

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: Instability and the humanitarian response in South Sudan, HC 824

Tuesday 13 December 2016

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Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Pauline Latham; Wendy Morton, Fiona Bruce, Mr Nigel Evans, Stephen Doughty, Jeremy Lefroy, Dr Lisa Cameron

Questions 1-60

Witnesses

I. Dame Rosalind Marsden, Associate Fellow, Africa Programme, Chatham House, Emma Fanning, Humanitarian Policy Adviser, Oxfam

II. James Wharton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, Mr Tobias Ellwood MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs



Examination of Witnesses

Dame Rosalind Marsden and Emma Fanning.

Q1 Chair: Good morning, everyone. This is a one-off oral evidence session on the situation in South Sudan. We have two excellent panels this morning, and we have about an hour with each. Can I welcome our first two witnesses? We are seeking, over the next hour, to cover 10 questions with you, so we will try to bear that in mind in brevity of questions, and if you can reciprocate in brevity of answers we will cover a lot more ground. I am grateful for that. What we tend to do is go straight into the questions and then, when you have your first opportunity to answer a question, please introduce yourself. Let me just start with an opener that gives you a chance to respond. Clearly, South Sudan is a country in crisis. What is your assessment of the situation on the ground?

Dame Rosalind Marsden: The situation is very complex and fluid, and politically it would seem increasingly intractable. South Sudan is engulfed in a severe and protracted humanitarian crisis, and there have been reports, as you know, of grave human rights violations against civilians committed by both sides. Since the crisis started in December 2013, tens of thousands of people are estimated to have died. Nobody quite knows what the exact figure is, but something in the region of 50,000 is often mentioned.

In addition to that, a quarter of the estimated total population of around 12 million have been forced to leave their homes. About 1.8 million are internally displaced and 1.1 million have fled into neighbouring countries. OCHA is expecting the outflow of refugees to become even worse over the next year, together with the food insecurity situation, which is also expected to deteriorate. The Equatorians, who have been responsible for around 50% of cereal production before the conflict, have also been unable to plant in many places, so food production is falling.

On the security side, conflict dynamics have evolved rapidly this year, particularly since the events in Juba in July, when there was intense fighting between the forces of Salva Kiir and his then first Vice-President, Riek Machar. In 2013 to 2015, up until the August 2015 peace agreement, conflict was largely confined to the Greater Upper Nile. Now, however, the conflict has spread across the whole country, particularly into the Equatorias, much of which were previously peaceful, and into western Bahr el Ghazal. This has also increased the security threat to civilians.

The conflict is now more decentralised, with local militias mushrooming, especially in the Equatorias. There are estimated to be about 40 militias, many of whom have taken up arms because of local grievances. There have been attacks on convoys and passenger buses on the main roads out of Juba to Yei and Nimule, and also reports of collective punishment meted out by the SPLA and its aligned militias to civilians in areas



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thought to be sympathetic to the rebels. The heavy-handed counterinsurgency tactics and the escalation of hate speech have hardened existing divisions and led to increasing polarisation of ethnic identities.

I will perhaps pause there. There is a lot I could say on the political situation, but perhaps I could leave that for later.

Chair: Thank you. We will follow up on a number of the issues you have touched upon, so thank you very much, Dame Rosalind.

Emma Fanning: I am Emma Fanning. I am a Humanitarian Policy Adviser with Oxfam. To build on what Rosalind said, and particularly looking at the humanitarian situation, the big indicator that we are seeing at the moment is the displacement and the number of people fleeing the country. It is quite different from what we were seeing until recently, when internal displacement was a major thing. This is also to do with the conflict moving down into the Equatorias, but we have seen over 3,200 people every day since early July crossing the borders, rising to 4,000 people per day in the last month or so.

We are also seeing a very gendered dynamic there, and we can pick that up later. There are huge levels of violence being reported. You will be aware of the UN Commission that has recently been there, and who came back reporting that starvation, gang rape, and burning of villages was pretty commonplace. It had become so prevalent, they said, that it is becoming normal. The number of people fleeing indicates that people see this as a really big issue and they do not see an end in sight to that soon.

Food insecurity is massive as well. It has been a big issue in this conflict since 2014, but what we are seeing at the moment is that the peaks of food insecurity are coming closer together and getting higher. We are just after the harvest season, which is when you would expect people to be okay with food, but 3.7 million people do not have enough food today, and we are seeing that the lean season between harvests is getting longer and longer as people do not manage to plant and are forced to displace. This is obviously affected by the economy, which I would be happy to talk a bit more about later.

The insecurity on the roads to Juba is meaning that people are really struggling to survive in Juba. There are a lot of armed men, so there is a lot of violence increasing, related to the economy and food insecurity. Across the country, we are seeing a lack of access to basic services. It is a conflict across many, many areas. 70% of schools in some areas have closed. There is no medicine in clinics. In a place called Leer County in Unity State, all humanitarians have been evacuated recently.

There is nothing left to treat things like malaria and cholera, and cholera has been spreading a lot with people moving, fleeing soldiers and going to different places. Cholera is epidemic in South Sudan, but at the



moment what we have seen this year is that it is much more widely spread than usual, just from that movement of people, and then obviously, it is much more difficult to get humanitarian access to contain these things.

Q2 Chair: Do aid organisations have enough funding, including from DFID, to deal with this?

Emma Fanning: DFID has been extremely generous on the funding. It is the second biggest donor to the appeal with \$173 million this year. They also have a five-year plan linking humanitarian assistance and resilience, which is £443 million, I think. It is a really impressive plan, in that it does what we have all been asking for for a long time: it makes the link and gives the long-term funding that allows sustainability and a move towards people's coping strategies. What I would say is that the response in South Sudan is now funded, but funding is not the problem in delivering aid. We can go into that later.

On the regional refugee response, there is critical underfunding. We are now in December. It is 27% funded. If you are going to get loads more refugees coming, the moment to be funding that is now, in order to get all the contingency in place to be able to prepare for even more people coming in. DFID is a very good funder. Its HARISS project, the resilience to humanitarian assistance one, gives a lot of funding to NGOs.

I would say, on the money that goes through the UN appeal, which is the \$173 million, that it would be nice to see more diversification of funding. It goes mostly to the UN at the moment, or to the pooled fund, which means that the money that comes out for NGOs does not cover operational costs. It is quite problematic, and it is also very short-term. Not enough is going to national NGOs. It is all about management structures and how much time and effort you can invest in the management of that money.

Q3 Wendy Morton: Could South Sudan be on the brink of another civil war?

Dame Rosalind Marsden: It is always difficult to predict, but it looks as though the current crisis will certainly be protracted and could well escalate. A number of senior UN officials have just recently warned of the risk of mass atrocities, and indeed the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide has even warned about the possibility of this turning into a possible genocide in South Sudan. The fact is that mass atrocities, targeted ethnic killings and grave human rights violations have, of course, been going on for quite a long time.

The Government have strongly denied that there is any intent by any group in South Sudan to commit genocide. They have been trying to say what is going on is a low-intensity insurgency, which their security forces are capable of controlling. That is the Government position. There is a lot of concern that with the dry season having now started, there could



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be a further escalation of perhaps collective punishment against some of the areas in the Equatorias. The conflict could escalate unless some of the drivers of the conflict are addressed. One of the most important is this alarming increase in hate speech and ethnically charged rhetoric; the IGAD summit, which met the other day, came out very strongly urging the Government of South Sudan to do something firm to curb that. Of course, the international community has done the same.

Another possible driver of conflict is the lack of an inclusive political process, and a lack of peaceful avenues to power and political representation means that there is no real incentive at the moment for some of the opposition leaders who are threatening further armed resistance to put down arms. Trying to find some way to have an inclusive political process is very urgent. The perception by some Equatorians that they were marginalised by the August 2015 peace agreement because they did not take up arms during the preceding two-year civil war also seems to have fuelled the formation of armed groups in the Equatorias. The conflict could swell and take on more localised forms.

The rather heavy-handed counterinsurgency tactics by the Government have, of course, also facilitated and acted as a recruiting sergeant for some of the local militias. It is perhaps also worth mentioning the creation of 28 states, which was announced by Salva Kiir back in October 2015. Although this is popular amongst some members of the Dinka community, it is also perceived by others to have increased Dinka control at the expense of other communities, and this could lead to further conflict in some of the flashpoint areas, unless the disputed internal boundaries are addressed.

Finally, I think economic collapse is of course making the security situation even worse, with increasing criminality, looting and roadblocks being set up on some of the main roads, including increased criminality in Juba as well. All those drivers suggest that things could indeed become considerably worse over the next year, unless some quite radical action is taken.

Q4 Wendy Morton: I wanted to follow up, and maybe both of you would like to share some thoughts with us. What do you think DFID and the UK Government could be doing to help support conflict prevention efforts in South Sudan?

Dame Rosalind Marsden: I have a number of things. Perhaps I will start with some of the broader and slightly more political ones. An inclusive political process is being widely called for by the international community. The British Government, together with its international partners in the region, are keen to try to keep the peace agreement alive. However, there is no clear idea at the moment as to how to shape that inclusive political process. The fact that the former Vice-President, Riek Machar, is now diplomatically isolated and excluded from the current



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political process is seen by many as an obstacle to trying to achieve a durable, peaceful way forward. That is one point.

On the same issue, the Government of South Sudan has indicated that it will outline some plans for a national dialogue. I understand that President Kiir is going to address the transitional national assembly tomorrow to announce his ideas for how to launch such a dialogue. My own view is that a national dialogue and conversation for all South Sudanese is in principle very desirable. However, it is important not to do this prematurely or without very careful preparation, particularly at a time when conflict is still escalating and it is by no means clear that a conducive environment exists.

I would hope that the British Government could advise President Kiir to take great care to do the preparation carefully, and to reach out to some of the other political actors, to see if consensus can be formed as to how a national dialogue might be taken forward. On other areas where I think DFID could provide valuable support, creating neutral space for dialogue and encouraging an inclusive approach to peace-building and reconciliation is very important, hence the importance of supporting longer-term initiatives, for example for bringing youth leaders together in a neutral space. The same goes for women and tribal elders.

The churches have a very influential role to play in facilitating dialogue. They have recently announced an Action Plan for Peace, which would prioritise efforts to combat hate speech, which is obviously extremely important, to promote grassroots reconciliation and address root causes of conflict. The South Sudan Council of Churches' Action Plan for Peace is certainly a very laudable initiative that deserves support. In general, it would be very helpful if DFID could look at the scope for supporting local efforts at conflict resolution, reaching out beyond what is known as the Juba bubble. DFID could be looking for scope to support South Sudanese actors who are willing to counter hate speech and to support initiatives that foster inter-ethnic dialogue.

It would also be good if the UK could push for a continued focus on addressing the drivers of conflict, alongside all of the efforts it is making on the humanitarian assistance, and bringing others on board for conflict-sensitive humanitarian assistance in that context. I very much welcome DFID's initiative to set up the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility in Juba, as well as DFID's efforts to maintain close links with NGOs and country experts who have long-term knowledge of the country.

Finally, more support is needed for South Sudanese civil society organisations and NGOs. It is also very important for DFID and the Foreign Office to take very seriously the restrictions faced by international NGOs, local NGOs and civil society organisations, such as those imposed by the NGO Act, and encourage the UN's Humanitarian Co-ordinator, and hopefully the new SRSG, when they are appointed, to



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take these issues up as well. This is not a peripheral issue if humanitarian actors are going to be able to do their jobs effectively. We are seeing that many of the more outspoken South Sudanese civil society leaders have now been forced to leave the country. For the long-term wellbeing of the country, it is very important that we can bring them back inside.

Emma Fanning: I will build on much of what Rosalind has said. It really does strike me that there is no common international plan for peace. You see a lot of divides, both at the Security Council, where they should be looking at the renewal of the UNMISS mandate today, but also with IGAD, the regional body that is running the peace process, and the AU. There are divides particularly over an arms embargo, the role of Machar and the regional protection force, which is meant to be coming in to support UNMISS. There is a real lack of consensus, and that is hindering peace going forward.

Echoing what Rosalind said about the conflict analysis facility in Juba, it is great that the UK has taken such a lead on that. We see in a number of our projects how, at a community level, you can do a lot of that peacebuilding, and there are lots of initiatives. The picture is not unrelentingly grim. There are some real rays of hope of amazing things going on at that level. Perhaps integrating peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity into projects is something DFID, both in its own projects and using its influence within the humanitarian community, could continue to encourage, because I know they do so. It is, again, a large part of the HARISS funding and business plan to do that.

DFID has done some really good research on what is going on in South Sudan recently, so perhaps it is about researching that and looking into what works. As Rosalind said, you must get the timing of things right, but you cannot just not do anything, particularly at a local level. We should be building on what does work at a local level, but also having an eye on the longer-term picture, getting beyond Juba and ensuring there is inclusivity, and linking up the different levels, as it were. I agree absolutely on calling out ethnically targeted hate speech. It has to be done absolutely consistently.

Again, perhaps to go back to my first point, the UK is not one of the major players at the forefront of this, but it is a really important player behind the scenes. The UK's role is critical in getting everybody aligned, because it is not clear that anyone has a plan, and the UK has a really important role in bringing people together around a consensus, and bringing others, particularly people in the region, to call out the ethnically targeted hate speech. We can talk about UNMISS separately, the role it plays and how the UK can work with others to strengthen that. It may not always be the UK's voice, but getting others to do it.

Chair: We are hearing fantastic, comprehensive answers, but we have done two questions in 20 minutes, so we need to have slightly more



concise answers, if that is okay.

- Q5 **Pauline Latham:** Médecins Sans Frontières have detailed regrettable cycles of violence and displacement. ICRC has stated that there are 2 million displaced people in South Sudan. What actually is the situation facing those people? What is life like for them?

Emma Fanning: It depends where you are. There are 200,000 people in the protection of civilian sites; that is like being inside a prison. It is maybe slightly better, but you cannot go out; people are terrified of going out. There are not many activities for people to do; they are totally dependent. However, that is only 200,000 people. Most people who are internally displaced are in hiding places or in host communities. What we see in areas of Unity State, for example, is people going to the swamps and the islands. These are traditional coping mechanisms in South Sudan, but we hear stories about women with their babies drowning on their backs, hiding in the swamps as militia go past. That fear is so desperate that they are hiding underwater.

They are living on islands that only usually support a very small population, but it is much bigger now. Humanitarian aid has reached something like 1.7 million people out of the 6 million people who need it. It is tiny. The main responders are South Sudanese, with communities helping each other, and there is not enough to go around. There is a big reliance on wild food in South Sudan anyway, and there is only so long before that is exhausted.

The other thing to really mention is the gender dynamics of displacement. On the journey to displacement there is a lot of risk of sexual violence. Men are at risk of recruitment, which is quite important and a big reason why they flee. Once you are in displacement, because men are often recruited or stop at home to look after the assets or the cattle, you have women taking on different roles and much more at the forefront. They are vulnerable to a whole other range of sexual exploitation and abuse. Men who do displace are losing their sense of masculinity and what it is to be a man, so there is more violence in the household. It is very, very complex picture and it depends very much where you are.

- Q6 **Pauline Latham:** Can you tell me whether you think DFID could do more, and what they could do to support the displaced people?

Emma Fanning: I would say the regional response. I may not have the most up-to-date figures on this, but the UK, as far as I am aware, has only given about £5 million to the regional response. It is very low in comparison.

- Q7 **Pauline Latham:** I am sorry; in comparison with what?

Emma Fanning: Sorry. That is in comparison with their funding for what is happening in South Sudan. Once you get into the region—Uganda particularly, but also Ethiopia, Sudan and the DRC—it is very low. DFID is a strong humanitarian actor. It is very strong on the



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Humanitarian Country Team in Juba. We welcome that and see them as a great ally. Perhaps they could be calling out and pushing UNMISS to do more to protect displaced people. We have seen a few times where it would have been helpful to have DFID call them out, perhaps privately, but to put that pressure on, because they do not always make decisions in the best interests of people's protection.

Chair: We have already agreed as a Committee to do a piece of work early in the new year about the broader issue of regional displacement in Africa, so that is very, very helpful.

Q8 **Albert Owen:** Still on this theme, what more can the Government and DFID do in the area of persuading the Transitional Government of National Unity to significantly reduce its military spending in favour of health, education and humanitarian response?

Dame Rosalind Marsden: The majority of government spending does go on the military and security, and it is largely controlled by the presidency. The total amount of military expenditure is unknown because a lot of it is off-budget. Quite a big chunk of military expenditure goes on SPLA salaries, and that will not change while the conflict lasts. However, of course, there is a lack of transparency around how that money is spent, and at some point, there is a need for SPLA payroll reform. The really big ticket items in terms of spending are things like heavy weaponry.

We know that the Government have, in the last two or three years, been spending a lot on buying military helicopters, jet fighters, and so forth, which have enabled it to mount large-scale attacks this year. The availability of these weapons has also encouraged those who are seeking a military solution. This is where an arms embargo could help. The UK deserves credit for having pushed hard in the UN Security Council for a UN arms embargo on South Sudan. It is worth mentioning that the European Union has had an arms embargo on South Sudan in place since independence.

Some people have said that most people in South Sudan are being killed by small arms, which is going to be difficult to control, but the UN Panel of Experts has found that the big weapons systems in the country are being serviced and maintained by none of the South Sudanese nationals.

Q9 **Albert Owen:** There are embargos and sanctions in place. Do you think the sanctions are targeted sufficiently?

Dame Rosalind Marsden: The arms embargo has not yet been agreed. This is a particular illustration of a point made by Emma: there is no co-ordinated, joint international position. The UK and France have for some long time pushed for an arms embargo. The US was for a long time divided internally, but has just recently come out in favour. However, at the last IGAD summit on 9 December, the region has explicitly opposed both an arms embargo and further targeted sanctions.



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That will have the effect of making the Government in Juba feel that the pressure on them is now reduced.

That arms embargo would have been one way of trying to reduce the skewing of overall government expenditure so much to the military, by at least addressing the heavy weaponry issue. Unfortunately, that does not look as if it is a very promising avenue at this moment.

Emma Fanning: I would briefly say that the budget has always been military-oriented. It is not new, but it has obviously worsened with the conflict. It needs to have a long-term plan on this. I do slightly wonder if it is possible to do now, because the Government are obviously very involved in the war. However, they are desperate for cash. They have a 40% gap in their budget for next year. They are talking to the IMF. That is an avenue. I also think that one thing the UK can do is to bring regional voices, like the leaders in the region, to have this discussion and preferably show where they are leading by good practice, and what that has done for their countries.

Q10 **Stephen Doughty:** Just before I come to my question, I wanted to ask who the major suppliers of arms to South Sudan are.

Dame Rosalind Marsden: Ukraine has been mentioned as one. I am afraid I do not know the full details, but I think that is certainly the case with the helicopters.

Q11 **Stephen Doughty:** Do you have any ideas of where the heavy weaponry is coming from?

Emma Fanning: I am not sure I can remember. A lot of things have been in the country for a very long time, and there is weaponry moving through the region. However, I think the big-ticket items are—

Stephen Doughty: Ukraine.

Emma Fanning: The Panel of Experts reported some fighter jets being seen around Juba in July. We know that they stopped in Uganda, but we do not know where they came from.

Q12 **Stephen Doughty:** Coming back to the issue of gender and sexual violence, could you just give us a little more detail in terms of some of the statistics on what percentage of women have been affected? Is this widespread across all regions, or is it particularly focused in certain areas? It would be good to have some more granularity on that.

Emma Fanning: Sure. They are pretty grim statistics. Looking at conflict-related sexual violence, the UN have recently said from a survey that 70% of women in Juba have been victims of some form of sexual assault since 2013 when the conflict started. What we are seeing from surveys by IRC and CARE is perhaps a lower percentage, so maybe Juba is particularly bad. IRC, in a recent study funded by DFID, is reporting that 64% of women in the three locations they were looking at have experienced intimate partner violence. One in three women has



experienced some form of violence by non-partners. One thing that is quite important is to open that up and look not just at sexual violence but violence against women and girls, and gender-based violence. In South Sudan, there are very long-term structural issues around gender-based violence or violence against women and girls.

One of the things is that a girl is three times more likely to die in childbirth than to finish primary school. One in seven women dies in pregnancy or childbirth. These are really high statistics, but that was before the conflict, so we need to bear in mind where our baseline is. There is also a long history of cattle-raiding; you need to pay the dowry, and girls and violence have a big history. It has all become much worse with the current conflict. CARE is reporting in particular an increase in early marriage in some areas they have seen. It is not massive; it is a couple of percentage points, from 7% to 9% of girls under 15 being married. I think it has gone from 45% to 52% of girls under 18 getting married.

These are coping mechanism that need addressing, because they trap girls into cycles of poverty and potentially violence. The other thing to talk about around gender-based violence is castration of boys. We have seen quite a lot of that, and killing of boy children and men. There is also forced recruitment of men. Again, CARE studies show that with a lot of people moving towards Uganda there is a spike in the number of boys aged 12 to 17. There are more boys than girls, which is quite surprising, and most people say that is because they are escaping forced recruitment.

Q13 Stephen Doughty: I accept that there is an underlying baseline that you described, which was long-established before the conflict. What are the two or three things that you think would be most effective right now in addressing some of these concerns?

Emma Fanning: Making sure that the services are in place. There are areas where you can get those: for example, in the refugee camps, which are much easier to programme, there are still not the services in place. In areas where there are high levels of displaced people, where they are congregating, we should be making sure those are in place. We should get UNMISS to do firewood patrols, get out of the camps, support beyond the protection of civilian sites. We should target adolescent girls, making programmes right for targeting them, ensuring they are in school and improving girls' access to education.

There is an inter-agency standing committee that gives guidelines on humanitarian stuff, so we should be ensuring their guidelines on gender-based violence are integrated right the way across the humanitarian response. We should also be making sure that women's groups get long-term funding, so it is sustainable and they build their capacity. There should also be community outreach, talking about this at community level, ensuring that it cross-cuts every programme. That is rather more than three.



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Q14 **Mr Evans:** You are painting an incredibly bleak picture there. You have just mentioned castrations. Who is inflicting these castrations on these young males?

Emma Fanning: It has been reported by all sides and all parties to the conflict.

Mr Evans: They are all doing it.

Emma Fanning: I do not have the armed group that is doing it. There was a good report last year by the Office of the Humanitarian Co-ordinator that looked into this, and into why people were fleeing and moving. It was really widespread.

Q15 **Mr Evans:** Is it gangs doing it to gangs?

Emma Fanning: No, it is pretty systematic. It is part of the pattern of the violence. You come to a village, you are razing a village, and this is one of the forms of violence that goes on. Violations of IHL are so commonplace in South Sudan—

Q16 **Mr Evans:** Do these boys end up dying? Is there any access to medicines?

Emma Fanning: I do not know. There is very little access to medical care. Because of the size of South Sudan and how big it is—

Mr Nigel Evans: So do they end up dying?

Emma Fanning: I do not know the answer to that, sorry.

Q17 **Mr Evans:** I suppose it leads on to the next question, which is access to justice for these people who have had violence inflicted against them, whether it is young boys or women. We were involved in a programme of helping people to get access to justice. That has gone now, apparently, because of the situation there. Is there anything the international community can do to ensure that these people, who have had some of the most hideous punishments meted out to them, get some access to justice?

Dame Rosalind Marsden: Perhaps I can just start by saying a word about the hybrid court, which, as you know, was part of the peace agreement. Indeed, the importance of the hybrid court is one reason why the international community has been struggling to keep the peace agreement alive. The African Union is responsible for taking forward work on this, and, so far, it has been moving very slowly, although the American Government has now given the AU Office of Legal Counsel enough money to increase their capacity and hire experts.

One of the important things that has been suggested by a number of experts is that it is urgent to get an investigative body out on the ground, to start collecting evidence of some of these atrocities that we have been discussing. There is no need to wait for the bricks and mortar of the court. If this investigative body could be set up, it could eventually be



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folded into the office of the prosecutor. There have been some local civil society organisations that have been trying to collect basic data on both people who have died, and some of these other atrocities, but this effort needs to be much more systematic.

Q18 Mr Evans: It needs somebody to drive it, does it not? Is anybody driving these reforms that you want to see?

Dame Rosalind Marsden: The international community and international actors, including the UK and the United States, have been pushing for this hybrid court to move ahead and not to be dealt with too slowly. The concern is that the African Union is moving very slowly. There has been some continuing urgency attached to this from the international side. As soon as somebody senior could be held accountable for war crimes or serious corruption, that would have a very big impact, but so far there is no sign of that. At a more local level, part of the problem is that grievances from human rights violations that took place during the long civil war in the 1980s and 1990s and so forth, until the CPA, were never properly addressed.

The continuing absence of the rule of law encourages people to take the law into their own hands. This leads to a cycle of revenge and counter-revenge. That is why some mechanism for accountability and efforts to counter the impunity that appears to be enjoyed by the security forces is so essential.

Q19 Mr Evans: It sounds appalling. Can I add to what Stephen asked? You were talking about rapes used as a weapon of violence as well. There seems to be a lot of underreporting because of the stigma attached to this. Is that something you believe some of these NGOs would be able to assist with, in helping these victims, whether it is females or indeed people who somehow survive castration, to report these crimes?

Emma Fanning: As Oxfam, we do not work on this issue precisely, in a narrow sense. One of the issues we all face is around ensuring that we are perceived as neutral and independent, so we can access all areas. Once you get into justice, it can get very complicated if you are reporting or seen as reporting. We do need to be quite careful. However, there is evidence-collecting going on. It is data collection; it is not necessarily used for evidence. It is quite important to maintain that difference, because we have to get access.

I definitely support what Rosalind was saying about some kind of leadership on commissions of inquiry. The hybrid court is part of the peace agreement, but it is moving at a glacial pace. There needs to be documentation going on continuously, and there are some bodies doing that, but it needs funding and needs to be systematised. One thing I would say very strongly is that it has to be based on what people want in South Sudan. By "people" I do not mean the leaders, but people on the ground. We need to get that right, because too often, as Rosalind was saying, after the last conflict the leaders held that there was no justice.



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At the local level, it also has to reflect what can work and hold together. That needs investment and research, and it has to be locally led.

Q20 Albert Owen: What is the impact of the conflict on the delivery of healthcare and education? Do you have any examples of best practice in both education and healthcare delivery?

Emma Fanning: They are both very difficult. Obviously, the amount of money that goes from Government budgets was already very low in these sectors, and it has been slashed further. The economy is a massive factor. Teachers' wages have shrunk hugely, and likewise those of health workers, because they are paid in the South Sudanese pound. Inflation last month was 835%, I think. The South Sudanese pound has dropped from 2.3 pounds per dollar to 73 last month, over the last 10 or 11 months. That has a massive impact, both on what people can buy and provision of medical supplies and on staff morale and getting staff in.

We also have the sheer difficulty of getting medical supplies to different places. We as humanitarians are not a state; we are only doing very small pieces of it. I would love to think we were in the most important places where there were the greatest number of people to assist. However, the reality is that a lot of stuff is happening right out there where, even before, healthcare was very patchy and it is very different to get things to. Do you want to continue on education?

Q21 Albert Owen: Just before you do, is this not an area where DFID can direct, working with yourselves and others on the ground, to help the schools? I understand what you are saying about the Government and the way it is treating teachers, but is it not—

Emma Fanning: DFID has done some really good work on education, has funded it, and is still funding it very much, including a grant that goes directly to schools and increases the pay to teachers, for example. This is slightly beyond my area of knowledge, but there has been a health pooled fund for several years, predating the conflict, and DFID has been a big contributor to that, but also to making sure that it works. So yes, they do.

Dame Rosalind Marsden: Perhaps to add on the impact of the conflict on the educational sector, I agree with what Emma said. The success of the DFID project to support girls' education in South Sudan has been quite considerable in maintaining the level of enrolment in many areas, despite the conflict. The impact of the conflict has varied from area to area. Certainly, for example, in Greater Upper Nile, which was the main area where fighting took place during the 2013-2015 phase of the conflict, UNICEF reported in May 2015 that 70% of schools there had stopped functioning. Many of the schools there dropped out, including from the DFID schools programme.

There have been other areas. There is a private initiative to support the IBBA Girls School in Western Equatoria, which has managed very



successfully to keep going despite all the violence. In broad terms, though, we can see that some of the improvements in educational opportunities that were achieved during the CPA interim period and in the early period of independence have been reversed in some areas as a result of the outbreak of conflict in December 2013. Obviously, this is owing to the escalating violence and mass displacement, but also owing to teacher shortages in some areas, where schools have depended heavily on Ugandan teachers. Those Ugandan teachers have had to leave because it has become too dangerous, and the road back to Uganda in particular has become insecure.

The extra money that DFID has been able to give to pay schools to supplement the salaries of teachers, something like 200 South Sudanese pounds, has been useful. However, even with that extra increment it still does not give teachers a living wage. That shortage of teachers is leading to schools being closed. I personally think that support for education is a top priority. If there is to be any hope that a future generation will be able to rebuild South Sudan and help to repair the social fabric, and try to overcome the growing trend to tribalisation, it is essential to continue to prioritise education. We need to try to keep that going as much as can be done without waiting for the conflict to come to an end.

Emma Fanning: One thing DFID could do is to push for secondary education in the protection of civilian sites, which does not happen at the moment, and also move to more informal education, such as trauma healing for children associated with the armed forces and groups.

Q22 **Fiona Bruce:** You responded to a number of questions from my colleague Mr Doughty about tackling gender-based violence. My question was going to be about what role education can play in challenging social norms and empowering women. Dame Rosalind, you have said you think education is very important. Because of the desperate situation, my question is perhaps better phrased as: if there were not this terrible, catastrophic firefighting going on now, what role could education play in challenging social norms and empowering women? What would you like to happen, if there were an opportunity, which at present seems to be very difficult?

Emma Fanning: It really could be fantastic. Some of the basic things, like boys and girls being in a class together and working together—

Fiona Bruce: That does not normally happen, does it? They separate them?

Emma Fanning: No, it does, but this is why it is so important to have education at the base. There are ways of teaching to mainstream gender awareness throughout the curriculum. It is a huge opportunity, once you can get kids in schools, to do that. In the meantime, we need to reach out beyond schools, if that is where it is, and look at more informal ways of education. I am sorry. It is really—



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Q23 **Fiona Bruce:** I realise that; that is why I tried to rephrase it. At the moment, it is very, very difficult to do this, is it not, while you have the violence going on?

Dame Rosalind Marsden: I was just going to say that there is a very, very high level of illiteracy amongst girls and women in South Sudan. I think it is over 80%. Anything that can be done to increase their access to education would help to give them a chance at a much wider range of job opportunities, raise their social status, help them get out of their house and bring up their own families more effectively. It would make a huge difference to social change in the country.

Emma Fanning: It would also need to be tied to getting girls into school in the first place.

Q24 **Fiona Bruce:** Do you know what percentage of girls are in school compared with boys?

Dame Rosalind Marsden: I understand that the national average for girls is around 40% and for boys around 60%.

Fiona Bruce: It is difficult.

Q25 **Chair:** It is a massive challenge. Can I ask a question about corruption? Earlier this year, the former Africa Minister James Duddridge said that "South Sudan could be a case study for the damage corruption can do when it pervades a country's politics." Can I ask each of you how this can be addressed, and the role that the UK, including DFID, can play?

Dame Rosalind Marsden: There have been a number of efforts made to try to curb such corruption. Committees have been created, laws have been passed, rhetorical commitments have been given by the Government, but there are still no really effective checks against corruption. There are institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Audit Chamber, some of which I believe are being supported by DFID, which exist to fight corruption and try to create greater accountability and transparency. However, they face tremendous challenges, without the real political will to make this work coming from the very top.

Widespread corruption, nepotism, and patronage lie at the very heart of this crisis, with the elites trying to advance their political and military interests by fighting over access to resources. This is why, for example, in the formation of the last cabinet in Juba we saw so much attention focused on who would be given the plum job of Minister of Petroleum. As long as this sort of approach continues, it will be very difficult to make any fundamental change. Of course, it also disempowers state institutions and encourages political favouritism, which continues to fuel conflict at every level.

In the oil-producing states, there used to be a system that 2% of the oil revenues were retained by that particular state, but there were reports



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that that 2% was allegedly used to mobilise, train and arm militias. Tackling corruption has to be a very key policy imperative, as part of the reform agenda, which is prioritised if the peace agreement in any form is able to be implemented.

Emma Fanning: Looking back, the APPG did a very good report in 2014 about the lessons learned from the CPA and the first period of independence. One of them was very much that there has been a tendency to focus on technical solutions. The international community helped set up all of these committees, but without the political will those are never going to work. There is a long-term game there, working on behaviour change. Where dynamics are at the moment, white, Western voices pushing this will not be very much listened to. It has to come from regional players. Again, it is about going back to the region and getting them to take this on, and looking at best practice in the region.

The other thing to mention is civil society space and the importance of civil society being able somehow to hold the Government to account on that. It is very important that that voice remains.

Q26 **Jeremy Lefroy:** I apologise for coming in late. I wanted to ask a brief question about healthcare, and particularly about malaria and tropical diseases. DFID has had some programmes in South Sudan, and South Sudan is one of the few countries where diseases like polio and visceral leishmaniasis still occur. I wondered what the situation is, and whether many of these programmes, for instance, of bed net coverage or vaccinations are continuing. Have they all been stopped by the conflict?

Emma Fanning: As far as I know—and my knowledge may be fairly partial—where there is humanitarian work going on, so the likes of MSF, those will be ongoing. I do not know about other, further out areas, to which it is very difficult to get supplies. It is very difficult to ensure that you have your cold chain, for example, for the vaccinations. We were talking earlier about just how difficult it is to get the supplies to make sure that they have the ability to combat malaria, for example. It is still the highest cause of death for children under five, but I think it probably was before the conflict as well.

My knowledge is that where there is a humanitarian response, yes. I do not know about the longer term, I am afraid.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. These evidence sessions never give us enough time, but you have both given us a great deal to think about. It is obviously a deeply, deeply challenging situation; that is probably an understatement. Thank you so much. Our second panel is with the two Ministers from the Foreign Office and DFID. Please feel free to stay in the gallery if you wish to, but thank you both very much indeed for joining us this morning.

Examination of Witnesses



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James Wharton MP and Mr Tobias Ellwood MP

Chair: Welcome. Can I thank both Ministers for joining us for this one-off session on the current crisis in South Sudan? We have an hour with you, and we have 10 questions that we will try to cover in the hour. Some will be aimed at one or other of you; some may necessitate both of you responding. I will go straight to Stephen Doughty for the first question.

Q27 **Stephen Doughty:** In the written evidence, DFID acknowledged that insecurity is increasing, that the command structure in the armed forces is deteriorating, and that the Government does not genuinely represent the interests of the wider people of South Sudan. What is your current assessment of the situation on the ground? Maybe James first, and then Tobias.

James Wharton: It is not good. Clearly the situation is already very challenging; it is a difficult environment in which to operate, and we have designed our interventions there to be both flexible and resilient, with that in mind. However, there is the danger of further deterioration as we head into the dry season, which I think is the expected time when things might become worse. We have the additional pressure, which we are both assessing and responding to, in neighbouring countries, because of people who have been displaced and moved there.

We are particularly looking at Uganda. On 1 December, we released a further £5 million to help with the refugee challenge in Uganda, and I think it will be necessary to do more there, looking to the future. My assessment of the situation in a nutshell would be that it is pretty dire, and there is a serious risk that it will deteriorate further.

Q28 **Stephen Doughty:** There is obviously quite a limited number of DFID staff on the ground. Do you think that is likely to change? Are there any plans to increase the contingent in-country or in the region at all?

James Wharton: I do not think it is likely to change significantly, because as the security situation deteriorates, it becomes more difficult to place staff in-country. I think we went from a joint DFID-FCO staff of about 28 at our peak, down to five or so. We are up to about 10 now. I do not anticipate that increasing significantly unless the security situation improves. Clearly, we will be guided by the advice that we are given by professionals in that area as to what is right, to ensure the safety of our staff. As I say, however, our programmes are designed to be resilient and flexible, and delivered through partners on the ground. It is not always easy; partners are not always available, but at the moment we are delivering and I think we are delivering well in the circumstances.

Q29 **Stephen Doughty:** That is the predominant reason for lack of staff. It is the security situation, for yourself and other partners?

James Wharton: Yes.



Mr Ellwood: It is a tragedy what is unfolding here. This is the world's newest country; it gained its independence in 2011, and then, as you know, the friction between President Kiir and his Vice-President Machar deteriorated in December 2013. Everybody then leaned into this, including Britain with our counterparts on the Troika team, to bring parties together to sign a peace deal, which I attended in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in August 2015. Even the signing did not go well, because one side signed and the other side just initialled it, which showed the tensions that existed.

We now see that the UN mission in South Sudan is struggling to fulfil its mandates, and, as the Minister has said, insecurity across the country is increasing. Violence is widespread, and has reached previously calm areas, areas that were not affected by this, although the capital itself remains relatively calm. I should inform the Committee that I intend to go out there, because I think this is a priority, next week in order to visit. However, I make it very clear, just to elaborate on some remarks here, that the power is currently concentrated in the hands of President Kiir and his supporters, and it requires the leadership from within to make this happen. It cannot be from outside, if this is actually to work. They need to understand that until that happens, the economy will continue to collapse; the violence will continue to spread.

The command structure of the armed forces is also deteriorating, because there is no money, and the local economic situation is deteriorating and causing a humanitarian situation in South Sudan to elevate to one of the worst in the world. There are now almost 3 million people displaced, and it is now joining those other countries that we end up debating—Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria—as countries of grave concern.

Q30 **Albert Owen:** Good morning. It is good to see both of you here, representing both Departments. I am sure we appreciate it as a Committee. My question is specifically for the Foreign Office, which in its annual report states that £8.5 million was spent on Sudan and South Sudan through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund in 2015-16. Can you tell the Committee how much was spent specifically in South Sudan under the CSSF in the last financial year?

Mr Ellwood: Without going through the papers and elongating the limited time we have available, maybe I can write with the details. I am very happy to break that down. There are some programmes that we are doing directly through NGOs, and a lot of our efforts are directed through the UN organisations as well. I am very happy to distinguish as to where the funding is actually going.

Q31 **Albert Owen:** I appreciate when you say that. What I am looking for, and my question really, is not so much the details but how the decisions are made for spending under the CSSF in South Sudan, and the current projects that are being carried out. Do you have a bit more detail on that?



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Mr Ellwood: Yes, this is done first through a bidding process as to how much is a pot of money, in essence, and what it can do. It is then done through posts themselves putting in the bids for it. You said that you were pleased to see us working together. It is fair to say that in the history of DFID and the FCO, since DFID was created, it was not always thus. We have a very strong working relationship and share our notes, making sure that we are able to collaborate, particularly on prosperity funding, CSSF funding, or ODA funding.

It is very important that we are able to recognise where we can make an influence and where we do have leadership. We are one of the international leaders looking to support South Sudan, and that is exactly why the Ambassador and his team, and indeed DFID, see this as a priority. James may have further thoughts.

James Wharton: One of the things the CSSF is funding in South Sudan is the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, which speaks to the leadership role the UK has taken in this. It is a relatively small amount of money—although when I say “relatively”, it is about £700,000. However, it is helping to co-ordinate the responses of a number of international and multinational actors, by effectively ensuring that they do no harm in the interventions that take place, in what is a very complex situation. Where it is being particularly helpful and leveraged is in that co-ordinator role, to ensure that interventions that international donors and actors make are helpful rather than detrimental, which of course could be the risk in a very fluid and sensitive situation.

Q32 **Wendy Morton:** Good morning. Like Albert I welcome you both coming here to give evidence to the Committee this morning. It is certainly turning into a very sobering morning; I think we are all finding that. I wanted to ask you about the South Sudan humanitarian programme, HARISS. It is the largest DFID programme in South Sudan, and its work is underpinned by the assumption that insecurity does not interrupt access to services. DFID’s written evidence reports that this assumption has not held true. I wanted to ask, predominantly to Minister Wharton: what has DFID done to implement contingency planning for the HARISS programme, to ensure that gains made are not lost in the deteriorating situation in the country?

Mr Ellwood: Thank you. That is a very important question. The Humanitarian and Resilience-Building in South Sudan programme, HARISS, is a very large programme. Over five years, it is £433 million. This year we had expenditure of about £110 million under that programme, across a wide range of areas and interventions. It is designed by its very nature to be both flexible and resilient. If we had tried to be too prescriptive in terms of what it would do each year at the point at which it was brought forward, I think the changing circumstances would have meant that was practically impossible. As a result, much of the focus is on life-saving and humanitarian aid in the current situation, channelled through international partners.



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That ranges from providing food and medical care, food and blanket distribution, feeding, and operational logistics, some of the getting the aid around the country. It has been stepped up and responded to the changing circumstances, particularly since July. The programme, since its inception, has been a flexible one. It recognises the need for significant intervention, but also the need to quickly adapt and change, and flex both the spending profile and activities that we would fund, as well as the partners with whom we would work in order to meet what is a very difficult situation.

Q33 Chair: As Minister Wharton knows, in the Westminster Hall debate on South Sudan last week, there was quite a big focus on the comments of the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, who has warned that further escalation of this conflict has the potential to lead to genocide. Perhaps I can ask each of you to respond on this. First, what is the Government's view in terms of the risk of genocide, and what are each of your Departments doing to help prevent South Sudan sliding into another civil war, but also to prevent genocide and further mass atrocities? Tobias, do you want to lead on this one?

Mr Ellwood: We are deploying 400 troops to join UNMISS, as you are probably aware; we have made the announcement. There is also the amount of funding that is being put forward: I think we have provided over £357 million of support as well. I do not know if you have been able to see the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide's report, but it raises grave concerns as to the direction of travel and where we are going to. This is always a toxic word that is used. We go back to Rwanda, where people could not even bring themselves to say this word. They were using "acts of genocide" as well.

The international community needs to prepare itself and ask itself what we are going to do if the direction of travel in this tragedy continues in the trajectory in which it is currently going. There is something called the duty of care that the international community has, not to allow the events to unfold, if the leaders of that country fail to discourage the violence from continuing in this direction. These are very, very difficult questions. I would say we are not there yet, but given what the UN Special Adviser has said, that is one of the reasons why I am going out there myself, to gain a better assessment as to what is happened.

Q34 Chair: In the earlier evidence session, I was very struck by what we heard in terms of the kind of hate speech that has had resonance, for me, of what I know about what happened in the run-up to the genocide in Rwanda. I note that simply in support.

Mr Ellwood: Yes, that is absolutely right. It was the power of the radio and the media in order to incite violence in people. People with limited education would then believe that they were acting in a good cause, by doing something that is important. It is something that I am sure will be raised at the African Union meeting, the major meeting that takes place in January, as well. The neighbouring countries, too, are concerned



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about this. Of course, it is not just in South Sudan, but in Sudan itself. This is a difficult neck of the woods, and where you have instability, the borders are not recognised, and it can easily flow as fighters move backwards and forwards.

James Wharton: I agree with everything that Mr Ellwood has said. We need to be careful at this stage. This is not currently recognised to be genocide, and that is something we want to avert. What has been highlighted by the UN is that there is the risk that if things continue to deteriorate, we could find ourselves in that place. I know I do not need to give the Committee the bare-bones explanation of what is happening. We have President Kiir, who is Dinka, and Vice-President Machar, who is Nuer, and we are now seeing an extension of potential conflict into the Equatorias, which are taking in other groups.

There is the danger that this goes from being what may have been characterised primarily as a Dinka-Nuer dispute and conflict, into being a Dinka-everybody else conflict, with a number of the other regions, as things expand and we enter into the dry season. I think we need to be very alert to and aware of the risk that this becomes a situation where genocide is a problem. However, we should also be careful of the language we use, because we are not in that place at the moment. The driving factors behind this are still some particular personalities and individuals. It appears to be still to a great extent, I am afraid, financial and money-based.

We have significant presence in the country; we are the second-largest bilateral donor; we are helping, as we have already discussed, some of the programmes that we have to try both to help individuals, but also to co-ordinate some of the international interventions. We need to continue to pursue that, and indeed to continue to increase our efforts in that space. I am very pleased that Mr Ellwood is going. I will be planning a visit in the new year at some point as well, to see some of our DFID programmes. We need to keep the pressure up, particularly on the individuals who are the driving force behind much of this conflict and instability.

Q35 **Chair:** Absolutely, and I am sure I speak on all of our behalves on welcoming the fact that both of you are planning to visit. If I could come back to Minister Ellwood on the African Union, whose forthcoming meeting you mentioned, what is your assessment of the state of play with the African Union on this? In a broader sense, if we look at some of the attitudes of some African countries to the International Criminal Court, is there something of a movement away from concepts of international justice, like the responsibility to protect, which arose out of the Rwandan genocide?

Mr Ellwood: I probably do not want to be drawn too much into the criminal court piece; you will be aware, Chairman, of the specific reasons as to why there is a hesitance to support it, because of the pursuance of certain leaders in Africa, to which as a group they are taking offence.



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That is separate from the genuine concern of violence breaching any border area. Whether it is the Dinka-Nuer conflict or the conflicts elsewhere, were they to expand beyond borders, it would cause huge amounts of problems. This is something that I am sure the African Union will be discussing, in order to see what can be done to support the neighbouring countries.

If I could just add, part of my visit will also be to underline the message as to where this country could go from a prosperity perspective. Resource-wise, this is not a poor country by any stretch of the imagination. Indeed, many of the disputes over the breaking of where the line was between Sudan and South Sudan were to do with where the line goes across the oilfields themselves.

I visited Kampala not long ago; we discussed the opportunity of more regional programmes to mutually assist a number of countries. There is a programme to take a pipeline from Uganda down through Tanzania to the coast, so that Uganda can benefit from the sale of its oil. I was very politely forceful to say that this must include the pipeline going north slightly, in order to allow South Sudan to sell its oil, and how that would then change for the amount of money that they would then be able to bring into the economy. It would be something that the South Sudanese could then be proud of, and look after themselves. There is a collective vision that you can buy into, but you will not achieve any pipeline going anywhere without a ceasefire and security being put in place, so that any of this work can begin.

Chair: We are going to return into the economic challenges, including the oil industry, in some later questions, but thank you for that.

Q36 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Could I just ask Mr Wharton about the humanitarian support? You mentioned £110 million this year, which is a substantial sum of money. Who else is contributing to humanitarian support in South Sudan?

James Wharton: We have a number of partners. Of course, there is the Troika, with Norway and the US, which plays a key role. We are the second largest humanitarian donor after the US; the US, this year, is giving about £270 million. The EU is giving just short of £70 million, at £69.8 million. There are a number of international actors in this space. When it comes to these sorts of crises, they are relatively well funded. The estimates are that it is now 88% funded in terms of the financial intervention that is required in South Sudan. That does not include the surrounding countries and the needs there, which are separate and challenging. However, in terms of the flow of finance that is needed to meet the need, the signs are relatively positive. The challenge, of course, is that the need is becoming greater as things deteriorate, and the challenge of actually delivering interventions in what is a very difficult and insecure environment at times.

Q37 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Thank you for that. If I could move on to UNMISS now,



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both DFID, which said that UNMISS has struggled to fulfil its mandate, and the UN's own internal report have highlighted fairly serious failings in UNMISS. Mr Ellwood, could you comment on that and on what your perception is?

Mr Ellwood: There are two ways of looking at this. You can say that UNMISS has not failed, or you could say that the circumstances in which UNMISS is working have become harder. When we signed the peace agreement in August 2015 in Addis Ababa, there was an anticipation and expectation that, yes, there would be an element of concern over security, but not to the scale that we are seeing now. That is why UNMISS needs to upgrade and to move, to be able to deal with the change in circumstances.

That is why we offered 400 troops, who will provide vital engineering and logistical tasks to help strengthen the security and accessibility for the UN's protection of civilian sites themselves. We are lobbying now, in recognition of the changing circumstances, for a UN regional protection force as part of the UN mission to protect civilians and key humanitarian transit routes in Juba, so that aid can reach the necessary people.

Q38 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Could you just put that deployment in context? I do not recall too many recent cases where the UK has provided troops for peacekeeping missions.

Mr Ellwood: That is true. This is exceptional, what we are doing, and the scale of 400 troops as well. I have served as a soldier in Africa too, and there are normally very small advisory teams that go into various places. We have them across Africa, normally providing support behind the scenes. You are right to highlight this, and I hope you would agree that this is something the Government are to be commended on, in leading into this. We hope other countries will be able to match it as well.

Q39 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Absolutely. In the last Parliament, this Committee actually suggested that the UK should take a more active role in providing peacekeepers as well as funding peacekeepers.

Mr Ellwood: I am sure you will rejoice in the fact that the Government have listened to this Committee and has acted upon your word.

Q40 **Jeremy Lefroy:** I have just one final question, if I may, on that. Apart from sending 400 troops, what other improvements are we pushing for in UNMISS?

Mr Ellwood: We have to work through the UN organisations to do this. There is a sense of evaluation that is taking place because of the changing circumstances. We do need to make sure that humanitarian access can continue to get in. As I say, we are also lobbying behind the scenes for a UN arms embargo and targeted sanctions as well, through the United Nations in New York, to make the work of UNMISS easier. For the moment, unless James has anything more to add, I do not think



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there are any further imminent announcements, but obviously I may come back with more recommendations after my visit. James may do so after his visit as well.

Q41 **Jeremy Lefroy:** How many UN troops are in UNMISS at the moment?

Mr Ellwood: I think it is about 12,000 or 13,000.

Jeremy Lefroy: So it is a very considerable force.

Q42 **Stephen Doughty:** I would like to ask a follow-up, and you may not have this with you, Minister. In terms of the role of those 400 troops within UNMISS, obviously there is the role they will play themselves, but what expectations do we have in terms of wider influence within UNMISS and its operating practices? Some of those have come under criticism. Do we have an idea of trying to influence the way UNMISS more widely does its operations, as well as the individual work they will do as peacekeepers?

Mr Ellwood: I would hesitate to try to answer that. We are getting into the operational weeds, if you like, of how they will work. I know that the people we send out there usually have experience in these matters, in doing post-conflict stabilisation and working in difficult arenas such as this. I am sure they will be as professional and as committed as we have seen them in other places, but also, if they have ideas, they will be able to share them in the wider piece.

Q43 **Stephen Doughty:** Is it possible to perhaps ask the MOD to give us more of a breakdown of where, for example, officers will integrate within the officer structure of UNMISS, and in specialities? It would be useful to understand their specific role in this area.

James Wharton: Certainly we can provide more specific information as to the details. I know, for example, there is quite a heavy weighting towards engineers, medics and the sort of people who can provide the professional services that sometimes are difficult to find in these forces. I know that the MOD also is looking at what additional options there might be for further support, particularly in training some of the other nations that contribute to UNMISS, to make sure that they have the skillset they need in what is a very challenging environment.

Stephen Doughty: That is more the point that I was getting at. It would be useful to have a bit more detail on that, if it is possible.

Q44 **Dr Lisa Cameron:** I am particularly concerned about sexual violence within the conflict being used as a common weapon of the conflict, and perpetrators operating in a climate of virtual impunity. The Access to Justice programme has been suspended with only a commitment to review Access to Justice programmes in the future. What led to the suspension, and what steps are DFID taking for the reinstatement of a programme to allow access to justice for the most vulnerable?



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James Wharton: You raise a very good point. In terms of the Access to Justice programme, effectively in the early stages we were looking at the feasibility of intervening in this area. The signs were quite positive, but the deteriorating security situation meant that that programme could not practically continue to be delivered. Until the security situation improves, the mechanisms that we were looking to, to enhance access to justice, are no longer practically available to us, which is why that programme has had to be closed. We do, though, continue to be active in this space.

Under the HARISS programme we were talking about earlier, there is a specific section of the programme that is delivered through the International Medical Corps on gender-based violence, and what we can do to try to address some of the particular impact. We know that the gender impact of the deteriorating security situation, and the impact on women and girls, has been particularly acute in South Sudan. We are very conscious of that and we want to do what we can to try to tackle it. We build through all of our programmes a recognition of that. For example, if we fund the construction of facilities, we ensure they have proper toilet and bathing facilities that are segregated and so on.

However, there is also a specific part of the HARISS programme that looks at gender-based violence, and what we can do to tackle it and support those who are victims of it. The Access to Justice programme, although it was a successful initial test of that intervention, is not something we feel we can continue at this time, because of the broader security concerns, I am afraid.

Q45 Dr Lisa Cameron: Do the programmes that you are able to undertake tackle psychosocial support for survivors of sexual violence?

James Wharton: There is a broad range of support, particularly through the DFID-led multi-donor health pooled fund. That delivers services in approximately 1,000 facilities and eight of the 10 regions of South Sudan, and it focuses on the clinical management of rape and those who have been impacted by that most awful of crimes, particularly in a conflict context. They ensure that that range of medical support is available to the best of our ability to deliver it. Yes, we are very acutely aware of the challenges that represents.

Dr Lisa Cameron: I think it is heartening to hear that. Thank you.

Q46 Fiona Bruce: Can I add my thanks to both Ministers for attending? Minister Wharton, you have largely answered the question I was going to ask you, which was about what else DFID can do to help tackle violence against women and girls, and how resilient that is, bearing in mind the ongoing conflict and outbreaks of violence. If there is anything you would like to add that, I would be grateful. Could I also just mention a very concerning gender-based violence that we heard of in the previous session, which was an appalling pattern of boys being castrated? Is DFID aware of that, and is there anything that can be done to address that dreadful issue?



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James Wharton: On both points you raise what is one of the very challenging areas of operating in South Sudan, and the way the conflict has unfolded, and the impact on people's lives there. I have talked about some of the work we are doing in terms of the impact on women and girls. You are absolutely right to highlight some of the impact on boys as well. We are seeing some of the most horrific violence. When things go wrong in South Sudan, they appear to go very, very terribly wrong indeed.

In terms of our interventions through the health pooled fund and through HARISS, we are working through our programmes an understanding of having to both adapt to circumstances where people have been impacted by some of this terrible violence, and to identify opportunities to intervene in a positive and constructive way, where we can. I have talked about that in terms of the clinical support we are giving, particularly focused on rape; but where there is castration of young boys, where those sorts of horrendous acts of violence take place, we want to make sure that the health facilities are available to support people.

We want to make sure that the emotional support that is often needed, through the broad spectrum of health support that should be provided, can be provided. We are doing this in an incredibly difficult and, I am sorry to say, what appears to be a deteriorating set of circumstances. That presents challenges.

Q47 **Wendy Morton:** Mr Evans, who is not with us now, asked previous witnesses what is happening regarding these boys and any healthcare. Is the way that they are being attacked fatal in many cases? Do you have any further information?

James Wharton: I do not have detailed information on fatality rates, or the estimates of the extent of this, but it is something that is clearly a great cause for concern. The approach that we take is generally to strengthen access to health systems, to strengthen the clinical processes that take place. That should be of broad benefit to everyone who comes into contact with those services. However, there has been a particular focus on the impact of sexual violence, of which this is an unusual and particularly unpleasant sub-category, if you can have an unpleasant sub-category of what is a terribly unpleasant area of work with which to have to engage.

Our approach is to strengthen those medical clinics, to make sure to the best of our abilities that the services are there, and to make sure that the drugs are available if people need treatment. Often, if things like this are done, they are not done in clinical or clean circumstances, and there are all sorts of knock-on effects. That is the approach we have taken. I am quite happy to look further where there are specific interventions we should make in light of this particular type of violence. However, my initial reaction is that we are probably on the right course in terms of the very significant work we are doing to strengthen access to medical and clinical services.



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Chair: I think we were all shocked by the evidence that we had earlier on on this very particular issue of castration. If there is further information about work that is happening on the ground to address the consequences, it would be helpful to have a letter on that, Minister. Thank you.

Mr Ellwood: Can I just add to that? Something the Foreign Secretary is very concerned about is making sure that we collect the evidence now as these things happen, for the future. Where this has assumed the highest profile is in Syria and Iraq: war crimes, crimes against humanity, and these other things as well. I do not have the answers, but I will say that I will ask these questions when I visit myself to see what is being done for us to hold these people to account. It may not be immediately, but ultimately, so abhorrent is what we are hearing, that we need to make sure the world sees that they are held to account in the longer term. That means collecting the necessary, appropriate evidence so that they can go through the legal processes of holding them to justice.

Can I also just add, on the same note, it is worth mentioning that in Geneva, the UN Human Rights Council is meeting in a special session to discuss South Sudan, today in fact? The focus will be determining the new mandate for the Human Rights Commission based in South Sudan itself, but there will also be a push to increase the ability to investigate sexual violence and ethnic violence with a view to encouraging accountability in the longer term.

Chair: That is welcome news. Thank you very much indeed.

Q48 **Wendy Morton:** I wanted to move on to the economy and economic fragility in South Sudan. In written evidence to the Committee it was state, and I quote, "that capacity building and development assistance initiatives sponsored by donor countries, of which the UK is a significant contributor, have served to free South Sudan's leaders from their obligation towards South Sudan's citizens and allowed them to focus the country's resources on militarisation." I wanted to ask whether you agreed with that view or not, and, if so, what DFID is doing to ensure that there is no unintended consequence of UK aid to the country.

James Wharton: We have to be realistic. There is always a challenge when you intervene in a humanitarian or resilience-building or economy-building sense. With countries like South Sudan, we do not give direct support to Government, for obvious reasons. There is always a risk that if we invest in something, that they then therefore do not have to invest in, they can use that money. It displaces that spending, which may then be used somewhere else. It is one we are very acutely aware of, it is one that we monitor very closely, and we design our programmes to try to ensure that that is not the case.

I would be very surprised if it were the case in South Sudan. I take, for example, the Building Resilience through Asset Creation and Enhancement II programme, BRACE II. It is a £20 million programme



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where we are going into communities, helping them to build resilience. It is things like irrigation, basic access roads and services that they need in order to survive and, relatively speaking, improve the quality of life that they have.

If we were in an environment where, if we did not do that, it is likely that the Government of South Sudan would step in and do that, then I would have some time for the argument that we may be displacing funding that the Government of South Sudan would otherwise have spent. Looking at the track record of the Government of South Sudan, however, I see very little evidence that they themselves would step in to do the sort of work that we are doing to improve those people's lives. We are not talking about a state that is currently focused, from the very top of its political leadership, on the best outcomes for its people or the best development of its economy, particularly at that lower level. I think that, whilst it is a legitimate concern to raise and one we must always be conscious of, I do not think it will be the case in South Sudan.

You would have to make the argument that if we were not doing these things, the Government of South Sudan would then be doing them, and would have less money to spend on other activities. I just think they would go undone, and all the experience we have seen of how this particular Government treats its people serves to underline that very depressing but nonetheless true point.

Q49 Wendy Morton: Thank you; that is very helpful. Could I follow that up and ask what the FCO view is on this?

Mr Ellwood: The bigger picture is that until we see peace we will not see the farmers being able to plant, and until we see peace we will not see the Government able to cut its armed forces budget. If we do not see peace, we will not be able to see the oil revenues being exploited to the levels I mentioned earlier. The IMF is involved in providing support, but at the moment there are no plans to provide any funding as such. They have had discussions with the Minister of Finance to try to impress the importance of working within its budget, which it is currently not doing by any stretch of the imagination.

The Transitional Government of National Unity, as such, is doing better at removing ghost workers from the payroll. There is a huge amount of corruption that takes place, as the Committee will be aware. There is a huge shortfall in foreign exchange, and the fiscal crisis, as I say, is being perpetuated by the absence of civility, which we are all trying to work towards. The IMF expects the economy to shrink this year by 13%, with no prospect of that improving next year. The economy is totally reliant on the stability of the country.

Q50 Fiona Bruce: My question leads on from that, and talking about the stability of the country and the challenges there. The DFID Strengthening Economic Governance programme is ending this month, I believe. I am interested to know, Minister, what you think the positive



legacy is from that, given the current fragile situation in the country. What has the impact of the programme been and what lessons have been learned?

James Wharton: We have had some impact in what are very difficult circumstances. It is sometimes difficult to assess against the counterfactual: if we had done nothing, what would the situation be? The reality is that if South Sudan is to emerge from this period of conflict with any sort of positive prospect for its future, there are certain institutions of government that will need to function. These include basic financial institutions, the ability to deliver a budget, the ability to actually transfer resources effectively to a line ministry and ensure that ministry delivers what it is supposed to deliver.

We see this, for example, in some of the ambition, albeit unmet, to ensure access to education. This is a welcome ambition, although one that is woefully underfunded. The work that we have been able to do in effectively assisting the Government to do the basic things in terms of financial management, strengthening institutions and accountability, and tackling corruption, has made a difference. If you do not have proper accountability, it is very difficult to identify when money goes missing. Our work has somewhat strengthened the institutions about which we are talking.

However, that is in an extraordinarily difficult set of circumstances, with still very challenging levels of corruption, which do, I am afraid, go very high into the management and political oversight of some of these institutions. I think it has been worthwhile and we should continue to be willing to work in that area, but it is a relatively small part of our overall programme. We should also recognise the limitations and challenges when the broader security situation is as it is in South Sudan at the moment.

Q51 Fiona Bruce: I am just asking also about whether DFID, under the present situation, can help at all to diversify the economy? Minister Ellwood has talked about the importance of accessing the potential oil revenues, but obviously any country needs a diversified economy in order to flourish. Is there anything DFID can do?

James Wharton: Yes, there is, and there are things we are doing. I talked about BRACE II in answer to an earlier question, and the difference that makes. We are literally going and helping communities in lean times, helping to get that local workforce to dig a pond to store water for the future, to facilitate irrigation, to facilitate access, to improve the economic opportunities when they come. There is also the Urban Food Security, Livelihoods and Markets programme, which is a £20 million programme of which DFID is about half. Again, that is primarily aimed at food security, but actually there is an economic benefit to that as well.

Where BRACE may scale up the impact of the crops you can grow, for example, the UFSLM might help you to grow crops or have basic food



security where you would not otherwise have had it. Although at the very basic level of economic activity that is still very important, and a lot of the focus is food security, there is an economic impact that enables people to feed themselves, look after their families and so on.

Q52 Jeremy Lefroy: I am just following up on governance. In some countries, you have a situation where even though you have serious problems with the leadership and their motivation, there is perhaps a second or third tier group of very capable people, perhaps in the finance or health ministries. These people are somehow keeping the country going, despite the disastrous situation of conflict. Would you assess South Sudan as having that calibre of second or third tier people in Government?

Mr Ellwood: I look forward to meeting them if they are there. The underlying factors are that the IMF vacated the country, as did the World Bank, I think, in the summer, because it became too dangerous. The IMF is about to produce an economic report that the Committee may be interested in. It is imminently due, I think, in the next few days. The fact that the Government itself are unwilling or perhaps unable to pay their bills to their civil servants is causing an elevation of crime. The fact that inflation is running at 400% to 800% per year and the South Sudanese pound has lost 80% of its value against the dollar suggests that even if there are these capable people, they are not able to provide the necessary changes and influence that we would want to see.

Ultimately, however, it is a bold decision by the leaders at the very, very top to say whether they want to prevent us going down towards a very dark chapter; it is their gift to make it happen. This is what is so sad. This is a man-made disaster. It could be prevented. We are coming in to provide support, but I have to say it is always more frustrating coming into these countries when you are having to bolster and support people who are suffering because of other humans who have caused them suffering.

James Wharton: I think the answer is yes. There are not enough, but there are good people trying to do good things in very difficult circumstances. We have talked a little bit about the budget strengthening project, and about the work we have been doing with the Ministry of Finance to try to build resilience into that institution, in the hope that, when and if things improve, they may be well placed to adapt to it. We should also recognise the huge potential South Sudan has, not just in oil, on which it has been over-dependent, but in agriculture. We have talked somewhat already about some of the projects in agriculture, but they also have export potential in teak, gold, and livestock.

This is a country that has the potential to be successful, but failures of political leadership and deeply unfortunate and tragic circumstance have led it to the place it is today. We have difficult times ahead, but there are enough people showing enough interest and enough concern for the future of this country, that it is one on which we should not give up. That



will include some of those people you talk about, the second and third tiers, who want to do the right thing but find themselves trapped in circumstances where they are not currently able. That is one of the stronger arguments for our continued involvement: to see that potential and hopefully play our role in unlocking it in the future.

- Q53 Jeremy Lefroy:** Given that many of these people seem to have large assets, for instance in Kenya—Nairobi particularly—and some of them seem to spend quite a lot of time there, is there any role that the Kenyan Government is playing to help in bringing some kind of resolution to this?

Mr Ellwood: I do not think it is just Kenya. You touch on one thing, which is that whenever you have chaos there are always individuals who are able to leverage this and make an awful lot of money, to the forfeit of the people who deserve it. The second point that you made is other neighbouring countries are not only concerned about this but are wanting to seek solutions and provide support. Indeed, there is talk of a regional protection force being created, which could possibly include Kenya as well.

The other countries are very, very concerned. However, these same countries, or similar countries, are also providing support through UNMISS in Somalia. Their support is spread very thin, which is why it is all the more important that the wider international community is also able to remain focused on this.

- Q54 Chair:** We have had a lot of evidence about the impact of this conflict in terms of displacement, both internal displacement within South Sudan, but also the large refugee flows to other countries in the region. Can each of you tell us what your Departments are doing in particular to address support for neighbouring countries who are taking large numbers of refugees from South Sudan?

James Wharton: Yes. I think it is a very important question. There is a danger we focus on just South Sudan without recognising the regional interplay of what is happening there. DFID is providing support to more than 1 million refugees who have fled South Sudan to neighbouring countries. In this financial year, we are spending £15 million in Uganda, nearly £4 million in Ethiopia and just over £3 million in Kenya.

I have spoken also about the £5 million uplift to Uganda that was approved on 1 December, and I anticipate there will be a need for further programming in Uganda, given the scale of the challenge that the Government there is trying to deal with. We are very acutely aware of the impact on neighbours. We are involved in supporting them, and I anticipate we will see a scaling up of that support, particularly with regard to Uganda, where the challenge is acute, at some time in the new year as we look at the right response and how we might shape that.

- Q55 Fiona Bruce:** Both our previous witnesses talked of restrictions in the space of civil society to function in South Sudan, and therefore to hold



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Government to account, including reference to an NGO Act, which we were informed was passed in February 2016. NGOs were not consulted about it, and apparently it requires, for example, government registration by NGOs and monitoring of their humanitarian work. It is very concerning, because it is actually not exclusive to South Sudan. It is something that some members of the Committee are concerned about more widely. Is there anything DFID is doing to address this, or to challenge the Government in South Sudan regarding this restriction?

James Wharton: Working very much with the FCO, we continue to put pressure on the Government of South Sudan insofar as we are able to do so. The issue is not just their approach to civil society and NGOs but their approach generally. One of the reasons that UNMISS has had the problems it has faced has often been restrictions placed on it by the government of South Sudan itself. DFID has a strong track record in understanding the contribution civil society can make, and understanding the necessity of strong civil society if we are to build stable governance going into the future.

We work closely with civil society actors. We lobby Government as effectively as we can, given the state of Government in some of the places in which we operate, of which this is one, to recognise the value that civil society brings. I know we have had discussions previously about particularly the role of church groups in South Sudan. On 25 November, the Government Envoy to South Sudan arranged a meeting with church group representatives there, to talk about how we can work more closely with them in terms of the role they can play in hopefully tackling some of these challenges.

They are one strand of civil society that continues to play a proactive and constructive role in South Sudan, and should be recognised. However, we also have to accept the reality that for all of the advocacy we can undertake, for all of the support and the programmes we can design and give, much of this is in the hands of the Government of that country. The Government of that country appears, at this time, not to be minded to value the input of civil society to the level that we would like to see it valued, or indeed would value it in countries such as this.

Fiona Bruce: Thank you. That is very helpful.

Mr Ellwood: You are right to highlight the fact that it is not just in South Sudan that this challenge to the role of NGOs, international and otherwise, is being brought forward. Egypt is another one where we have had discussions, and I raised it with the Egyptian Ambassador only last week. We received assurances that NGOs can continue their business, but we need to ensure and push forward that the freedom of expression and the support that is given for a transparent society goes unhindered. You are absolutely right to raise this. It will be something that I will bring to the attention of the authorities when I visit Juba next week.



Q56 Chair: Can I ask a couple of questions about funding? Previous witnesses have been positive about the UK's commitments in terms of funding, but there is still a funding deficit. What are the two Departments doing to encourage other international donors to ensure that sufficient resources are available?

James Wharton: Again, we work closely, but a lot of this falls to DFID's direct responsibility. I have had discussions with a number of my counterparts in other donor countries about the challenges in South Sudan, and about the need for other donors to step up. I have talked about the fact that we have just released additional funding for Uganda and looking at what we need to do there. One of the things that is becoming increasingly apparent is that we need to ensure that our international partners focus as well on the surrounding countries and the impact on those refugees.

We are proactively lobbying our partners to ensure that, wherever possible, people step up to meet the need. Whilst, as I say, the in-country response is relatively well funded, there is still a gap, and if things deteriorate further, clearly that could become a greater challenge. We are proactively engaged; I am talking to my counterparts from other donor countries and have made lobbying calls to that effect, and will continue to do so.

Q57 Chair: You mentioned education earlier, and we heard from the previous witnesses the crucial importance of education. We have had around the Istanbul Summit this year the greater focus on education in emergencies. Are there lessons, James, that you think we can learn from the experience of the South Sudanese refugees for future programmes on addressing the needs of refugee children?

James Wharton: There are, and one of the challenges is the rapidity of response. These things tend to happen relatively quickly; I am not going to say they are entirely unpredictable. We are talking now about some of the danger of further deterioration, which will be very likely to lead to additional flows of refugees. The response of getting the donor community to step up, the process of co-ordinating an approach and getting everything arranged, in line, and things on the ground, often leaves a host country for refugees on its own to deal with the challenge for what can be quite an extended period of time.

That means that things like education are often not the top priority when you are talking about basic shelter and accommodation, the basic provision of sanitation, and so on. One of the lessons the international community is learning, but one of the things I would like us to be better at, is that we need to find better mechanisms for rapid response and the release of funding. I say that slightly, I hope, advisedly, because I am not sitting here pretending that I will be able to change the world overnight.



One of the tools that the Committee will be aware is being looked at in the international community is insurance-style systems, where you can pay a premium, but then it unlocks money much more quickly rather than trying to get donors around the table. It allows that more rapid response and allows things like education to be more quickly catered for, because you hopefully get through the very basic needs in a shorter period of time. We need to continue to explore those mechanisms, and it is through resolving some of those issues that we will be able to then ensure that when people, in this case children, become refugees, we are able to meet the full breadth of their needs more effectively.

Q58 Chair: As you know, we were in Lebanon and Jordan as a Committee two weeks ago, and we saw both the extraordinary response of those two countries, their Governments and their people, to the Syrian refugee crisis, but also the very positive role that the UK, particularly DFID, are playing there. Are we matching that in Africa?

James Wharton: The challenge in Africa is different. We are dealing with similar challenges on multiple fronts at any time, in circumstances that are different. We are dealing with flows of people who are from different backgrounds. The people who are leaving Syria are leaving a middle-income country; people in Africa are often leaving much less wealthy, developed countries and circumstances, and that presents challenges that flow with it.

Africa has, as the Committee knows, a number of refugee crises ongoing at any time, some of which have been running for more than a generation. That presents a different set of challenges and the need for a different response. Is the international community getting it right all the time? No, it is not, and I will not pretend that it is. The UK's role, though, both as a direct contributor but also as a thought leader, effectively, in this space, and a co-ordinator of other actors and donors, is one of which we should be proud. Is there more to do? Yes. Are there improvements that could be made? Yes. However, I think we are playing a very significant role in driving that agenda.

Q59 Chair: I will bring in Fiona in a moment; there is just one more from me. Emma, our witness earlier from Oxfam, made the point that most of the money goes through the United Nations, and not a lot goes through local NGOs. You will know that this is an issue that, as a Committee, we have raised over a number of years. Do you have any comment on that, Tobias?

Mr Ellwood: I will let James lead on that. I wanted to come back on the—

Chair: I will let you come back.

James Wharton: Some of the funding in South Sudan does go through Oxfam, if that helps. We should recognise that there is a truth in that, but there is a need to be able to contract with reliable delivery partners, to have sufficient oversight of what is being done, and sometimes it is



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difficult to be confident, particularly when you are having to make decisions quickly to deploy resource, that more local organisations are able to deliver that.

That said, I have said it before to this Committee and I am happy to say it again: I think we need to continue to look at diversifying the range of contractors with which we work, and organisations through which we deliver. We need to be more flexible and able to respond to smaller organisations that nonetheless have a valuable contribution to make. That is an area of work that is ongoing in the Department at the moment. We are looking at what can be done to diversify our contractor base, and to deliver effectively through a broader range of organisations.

There are challenges, particularly given limited resource for oversight and, quite rightly, high expectations of monitoring and due diligence when we are spending British taxpayers' money, and we are very conscious of that. However, I think we can make progress in this area, and we will endeavour to do so.

Mr Ellwood: I was just going to elaborate a bit. You touched on the support that has been provided by the international community, quite rightly, for Lebanon and Jordan, and Turkey could also be included there. This is because of the huge generosity they have shown in taking on board millions of refugees. The international community, quite rightly, has stepped forward to provide funds and employment opportunities and to look after these people. I think Britain has a very solid track record on engaging and leading other countries to step forward and put their money forward.

We had the London Syria Conference, which raised, I think, \$11 billion: a record in a single day. I will stand corrected on that, but either way it was an impressive amount to be put forward. Next year in spring we will hold a similar focus on Somalia, where we will be encouraging countries to come forward, provide funds, but also to look at the governance structures and what more could be done to assist that country as it moves forward in its new federated structure.

During the UN General Assembly, the Secretary of State for International Development held a Yemen-focused conference, where again, we upgraded our funds and indeed encouraged others to do so, and they were forthcoming with that as well. I think it is now a recognised mechanism for support of countries, to bring the international community to become more aware. There is a lot going on, so therefore these conferences do help. There will be a time, without getting ahead of myself, that with South Sudan we could certainly do this, given the leadership we show with Troika, with the Norwegians and the United States.

We need to ensure that the new administration, if I can put it delicately, is also as committed as they have been in the past to this very important part of Africa as well. What I would like to say, and I hope you would



agree, is that we can be proud of the leadership role we play on the international stage, in recognising when funds need to be put forward and ensuring those funds are well spent.

Q60 Fiona Bruce: Yes, Ministers, in fact our previous witnesses did commend the UK for its leadership in co-ordinating. I am interested to know, apart from the UN, which other international actors are active in South Sudan at the present time. Who are you working with?

Mr Ellwood: As in from the DFID perspective?

Fiona Bruce: Primarily DFID, but there may be—

James Wharton: There are a wide range of organisations. Oxfam, which I have mentioned; of course, the UN, UNICEF, Medair, the International Medical Corps, GOAL the charity, and the World Food Programme is active there. The Common Humanitarian Fund, the International Committee of the Red Cross, our global partners, the Troika, people like Norway and the US, are big contributors. I mentioned in answer to one of the earlier questions some of the contributions that different actors and donors are making.

South Sudan is getting significant international attention. The problem is that the problems are so great and so domestically driven, and the levers we have to pull are of limited effect.

If I might very briefly, with the indulgence of the Chairman, veer slightly off the question to make one point, which I think is very important: it is very easy to be down on South Sudan. There are huge problems, and very difficult times ahead. However, we do have some programmes that are also delivering a very real impact and making a difference to people's lives. I have not had a chance to talk about Girls' Education South Sudan, a £60 million programme supporting 240,000 girls through its broader programming, and supporting 150,000 girls directly in primary and 50,000 girls in secondary schools. It is supporting over 2,500 schools through capitation grants, and making a real difference to the education of huge numbers of young people in South Sudan, who will be the building blocks of the future of that country.

We talk a lot about the humanitarian work that we do, which is crucial at this time, the security situation and the broader political context. DFID and the UK taxpayer is doing a lot of good work outside that narrow focus, which is building up the opportunities for people's lives in the future in that country. I think it is valuable, and I wanted to take the opportunity to put on record my view that we should stay engaged, we must stay engaged, we must respond to the difficult times ahead, but we must not give up on these people as well.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. To finish on that upbeat note after a pretty, as Wendy said earlier, sobering two hours of evidence is very positive. Can I thank you both for your evidence here today, and particularly, on all our behalves, wish you well for your forthcoming visits



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to the country? Thank you very much.