationals to enter. It is very difficult even for Syrian staff of the UN or NGOs to enter those areas. That means that we are operating in a very unfamiliar environment in which the normal things that we would hope to be able to do for refugees, IDPs or indeed vulnerable people, and the kinds of things that we are proud to be able to do in Jordan, for example, are simply not possible within Syria.

The support that we provide in Syria can be divided into two kinds of support: support within the areas controlled by the regime and support within the areas controlled by the opposition. In the case of support provided within the regime areas, that is almost entirely delivered through UN agencies and is focused on humanitarian assistance. That is predominantly focused on shelter, food and medical support. In the case of opposition-held areas, we provide some support for the moderate opposition governments. That includes support for education provision: supporting teachers in schools, supporting some of the school infrastructure and, through that, supporting the children.

I am very proud of the efforts that our team make to do that and it involves a lot of very hard work, but it is work being conducted remotely, unfortunately. We have to make very sure that we are scrutinising it through social media. We scrutinise it through images, through Skype conversations and through very regular meetings with staff who have been on the ground in Syria when they leave Syria. However, we are



simply are not able to deliver the kind of programmes we would if we were on the ground.

Q62 Jeremy Lefroy: Could you give us some more details, particularly around education and livelihoods?

Rory Stewart: Yes. The reason I am being a little uncertain is that I am not quite sure how much of this is classified when it comes to opposition-held areas. I am going to slightly defer. I am confident that one bit of it is not classified. The bit that is not classified is that we provide support to the education service in the moderate opposition areas, so these are Free Syrian Army areas, where we are providing through the CSSF fund support to teachers' salaries, which allows children to be educated.

In terms of the delivery of what you would mean by livelihoods, in other words traditional support to individual businesses, that is not possible for us within moderate opposition areas. It is not possible for us to conduct sophisticated vocational training programmes. It is not possible for us, in opposition-held areas of Syria, to do the kind of structural adjustments and governance changes that we would try to do to drive livelihoods in Jordan or Lebanon.

Matthew Wyatt: On the livelihoods front—and this is not classified—they are not huge, but we have some programmes with our partners there, providing things like seeds, tools for farmers and so on, to help keep up food production and create livelihoods.

Q63 Chair: I have a follow-up question before I come to colleagues. Islamic Relief has highlighted to us that current funding will only meet 76% of estimated need. The UN appeal, as I understand it, on the regional refugee and resilience plan is only 49% funded and the UN-Lebanon appeal is only 38% funded. We have a very strong record as a country in regard to these appeals. What are we doing diplomatically to press other countries to match us?

Rory Stewart: First, thank you for acknowledging that we are doing a certain amount in Britain. I do not want us to be smug. I do not want the tone to be that Britain is the only country doing anything. In fact, since your last report, there has been a lot of movement by other donors. We have commissioned a report. This is the first financial tracking report that we have provided on support in Syria and the region after the London conference. Germany has now committed, for 2016 alone, \$1.3 billion. The European Commission is putting in about \$1 billion, the United States a similar amount, the UK about \$750 million and Japan about \$350 million.

These are not simply the UN programmes; this is the overall package of support that is provided, so that is both the UN appeals and bilateral programmes. It is support directly to Governments in Jordan and Lebanon and support to development, as well as humanitarian assistance.



We continue to use the humanitarian conferences—the London conferences—to continue to keep this pressure on donors.

Some of these UN figures are less bad than they appear, because there are differences between the tracking mechanisms available to the United Nations and the actual arrival of money. Within the broader region, for example, the UN was reporting a less than 50% delivery against its Mosul target. The US was calculating that we had overfunded that to the tune of about 105% at the time at which the UN was reporting less than 50%, and that is partly to do with different reporting mechanisms. At the moment, we feel the international community is beginning to step up.

Q64 **Chair:** You mentioned the United States. Do you have any early assessment of whether US commitments will be maintained with the Trump Administration?

Rory Stewart: No. The new incoming Administration of President-elect Donald Trump is yet to take power, so we do not have a clear idea of what their policies will be in relation to this region.

Q65 **Stephen Doughty:** I want to ask some questions about humanitarian access, specifically along the borders, first with regard to the Turkish border and secondly with regard to the Jordanian border. With regard to the Turkish border, I understand there are discussions in the UN this week in New York regarding the next Security Council resolution. Are you pressing for Jarabulus to be included within that process? I understand it is New Zealand and Spain that have the pen on that, but could you update us as to the progress on that?

Secondly, we had some concerning information from the NGOs who were with us before about access and registration for staff, particularly being limited to five or four staff and having to retain the same names for a year, and the impediments that is placing on their ability to do their work. What are you raising with the Turkish Government over that issue?

Rory Stewart: Our ambassador in Ankara continues to raise the issues of access on a regular basis. I was in Turkey myself five weeks ago. It is a major issue. Humanitarian agencies, development agencies in general and many of our partners are understandably extremely frustrated by this problem. As you say, it is not possible for international staff to cross that border and there are huge limits imposed even on Syrian staff crossing that border. First, that has to be acknowledged, and it is a serious problem for monitoring and evaluation and for implementation.

At the same time, we have to acknowledge that it is happening in a very particular context. We will not be able to make progress with the Turkish Government unless we acknowledge, first, that Turkey has taken more refugees than anyone else and, secondly, that Turkey was under huge pressure relatively recently from many European countries, including ourselves, and the United States to limit people crossing the border because we were worried about security alerts.



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If you go back a year or two years, there were lots of criticisms of foreign Islamic State fighters—45,000 people potentially—crossing the Jarabulus border and we put huge pressure on the Turks to monitor people going back and forth across the border. They would also point out that Daesh has now, with a great deal of fighting, been separated from its supply chains. It used to have direct access to that border, which allowed it to resupply itself in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor. It is no longer able to do that and the Turks understandably are keen to make sure that it cannot do that. Thirdly, there are extremely complicated issues in terms of the Turkish view of what is currently happening with Kurdish Syrian forces and their operations around Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor.

We raise this. Our ambassador in Ankara continues to push this. However, we have to be very focused on making sure that we have clear arguments and clear methods for distinguishing humanitarian access from the security risks that are currently being spoken about by the Turkish Government. Just to reassure the Committee, we are able at the moment to get UN humanitarian supplies across those borders. You can get material and food, for example, across those borders. The problem at the moment is moving staff across these borders, which is particularly frustrating, understandably, for NGOs that wish to focus on capacity building or technical assistance.

Q66 Stephen Doughty: We were told that that level of staff is very low and there are pressures put onto staff when they are operating on the other side as well. You are not able to give R&R to staff, but also food has been stopped at the border and left there because they physically are not able to have the staff bringing it over. Would you undertake to continue to press this issue with the Turkish? I understand the constraints that you are saying, but it seems that somewhat of a movement from the very restricted position could be a huge benefit. Specifically, will you be raising Jarabulus at the UN this week?

Rory Stewart: As you say, the current negotiations at the UN are being led by two other member states. We will be holding the pen in resolutions going forward in January. I cannot speak for the Foreign Office, but I am very happy to say personally we will absolutely continue to push this. This is a very important issue and it is something that very directly touches all of us who are trying to operate in Syria. Unless you can have good access on the ground, it is extremely difficult to deliver high-quality assistance of any sort.

Q67 Stephen Doughty: To the Jordanian border, the system in the berm area has been of great concern to a number of Members of the Committee and others across the House. We corresponded on it and I appreciate the candour with which you have spoken about it. What is your current assessment of the situation? Do you think that the Jordanians are doing enough? We are told, for example, that individuals are still not allowed to cross into Jordan, despite there being capacity at some of the camps in northern Jordan and there being potentially a



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security apparatus there to check the people. What is your assessment of the situation and what is happening?

Rory Stewart: Firstly, it is an absolutely horrendous situation for the people stuck in the berm. They are stuck in no man's land. By definition, almost all those people have been pushed there by conflict. There will be people coming from Daraa, because they have been driven out by barrel bombs fired by the regime. There will be people moving into the berm who are fleeing from the Islamic State in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor. Even those people who have simply been displaced by instability are living in very testing conditions, in an arid area with very little protection and access. That is the first thing. It is a horrendous situation.

The second thing is to understand the Jordanian position on this. The primary concern from Jordan is in part because so many of the people there have been displaced from previously ISIS-controlled areas around Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor. They faced an attack from that area, which killed and wounded a number of Jordanian soldiers. The Daesh groups that were behind that attack are still located within the berm area, so they have significant security concerns with that. We therefore have to negotiate with the Jordanian Government very carefully to address their security concerns.

That is, however, unfortunately I am afraid, a medium-term issue. The short-term issue is making sure that we can get humanitarian assistance to those communities. In order to do that, I was hoping to turn up today and say we would manage to get the assistance through tomorrow. I do not want to be too pompous by saying "we" and imply it is Britain alone; this is primarily led by UN agencies. There is an international NGO that is currently managing to get a small amount of assistance through to people on the other side of the berm.

We currently have the framework of an agreement with the Jordanian Government. We have a location identified, which is close enough to the internally displaced people that they can access it, so that when the food is deposited there they can move to that area and pick it up, but far enough from them to address some of the security concerns of the Jordanian Government, which does not want to create a new settlement around the drop-off point. We are currently facing some last minute negotiations around border security, which has delayed what I had hoped would be an announcement tomorrow. I am confident that, imminently, we will have an agreement with the Jordanian Government that allows us to move that aid across.

Stephen Doughty: We will look forward to that announcement. I do not have the maps here in front of me, but concerns were raised that moving people further inland could push them further back towards danger, and I am sure you are considering all those matters.

Rory Stewart: Of course.



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Q68 Wendy Morton: I wanted to move on to Lebanon, another one of the host communities. We know that UNICEF reported that in September, for the first time, there were evictions of refugees from three informal settlements. I wondered how real you feel the threat is that the President of Lebanon could forcibly return refugees to Syria.

Rory Stewart: First, we have a new President in Lebanon and, as with a new President anywhere, it takes a little time to work out exactly what their policies are going to be, as the Chairman pointed out in relation to the United States. Secondly, yes, you are right: there was a statement made in that opening address, but he has clarified since that any move that he made on refugees would be made in consultation with UN agencies, which reassures us because the UN agencies operate very clearly within international humanitarian law and would not co-operate in anything that broke international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, the Foreign Secretary was able to speak to the new President of Lebanon. It was a warm conversation in which we were able to reemphasise our concerns on that. At the moment, we are cautiously confident, but I do not wish to pretend I have a crystal ball.

Q69 Wendy Morton: That is really helpful. What do you feel are the implications for refugees of changes to Lebanese residence regulations that came in last year?

Rory Stewart: It is a challenge. There are fewer refugees currently entering Lebanon than before, so the absolute number of people affected is lower. There are currently, as you will be aware, three different statuses that a refugee can receive. There is full residence. If you get full residence, that essentially guarantees that you can remain within that country for the period of your residence. That allows you full access to the labour market and other Government services.

The second kind of status you can get, which is a registration status, is issued by UNHCR. That allows you access to the full panoply of UN services, including WFP.

The third is that you can be recorded by UNHCR, which means you do get full registration, but nonetheless allows you access to all UN services with the exception of WFP services: access to UNICEF and UNHCR provisions on shelter, education and livelihood support. Currently, in Lebanon the UNHCR is able to provide that third type of assistance and we continue to negotiate very closely with the Lebanese Government in order to encourage them to move towards the two higher forms of support.

In regard to the question of residence, we have had two interesting conversations, which came out of the compact. One of them is around allowing them to have access to labour markets, and that has happened. The second, where we are still negotiating, is around the cost of \$250 per annum that is currently being charged to people to register for residence,



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which we are hoping the Lebanese Government, in accordance with what they agreed in the London compact, will eventually drop.

Q70 Wendy Morton: Can I ask about cash-based assistance? This is something we recommended the scaling up of in the region, as way of facilitating peaceful co-existence within the host communities. Is there any evidence as to how this is working? Is it working?

Rory Stewart: Yes, it is working well. Minister Goodwill and I both visited the Azraq camp in Jordan, where currently we provide cash-based assistance. That is the primary way in which people get food, although the Jordanian Government very generously for Eid provided meat for people. That was an unusual Eid gift. Generally, people receive cash and then they are able to follow up. That cash is usually provided for food in the form of a voucher system, but UNICEF and UNHCR will generally provide that cash flexibly.

To clarify in terms of the UK Government, we are not currently supporting the WFP voucher system. We are supporting more flexible cash-based solutions, which is the correct solution, particularly for countries like Lebanon and Jordan where there are functioning market economies. Already the results seem to us to be impressive.

In Oman, I met a number of Syrian families receiving cash-based assistance. It allows them, as you can imagine, and indeed as your Committee pointed out in your very good report, to make their own decisions. This is particularly important for vulnerable people. Instead of trying to get a one-size-fits-all system, it allows the family that might face problems around mental health, disability or accommodation to target the money in the areas that they most need and makes sure that the money gets to the families rather than being absorbed in bureaucracy.

Q71 Wendy Morton: That is really helpful. I visited a camp a few years ago in the region and saw a similar scheme working. I would be interested in your view. You touched on mental health. I got a sense that it helped with mental health issues, giving a routine and a sense of dignity to people's lives. Have we any more feedback on that?

Rory Stewart: Cash is a research area that is growing and growing and growing. It is attracting more and more academic attention. There is a series of researchers working on cash-based transfers. As you say, initial results suggest that people feel that, particularly in a humanitarian situation, it can give you more dignity.

That has to be weighed up against the limits. Cash is not the answer to everything. There are going to be areas of extreme conflict or where markets are not operating where providing cash can simply cause inflation and people may be unable to access services. There may also be certain donor countries that may feel that they prefer to provide direct support. Your instincts are right: that people feel much more dignity



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when they are able to make their own choices about their needs, rather than being told what their needs are.

Q72 Dr Cameron: What can the Government do to ensure that money is not delayed by banks in reaching the NGO projects operating in Syria? Have the Government been having discussions with the NGOs and banks about this?

Rory Stewart: Again, as the Committee will know better than I, there are two kinds of problems that NGOs are facing in dealing with Syria. In the regime-held areas, it is a problem of sanctions and the banking system. The problem there is that NGOs that are procuring services or putting money into banks in regime-held areas have to deal with either the financial sanctions or, in certain cases, things such as fuel sanctions. In the opposition-held areas, you are largely looking at a Hawala system, in other words a cash-based transfer system, because the banking system is not operating there.

Yes, we are very aware of it. NGOs raise it with us regularly. In fact, we had a meeting on Friday with the British Bankers' Association and with most of the leading NGOs—Save the Children, Oxfam and others were there—in order to go through in detail what kinds of solutions we can support as the British Government.

That involves trying to get more assurance around the Hawala system in terms of the two different kinds of risks. There is the fiduciary risk, in other words the risk that if you put money into the Hawala system it does not come out at the other end. Generally speaking, that is a much lower type of risk. In fact, the reason why the Hawala system is so widespread is that generally, when you put the money in this end, it does come out at the other end.

The second type of risk is around the money being diverted or used to fuel terrorist groups, which is where it has tended to be caught up, particularly, for example, recently in the United States terror legislation. The second thing is to work on the correspondent bank issue, which means working through the FSA and with the British Bankers' Association to look at whether it is possible, for example, to bundle money or get group licences to simplify the system.

We are never going to be able to entirely overcome the problem. With a country like Syria, which is under financial and banking sanctions, it is always going to involve licensing and process in order to get the money through to that country. However, we can do things to make it more straightforward and try to speed it up so that humanitarian work, which should be exempt under the licensing system, is able to get through.

Q73 Dr Cameron: It sounds like you are providing a lot of input, in terms of trying to get to a practical yet secure method of funding.

Rory Stewart: As DfID, and I am very proud that we are doing this, we are sending a very bright DfID official to work alongside the British



Bankers' Association and the NGOs, with the UK Treasury and the FSA in the room too, to see whether we can come up with practical solutions to a problem that takes in European Union and US sanctions.

Q74 Dr Cameron: As you said earlier, it is so vital to get the resources where they are needed in the country, and they also provide a stimulus for people to—

Rory Stewart: Absolutely. One can fully understand the frustrations of the NGOs, which are determined to do good and are finding it difficult to put money through.

Q75 Chair: What was very striking in the evidence earlier from the NGOs was the sense that it was inconsistent. Sometimes there were substantial delays and sometimes things worked really smoothly. The word that was used was "random". I wondered if it depended on the project or where in Syria the work was being done, but the response we got was that this was random. I do not know if you can comment on that.

Rory Stewart: My sense is that the randomness will not generally affect the Hawala transfer system, so the randomness is usually in regime areas. Again, I am not a financial expert, but my sense from talking to people is that the risk in the opposition-held areas is more that the individual NGO, whoever it happens to be, will be very worried that they will be caught up in terrorist financing legislation, and be held personally responsible and even prosecuted for putting the money through the Hawala system to their beneficiary.

In the regime areas, the randomness is that you will make a transfer to your correspondent bank and you will suddenly find that the intermediary bank, which could be a Turkish or a Lebanese bank, may refuse to take the money or your own bank in the UK suddenly says that it cannot do the transfer. This is, I suspect, because these banks themselves have very limited knowledge about what is going on on the ground and are under huge scrutiny in terms of who they are giving money to on the ground. Depending, unfortunately, on who you get on your desk at the time, you will get a very different response.

This is why we are working with the British Bankers' Association to group things and try to get a common understanding of which partners on the ground are reliable, so that we can speed up the licensing process for a reliable partner.

Q76 Paul Scully: Coming back to immigration, we have heard of the plight of Iraqi minorities, including Yazidis and Christians, fleeing Mosul and their extreme vulnerability. Given the persecution of these groups, what active measures are the Government taking to ensure they have equal access to resettlement programmes? Are they eligible, for example, for the vulnerable children resettlement scheme?

Mr Goodwill: Unlike Canada and Australia, where they specifically focus on Christian groups and where some of the schemes are in conjunction



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with faith groups back in those countries, we rely on the UNHCR to focus on those most vulnerable people. It may be that, if a religious group is subject to some degree of persecution, that will single them out as being vulnerable and at risk, but we do not specifically target any particular religions. It is more about how we work with the UNHCR to look at people who are in need of resettlement, and it may well in some cases include Christians and Yazidis, because of that particular situation.

One group that are particularly at risk are Muslim converts to Christianity, and that is one of the big challenges that we face in terms of some of our asylum seekers, where we have to separate the genuine converts from those who may be using that as a path for claiming asylum. In terms of those particular groups, I know we would be keen to help.

- Q77 **Paul Scully:** I have met some Yazidi Christians in Greece, in Lesbos, who had done the trek across the mountains and then brought their family, including a 10-day-old baby, across the water in the dangerous boat trips that you were talking about earlier. I wondered, notwithstanding what you just said, if you have any figures about how many vulnerable Iraqis have been approved for resettlement in the UK.

Mr Goodwill: Mr Morrison might have some figures.

Paul Morrison: The first thing to say is that the Syrian scheme that we have operated has very small numbers of Yazidis, because the Yazidi population is primarily in Iraq. The relatively recently announced vulnerable children scheme, which is open to Yazidis and, as the Minister said, is one that they are likely to enter, is in the early stages. I do not have figures that I can announce to the Committee, but I would anticipate a broad range of vulnerable people from a range of nationalities, including Iraq. It may follow, therefore, that there will be Yazidis among those. They would also be open to enter through the Gateway scheme, which is another one.

At the moment, I would say the numbers are very small, primarily because the bigger cohort of people has come from the Syrian scheme. I would expect to see those numbers shifting as we get further into the vulnerable children scheme.

- Q78 **Paul Scully:** I wonder if there are any humanitarian pathways that may be a possibility for admission to support immediate medical evacuation of those that have suffered brutal and often sexual violence.

Mr Goodwill: They are just the sort of people who will be seen as vulnerable and need to be targeted, certainly in the case of medical emergencies. They are just the sort of people who would not be able to use people traffickers to get to Europe. The most vulnerable people are likely the people who are still in the region, particularly in the refugee camps, and they will be just the sort of people who we would see as absolutely a priority in terms of helping.



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Paul Morrison: Absolutely. It is one of the criteria that the UN will apply around the need for emergency medical care.

Q79 **Paul Scully:** You go down the UNHCR route, which specifically covers those groups of people.

Paul Morrison: Correct.

Mr Goodwill: We have had very good experiences with the UNHCR in terms of the way that they select and, yes, we carry out some additional security checks, but we are very pleased by the engagement with UNHCR. Some other countries will have their own systems, or indeed will have much more intense checking post-recommendation, but we have had very good experiences. We are very aware of potential security risks and take every step we can to try to address those. Without saying too much, we are very content with the way the UNHCR is carrying out its work.

Q80 **Fiona Bruce:** Mr Morrison, you responded to Mr Scully's question and referred to the Yazidis. I wonder if you could tell us what figures, if any, you have for Christians. In particular, are you aware of how the problem that the Committee has been told of is being addressed, whereby Christians have suffered atrocities in some cases, as a result of which they are displaced but are fearful of going into the camps because they fear further attack there? How are they being cared for?

Paul Morrison: On the question of Christian groups, we have had a number of conversations with Christian groups both here and in the region. The first thing I should say is that the majority of people who are coming into the resettlement schemes are not in the camps. They are in host communities. The key is that they are able to access, register and log themselves with the UN and that is their route in. Some of the concern around harassment within the camps does not apply to people accessing the UN.

The other thing is that, by and large, the referrals we see to the UN reflect the nature of the displaced population, which has a minority of Christians within it. From the numbers we have through—and we do monitor this—relatively speaking the Christian communities represented are in a minority. In conversations with the UN, I remain confident that the number of Christians who are arriving in the UK is proportionate to the number in the displaced population.

Q81 **Fiona Bruce:** Are you able to perhaps let us have some numbers?

Paul Morrison: We released the mix through freedom of information. The vast majority are Muslims. There were about 50 Christians at the time that we published that. Although that may sound quite a low figure, from what we can see and the conversations that we have had with Christian groups in the area and the UN, it seems a reasonable proportion of the displaced population that are arriving in the United Kingdom.



Q82 **Fiona Bruce:** What percentage is 50 of the total number?

Paul Morrison: It is a relatively small proportion. I would say that that is around 5%² of the intake. I should emphasise that this is management information. They are not the most robust figures, but they appear to indicate—and this is a conversation we have had with the Christian groups in the region and with the UN—that that is broadly proportionate in terms of the numbers that we would have been expecting. As the Minister said, our processes are largely faith-blind, in that the vulnerability is the primary driver of whether people arrive or not. Those are the figures that we have previously released.

Q83 **Dr Cameron:** I have another question regarding vulnerability, particularly vulnerability of disabled children, in terms of any prioritisation in that regard.

Paul Morrison: Disability is one of the factors that would enter into whether or not a person arrived under the vulnerable persons scheme. One of the reasons we take the approach that we do of giving reasonable lead-in times and a reasonable period for local authorities to prepare themselves is so that we can make sure that the services and accommodation available are appropriate and suitable for those people. It is certainly one of the drivers of people arriving in the United Kingdom under the resettlement programme.

Q84 **Dr Cameron:** Do you feel, in terms of the figures that you have, that those vulnerable children and people with disabilities are being prioritised and are coming through?

Paul Morrison: Across the board, I am very confident, in the conversations that I have with the UN, that the mix of cases that we have is generally a fair mix that is rightly focusing on the most vulnerable that we are able to provide for. It does mean that we are not taking the easiest cases. There are added complications, but our focus is around making sure the most vulnerable are arriving.

Q85 **Albert Owen:** I have a general question. It is great to see both Ministers side by side here. This is a follow-up inquiry. When we had the original inquiry, we had a specific Minister for Syrian Refugees. Compliments were given by the NGOs of the focus and attention that was given to initially setting up the schemes. Can you assure us that there is no slippage in this as we go forward? Secondly, we primarily scrutinise DfID. If there was a statement to the House of Commons, who would be making that statement? Would it be the Home Office or DfID?

Mr Goodwill: Can I just reassure the Committee that I am quite firmly ensconced as a Minister for Syrian refugees.

² Subsequent to the evidence session the Minister has corrected this with the following 'Of the 2,659 refugees resettled in the period 7 September 2015 to 30 June 2016, 2% are Christians (47 Christians and 4 Eastern Orthodox)'



Albert Owen: Congratulations.

Mr Goodwill: The fact that I went last week to Jordan to see the situation first hand underlines that. This is a cross-departmental responsibility, for not only DfID but also the Department for Education in terms of when children arrive here, and Communities and Local Government because of the local authority partners that we have. We have a great ministerial team working on this issue on your behalf. Whichever Minister would be most appropriate to answer any urgent questions—

Q86 **Albert Owen:** It is a serious question. David Cameron chose a Minister with specific responsibilities.

Rory Stewart: We have a clear answer on that, as you can see from the questions that you are asking. If the question is around the settlement of Syrian refugees in the United Kingdom, Mr Goodwill will answer it. If the question is of Syrians displaced into Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, that is something for our Department.

Albert Owen: It is not quite the answer I wanted, but it is the answer you have given.

Rory Stewart: The division would be exactly the division that you see today. To reassure you that it is joined up, I also have just done a trip that has taken me through Turkey, Jordan and Greece. I met the refugees in Greece. I was able to speak in Dari to Afghan refugees in Ellinikon airport terminal and elsewhere. We continue to work very closely on this, but it is important to understand that Minister Goodwill is responsible for issues of immigration and we are responsible for humanitarian assistance. That is a reasonable distinction in Government.

Q87 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Could I just ask about funding for the resettlement of refugees through the various schemes and particularly, in relation to local authorities, whether this funding has been secured for 16 years? We realise that for the first year the funding comes substantially out of the international development budget, but thereafter it does not. Has that been secured?

Mr Goodwill: In terms of the additional funding for local authorities for looked-after children under the Dubs and Dublin regulations, particularly the Dubs ones—the unaccompanied children—I made it clear at the Local Government Conference two weeks ago that the additional funding would continue through into the next financial year. Further years would be a matter for negotiations with the Treasury.

Paul Morrison: For the VPR scheme, under the spending review it was announced that first year cost would be up to around £460 million, but in addition we would pay a tariff to local authorities reflecting the costs that they would incur for years two to five, which is not part of the overseas development aid budget, which totals around £129 million for the duration of the spending review.



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Q88 **Jeremy Lefroy:** And that will be sufficient to compensate local authorities for the cost.

Paul Morrison: The way we constructed it was not, again, to make it up in the Home Office and send it out there. We worked with the local authorities who had been resettling refugees for a number of years. It was the first time we had been looking at years two to five costs, so we needed to work on the basis of what the experience of running, for example, the Gateway scheme had been.

We took a range of averages of the costs they thought they would incur from rural areas, urban areas, the people who had been doing it for a while and the people who were newer to it. Basically, we worked it out and the contribution is about 80% of what people were saying that they want. It is an 80% contribution to the year two to five costs that local authorities were telling us they thought they might incur in the year two to five period.

Q89 **Chair:** Before we finish, Rory, while we have been meeting, I understand the Government have published their response to the Yemen report that we published jointly with the BIS Committee. I have just seen some of it. "The Government is not opposing calls for an international independent investigation, but, first and foremost, we want to see the Saudis investigate allegations of breaches of IHL which have been made against them". That is the position the Government have taken for some time. Are you able to give us a sense of timescale? At what point would the Government switch their position and fully support an independent international investigation?

Rory Stewart: This is something that Mr Ellwood has taken the lead on. He has said very clearly in the House that we are not expecting anything different from the Saudi Government than we would expect from any other Government. If British planes were engaged in an incident of this sort, we would expect Britain to conduct its own internal investigation. Once Saudi have completed their investigation, he has made it clear that if that investigation was not adequate Britain would support an international investigation, but they need to be given time to complete that investigation.

Q90 **Chair:** You do not have a sense of what that timescale would be, so we should pursue with him.

Rory Stewart: No, I do not.

Chair: Thank you. Can I say thank you to all four of you for appearing before us? We have covered a lot of ground over the last hour. I am very grateful to you. Minister Stewart, we look forward to working very closely together with you. We have an informal meeting with you later in the week. Thank you very much indeed.