

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: [Fragility and development in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), HC 99

Tuesday 6 December 2016

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Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Mr Nigel Evans; Pauline Latham; Jeremy Lefroy; Wendy Morton; Albert Owen

Questions 77 – 145

Witnesses

I: Larry Sthreshley, Democratic Republic of Congo Country Director, IMA World Health

II: Noella Coursaris Musunka, Founder and Chief Executive, Malaika

III: James Wharton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State; Christian Rogg, Head of DRC Country Office, Department for International Development

Examination of Witness

Larry Sthreshley, Democratic Republic of Congo County Director, IMA World Health.

Q77 Chair: This is the latest evidence session in our inquiry about the Democratic Republic of Congo. We have reordered the evidence-taking. We are very grateful to our witness who was due with us at half past 10; we have swapped the 10 o'clock session with the 10.30 am session. We have about half an hour and during that time we want to cover four areas, so we have a decent amount of time for each one. I will start with an opening question and if, perhaps, in your answer you give us a little bit of introduction to yourself, that would be great.

In your assessment, what is the current state of the Congolese health system is? What are the main obstacles to achieving universal access to healthcare in DRC?

Larry Sthreshley: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this group today. I want to thank the British people for giving me the privilege of being the director of this project. It is one of the largest health programmes that DFID has in the world. Some of you know that I was born in Congo and I have spent the last 28 years designing and implementing health programmes. This project has, by far, been the most impactful in terms of transformationally changing the structure of the healthcare system in Congo and having an impact on the 9 million people who are served by this project.

It is done in a very sustainable way. Using the government health plan as its basic structure, it is working through that structure, which is a decentralised system that includes faith-based organisations as well as government organisations, to create a stable health system. Now, a lot of people do not look at Congo as being stable in anything, but, because of the destabilisation over the years, it has had to create resilient systems. If you tap into them, you can get results from them. That is what this project does.

Another thing that is unique about this project is the collaboration between the DFID team and the implementers, with IMA World Health being the lead agency on this. I have managed a lot of projects and it is rare that you are working with the donors on a daily basis to come up with how to best run a project, but that is the way this has been implemented.

What are the obstacles to healthcare in the Congo? Financials are a big one. People are very poor, as you know. 82% of the people live on less than \$1.25 a day, so healthcare cannot cost very much. At the same time, however, there have been experiments with free healthcare and there is just not a structure in place to make that happen right now in



Congo. There is no taxation; the Government does not implement the budget; there is just no other source. With free healthcare, somebody pays for it somewhere. The challenge is to develop a system that can eliminate the barriers as much as possible, but create a sustainable system at the same time, and I can give examples of that in the future, if you want me to.

Q78 Chair: Thank you very much indeed. That is a really excellent and helpful introduction. I can give you the opportunity now to elaborate a little further and, in particular, provide us examples of positive results of the programme so far. Then, perhaps, you can say a little about your expectation of what might be achieved over the full lifetime of the ASSP programme.

Larry Sthreshley: The ASSP programme was a continuation of another 10-year programme that DFID had funded. The model before was kind of a humanitarian approach but with a long funding cycle. Over those 10 years, we had gotten up to 50% to 60% health utilisation rates for those 20 health zones they were serving. Within three years, the ASSP project has matched those same goals at less than half the cost per recipient and covers a population that is two and a half times larger than the one covered by the previous project. Just on people being able to access healthcare, which is the title of the project, it has had a very successful start.

Maternal mortality is one of the highest in the world, at 550 per 100,000 births. One of the best ways to bring that down is to bring more women in for prenatal visits, to start with, and then for them to have assisted births, as opposed to giving birth at the house. We have raised those statistics—I will make sure I get this correct—so now up to 95% of women are having assisted births, whereas it was below 80% before this project started. That has a huge impact.

Of course, there is child mortality, which is 140-something per 1,000 for Congo. Again, that is one of the highest in the world and very far from the sustainable development goals. The estimates are that 50% to 60% of that is related to malnutrition. 43% of children in Congo are stunted and around 10% are underweight.

Again, this project speaks to the way that DFID works in Congo. It has been very adaptive. When we started this programme, it was oriented towards kind of a curative approach to malnutrition and it was a very small component of the project, but, quickly, as we did the design phase and we looked at what the priorities were, it shifted around £4 million towards nutrition, with a heavy emphasis on the prevention of malnutrition. We touch over 80,000 women and children per quarter with this programme for nutrition. We screen about 80,000 children per year, as well. In the last 12 months, we have seen the number of malnourished children we can find through this screening process going from 17% down to 10%. When that is causing 50% of the deaths of these children, it should have a very large impact on this country. This is just a proxy



indicator. We will not know the real results until the end-line study is done in 2017.

I have talked about the mid-level service delivery statistics. There is also some very high-end impact out of this project, or high-end system development changes that are happening because of this. One of those is the human resource reform. Again, it was not a large component of the project at the beginning, but we found that only 30% of the health workers were getting salaries in Congo. We worked with four different ministries: the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Civil Service, the Ministry of Budget and the Ministry of Finance. We identified the ghost workers, and we found that 42% of the workers in the Kasai region, for example, were ghost workers. We cleaned those roles and increased the rate of health workers getting salaries to about 50%. Again, that will help lower the cost over the long run for what has to be paid by the people getting services.

Another long-term impact has been in the health information system. Congo had spent 15 years trying to develop a computerised health information system and had failed. It was not performing. They had spent millions and millions of dollars on it. At the beginning of this project, UK aid paid for IMA to take the Ministry of Health to South Sudan, where we had implemented a programme for computerised health information. They were so impressed that they came back and within six months that became the national system. Now, 82% of the country is covered with a computerised health information system that allows us to drill down to the level of every health facility in the country.

As I talked about with the nutrition, we have set it up in such a way that we can identify all the volunteers. There are 9,000 volunteers. We are tracking every single volunteer. We know how many visits they are making; we know how many times they give a message of nutrition. It is a phenomenal amount of information for any country, even more so for Congo.

Q79 Wendy Morton: Good morning. The sustainable development goals—or the “global goals”, as we now know them—include a strong focus on leaving no one behind. How are you ensuring that you are reaching the most marginalised with your healthcare interventions? In particular, I mean women, the disabled and the elderly.

Larry Streshley: As I mentioned, one of the biggest obstacles is financial. When this project started, the average cost for healthcare at a health clinic was somewhere between \$3.60 and \$4. We have now lowered that cost to a little more than \$1; it is about \$1.15 to \$1.20, so about one third of the cost of what it used to be. For women, however, pregnant women especially and children under five, it is half the cost it is for the general population. Usually, it is about 50 cents for healthcare, which is very minimal.



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As I said, the utilisation rates are as high with this project as they were with free healthcare, which kind of shows that price is not really the obstacle anymore. Part of the reason they are willing to pay is that we have improved the quality of care. A lot more services are offered, and many of those services are free: family planning is free; SGBV care for survivors is free; this nutrition follow-up by the community is free; any handicapped person who comes gets free healthcare. It is designed in such a way as to minimise the burden on people who can support a little burden and eliminate it for those who cannot.

Q80 Wendy Morton: Can I follow up with another question? This is a topic that really interests the Committee: healthcare for victims of violence and women. We know that a shocking number of women are raped on a daily basis in Congo. How do you feel DFID's work on access to healthcare supports the victims of violence against women?

Larry Sthreshley: We have made this universally available to women. There are 910 health centres and 52 hospitals. Every single one of those is equipped and trained to deal with these issues. They have PEP kits, where the women can come within 72 hours and get care for AIDS and unwanted pregnancies. That is available to everyone.

We are finding that it is very difficult to get society to accept bringing their women, or even the men, to health facilities, when needed. We are doing a lot with civil society, trying to change communities' attitude and working with the police. They usually go to the police at first, so we are getting the police to understand the issue and refer them to the health centres. We are seeing an overall increase in people coming to the health facilities, but they are still not coming within 72 hours. There is a lot more work to be done.

Q81 Wendy Morton: Just on that point—you have partly answered the question I was going to come on to—are you able to share with us, maybe, an example of a type of project or something where you have worked with civil society to try to tackle this problem and change attitudes?

Larry Sthreshley: Yes. This last quarter, for example, our reproductive health team—it also does sexual violence; there is a full-time person on our staff to deal with gender issues—went in and did a study of the area and identified 32 different civil society groups involving women and gender that it was felt they could help promote, and they also identified the police groups. They worked with these two groups, training them and taking them through a very hands-on process of identifying within themselves what the obstacles were and what needed to be addressed.

We also worked with the Government to develop a manual for training for youth. We went out and starting working with the youth groups. It goes beyond sexual violence; it is also about access to family planning and access to healthcare. Youth are kind of left out of that, so we wanted to have a special programme to address those needs.



Q82 Mr Nigel Evans: We went to the eastern part of DRC and we saw a lot of poverty there, but clearly the United Nations was all over the place, and in other parts, as a response to the conflict that exists there. Can you say what impact that conflict is having on the provision of healthcare throughout DRC, and particularly the eastern part?

Larry Sthreshley: In the eastern part, it has been going on for a long time. Of course, when there is a flare-up, it restricts what we can do. IMA actually has an office in Goma and we have a sexual violence programme there. It is one of the largest in the country. We have cared for 28,000 survivors in this last programme. We are very familiar with working in that environment.

IMA, as a faith-based organisation, works with local groups. In the east, we work with HEAL Africa, Panzi Foundation and a local group called PPSSP. We work through local groups so that we can function even if there is conflict going on. We are not expats coming in; we are not short-termers. Even my expat staff, which is only about 10 people, all have 10 to 25 years of experience in the country.

We have just adapted. We have lived with this for a long time. Like I said, I was born there and I have been working there for 28 years. We have functioned through wars and everything.

What I am more concerned about right now is what is happening in central Congo, just in the last four months or so. Militia groups have been forming in the two Kasai regions. Young people, down to four years old, are in these militia groups. That part of Congo has not seen militia groups since the mid-1960s. This destabilisation is happening in what used to be stable sections of the country. It is where this project is. In fact, I had to evacuate two teams last week because of violence in the area. We are just constantly monitoring what is going on and working with the community to find out how we can work around the problem.

I will give you a good example of that. One of these militia groups carjacked our vehicle about six weeks ago. We have car tracking, so we were following where the car was. We were going to push the button to stop it if it ever got in a safe place, but it kept moving around. We went to the local chief and we said, "That vehicle was a gift to the people of Congo. If it does not come back, we are not going to be able to serve your area." He negotiated with the local militia and we got the vehicle back safe. No one was hurt.

That is just an example of the way we work. We did the same thing for getting drugs out through the militia areas. We talked to the local chiefs; we talked to the people. We said, "We are going to be coming through with drugs. Let this pass. Do not let this group stop us." We got drugs out the last quarter.

Q83 Mr Nigel Evans: What do you put this escalation or reintroduction of conflict into the central parts down to? What is the reason why the militia



have started again in central Congo?

Larry Sthreshley: Ultimately, it is the people resisting Kabila staying in power, at the base of it, but it gets very complicated very quickly. The story I heard—and there are multiple stories floating around—was that this chief was invited to meet with Kabila when he visited Kananga. He refused, and so the Government sent out policemen. The villagers killed the policemen, and so the Government retaliated with troops and they killed the chief.

That has now become a battle cry to organise against the Government. It is very complex, because it is not organised. There are very young people involved in this, but it is very dangerous because of that. It is not really structured.

Q84 Mr Nigel Evans: You must have a really specialised group of volunteers or workers working with you. Have any of them been exposed to real danger? Just having dialogue with the militia must be dangerous.

Larry Sthreshley: They were right in the middle of the carjacking, of course. They brush up against it, but we have good communications, satellite phones. We are constantly monitoring the situation. We have updated our security plan several times in recent months as things change and we have to adapt to it. I have a very experienced team. I have been there for about 40-some years. My deputy was born there and has lived much of his life there as well. 70% are either missionaries or missionary children working with me, so they know the context really well and they have a lot of contact.

Q85 Mr Nigel Evans: I have one last question. When we were there we knew there was an issue with the President staying in power and it was likely to have an impact. You have just confirmed that. If it does escalate in any parts of the country where you are operating, whether it is in central or eastern Congo, what is your plan B? How will you adapt to that situation and get your healthcare there?

Larry Sthreshley: We have prioritised and established what are essential services and what are the extra activities of the project. Of course, the extra activities of the project just stop. Things that expose us a lot to the risk of theft are stopped, i.e. construction and that sort of thing. Those indicators will suffer. Getting drugs out and keeping the health facilities open is our priority, so that this project can continue and that people are served. So far, we have been very successful with that.

Q86 Pauline Latham: DFID is also very active in trying to control malaria and Ebola, as well as in improving access to water sanitation and hygiene. All of the programmes contribute to improving the health of the Congolese. How joined up do you feel DFID's programming across the health issues is? Do you work with those administering its other projects in the area?



Larry Sthreshley: We have malaria components and WASH components, so we overlap quite a bit in our mandate. As I mentioned earlier, we are constantly collaborating with DFID. We co-ordinate with them, and we will take field visits to look jointly at what UNICEF is doing, what the WASH Consortium is doing and what IMA is doing, and we will cross-fertilise our understanding and knowledge of what works.

Also, for malaria, there is a lot of moving of commodities. If we have a shortage of nets and PSI has nets, then we will buy from them, and vice versa. It is the same thing for drugs, as needed. We also co-ordinate in the same way with projects, that are outside of the DFID family, such as Global Fund, GAVI and others.

Q87 **Pauline Latham:** When we visited a health centre over there, we saw very little evidence of very basic hygiene. Do you work with health centres and others to work on the basic hygiene in the health system? Even if you are working to control infections, it just does not work without basic hygiene.

Larry Sthreshley: It was one of the original objectives of the project. We found it quite alarming that so many projects had come and gone in Congo and they had never put water in at a health facility, for example.

Pauline Latham: That is basic.

Larry Sthreshley: We have 30 teams going around, putting in cisterns, latrines and incinerators so that we can destroy medical waste. Accompanying that, of course, is training and checklists, especially in hospitals, where we create whole committees to monitor and improve hygiene.

I will say that your reaction is a very typical reaction. In the Congo environment, it is difficult to keep things clean. It is pretty overwhelming sometimes when you come in and you say, "Why is this not being washed?" We address that on a daily basis, and we try to give them the fundamental things they need.

Q88 **Pauline Latham:** It is not just DRC; it happens in a lot of places. I cannot understand why Governments do not build facilities that have basic hygiene systems. Clearly, they do not. That, it seems to me, is counter-productive, because you are not going to help people unless they can keep clean and the medical staff can keep clean.

Larry Sthreshley: There has been this attitude that Congo is such a crisis state that you just have to keep the services going, maintain the bare minimum, and that is all that is needed. What has been beautiful about this project is that it is saying, "No, that is not sufficient. We have to build the health centres; we have to get the cisterns. We have to create the structure to deliver healthcare with higher quality. We can do it at a cost that is less expensive than what you were doing before."

Q89 **Pauline Latham:** When we visited Kananga, we came across a lot of



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undernourished children. Obviously, prevention is cheaper than treatment. Do you work with nutritional advisors within the community

Larry Sthreshley: We have trained over 9,000 of them. For every health facility, we have 10 volunteers. We work with them for gardening as well as nutrition messages and looking at local weaning foods. We are having extreme success with that, despite a lot of resistance. A lot of people forget that the basis for having a healthy child is just feeding them what they need every day.

I was looking at the statistics of this quarter. We are up to an 80% recovery rate using local foods in the community. It is what they are growing in the garden. There is no extra food coming in, no extra money coming in. It is at no cost. It is completely sustainable, and it prevents malnutrition.

Q90 **Pauline Latham:** IMA World Health's written evidence highlighted that the latest Ebola outbreak was not in an ASSP-supported region. How did you and DFID respond despite this? Do you have the capacity to provide high-level assistance for such outbreaks outside of your focus area?

Larry Sthreshley: IMA has had a lot of history with Ebola. My team was the first responder to the 1995 Kikwit outbreak. That was the largest outbreak until West Africa happened. Again, it was the network of churches. We got patched in by radio and had a MAF plane deliver materials on the ground immediately. Our ability to handle logistics is key to addressing Ebola. We do not have the expertise to be suited up and doing the care, but there are people in the Government and organisations like Doctors Without Borders who can do that.

We are often the first ones to respond. We set up the facilities and we facilitate these groups coming in. Within 24 hours of the 1995 outbreak, I had contacted the CDC; in two days, they were on the ground. We handled all the logistics, and Ebola was stopped within two weeks after they got on the ground. A huge disaster was averted because of that quick and co-ordinated activity.

Chair: Thank you very much, indeed, for your evidence here today. We are taking further evidence from other witnesses this morning, so please feel free to stay if you wish to. Thank you very much indeed for being here with us.

Larry Sthreshley: Thank you very much.

Examination of Witness

Noella Coursaris Musunka, Founder and Chief Executive, Malaika.

Q91 **Chair:** Welcome and thank you very much indeed. I am going to ask my colleague Wendy Morton to start the questions.

Wendy Morton: Good morning and thank you for joining us today. I wanted to ask you if you could, for the benefit of the Committee, explain what your organisation does and what the major challenges faced in DRC are, which cause so many children to be out of education?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Thank you very much, everyone. I am proudly representing my dear country, Congo, and I thank you for the attention that you have on the Congo. My organisation, Malaika, has built and operates schools for 252 girls and a community centre. We also build infrastructure and wells. Every year, we are building more wells. We have seven wells that impact more than 15,000 people. We have just launched our agricultural eco-farming project. The food that we are growing goes to the school.

We are in Kalebuka in the south-east of Congo. It is a small village where there is no water, no electricity. It is a village that has completely no benefit of school education or healthcare. The challenge is that children are not attending school in the Congo. Mostly, that is because you have to pay to attend school and a lot of families cannot afford to send their children to have an education; or they start the first year and the second year, and then they are dropped. Does that answer your question?

Q92 **Wendy Morton:** Yes, thank you. That is really helpful. Maybe I can just follow up on that. It is good to hear that you have a focus on girls; you said there are 252.

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Yes, every year we are building more classrooms. We started with 104 girls and now we have 252. We start at five years old, because we believe that early-childhood education is very important. It is a free school.

Q93 **Wendy Morton:** That is good. The sustainable development goals, the global goals, have a focus on leaving no-one behind. I wondered what your thoughts are on the major obstacles for girls in Congo getting an education. What can be done to try to overcome these?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Out of 59 million children who do not go to school worldwide, 7 million are not going in Congo. More than 60% of them are girls. It is very important to put an emphasis on girls, because when a family has money to send a child, the first thing they do is send their boy. We need to close the gap between girls and boys attending school.

Q94 **Wendy Morton:** Do you have any thoughts, ideas or projects that are specifically aimed to help that?



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Noella Coursaris Musunka: Yes, we have a community centre, which we built with FIFA. We have more than 5,000 people going to this community centre, where we are offering programmes of sewing classes to mothers, literacy to the fathers and mothers, and vocational training to youths, where we talk about leadership and entrepreneurship.

The problems come from the source. You need to talk with the communities and say that it is as important for girls to attend school as it is for boys. It has to spread out from the base, with the parents and the community, and then grow. They have to make the children understand that it is not a culture only for boys; it is for boys and girls. I am a believer in girl power, but I like equality, so let us see boys and girls attending school.

Q95 **Chair:** You have talked a bit about the issue of fees and schools charging fees. In principle, as I understand it, the policy of the Government in DRC is that education is free, but in practice many of the schools charge fees. Can you say a little more about the difficulties this presents to families and the practical consequences of schools charging fees?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Right now, we are in a political crisis, which is bringing economic problems. A lot of companies are laying off people and a lot of mining companies are closing down. Many companies are closing down. More and more, this year we are seeing a decrease in children attending school, because the families cannot pay the fees.

I am a mother of two children. I do believe that education should be free for all children in the world, and specifically in a country like Congo, which is so rich and has so much potential. We need to increase the budget for education through our government policy. That is key number one. The problem of paying fees in school is that it brings more problems in terms of the gap between rich and poor and in terms of discrimination.

If the parents do not pay the fees for children, the teachers are not paid. Sometimes, there is a problem where parents start to pay teachers, and that brings more problems, with corruption in the exam results of the kids. To avoid all these problems, we really have to invest in free education at the primary and secondary levels. Now, the first grade is normally free in terms, but the children still have to pay.

Q96 **Chair:** You have implicitly answered the next question: do the Government of DRC focus enough on education?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: No, but I do not believe they do in England either. We need to invest even more in education.

Chair: I agree.

Noella Coursaris Musunka: The Government have to increase the budget. Even if we are in an election year, the budget of education has to increase and increase every year in the same way as spending for health issues in the Congo does.



Q97 **Chair:** What, if anything, is the role of donors like the Department for International Development in pushing for an increase in spending on education in DRC?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: We can help with that, but what I have seen over the 10 years I have been working and setting up my foundation in the Congo is that it is very important that we offer quality education. It is not only about putting education into education. We need to be at the same level as a school in England, New York, Washington or Belgium. The quality of the curriculum, the teachers and teacher training are all very important. We have to work with new technologies.

At our school, we offer breakfast and lunch to our children. We are offering sport activities, music activities and IT classes. It is a very rich curriculum that we improve. We have the base of the Congolese/Belgian system, but we improve it with different parameters to make very high-quality education.

Chair: My colleagues will return to some of those issues in the next few questions. Let me just finish my question.

Noella Coursaris Musunka: This is a long question.

Q98 **Chair:** This is about the political crisis. What do you see as the impact of the political crisis on education in DRC?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: I do not enter into politics. I respect the President who is in power. I met the national Minister of Education, and we were in a discussion together at the Clinton Global Initiative. My concern was that whatever we have in terms of politics cannot affect anything to do with education. The people we are serving now, the youth we are teaching, will be the leaders of tomorrow. This is very important. I am a daughter of Congo, and I believe with my education I am able to give back. That is what I want to see: for the solution to come from the ground and for it to be a long-term solution. I do not want a short-term solution, where we are injecting money but we do not have a plan or a vision for the long term.

You have kindergarten; you have primary education; you have secondary education. Then you have university; if you do not go to university, we need to emphasise the vocational training. Not everybody wants to be a doctor, a judge or a lawyer. When I go to my mum's house and they have a problem with the water, I want to call a plumber. It is so difficult to find a good plumber. We need to invest in all of these manually skilled jobs.

Q99 **Mr Nigel Evans:** Good morning. We are dealing with the leaders of tomorrow, but, with the conflict, let us pray and hope they get to tomorrow. Clearly, the absence of conflict allows them, then, to get an education. Could you just say something about what impact the conflict is having on the delivery of education, not just in the east, but in central Congo as well, as we heard from Larry Sthreshley earlier on? This is



going to have a huge impact, is it not, on youngsters getting education?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: The world is not in a good place, all over the world. I wish my country was getting better. Over 20 years, 6 million people have died in a silent conflict. Of course, the political situation is a massive challenge in terms of what we are doing now. However, I believe that we have to help them to strengthen the programmes. When I have discussions with them, I try not to attack them, but to ask, "What can we do?" Schools have to be a refuge for children to go and be eager to learn, whether there is conflict or not. Dream number one for any Congolese person is peace in the Congo and peace in the world. We want peace; we want our country to be developed. We want to study, but we want jobs. We want creation; we want economic growth in our country.

If we study and we have no jobs, it will bring crime and instability to the country. The first thing—whether or not we have an election this year—is that we need stability in the country. From what we see, elections will be in 2018. If elections are not until 2018, let us keep the agenda of education as the number-one priority. Let us keep the agenda of health and let us keep peace and stability growing. Let us keep all these agendas not decreasing, but growing.

Q100 **Mr Nigel Evans:** How easy is it to keep that dream alive, though, when the conflict seems to be increasing in places like the central parts of Congo?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: To work in a country like Congo, I never imagined that our foundation would be celebrating 10 years. We have challenges every day to implement a school, our programmes, to pay our teachers. The average salary of a teacher in the Congo is between \$40 and \$60. At our school, we pay them \$350, because we really want them to be focused so they can give good-quality teaching to our students and can afford to send their own children to school and give food to their children. If you make employees happy, you make a happy school and happy students.

Of course, I try not to be negative. I lost my dad when I was five years old. My mum did not have any money to keep me. I grew up with families in Belgium and Switzerland. For me, I was unhappy to go to see my mum in my country. I wanted to see what I could do. We have many challenges in the Congo. We have a war going on. We have everything that is happening. The youth, my generation, believe in our country. We believe in our continent. We believe there is potential in the Congo not only in the mining sector but in agriculture, tourism and all the things that Congo can offer. That is the Congo we are dreaming of. Maybe it is a dream, but my generation wants to make this change happen.

Q101 **Mr Nigel Evans:** Is the conflict not putting that in danger?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: The conflict has been there for 20 years, but in the last few years we are seeing a completely new generation of entrepreneurs, which we did not see before: in journalism, agriculture



and leadership. A lot of the diaspora went to study abroad. They are going back to the Congo, working in banks, the Government and other places.

It is important to have this discussion non-stop with the Government and to let them know what we want. That is not only for you, as foreigners, but for us, as Congolese, and what we want for our country. We have to keep pushing and pushing the door.

- Q102 **Mr Nigel Evans:** Do you appreciate that some youngsters, clearly, not only are not getting education but are actually getting involved in the conflict themselves? Do you have any anecdotal evidence about young people who then leave the armed conflict and who have not had education for a few years? Is there any specialist education being aimed and targeted at them to bring them back into the world of education?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: There are some programmes that UNICEF and all these organisations are doing. It is very important. It is very important to bring them back to school and into education, and to make them understand. Some children have been born in the war and still they are there. It is important to make them understand that the world is not a war. There are other things than the war. They can learn and do something with their lives, without crime and without begging. The solution for Congo is not all this aid we are receiving. We need to come to a compromise that we have developed ourselves.

- Q103 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Good morning, and apologies for being late. When we were in Kinshasa, the Congolese Minister of Education told us that DRC does not struggle in terms of the number of teachers, but the quality is a serious concern. Would you agree with that—both about the numbers and the quality?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Yes. We have a lot of teachers. To recruit teachers at our school we do a test. We work with teachers from New York and Belgium, and we emphasise a lot of teacher training. It is very important to emphasise teacher training and also the curriculum. The local curriculum that is happening in the Congo needs to be reviewed and updated non-stop, and be more concentrated on competing with any school in the world.

- Q104 **Jeremy Lefroy:** What about the language barriers? Do they present difficulties? Obviously, you have French as a language, but then lots of other languages such as Lingala and Swahili. Is that a barrier in terms of teaching, particularly the technical subjects?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: The main language at schools in Congo is French. Sometimes it can be Swahili, but moving forward we need French, Swahili and we really need to put a big emphasis on English, because it is the common language, although in a lot of countries in Africa maybe it is Mandarin, as we have so many Chinese people coming.



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English and French have to be the main languages. It is very important that we keep Swahili and Lingala too, because it is our culture. Our students arrive at school and they speak Swahili. We have to teach them Swahili, French and English. The culture and identity has to be there. We cannot say, "Okay, we are not going to teach you any more about Swahili or Lingala or any languages you speak."

- Q105 **Jeremy Lefroy:** If you take the case of Tanzania, the primary education is in Swahili and the secondary education is in English. That has caused substantial problems over the years, because children come in effectively learning their secondary education in a foreign language. Do you see similar problems in Congo, where they are taught in one language at primary level, another at secondary level, and, effectively, their education is set back by the change between languages?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: It is important that we keep the same language. Schools in the Congo are speaking French as the main language all the way from kindergarten to primary and secondary school. The curriculum is more based on the Belgian and Congolese curriculum, so it is French.

- Q106 **Jeremy Lefroy:** When we were in Kinshasa, we spoke to some young women who wanted to learn English but found it difficult to find the places to learn it. We imagine there is a strong demand for English teaching. What opportunities are there for Congolese children to learn English?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: The problem is, to learn English, most of them have to pay. If you want to learn a different language or a different skill, you have to pay. It is the reason that at our community centre all these programmes are free. We need to make the English language more accessible, and we need to make it free. Maybe with all of you we can create more teaching centres in English all over Congo.

- Q107 **Pauline Latham:** You talked about vocational education earlier with plumbers. How well does the Congolese education system prepare children in DRC for vocational jobs?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: There is not enough emphasis on that. There are not enough technical or vocational schools. Again, when people want to attend these schools, they have to pay. Only a few training centres are being supported by Catholic or religious programmes. We have to make it more accessible, because we have so many youths not going to school and not doing anything. It is so important to keep them occupied and give them a job.

- Q108 **Pauline Latham:** In that case, how should vocational training be targeted in DRC to ensure the children are prepared for the transition from school to adulthood?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Yes, we need that for sure. We need to work with the Government, with the Minister of Education and all the



other Ministers, to make it happen as a number-one priority. As much as we emphasise primary, secondary and university education, vocational training has to be at the same level. This way, all the children who did not attend primary school can still have a chance to become someone, have a job, have a dream, feed their family, have a house and have the basics.

Q109 Pauline Latham: Talking about university, what prospects do Congolese children have to progress to university and third-level education? Should donors like DFID focus more on this?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Yes. We have good universities in Congo; they have passionate teachers. However, we need to equip them: in terms of the curriculum, in terms of refreshing their infrastructure and, of course, in terms of refreshing the curriculum. We have to create a stronger structure, create more relationships between universities all over the world and have external exchange.

Q110 Jeremy Lefroy: Following up from Pauline's question, one point that has been put to us is the importance of including within a curriculum at school life skills training to enable young people to be ready for the world outside, particularly around jobs and livelihoods. This includes things such as personal development and communication skills—i.e. things that will encourage the building of self confidence in young people and, also, perhaps, the beginnings of entrepreneurship. Are those the kinds of things that you see and you encourage, or are they very much outside the school curriculum?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: No, we encourage that. We encourage that and it is the reason we have the school and the community centre, where all the programmes we are doing are completely linked. We do a lot of programmes with the youth and the parents. It is very important. Not everybody can be an academic and not everybody wants to be an academic. It is important to have a chef, an electrician and all the rest of these jobs.

However, it is important to emphasise to the Minister of Education that it has to be on the agenda. It has to be a priority in whatever we do. We have to give these people a chance. It is very important in a country like Congo. This self-esteem and confidence is something that we need to build in every individual person in the Congo.

Q111 Chair: Can you say a little bit more about the role of education in empowering women in DRC?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Congo is very complex. If you talk to a woman in Katanga province, in Kinshasa or in east Congo, it is completely different, because they are living different things every day. A woman in east Congo will be first afraid of any sexual violence and afraid of the war, of the conflict. A woman in the south-east, in Katanga, will have different problems every day. You have to unify the ideology around what girls and women want to be and what prospects they can have.



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Q112 **Chair:** Our next witnesses today are the Minister from the British Government and the head of DFID in Congo. If you were questioning them, what would you ask them?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: I would ask to please push for peace and a peaceful transition in the next few years. Let us have the Congolese building their own country, and let us hear what they want. For me, whenever I go to Congo, I sit down and I listen. I never wanted to impose a school; I listened to what they wanted to do. "What do you want? What is the dream?" That is what we have to listen to.

Congolese do not deserve what happened in their country, and we have a big role to play in Congo. It is a key country in Africa, but we are at the stage where we have completely failed to help the Congo for 20 years. It is time to listen to what they want. They are ready. There is a new mentality coming up in the Congo. This new generation is eager to do something for their country. They are not avid for power or for money, but they want the best for themselves. We have to write our own history. It is time for us to give the pen to the Congolese and say, "Give us the 10 points that you want to see", and maybe do mapping of all the country and the provinces.

Q113 **Chair:** On education, is there something in particular DFID and the international community should be giving greater priority to than they are at the moment on education in Congo?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Yes, technology is very key for every school and university. I believe that is something that we need completely. Technology, infrastructure and internet all need to be spread more widely in Congo. Like we said earlier in the conversation, however, it has to be good-quality.

Q114 **Jeremy Lefroy:** We were in Lebanon last week.

Chair: Lebanon and Jordan.

Jeremy Lefroy: We were looking specifically at education: the education of the Syrian refugees but also the education system more generally. There was a DFID programme that connects schools, and Lebanon had the highest number, from what we understand, of schools connected with the UK.

Chair: You mean Connecting Classrooms.

Jeremy Lefroy: Yes. I wondered whether you had heard of this programme and whether it was available in DRC.

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Yes, there are some schools exchanging with other schools, but, even though we have set up an amazing school in the Congo, it is difficult to have so much external exchange, because you need good internet; you need good communication. That is what we are missing. It is coming, but it is still slow and it is still expensive. That is really what we have to emphasise.



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Q115 **Chair:** From what you have described, you have set up a school that sounds amazing.

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Yes, I am inviting you all to have a look through the school: malaika.org. I wanted to build a school as good as any school in the world, so my son will tell you, "The classroom of my mum's school is as big as mine."

Chair: And it is free.

Noella Coursaris Musunka: It is free.

Q116 **Chair:** What are the barriers to more schools like yours being created in DRC?

Noella Coursaris Musunka: One day, I would love to work with the Government to make more schools like that, where the children are looking forward to learning every day and where the relationship with the teachers is so key. For 10 years, the foundation has had the same main team, because they are happy and they know their roles. The teachers understand the role they have in terms of educating one individual person and not an entire classroom. We need to duplicate that.

We are writing a manual of operation for how we set up the school. Every year, of course, we are learning. We make a progress report on what we did wrong, what we can improve on and what was super great. We should have more exchange with a lot of schools worldwide. We want to show the Minister of Education how to implement more schools like that; or even to show the schools that already exist how to rehabilitate themselves and become something more than the part of town or village where the children go.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed for your evidence here today. We are very, very grateful to you for joining us. Please feel free to stay to watch the evidence from the Minister and the head of DFID in Congo if you are able to. Thank you.

Noella Coursaris Musunka: Thank you for your interest in the Congo. The Congolese people really appreciate it.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed.

Examination of Witnesses

James Wharton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State; Christian Rogg, Head of DRC Country Office, Department for International Development.

Q117 **Chair:** Welcome, Minister and Christian. We have the best part of an hour. We will probably aim to finish by about quarter or 10 to 12. We are seeking to cover nine questions in that time, so we have five or six minutes for each one. I will kick us off.



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Minister, can you set out the Government's assessment of the current political situation in DRC? In particular, is DFID preparing—and, if so, how—for the potential for violence to break out on and around 19 December, assuming Kabila stays on beyond 19 December?

James Wharton: First of all, thank you. As an opening question, that is one that could take up the best part of an hour if we were to try to cover it all. I was in DRC only a few weeks ago and there is—if I can phrase it carefully, given the position I am in now—a challenging political environment. Clearly, it looks almost certain that there will not be the elections on 19 December that were anticipated. When I was there, I had a range of meetings including with Tshisekedi from the opposition, with the Vice-Prime Minister of Interior and Security to talk about the Government's likely response and with a number of other actors.

I found that both sides of the debate were quite firm in the positions they had taken. I did not get the impression that there was likely to be significant movement from the main opposition or from the Government. There was a lot of reference to selective parts of the constitution, depending on which argument they wanted to progress at the time they were talking to me, depending on who I was talking to. My concern, therefore, is about how this is now going to manifest itself and what it is going to look like on 19 December.

The anticipation is that 19 December is the most likely flashpoint, the date on which elections were supposed to take place. That is the date, therefore, on which we would expect the opposition to most forcefully express their discontent with the fact that elections are not going ahead. President Kabila's popularity rating is very low, but he shows no sign of relinquishing his control of power at the moment.

They have had this national dialogue process, which has brought some opposition politicians into Government. That may mitigate, to a certain degree, the level of public reaction—not necessarily, in my assessment, because of support for the outcome of that dialogue, but because of a recognition that there is little alternative. In fact, it appears too late now for any amount of pressure to be likely to change the immediate circumstances as they are on the ground.

I and the Government would anticipate that we will see some level of protest focused on the 19th and some response by the Government. I and my counterparts in the Foreign Office went to great lengths to stress in every meeting we had that we did not want to see unnecessary violence or unnecessary problems, and that the UK would look to play a leading role in holding to account any individuals who were responsible for any breaches of international law or overly heavy-handed reactions.

Clearly, that is particularly focused on the Government, because Governments have a unique responsibility in this space, but the message needs to not be lost on the opposition either. They need to ensure there is a carefully calibrated approach to what could become a really very



difficult period. My hope is that it will not be the worst-case scenario. The fact is that they have had the national dialogue and there is talk of elections, although the date for those is pushed into the future. The international community has sent some quite clear messages, and I hope will send further clear messages before the 19th, including potentially on the issue of sanctions

Those things, combined with the political reality of the lack of public support there appears to be for the President, may mean the response is not the worst-case scenario that we could envisage. There is a very real risk that the response, nonetheless, will be a heavy-handed and deeply unwelcome one, which will have a significant impact on individuals who take part in the protests, and we will have to respond to that to the best of our ability in what is a very difficult environment.

Q118 Chair: Thank you for that very full answer. Let me just ask two follow-up questions. Are the British Government now pushing for a particular timescale for elections?

James Wharton: In all the meetings I had, the lines that we pursued and the message that we sent were that elections should be sooner rather than later and that 2017 should be the target. The reality is that the Government are working towards 2018—if we choose to believe they are working towards that, in truth, at all. The talk is of 2018. Clearly, we are likely to miss the deadline for this year. We continue to push for as soon as possible. The British Government's position is very clear: there need to be elections; this process needs to be undertaken; it should happen sooner rather than later.

In reality, 2018—because it is the date the Government repeatedly insist they are working towards through the process they themselves are undertaking—is likely to be the earliest possible deliverable, but we have very strongly made the case that, if it can be sooner, it should be and that 2017 is preferable.

Q119 Chair: I welcome what you have said today about sanctions. Are you able to give us more detail about the potential for sanctions against key figures in the Government and, in particular, those responsible for potentially violent suppression of peaceful protest?

James Wharton: Yes, not too much, but I can share with you, to be frank, what I know at this stage. Clearly, sanctions can be quite a blunt tool. It is important that they are targeted against individuals and do not hurt the people and population more broadly. The challenge, in particular, with the DRC is that this is not something the UK can do on its own. It probably needs to be done at a European level at least, if not at a broader level than that, in order to have the desired effect. Those discussions are taking place with our European counterparts.

The understanding I have is that progress is being made, and we hope there will be announcements before the 19th about individuals who will



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be targeted for sanctions. That does not mean it will be as broad a list as we might like it to be; it does not mean we will not push for that list to be broader, depending on the reaction on the 19th. That is an important message to get across to the Government in DRC: this would be seen as the beginning of the process, far from it being the end.

However, I do hope we will see some movement on that. Is it next week, Christian, when we expect a meeting in Europe after which we could see an announcement? I know some of our European counterparts, in light of recent events in DRC, have become firmer in their views, and more willing to engage in this discussion and hopefully take action.

Q120 Jeremy Lefroy: I have a quick follow-up. For 19 December and the following days, we heard that there had been some movement of MONUSCO troops from Kivu and elsewhere into Kinshasa. Has there been any more movement there to help prevent any potential violence that might take place?

James Wharton: This is an issue I raised when I was there. I had a meeting with the commander of MONUSCO in which I raised it, as well as a number of other actors. Christian, please step in and correct me if I get my figures wrong on this. I think we are going to increase numbers to around 480 troops and 360-odd police, which is a stepping-up. Clearly, when we are talking about Kinshasa, which has a population of about 12 million, there is only so much impact that many troops can have.

The discussion I had with MONUSCO was one about both the challenge of relocation—because it is not an easy place to move people around and to ensure you can deploy people quickly, easily and effectively—but also the reality that there are still quite significant pressure points, particularly in the east. If you withdraw troops from one place to put them in Kinshasa, you may make the political point, but, while the west may look to Kinshasa, as the capital, there are large tracts of land and large numbers of people who need the ongoing support MONUSCO provides. There is a danger to drawing down troops in one place to move them into another.

There is some increase in presence, and that is welcome. In the meetings that I had, I very much stressed the point that we would like to see MONUSCO take a very visible role, particularly on the 19th, for the deterrent and monitoring effect that that can have. There is also a reality here, which is that it is not easy to move these people around; it is not easy to ensure they are deployed effectively at short notice in that sort of environment, where you could have protests in a very large and complex city environment.

We should not necessarily pretend that it is going to be the panacea. It is not going to solve all the problems, but we should welcome the fact that MONUSCO is engaging and there will be an increased presence on the day.

Q121 Chair: If we see an escalation in violence, what is the likely impact of



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that on DFID's existing programmes in DRC? What has DFID been doing to build resilience into those programmes?

James Wharton: Many of our programmes are outside of Kinshasa, so it will depend on the scale at which violence could escalate. Again, the question I, for obvious reasons, was asking repeatedly while I was there was, "What could this mean for this?" My understanding is that, other than in extreme circumstances, the actual likely impact on DFID programmes is limited. We are talking about a country where we do not deliver through Government anyway, because of the nature of Government there.

We are talking about programmes that are often quite far removed from places like Kinshasa, operating in the field. We are talking about an environment that is already challenging to operate in, and therefore the programmes by their very design are quite resilient and self-sustaining. However, we do need to be conscious of it.

There are potential impacts on some of our projected future spend. For example, we have provisioned for over £11 million to support elections, should they come about, because we want to ensure that, one, elections happen and we send the very clear message that we support them; and, two, if they do happen they happen in the right way. Clearly, if things escalate, it could impact on our future planning for that. If there are not going to be elections or if the elections are going to be sooner or later or taking place in a different environment, we will have to respond to that.

The very clear understanding I have, however, and the reassurances I have been given are that our programmes are both resilient and being very closely monitored so that, as and when circumstances change, we are able to very quickly adapt them. I do not know whether Christian wants to make an observation on that.

Christian Rogg: Yes, maybe I could add a few points to that. This date of 19 December has been known for a very long time. Over the last few months, we have had quite intensive discussions with the various programmes and implementing partners about contingency planning over the next few months, looking at the different scenarios.

In the previous session, I heard the question you asked about the health programme: "How do you see yourself being affected?" Those are discussions we have had with all the programmes. As the Minister said, quite a number of our programmes are working precisely in the most difficult areas on the most difficult issues, if I look at the humanitarian programmes or the stabilisation programmes with MONUSCO and civil society organisations in the east, for example. However, many of the partners we work with have also been in the DRC for a very long time and have worked at moments in the DRC's history that were maybe as challenging, from a conflict perspective, as the one now, or even more so.



You heard about IMA, but, similarly, one can look at some other organisations we work with. Of course, big international organisations like UNICEF have the arrangements within the UN system to prepare and support them during any periods of violence that may be ahead.

Q122 Mr Nigel Evans: Good morning. If I am sitting here in one year's time and asking you questions about the DRC, are you confident about the next 12 months or are you not?

James Wharton: It depends on the context in which you mean that question. I am confident in DFID's work in the DRC over the next 12 months. I am confident about the UK's position—both that it is the right one and that we are pursuing it as effectively as we can. I could not claim to be confident about the political situation in the DRC in 12 months' time, because it is both very fluid but also unstable, to be frank. There is the potential for the 19th to be a significant staging post in what then becomes a protracted problem, which could be really quite violent and really quite ugly. It could end, whenever that might come, following significant loss of life and destabilisation.

It is equally possible that it could be a relatively small protest, that it could be contained in a reasonable and managed way by the Government and that we could then follow a path to elections in 2017 or 2018, in which there could be a peaceful transition. I would not, at this stage, like to predict with confidence which of those, or somewhere in between, we might be. With a country the size of DRC and challenges of the scale that it faces, I think we are engaging in the right way and we are making the right provisions in terms of DFID's programmes, but I could not sit here and tell you I know where we are going to be in 12 months' time.

Q123 Mr Nigel Evans: When we went there, it seemed quite obvious to us that the slippage—it is a lovely word for it—could go on some time. Do the Government actually really understand the use of the word slippage and the reality as to the reaction by the public, who want democracy and want to see proper elections?

James Wharton: They do to some extent. They understand the severity of the situation in which they find themselves. The question is how they choose to react to that, and that I would not necessarily like to predict. We have been very clear—both the FCO and DFID, and in the messaging that I gave when I was there—about what we want to see in that transition to democracy: the need for elections, the need to show restraint when people protest and demonstrate.

There are some signs that the message from the global community is having an impact. As I say, I do not necessarily predict with confidence what is going to unfold. I hope that the threat of the announcement of sanctions will be a significant tool to target some of those individuals who are responsible for what has happened in the past and might happen in the future. This is a country that has a troubled history, as we know. It is trying to make a very difficult transition, in circumstance where many of



the structures of civil society and its economy are still far from as developed as we would like to see them be.

They do know, but we cannot necessarily predict what their reaction will be. What we need to be very clear about is what the reaction of the international community, and particularly the UK Government, will be. We will want to see any individuals who are complicit in a heavy-handed crackdown on protesters or complicit in what may prove to be criminal acts brought to justice by the international community. We will want to play a leading role in advocating for that to take place, whether that is sanctions, the International Criminal Court or whatever other appropriate and suitable mechanism.

Q124 Mr Nigel Evans: I know Christian wants to get in. Can you make a comment on the approach with peacebuilding and the International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy?

James Wharton: The ISSSS is a key part of the strategy. The National Security Council takes a keen interest in what we are doing. There is a need to support the structures that can underpin society.

One of the big challenges in DRC—I saw this when I was out in the east, and I suspect the Committee has seen this—is the desire to see that country be able to manage its own affairs, security and policing, balanced against the risk that if you strengthen these institutions they may be used in the wrong way by some of those who are in political power. We see that debate unfolding now. MONUSCO is doing an important job in peacekeeping. We want to see the army of the DRC able to do some of this for themselves, but only if they do it in the right way. If I can put it politely, there are mixed reports about the effectiveness with which they are engaging.

There is a need to support the elections and provide civil society with the support it needs, combined with direct security intervention through the likes of MONUSCO, where they are able to be effective, and, where appropriate, support for some of the structures of Government. We may not approve of their behaviour in many ways, but if it is targeted in the right way we will hopefully give it the ability to start to build a sustainable long-term capacity to manage their own affairs, civil society and security issues.

It is a very complex space in which there are multiple international actors and in which we play a key role, but there is no easy path to the right outcome. We just need to keep pressure on the right pressure points.

Christian Rogg: Yes, I would like to make two points. One is about your question on the year ahead. The discussion so far has focused on two key issues: political and security. However, it is really important to highlight a third area that stands alongside that: the economic situation. There are real question marks over how both the fiscal situation and the wider



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macroeconomic situation are going to play out over the next year, which has very clear links to the political and the security side.

If you look at what has been happening over the last few years, first there was an external shock to some extent: the fall of copper prices and other natural resources the DRC depends on very heavily for its revenue. That is now complemented by more of an internal crisis. The Government are running short on money. If you look at the indications of revenue collection, they are all significantly down from last year. That is a key factor to be watched over the year ahead. That is already translating into inflation going up; it is translating into the exchange rate, which has been stable for quite some time, becoming wobbly.

If we see knock-on implications like public-sector workers no longer being paid, for example, let alone the security services, or if we see knock-on implications for the price of basic goods in the streets of Kinshasa or other towns in other parts of the country increasing rapidly, that of course adds to discontent about a lack of transition and a lack of democracy, and it can also escalate the security situation very significantly. That is just one factor that is important to add to the discussion.

In terms of your question on the ISSSS, this is an area that the UK has been supporting both intellectually and financially over the last year or two. The good news is that there were a lot of debates, sometimes maybe too theoretical, about what stabilisation efforts could look like in the eastern DRC, including within MONUSCO. There is now a way forward that people generally agree is the right way forward; there is then the challenge of turning that into implementation and programming. Our assessment at the moment, following two pilots, is that it is actually looking like 2017 is the key year when the programmes will hit the ground and will affect and benefit communities in the key areas where the ISSSS is going to start working. It has had a difficult history, but we are optimistic that it is the right way forward and it will start yielding results very soon now.

Q125 Mr Nigel Evans: I have a final question about MONUSCO, which you have just mentioned. Are they being effective in the delivery of their services? Do you fear that they will have to be incredibly flexible, particularly with growing violence occurring in other parts, not just in the eastern part, of the DRC?

James Wharton: I can give the impressions that I have drawn from the information I have and the visit I undertook. You are talking about a large, multinational force of about 16,000 spread over a large geographic area, dealing with some incredibly complex issues. I saw examples of them being really quite effective in their engagement, doing the right thing, and helping, for example, to disarm combatants who wanted to put down their weapons and rejoin society in DRC. If you draw a comparison with the alternative, which is the Congolese national army and the Government of DRC's approach, MONUSCO is doing quite a good job.



At the same time, it is a mixed picture. They are not as universally effective as we would like. Different contributors to the force take different approaches. They are spread over quite a large area, so ensuring there is consistency of approach is difficult. Do they make a valuable contribution? Yes, I think they do. Could they do more? When I was there, I was raising the issue of whether they should send more troops to Kinshasa and whether they could do more there. We have to respect the military commanders, who, day-to-day, have to deal with what they have on the ground and the challenges they face.

At the same time, there remains quite a significant space for political commentary and occasionally pressure as to how they should be using their resource and whether they are getting maximum value from it. I would say that I am pleased they are there, but I wish we could find ways to get more value and drive more value from them as well.

Q126 Chair: Can I ask about the Conflict Stability and Security Fund, the CSSF? Am I right that DFID DRC does not use CSSF?

Christian Rogg: No, not quite. Essentially, our approach to peace and security in the east, as far as the British Government's support and programming is concerned, is that there are two programmes. They are both very much integrated between FCO and DFID. One is the larger programme, which is the Peace and Stability programme. For example, that funds the ISSSS, which we just talked about, but it also supports land reform, land conflict resolution and so on.

Standing alongside that is the CSSF, which is much smaller but no less important. It allows us to do other things that we are not able to do though the main funding. One example here would be that the CSSF is very much aligned with the National Security Council's strategy for the Great Lakes region. This year, for example, the CSSF funded some activities in the DRC but also in Burundi. It is the key tool we are using to support communities in Burundi.

It is done in an integrated way between the FCO and DFID, and the team in Kinshasa is working with the team in Kigali and somebody in Bujumbura as well.

Q127 Pauline Latham: There are three parts to my question for the Minister. First of all, how is DFID working to engage citizens into the political process? Earlier, you mentioned meeting an opposition group, but has DFID considered working with the DRC's political parties in capacity-building and parliamentary strengthening? Thirdly, you also mentioned civil society. CAFOD has talked about civil society being squeezed in the DRC, so what are the UK Government doing to defend civil society and protect the operating environment in Congo?

James Wharton: We engage quite widely with civil society. Particularly, at the moment, much of the focus is the talk about elections. It is a very large place with very complex challenges, so we have to be realistic



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about the scope of the engagement we are able to have. At the same time, we are in this space. We work with everything from civil society organisations, trying to support their engagement and ability to pursue what they want to pursue, to the women and girls agenda, ensuring that we recognise that there is a challenge for women and girls, particularly for women who want to go into politics in DRC. It is not as easy as, perhaps, it should be.

We also have very good engagement with the Catholic Church. They do very important work. Indeed, one example of that is the support we give to ensure election monitoring, which is delivered alongside them, because they are well placed to do it. With our support, they are able to ensure election monitoring in each of the different states, as and when elections take place. Now, of course, getting elections to take place is another challenge. We stand ready to support them as and when we get there, but we have to create the political will to deliver them. That is tied into the discussion we have had already.

We absolutely recognise the need to build civil society institutions and the need to engage with groups that otherwise feel frozen out of the political process. That informs part of our strategy in the country and the work we do. I do not know whether Christian wants to talk about any of the particular projects that speak to that.

Christian Rogg: On the first question or the others?

James Wharton: Any that you like.

Christian Rogg: The Minister already spoke about working with citizens and civil society. On your question about the opposition and working with Parliament, we have treated them slightly separately. In the past, before my time, we supported opposition parties in terms of generating a more issues-based debate, as opposed to personality politics, essentially, if you want to put it that way. That was not the most successful approach in the past.

If you look at the political landscape in the DRC, there are hundreds of parties. There are well over 400. Many of them are individuals who set up a party essentially as their own platform. Very few of the parties have any ideology or any platform they present. Many of them, I would argue, are not even liaising with the population to reflect the views of the population.

You can add that to the fact that there is a certain fluidity between the current majority and the opposition, most of the leading opposition politicians—with the exception of Monsieur Tshisekedi—were at one point in the majority and, for various reasons, essentially stepped outside the majority and are now opposition. They may very well, as part of the negotiation, come back in. There is a certain fluidity. In the absence of a political environment where the discussion is issues-based, we have very little by way of entry points.



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Parliament is slightly different. When you look at resources available from the budget, Parliament is actually very well endowed. Even though not many budget lines are adhered to, when you look at what is allocated compared to what is executed, some budget lines—particularly the Presidency, the Prime Minister's Office and Parliament—usually overspend. The resources set aside for Parliament are quite significant. There is a real question mark in that case. Does it make sense for the British Government to come in and support that financially?

We have not really done that by way of a big programme, but where we have engaged is on specific issues where there was a committee looking at a particular law that we thought was very relevant and where it was about expertise and capacity-building. We have done that in the past and we would be ready to do it in the future. Likewise, through the Public Financial Management and Accountability programme, we have supported audit reports being put before Parliament. We have supported those types of activities.

On the last question in terms of civil society and protecting their space, the Minister spoke a little about our support for civil society. There is one element I would like to add, which is that a lot of that strays into the area of protecting human rights, because there are certain civil society programmes that work on basic services, sometimes very much at the local level, sometimes at the provincial or national level.

That work—you heard a bit about it in the health and education discussion earlier—is ongoing, but the biggest challenges have been in the political space, with civil society organisations and activists who have been challenging the status quo, calling for elections and so on. In the last year, we have stepped up support for human rights. Particularly, that means supporting the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in terms of tracking information and making that available, and also in terms of human rights defenders.

We also work with civil society organisations, like Lawyers Without Borders, to protect people who either are threatened or have been charged with insulting the Head of State and things like, where we provide legal support or protection, in some cases, through these organisations.

Q128 Pauline Latham: You did not address, between you, how DFID is working to engage ordinary citizens into the electoral process. Are we doing anything there, not just through civil society, but engaging with ordinary citizens?

James Wharton: Our primary engagement is through civil society. Our election programme, if there are to be elections, will be looking at ordinary citizens but particularly at women and girls, and looking at women as a group of ordinary citizens who in the past did not always engage in the way they could. In elections, we have a track record of doing this with some effect. In 2011, we did a lot to try to engage in this



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space, but it is more challenging at this time, when there are no elections to speak of that we are sure are going to take place, to engage with people for them.

Although we retain a very close watch on this, our primary focus is to see what we can do to avert potential violence from the protests that are expected and to try to get on a track to having elections. We stand ready to invest in ensuring those elections are effective and ensuring that minority or otherwise disengaged groups are engaged, but, at this time, our main focus is on securing elections to take place, rather than some of that preparatory work for them.

Q129 **Jeremy Lefroy:** How do you assess the performance of UN OCHA and its pooled humanitarian fund?

James Wharton: It is quite good. I met OCHA when I was there. As a country, DRC has incredible potential but also huge challenges. We have 1.7 million or so internally displaced persons; we have somewhere in the region of 7 million people in receipt of humanitarian support of different types. From what we have seen, in very difficult circumstances, OCHA makes a significant contribution through the pooled humanitarian funds to supporting people who most need it. The challenge, of course, is how it will be able to adapt if the environment deteriorates further.

The reality within that is that much of the environment in which all the international actors are operating is already very challenging. Further deterioration, for some of these people who are trying to help, is unlikely to have a significant impact. My assessment of it is that it makes a valuable contribution. The discussions I had with OCHA when I was there further reassured me that they are focused on the same things we would want them to be focused on in terms of delivery.

Christian, I would be happy if you want to make any further observations on that. We have to recognise that in potentially changing circumstances there will be new pressures on them.

Christian Rogg: The UK is one of the main contributors to the pooled fund in the DRC. We have pressed quite hard for changes in the past. For example, we felt the pooled fund needed to do more to monitor and be more than just a dispersal mechanism; it really needed to monitor more. That has translated into many more field visits. We also we felt the pooled fund was not looking carefully enough at gender issues. Again, that is something they have taken on board.

We are now in the process of preparing the next humanitarian programme for the next few years. Discussions with the pooled fund in terms of its future positioning and also how other development partners and donors will contribute to it is a key moment for us, when we are looking to further improve the operations of the pooled fund.



Some examples of what we are discussing on humanitarian issues, including with the pooled fund, are the fact that the funding cycle is very short. It is often less than a year. That may be good in certain ways, if you need to respond very quickly, but, ultimately, as was pointed out already, if you do that for 20 years you have to start thinking about whether that is really the best way of approaching it. Likewise, the tools in the humanitarian armoury—for example, food distribution, cash distribution and so on—are all things where we feel more dialogue needs to be had, and more evidence from elsewhere can be brought into the discussions.

Q130 Jeremy Lefroy: Is there any clear link between the work of the pooled fund and the ongoing development work that DFID is also involved in? The criticism has sometimes been levelled that humanitarian work continues and there is no real long-term development impact, particularly in a protracted crisis such as we are seeing.

James Wharton: There are signs that it is improving. One of the roles that DFID, but the UK more generally, plays globally in these areas of policy is to push for accountability, transparency and that longer-term planning. We have made significant progress with the pooled fund. We have seen an increase in the actual checks of their programme and checks of their suppliers. We are seeing a move towards the three-year Humanitarian Action Plan of 2017-2019, which should better co-ordinate what they are doing with some of the broader development aims and opportunities.

Humanitarian responses, as I know the Committee will appreciate, are often different from longer-term development goals and objectives, but they should be complementary where possible. There has been scope for improvement, and we have been a leading advocate for that. We have to recognise the need to balance the flexibility and responsiveness required with the accountability and transparency that we generally like to see from programmes. The signs are that the pooled fund is recognising that and moving towards it.

The three-year Humanitarian Action Plan is a good example of that, because it allows us to do more planning and start to tie it into the development work and opportunities that exist. It is far from perfect, but we are talking about the DRC, which is one of the more difficult environments in which to operate. All the signs are that they are responding and working with us to go in the right direction.

Q131 Jeremy Lefroy: Talking about difficult environments, we were there in 2011 and saw a road running through South Kivu, which DFID was involved in constructing with UNOPS. We were very disappointed to hear the product had been pulled this year because it simply had not worked. We had travelled 60 kilometres along the road in 2011, and it had clearly made a huge difference to open up communities that previously had spent days walking to bring their produce to market, and it had helped humanitarian efforts to get through. Yet we now hear that we have given



up on this road. Could you perhaps give a bit of the background?

James Wharton: I will ask Christian to speak to the background, as this did not necessarily coincide with my time in post. I would say that, while it is always disappointing to see what could be good and beneficial projects pulled, we also have to recognise that we should be willing to take those sorts of decisions and we must be willing to respond to ensure the money we spend delivers value for money for the taxpayer.

Where projects are not working, in whatever set of circumstances, we always need to be ready to withdraw. That sends the message that we are serious about value for money and transparency, and we will withdraw if projects are not delivering to the expectations we have for them. That money can sometimes then be better spent and targeted somewhere that it may have an effect. Christian, perhaps you can talk about the specific circumstances to which my colleague refers.

Christian Rogg: This is a road in South Kivu, which was meant to go all the way to a town called Shabunda. It was implemented by UNOPS and we decided to close that part of the programme down last year. There were a number of reasons for that. Some were beyond the control of the Department. The general security situation in the area made it very difficult to continue construction.

We also felt that, while the importance of the road is a given, the performance of the implementing partner, in this case UNOPS, was problematic. The programme was reviewed a few times and scored very badly. Despite efforts to change and reform it, it did not improve performance. That led us to close this particular programme, but that does not affect the overarching point you mentioned about the importance of infrastructure, particularly road infrastructure, in the east of the Congo.

We are continuing with the other part of the programme in North Kivu, which is not run by the United Nations but is run by a private-sector contractor. That is a road between Sake and Masisi, which meets the same criteria in terms of importance: both reducing conflict and improving economic access along that exit out of Goma.

Chair: We have five more questions in 20 minutes, so bear that in mind.

Q132 **Pauline Latham:** I am going to shorten my question. The ÉLAN programme involves an investment into private-sector development in DRC of £50 million. How is DFID ensuring this programme is resilient to political and conflict shock? How is the programme being designed to be sustainable when it is completed?

James Wharton: ÉLAN is a very welcome development programme. It is going to have significant impact. It is about ensuring that people who operate across a number of sectors—primarily agriculture, renewable energy and transportation—are able to get better value from the work



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they do. It is about improving the productivity and improving what these people are paid for the work they can deliver.

I visited one of the projects when I was in DRC recently. It is performing well and the challenge, of course, as you recognise, is scale and sustainability. It is about how we can take small interventions that are effective and scale them up, and how we ensure the long-term sustainability of that which we do. So far, as I say, the programme is performing well. There are signs that it is actually outperforming expectations.

In terms of sustainability, these tend to be interventions in markets that are, themselves, sustainable. You show people how to change the way they manage their produce to drive more value from it, to move up the value chain and so on. Those things are relatively self-sustaining, because of course people want to do it since it drives more value and generates more income.

You ultimately cannot protect against the most severe political shocks. If something stops a coffee processing warehouse from processing because the political environment is so unstable, there is only so much you can do about that. That is why the other work we do in stability and trying to pressure the Government in terms of their reaction to the current political situation is important. For ÉLAN as a programme, the sustainability and scalability of what we do is built into the approach that is being taken, and all the evidence so far is that it is working well and outperforming expectations.

Q133 Albert Owen: I have a follow-on question, if I may. I will also reduce my supplementaries. Considering the amount of money that has been lost due to tax avoidance and tax evasion due to corruption and illicit financial flows out of the Congo, should DFID have focused more on this area rather than the “making markets work” approach of ÉLAN?

James Wharton: We have to focus on areas in which we expect to get outcomes for the investment we make. There is a cross-Government anti-corruption approach, which we do jointly with the Foreign Office. The UK Government are very focused on doing what they can to stem illicit flows. You are, of course, absolutely right that some of the biggest challenges not just DRC but many developing countries face can be the impact of the theft or misallocation of resource.

We are working closely with actors in that space internationally. We have to recognise that, given some of the challenges with the Government in the DRC, while we put on what pressure we can and we assist them to deliver what transparency we are able to deliver, there are some factors that are not entirely within our control, which represent challenges in this space.

Christian Rogg: The ÉLAN programme looks, to some extent, at corruption issues, but at the micro level. For example, it identifies what



taxes are levied legally or illegally on river transport and tries to bring transparency and streamlining into that.

Having said that, the ÉLAN programme works alongside another programme called Essor, which is implemented by PricewaterhouseCoopers and which looks at the wider environment. Anti-corruption is a key element there. I would just say that the anti-corruption drive is very much part of what we are doing in the private sector, through not only ÉLAN but other interventions as well.

James Wharton: To give you some specific examples of the sort of things we do, through our humanitarian programmes, we have established hotlines for people to report corruption. We are helping the Government to remove ghost workers from the payroll. We have supported the National Audit Office in DRC, because of the importance of the work they do. There are relatively small but practical interventions we can make that help in this space.

Q134 **Albert Owen:** My supplementary is this. Global Witness has identified a number of secretive mining deals involving money routed through the United Kingdom and overseas territories, as well as through London-listed companies. What are the UK Government doing about this? I know the previous Prime Minister was keen to stress that there was a cross-Government approach to this, but what is being done to punish those responsible for the loss of revenue to the Congo?

James Wharton: The UK Government have a very clear position. If there is evidence of criminality, it is something that will be pursued. I cannot necessarily comment on individual cases that might be ongoing or allegations that have been made that may or may not ultimately be founded.

Q135 **Albert Owen:** Sure, yes, but this is a general point. I should have said this. Do they require more powers to punish those responsible?

James Wharton: It is a difficult balance. Actually, we have quite a robust set of procedures and powers in place in this country. Whether we are always able to target them as quickly and effectively as we would like and whether it is always possible to get evidence to the standards we expect to have it in order to act in a country like this I recognise are both legitimate questions and challenges, but I am not advocating for more powers. We must always work to ensure we use the powers we have as effectively as possible.

Q136 **Albert Owen:** If the money is routed through the United Kingdom and overseas territories, it is our responsibility. That is my point. If we are failing now, surely we need more powers to address this very stark problem.

James Wharton: The challenge is often proving the illicit nature of the funds rather than the action you then take.



Q137 **Albert Owen:** It has been identified here by a body that this has happened and those are listed companies on the UK stock market. This is not a partisan point. Should we not really be tackling this from our end?

James Wharton: Absolutely. If it can be shown that funds are illegally removed, have been stolen from their rightful owners—whether that is the people, the organisations or the Government, whoever it might be—then of course we should take action, but it is one thing to identify flows of funds that are questionable and it is another to show with some certainty that they are illegal in their nature. That is a challenging area of the general legal debate, and we need to think very carefully about how we tread there.

Albert Owen: Could you look into the specific evidence from Global Witness?

James Wharton: Yes, very happily.

Albert Owen: Thank you very much.

Chair: Christian, we are going to run out of time. We have three big more areas to cover in 15 minutes. Answer really briefly.

Christian Rogg: I would just say that some of what you are asking for is actually happening. We are in contact with the Serious Fraud Office and the National Crime Agency. What is in the public domain, for example, is that the Serious Fraud Office is investigating a company called ENRC, because it was listed on the UK stock exchange. Not everything is in the public domain, but what you are asking for is happening.

Albert Owen: What about Glencore?

Christian Rogg: I am sorry. That is for further dialogue.

Albert Owen: Thank you. Those are the two that have been identified to us. You named one of them; I named the other.

Q138 **Pauline Latham:** Minister, you have mentioned a lot about women and girls in your answers, which is clearly a very important part of the work in DRC. Nearly every DFID programme contains gender components. Do you collect all the gender effects of the programmes in DRC to get a comprehensive and coherent view of how DFID programmes are helping women and girls? How can DFID scale this work up? Do you plan to expand it outside of Kinshasa?

James Wharton: Every DRC programme that DFID does should embed gender indicators, not just most of them. It should be part of everything we do, because these are some of the most marginalised groups, so it can have some of the most positive long-term development benefits.

In terms of collation, we monitor the effect of each individual programme. On our dashboard, we look at exactly what is happening across-country, so we have the data about the impact our programmes



are having. We draw that together and, indeed, it helps us to inform our decisions on future planning and the programmes we support and extend.

We have programmes outside of Kinshasa, of course, but you are right: there is often a focus in this area on Kinshasa, which itself presents a huge challenge. I tend to look to our country officers to advise on where we should expand, to ensure we continue to have value for money and deliver on our objectives. Where there are opportunities, we should and do, certainly, look to do so, but we have to recognise as well that some of the challenges are at such a level—i.e. the humanitarian responses, the security responses—that some of these interventions are not always appropriate outside of Kinshasa, the capital. Where they are, we should of course look at them. We should do the good that we can with the money that we use.

Q139 Pauline Latham: Can you explain why they are not appropriate outside of Kinshasa?

James Wharton: There may be a deliverability issue, for example. If our main activity in one area is the most basic level of support for a community to ensure they do not go hungry or to ensure they can access the very basic services we believe they should be able to access, it may be that it is not an effective use of money at that time to engage in some of the other ways. For example, engaging with the civil society elections process may be a step further down the line of development than we are able, in a value for money sense, to do at this time with resources that are limited.

We spend a significant amount in DRC, but it is not a bottomless pit from which we can draw endless amounts of money. We have to deploy resources where we can help the most people.

Q140 Chair: Let me ask two questions about education. DFID is currently working with USAID on a programme called the ACCELERE programme. Can you tell us a bit more about it? What is its focus and how is it going?

James Wharton: These are quite early stages for ACCELERE. It is a programme designed to help young people and children stay in school. So far, it has helped about 20,000. It includes provision of 250,000 high-quality textbooks to ensure these things can work. The early signs are positive. We should recognise that, for all the criticism we have of the Government of the DRC in many fields, they have a commitment to free primary education. The delivery of that commitment is some way off, but we should at least recognise that the statement is a welcome one and one on which we would like to see them progress and deliver.

ACCELERE is in its early days, but the signs are that it is effective. It is designed to help children not just get into school but actually stay in school and get the benefit of that education. It is a good example of working with other partners in this space, where we can scale up our efforts through that joint working and deliver more.



Q141 **Chair:** Minister, you mention the policy of the Government of the DRC for free education. We had evidence earlier from Noella around some of the challenges and the reality that parents are paying fees. What more is DFID doing or could DFID be doing to support DRC in strengthening its system and moving to truly free education?

James Wharton: The work DFID does with ACCELERE is a good example, where we are ensuring there is a flow-through of education that makes sense for those who engage with it, with the prospect of taking it to a level where it is going to be of significant benefit. The truth is that much of the challenge is to do with the Government of the DRC's own financial management and the desire they have to deliver on what is a welcome commitment. We want to see more of a focus on that. The security situation remains a very significant challenge when delivering these sorts of government programmes.

Actually, a lot of the support we are able to offer is indirect in its nature, in terms of improving the overall environment and the functioning of Government. At the same time, as we have just discussed, we are active in the education space, which makes a difference. The early signs are that this programme is going to make a significant difference and it is working well. However, this is not going to be an easy thing to deliver. We need to recognise that.

Christian Rogg: The issue of funding for the education sector is a critical one. If one looks at the overall allocation, it is not sufficient to put the policy of having free education in place. When it comes to the specifics of where the money flows, it is still going to teachers and salaries, but there is very little is on the infrastructure side, i.e. capital expenditure.

When we look at the way to approach this in collaboration with our American colleagues, it starts at the school level in terms of monitoring the funds that are received and having more local accountability through parent committees with individual schools, but goes all the way up in terms of strategic dialogue with the Minister as to what the funding for the sector as a whole looks like. It is this whole chain that has challenges all along the way.

In addition to the ACCELERE programme you mentioned, there is a second education programme that cuts across countries, the Girls' Education Challenge, which also operates in the DRC with a programme called VAS-Y Fille, which is particularly targeted at girls. That programme has the ability to make specific interventions targeted at girls like bursaries, for example, to help with the transition from primary to secondary education and so on. That is another way of supporting specific groups who cannot afford education.

Q142 **Jeremy Lefroy:** When we were in Congo, we heard about the work of GPE and some criticism of the World Bank's involvement. As the supervising entity, I wondered what action DFID had taken to challenge the World Bank to step up its work on that. We had heard that the World



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Bank was possibly going to put a permanent representative or a permanent staff member in the DRC.

Christian Rogg: I would need to check what the status of that one is, but the challenge our education colleagues have been mostly focusing on is on the government side to fulfil the requirements to access the GPE funding. In addition to that, there was an issue between the development partners in terms of who actually leads and how the World Bank leads that. That is still ongoing to some extent. I would need to check what the latest is, in terms of particularly the World Bank resource.

Q143 **Albert Owen:** If I could move on to health, Minister, DFID's work in the DRC is very broad, tackling issues like access to healthcare, malaria, water, sanitation and hygiene. How do you join up all this work in a comprehensive, coherent and complementary way?

James Wharton: There are a number of actors across the health piece in DRC, as you anticipate. DFID plays quite a key role in co-ordinating the health sector group, working with donors like GAVI, the Global Fund, the World Bank and the European Union, and of course with the Ministry of Health, to improve the information-sharing and co-ordination across the health sector.

Again, this is an environment in which there are significant challenges. We play a big role, but there is an awful lot that needs to be done. Whether it is our malaria programme, which looks to improve the availability and accessibility of treatment for malaria in some of the private-sector facilities in Kinshasa, or the work we do through ASSP, which provides support and delivery across 52 health zones—even then, that is only about 10% of the population, although it is in some of the most remote parts of the country—we are very active in the space, but there are huge challenges in a population of 84-odd million people, along with some of the other challenges in the environment, which have to exist for anybody who operates in DRC.

Q144 **Albert Owen:** I appreciate that. You mentioned the vast area and the large population. A lot of it is in rural areas. You say you are focused on certain areas. Do you have plans to extend beyond those priority areas to reach out to those who may be missed because of the focus on certain areas?

James Wharton: We are always looking at where there are opportunities that deliver value for the money we spend to help the most people we can. Christian is perhaps best placed to talk about some of the individual projects we would look to, but, absolutely, we do not have a closed mind to this.

Particularly in an environment where, since the mid-1970s, there have been something like seven Ebola outbreaks and significant health impacts can unfold with relative ease and speed, very sadly, we need to be flexible and ready to respond. Otherwise, significant numbers of people can go without the support that should be there and available to them.



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The short answer is yes, but I cannot predict exactly where those opportunities or, indeed, threats will arise in the future. We maintain a very close watch over that.

Q145 Albert Owen: Is there a review to go beyond the five provinces you currently operate in?

James Wharton: There is a willingness.

Albert Owen: Are you actively looking to review that?

James Wharton: We keep our programmes under constant review. I am not in a position to promise that we are going to expand in the foreseeable future, with all the other challenges DRC faces, but we always look at the opportunities that might arise. We have significant manifesto commitments. DRC is a big contributor to the Government's manifesto commitments. If there are opportunities, in a way that drives value and helps people, to increase that contribution, then we are open minded to them and indeed looking out for them.

Christian Rogg: For the last year, DFID has been chairing the group of all health donors in the DRC, precisely because the question you raised is a critical one. What that involves for us, more specifically, then, aside from co-ordination between all development partners, is to make sure that we are using our resources most effectively. That means, for example, not being in the same place where the US, as a very large health donor, is present or where the EU, as another big health donor, is present.

We have made adjustments in terms of focusing our resources more on areas where we can make the biggest difference. That is continuing. Since the Committee came to visit in July, we have developed a provincial strategy, where we want to concentrate more of HMG's resources—as far as development is concerned, but also as far as political dialogue is concerned—on the areas where we have a critical mass of activities and also where we feel others are not operating to the same extent.

Jeremy Lefroy: When in Kananga, we saw the ASSP programme, together with the WASH programme. I would personally say it was among the best if not the best programme that I have seen in six and a half years on this Committee, in terms of the extent and the fact it is reaching people nobody else is reaching and making a huge difference to an awful lot of people's lives.

I just wanted to put that point on the record, because we can often be critical and nit-pick, but this was an example to me of DFID at its best.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. That is a great note on which to bring the session to a close. We have covered a lot of territory in just over an hour. Thanks to both of you for coming to give evidence to us here today.