

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: Humanitarian crises monitoring: impact of coronavirus, HC 292

Monday 6 July 2020

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Members present: Sarah Champion (Chair); Mr Richard Bacon; Brendan Clarke-Smith; Mrs Pauline Latham; Chris Law; Navendu Mishra; Mr Virendra Sharma.

Questions 140 - 186

Witnesses

[I](#): Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, Secretary of State for International Development, Department for International Development; Dr Charlotte Watts, Chief Scientist, Department for International Development; Rachel Glennerster, Chief Economist, Department for International Development; Matthew Wyatt, Head of Conflict Humanitarian and Security Department (CHASE), Department for International Development.

[II](#): Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, Secretary of State for International Development, Department for International Development; Nick Dyer, Acting Permanent Secretary, Department for International Development.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Anne-Marie Trevelyan, Dr Charlotte Watts, Rachel Glennerster and Matthew Wyatt.

Q140 **Chair:** Hello and welcome to this Committee session, where we are honoured to be joined by the Secretary of State, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, and some of her team. We are looking, as a Committee, at two topics. The first is the humanitarian impact of Covid-19 and the Department's response. We then want to go into discussions of the merger, but more importantly the future programme of work and how it is going to be maintained. I will start by asking you and your team to introduce yourselves, so we can make sure we can hear and see all of you.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: I am Anne-Marie. I am the Secretary of State for DFID. I have brought with me today, in our virtual world, Rachel Glennerster, Dr Charlotte Watts and Matthew Wyatt. If you want to introduce yourselves formally, that would be great.

Rachel Glennerster: I am Rachel Glennerster and I am DFID's chief economist.

Dr Watts: Good afternoon, my name is Charlotte Watts. I am the chief scientific adviser to DFID.

Matthew Wyatt: I am Matthew Wyatt. I am the director of the humanitarian security and migration division.

Q141 **Chair:** We are looking for this first session to last around half an hour. If I can apologise in advance, we have a lot of questions and we would appreciate direct answers back. Some of my colleagues on the Committee may want to have supplementaries as well, so bear with us while we do the logistics of all that. The first one is from me to the Secretary of State; it is a broad question. Could you tell us your current estimate of the spread of coronavirus across the developing countries and the seriousness of the impact it is having?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: Last time I spoke to you all, I was setting out that Covid is not only a health crisis, but also an economic crisis and a humanitarian crisis. We are going to see that felt, sadly, for years to come. We have been working at a macro level, investing UK taxpayers' money in those big international institutions that could help grip some of the challenges in the most vulnerable countries as soon as possible. We have invested over £750 million so far. At country level, we have also been redirecting a lot of our programme work, where possible, to support critical early health interventions in those countries, and redirecting where particular programmes could not run because of the lockdown situations.

Of course, we saw the western nations being hit early on and locking down, and then our more vulnerable partner countries locking down similarly, but perhaps before Covid had really taken root in a very strong



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way. There was this delay and they are now suffering with it. The numbers are growing fast and hard in those developing countries. We are seeing their healthcare systems, which are in many cases not very strong, really struggling to cope with the numbers.

Perhaps equally worryingly, as we feared and as we discussed last time, the secondary health impacts are starting to be seen. As we have seen in western countries, people are not going to their healthcare providers for things like child vaccinations or maternity support, as well as other more day-to-day primary care activity. The risks there are starting to be seen and that is where a great deal of my anxiety lies: that we will have as many preventable deaths through that gap in continuous medical support as we will from that sharp impact of Covid affecting those who are most vulnerable to it. Charlotte might want to come in, because she is monitoring this day-to-day.

Dr Watts: I am very happy to. In terms of the figures, we are talking now about more than 10 million reported cases around the world. That is an underestimate; that is what is confirmed in terms of cases by WHO, with almost 513,000 deaths. As the Secretary of State said, in developing countries, early lockdown and early action probably slowed the rate of increase, but now, if we look at the top 30 countries with the fastest rate of spread, most of them are ODA-eligible countries. We are seeing rapid increases across Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. This is happening in multiple geographies.

We expect the rate of increase to keep going in the next few months, particularly as a lot of countries lift their lockdown measures because of the economic pressures of sustaining those. Following on from that, we will expect to see impacts in terms of severe illness and death, which often lag a few weeks behind the initial upturn of infections. It is an extremely concerning situation, with secondary impacts alongside that on health services, vaccination coverage, ability to deliver core health programmes as well as broader economic activities, education and so on.

We are at a very dangerous time in terms of the impact that might play out, when, if anything, in the west we are starting to take our attention off Covid slightly and feeling like we can relax activity. Sub-Saharan Africa is behind. They are just at the start of their outbreak, we think, on that continent.

Q142 **Chair:** I would imagine it is very challenging to get reliable data on this, but have you been able to make any realistic prediction of when it is likely to reach its peak in the global south?

Dr Watts: It is really hard to get accurate data. We have invested in collection of data, including supporting Africa CDC to provide technical support and improve data. We have also supported the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Imperial College, to help us do modelling to give us better projections, at least, of what might be happening. They estimate, for example, for sub-Saharan Africa, that



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about 10% of cases are being reported, so there is a severe underestimate, and we are likely to see peaks in the next two to three months. In practice, it is quite hard to predict when exactly, because it is very dependent on the actions that each country is taking and context-specific factors, such as the density that people live in and the extent to which they can reduce transmission risk through their own activities.

Q143 Chair: Secretary of State, I wonder if you could give us a bit of an understanding of the impact that Covid-19 has had on DFID staff and local partners, from both a health and a workload perspective.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: Early on, we needed to draw down many of our in-country staff to bring them back to the UK, which we did relatively quickly. The challenge for them now is to continue to run programmes to support either those in-country staff who are still there or a few others who chose to stay. Supporting both them and their families at a human level is enormously important to us. The duty of care to all our staff is paramount in my mind, every day. The team is always focused on that and making sure we support them in as many ways as we can.

The reality of being able, therefore, to deliver all our programmes in-country is much more difficult. In some cases, as Charlotte says, the challenges of delivery are greater because of the nature of lockdown in those countries or the inability to move experts in and out at the moment. There are a number of blockers to normal delivery of programmes in many places. For our own staff, the human challenge of trying to deal with this, not necessarily being in the right place, perhaps being back at home in the UK but not in their own homes, because they were not planning to come back, managing children and educational issues, alongside running these really complex and terribly important programmes, is a huge strain.

I pay enormous tribute. I have never seen such a professional troop as the DFID teams, who are under enormous pressure and have other pressures like our GNI challenges. They are just putting their backs into it. One could not ask for more from people. We continue to be very mindful of both the logistics and the mental health issues this is putting on our staff, and try to support them as best we can.

Chair: This Committee shares that commendation. The DFID staff and local partners have done some incredible work in the most difficult of circumstances.

Q144 Mrs Latham: When we are talking about DFID and developing countries, we are talking about many different vulnerable groups, like women and girls, people with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced people, low-income earners, forced labour and children, as well as trafficking and all the other things that happen. What is DFID doing to ensure that there is greater inclusion of these groups in its Covid-19 response?



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Anne-Marie Trevelyan: You are right. It is just critical. Those are the vulnerable groups that DFID focuses a great deal of our programming spend on in normal times anyway, because they are the ones most likely to be forgotten and in need of much more focus, to try to shift the dial for them. We have had a big focus up front in supporting organisations like the International Red Cross, to help them continue their work reaching refugees and, indeed, the IDPs in some of our most challenging places. That has been an immediate and continuing focus, to provide them with resources so that they can look after some of those most vulnerable populations.

The challenge with women and girls, particularly in terms of education, is that across the globe education has stopped with lockdown. This is a problem everywhere. I am pleased to see the Prime Minister is making sure that all our children will be back in school in September, but for those countries where not all children were in school anyway, and certainly they have not been, the challenge will be to help get particularly girls back into education.

We are going to make sure, moving forward, that the focus DFID already had on pushing for 12 years of good education for all girls in the first instance means that all girls get back into school, even looking at the primary settings. The loss of education is one challenge, but making sure that they do not fall out of the education net as the countries start to get back on their feet will continue to be a focused lens for DFID and the FCDO in the months and years ahead. There is a real risk there of both UK and other country development investment going backwards. We are really sighted on that.

We will continue to support the Rohingya, who are in Bangladesh. We continue to have a very strong focus there. I was talking to the Bangladeshi Finance Minister last week about that, thanking them for their extraordinary generosity in housing nearly a million people, but there are huge challenges for them in doing that. We have to support the country as well as those refugees, while we try to help move political solutions forward. These are really, really difficult challenges, but we are prioritising those most vulnerable groups to make sure we do all we can.

Q145 **Mrs Latham:** What are you doing to support the air bridge network, provided by the UN's Humanitarian Air Service? What impact have supply chain disruptions had on the global response to Covid-19? What are DFID and HMG doing to overcome them? I am interested to see that you have already changed to the new name, even though it has not come into existence yet.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: I was talking about the future, so as of September it will be one new organisation. Therefore, as we go forward in the months ahead, these things will continue but they will be done under the umbrella of the new Department.



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We invested a lot early on with the UN and its organisations to make sure they had resource and a lot of our expertise. Many of our experts have been lent to a number of UN organisations to help support that effort. We started supporting with the RAF, 10 days ago, to deliver some of the World Food Programme supplies needed, assisting with air deliveries. Again, one of the challenges of having so little aviation activity has been that it is that much more difficult to get both supplies and experts into countries. We continue to do that.

Rachel Glennerster: We have been working to help to support firms in their supply chains to keep the economic activity going, including through the CDC, but also providing advice to Governments and firms to try to keep that supply chain going. Actually, it is quite surprising. Health being an exception, in some ways it is quite remarkable how supply chains have continued to be upheld through very difficult and challenging times. There are exceptions, of course, but if you think of the magnitude of the hit, I was just looking at data this last weekend and in some ways it has been quite a success to keep food, particularly, and other forms of trade going.

Dr Watts: On the particular issue of the air bridge, DFID is also supporting the World Food Programme, which is working with the WHO, the UN and the NGO community to use its substantial logistics expertise to try to fill the gaps where commercial airlines cannot step in. We are very much using our resources to try to ensure that services continue.

Q146 **Mrs Latham:** Secretary of State, in terms of Covid, clearly people are very vulnerable, because they are vulnerable people anyway. They are in a more vulnerable situation because of Covid. What is DFID doing to make sure that the recipients of aid and the aid workers particularly in-country are not subject to sexual exploitation and abuse?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: Yes, that is always a critical focus of ours: safeguarding and the support we put around both those who work with us and, indeed, the recipients, who are the most vulnerable. We continue to work with the risk profile that we have on safeguarding.

These things are really challenging at the moment. All those who are trying to deliver would agree that being really sighted on it all the time is one of the critical aspects of it. It has to be even more at the forefront of everybody's mind than normal. Making sure we continue to build the avenues that are available for support, avoidance and dealing with problems is critical to us. We met recently to talk about those areas. DFID is continuing to grow both that expertise and the international framework. It is an ongoing piece of work, because I do not think we are there yet. We need to keep at it. This is a really difficult time to make sure that we can monitor all those risks, but we always keep that at the very front of our minds and all those in positions of responsibility are very much sighted on that.

Q147 **Mr Sharma:** The balance of the UK's funding for the coronavirus global response is allocated to research into vaccines, treatment and tests,



rather than distribution, procurement and in-country health systems. Do you think this has been the correct response?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: That is a really important question, and twofold. As the pandemic kicked off, we wanted to be able to support the international organisations that could most effectively and at speed start to both monitor and deliver the healthcare systems that were needed. We invested in those areas, as well as through CEPI, in our substantial contribution of £250 million, to the network that would enable scientists around the world, regardless of the normal working investment frameworks around them, to try to find a vaccine and, indeed, therapeutic treatments. We focused on empowering those organisations that could have the widest reach as quickly as possible. Indeed, CEPI has been working alongside two of our UK vaccine trials and supporting them as they progress, to see if either of those vaccine options might be viable.

We forget—and I do not think we talk about it as much as we should—that we have redirected, where possible, a lot of our ongoing programmes in-country into Covid-related support in-country, as a clear direction of travel. I was talking to some of my senior staff this morning, saying that we ought to harness the extraordinary amount of work that went on at speed, country by country, by those people in post who knew the local people, the healthcare systems and the Government bodies that needed support. That work has been going on and continues, redirecting existing programme activity to support the Covid effort in a number of ways.

Dr Watts: Just to talk about the overall balance of health investment, on the health side there was significant and very rapid support to WHO, to enable it to lead and provide technical assistance on the response. As the Secretary of State mentioned, we have been flexing across all our programmes, including everything from Gavi to the Global Fund, from programmes in health to bilateral support for countries on health, with major investments in health R&D to complement that. It is not an either/or, but trying to get that combination, so that there is support to the immediate response and significant investment in those technologies that are going to be the game changers: vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics.

In that case, the focus is on how we look ahead and think end to end. It is not only about finding a vaccine that is going to work, but how to ensure that there are the resources and future investment in production capability, so that that can be distributed to low and middle-income countries. Part of the size of that investment is because it is looking downstream at the significant scale of delivery and ambition of production that CEPI and the global community have set themselves looking forward.

Q148 **Mr Sharma:** NGOs urged that the Government disburse funds directly to frontline operators, instead of channelling it through slow and bureaucratic multilateral organisations. What measures have the UK



Government taken to achieve a better balance of speed and accountability in this respect?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: There are a number of ways. Again, this has been a very multi-layered approach. While we have invested large sums to support those global organisations to extend their reach and make sure they were as solid as they could be, we have also invested in things like our rapid response fund, where, exactly as you say, individual NGOs and groups could pitch for funding directly. It has been a mixture, partly for speed and effectiveness, but also because the global organisations could see where the greatest need was. As we were saying earlier, it is shifting as time goes on. That way, the funding, which is not enough at a global level—the ODA money in the pot is not enough of itself—can at least be targeted and reach those most vulnerable. NGOs can bid in through those central organisations to deliver the relevant amount where they are able.

Matthew Wyatt: I thought it was worth mentioning that, as the Committee knows, of the almost £300 million we have been providing for humanitarian, resilience and health systems strengthening, about £45 million has gone directly to NGOs. Another £55 million, as you mentioned earlier, Secretary of State, has gone to the Red Cross, which is very much at the front line as well. It is important that we balance that by providing support at scale where we can, as we have done through, for example, the UN. The Committee was talking about the air bridge, for example, and the £15 million we have provided to WFP for the logistics operation. More than half the staff that WFP is flying around are actually NGO staff. It is important that we do that too. There is a balance there.

Q149 **Mr Sharma:** Is there someone in DFID with specific responsibility to ensure that the coronavirus crisis does not mean other vital programmes and projects fall by the wayside?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: That is a very good question. In a short answer, I would say that every SRO of every programme will make sure that their particular programme is not allowed to fall by the wayside. This was the challenge that went out when Covid hit: if you cannot deliver your ongoing programme at the moment but you can redirect your resources to help the country you are in with Covid, please do so. The commitment to those programmes is unabated. We continue that focus on humanitarian and preventable diseases, and on getting, where we can, all our education programming back into operation, to make sure that those critical healthcare and education focuses that DFID is absolutely sighted on will be able to continue.

Everybody wants to continue to deliver the programmes. The programmes are very focused and incredibly invested in by all those who run them and, indeed, across the staff. The DGs who manage each part of the DFID portfolio have been at the front end of making sure we get the best delivery we can, even with the really difficult circumstances we have been in, with our staff not necessarily being where they would



choose to be, because they have had to come back home. We are also supporting and enabling those in-country who can still deliver to do so, either in the programme space they were always in or, indeed, in supporting that urgent Covid response, which is different in many different countries.

We all continue to be, short term, focused on Covid and trying to reduce the risks there. As I have said before, the secondary impacts are sadly likely to cause as many problems and potentially deaths as Covid itself. All those other programmes that are about education, economics, food security and healthcare more widely are as important as ever.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Anne-Marie Trevelyan and Nick Dyer.

Q150 **Chair:** Secretary of State, we would like to start moving to the debate around the merger, although there is going to be crossover. There is one thing that I wonder if you can speak to, which links the two and what you were just saying, DFID has paused some programmes, but we are hearing from NGOs that they are now being told their funding is paused indefinitely, which rings alarm bells, particularly as you have just said that you understand they need to be gearing back up for the original programmes they were doing. Can you give us assurance that this is not happening, that people are not being told their projects are being paused indefinitely, i.e. cancelled?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: There are a number of issues. As I said, we had a refocus, where we could, of programmes to support the Covid effort globally. Because of the drop in GNI, we also had to have a fairly mammoth review of all our programmes, and to assess, working with the Treasury and other ODA spending Departments, where our priorities lie and which programmes will have to be delayed or shrunk, mostly, to meet that GNI 0.7%. It has been an arduous and difficult task all around, and the First Secretary has acted as overseer of the whole process. We have worked our way through, across Government, to reach a position that will meet the 0.7% figure, which will sadly be smaller this year and probably next.

There has been a level of not rushing on with things, partly because in some cases we simply could not, due to Covid restrictions, but also knowing that there will need to be delay and shrinkage in a number of programmes, to make sure that we have absolute clarity on what those decisions will be. I hope they will be taken within the next few weeks, so we can give absolute clarity to everybody on what is going to keep moving forward and what we may have to delay and, in a few cases, but not many, possibly cut. It is mostly delay or changing the nature of delivery in the short term to meet that 0.7% reduction.

Q151 **Chair:** So the delay and potential cuts are for current year spending as well as future programmes.



Anne-Marie Trevelyan: We have looked at the 0.7% for this year. The strangeness of ODA is that it runs on a January to December calendar year so does not match the Whitehall year. Yes, we are looking at where we have to make delays and some cuts this year to December. We are halfway through already, so to meet that 0.7% landing point we will have to make some really tough decisions. A lot of them will be delayed, partly because they are not deliverable at the moment due to Covid, and that is an understandable challenge in the sense that we simply cannot. We can put them on pause. Some we want to pick up and run with in due course, but we have to slow them down to meet that 0.7%.

My Permanent Secretary, Nick, has had the unenviable task of having to help pull all this together. I do not know if there is anything you want to add, Nick.

Nick Dyer: Thank you, Secretary of State. I think you have laid it out really well. It is a big financial challenge, cutting in-year at this potential scale, given that we are a third of the way through the financial year, halfway through the calendar year already. It is going to be a question of both setting strategic priorities and realism, in terms of where you can pause and, ultimately, potentially cut contracts at this point in the year that will actually make a saving. This is a big financial challenge. As the Secretary of State has said, we have gone through quite a serious exercise and decisions have yet to be made. We are still going through that process of decision-making.

Q152 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Good afternoon, Secretary of State. Going on from what the Chair was just saying there, first of all, we are being told about freezes and cuts of perhaps 30%. What criteria are used to allocate reductions, Secretary of State? Are there any criteria?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: We have been very clear. It was a conversation that we had early on with the First Secretary, to have some absolute clarity so that everybody could make decisions on the same basis. The most important was humanitarian. The delivery of humanitarian support was always going to be at the top of the list, which then broadens out into healthcare and Covid-related response, the work on preventable diseases, vaccines and medicines more widely, and that whole space, given the urgency this year of all things Covid-related.

Beyond that, we are sighted on the important issues of girls' education, women and girls, that whole area of policy, and, indeed, the climate change challenges. While we have this global emergency ongoing, we need to remember that, to build back better, one of the most important things will be helping those vulnerable countries have stronger, more resilient economies, which will need strong renewable energy sources. That climate change space and all the questions there continue to be an absolutely critical focus.

Then, as Nick mentioned, after that there are questions of deliverability and whether they are, in a reduced budget, programmes that have as



much focus. Vulnerable countries are a key focus for us. It is not so much a DFID challenge, as we are working in 32 of the most vulnerable countries in the world, very fragile states with, as you would expect, those most challenging environments. But across the ODA spends, some with DFID but also other Government Departments, there is spending in not only those lowest-income countries but also middle-income countries. The challenge is whether, in a reduced budget environment, those programmes are as critical in their impact, in terms of supporting those countries to reduce the impact of Covid and helping those countries get back on their feet as quickly as possible.

Q153 Brendan Clarke-Smith: Just on that point, what is being done to make sure that any cuts do not disproportionately affect the smaller CSOs or NGOs? Is there anything being done to make sure that they do not get hit with that?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: In what has been a mammoth task, we have cut the grid in a number of directions. It has been an iterative process to try to reduce the impacts, which are real. You take over £2 billion out of the budget and it is going to have impacts that are unavoidable. We are trying to make sure that we are aware of where those impacts might lie and finding ways to make the best judgments. As Nick mentioned, there are some programmes where you might think, "We could save a bit of money here," but the reality is that, in delivery, you would save very little or, indeed, it has a wider impact on an organisation that is a critical partner to us and might be in a really difficult position as a result.

We have looked at all these things, in a grid-like fashion, from a number of angles, to try to make sure that, while there are genuine impacts that are unavoidable, we reduce those critical ones as much as we can. I do not know if there was anything you wanted to add on that, Nick. I know you have worked very closely with our key NGOs through this.

Nick Dyer: The only thing I would add is that there is a thematic cut in terms of the priorities you want to protect, which you laid out quite well. Within that cut, we are looking hard at the questions of what impact there would be on suppliers, what impact there would be on deliverability and realism in terms of being able to make the cuts. Are there any other national interest issues that you want to take into account as you cut or pause a particular programme?

The other angle to this is the multilateral. You have a choice, to some extent, whether you go down the bilateral or the multilateral route. We have also looked at the possibilities of delaying, pausing or pushing back our multilateral contributions, and CDC, our development finance institution. That would naturally protect some of the direct bilateral work and work with NGOs, rather than if you took it all directly from the bilateral side. Given the size of this potential cut or pause, the budget reduction, there is some inevitability—and we need to be realistic about this—that a whole range of potential suppliers will be impacted.



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Q154 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Finally, in terms of the cuts across ODA spending at the moment that we are looking at, what is the overview of that? Who gets the overview of that in general?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: In terms of the cuts that we expect, it is a bit of a moving feast. It is very difficult to judge. We are working with the Treasury on the basis of ONS figures and we continue to monitor that. The Treasury set the framework in which all ODA spending Departments had to offer up for reduction a number of their programmes. That is the framework and we will take a decision on that basis. Clearly, we hope it is not as awful as it might be. That would be good at a number of levels, not only for the 0.7% but for the economy more widely. Then we are trying to build in some flex so that we will be able to land on the 0.7% at the end of the year. But we are guided by the Treasury's financial management on where we have to try to hit.

Q155 **Chair:** As a clarification, Secretary of State, can you confirm that you would be or are, in discussions with the Treasury, looking at postponing or cancelling the scheduled issuance of £1.13 billion to CDC?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: As part of the whole package of reviews, one of the areas for reduced spending this year is CDC. We continue to support and invest in CDC. It is a critical partner in a key part of international development, helping those countries to become self-sufficient and to grow their industries and job prospects for their citizens. That continues, but nothing has been off the table. We have looked at every part of our spending to find areas where we could make, if possible, reductions or delays rather than permanent cuts.

Chair: Thank you for that clarification. There has been concern that it is easier to remove grants than it is to remove contracts, so that is why I wanted the clarification.

Q156 **Mr Bacon:** Thank you to all the witnesses for joining us. When Sir John Bourn was Comptroller and Auditor General, he published a report on churning and merger of Government organisations. He looked at over 200 organisations between 2005 and 2009, 51 of them in detail, where the costs of the mergers totalled £780 million. We remember but do not lament the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills and many others. The common thread in the 200 organisations they looked at was that, where the mergers were proposed, the benefits were overstated and the costs and the risks were understated. Why is this one going to be different, Secretary of State?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: Thank you, Richard. It is always a treat to have a question from Richard. The only upside of having sat next to Richard for four years is that at least I know he is going to be horrible to me and ask me a difficult question. I am at least prepared for it.

It is a really important question, Richard, and I do not disagree with you that there are always going to be challenges in bringing two Departments together. But the Prime Minister really is determined to create something



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that is greater than the sum of its parts. He wants our civil service tools to deliver UK abroad in as coherent and impactful a way as possible. He has felt for a long time that DFID does extraordinary work in of itself, delivering world-class talent and expertise. You are looking at three of them on the screen with you today, and the building is full of them and they are all around the globe. We also have a wonderful diplomatic service, but the two have not always been aligned.

Interestingly, we brought this together at the beginning of the year, trying to build in-country this coherence that the Prime Minister wants to achieve. It works very well in-country and it does not seem that surprising to anybody. Why would you not have a coherent team, so that the partner country you are in really knows what the UK's contribution, support and investment through the values we want to deliver and all those issues are? In bringing the two Departments together, we want to create, all the way through the machine, an organisation, that is as effective as possible in delivering the UK's values abroad.

That includes our commitment to 0.7% and continuing to work with partner countries to help them become stronger, more resilient and therefore less dependent on international development investment, so they too can grow in safety, education for all and health systems, so people have longer and healthier lives—all those things. That is all part of what the UK wants to bring to the table. The extraordinary DFID world superpower status that we hold is valued at the heart of Government in a way that perhaps it has not been.

Q157 Mr Bacon: We are all very concerned that that power base, as you call it, not be lost. Have you spoken to your counterparts in Australia and Canada, where they went through a similar merger process, to understand what we can learn from their experiences?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: We are working alongside a number of colleagues across the world who have done that. These things are always challenging and they are there for us to make successful, without a doubt. That is partly why the Prime Minister is very keen that we really embed all the constituent tools that are available to be UK Abroad together, rather than having, as we had 20-odd years ago, an ODA department within a Foreign Office. You had two cultures that did not really enmesh; they were running alongside each other.

Q158 Mr Bacon: Can you tell us what the key lessons are from similar mergers elsewhere?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: Mostly, it takes a while to embed and to move forward into a completely new culture. That is the reality. This will not happen overnight. In September, we will have terms and conditions and a framework in place, and we will move forward. As the Foreign Secretary said, in a year's time he will not know or have any sense of which Department someone came from before, because they will be part of the FCDO, which is genuinely Whitehall's abroad Department that thinks in a



holistic way about what the UK wants, delivers that and drives it forward through all the tools available. That is the vision and that is the challenge.

The challenge is there because structurally we have to get that right. We are literally in the throes of working out what that best looks like and making sure that everybody comes together into something new. It is not only DFID and it is not only FCO; it is the best of both into something that is genuinely greater than the sum of its parts.

Q159 Mr Bacon: You have just said something very interesting. Are you expecting that, in the future, classic diplomats, as one might call them, will be expected to spend time working on international development and aid as part of their career formation and development, before they are eligible for top posts such as ambassadorships and beyond?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: I absolutely would, but they do that now and there is already a level of crossover. One of my DGs has been an ambassador and those interrelationships exist now. This is an opportunity to create something that is much more powerful and impactful by everybody really knowing, understanding and being part of that expression of the UK's values in whichever countries we want to be working more closely with, to help them become stronger nations.

Q160 Mr Bacon: Who is on the transition team and has it met yet?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: Yes. If you want, Nick can give you an update on where we are at. It is in week two. It is making progress. Nick, do you want to give a brief update on where we are?

Nick Dyer: The transition team has its core senior structure in place. It is led by one of the directors-general, who is actually drawn from the Foreign Office and is supported by a senior structure. His deputy comes from DFID.

Q161 Mr Bacon: Are we allowed to know who they are?

Nick Dyer: Yes, the head of the team is called Nic Hailey and the deputy is Ben Mellor. The team is just this week finalising its full team of 30, which will be put into place, so there will be 30 people working on this. They are currently right in the middle of defining two things. First, what is the minimum or maximum viable product that we can get to by early September and what would it take to get to that point? Secondly, what work needs to be done after September? The reality is that it is going to take more than 10 weeks to do this well, particularly on the cultural side.

Q162 Mr Bacon: This whole question interests me deeply. When I left university, I joined an organisation then called Barclays de Zoete Wedd, which was the merger of three organisations. It took years to bed down. Arguably, it never did. Arguably, Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise are still bedding down after several years. How long do you think it is going to be before you get to what you might call a satisfactory end state



for the merged entity?

Nick Dyer: You asked whether we are talking to our counterparts. I spoke to my Canadian counterpart, who merged six years ago, and this was her key message to me: "We are still working on culture, but the main things you have to do and accelerate are things like common core training. Get that done early, so that you are building an understanding across the two organisations about what each other do. You accelerate the pace of promoting across different parts of the business, so that people have experience of different parts of the business. You go early in terms of people building up their skills and knowledge of how to do financial management and accountability well." That was her key message to me. "Get those things in place and do them quickly, because that will accelerate the cultural change."

We have done a lesson-learning exercise on recent similar mergers, machine of government changes and corporate mergers, at the Institute for Government. One of the key lessons is that structure is important, but the ones that work best are those with strong visions and strong commitments. That is the key to getting this right: embedding down a strong vision and commitment to what we are doing on both sides.

The interesting thing about the lesson learning is that quite often people ask, "Has development got better or worse?" No one yet has asked, "Has foreign policy got better or worse?" I say that because one of the questions is what skills and experiences DFID can bring to the table that can make the way we construct and run foreign policy better.

Mr Bacon: If I could paraphrase Mark Twain, it might be better to draw a veil over UK foreign policy for the last 20 to 30 years, but thank you very much. That is all very helpful.

Q163 **Chair:** Nick, could I ask a specific question on the transition team? What percentage of the team are from DFID?

Nick Dyer: They have not been appointed yet, but the last thing I heard was that more people from DFID had applied than had from the Foreign Office to be part of the team. I think there will be a pretty good balance. To be fair to Nic Hailey, who is running it, he is very conscious to make sure we have balance in everything we do, in the construction of the team and the way we work and reach out to different parts of the office.

One of the core lessons from the machine of government changes is that you have to do joint leadership. Simon McDonald, the PUS in the Foreign Office, and I are doing joint messages, joint all-staffs and joint engagement every single week. This is a signal that this is co-creation and that this is new.

Q164 **Mrs Latham:** Although we are not going to change the Prime Minister's mind, I do find it very strange to be doing this at this particular time. We are in a crisis with Covid. We are in a crisis of funding for DFID to spend and you are having to do emergency working out of how you are going to



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spend what is left of the money for ODA. We have already acknowledged it is going to take years to change the culture. It would have been much better and more sensible, I would have thought, to wait a year, but that is not going to happen. My concern is how we are going to scrutinise what everybody is doing. Secretary of State, is there any organisational plan that you can share with us yet?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: I am afraid there is not. We are literally in the throes of trying to think through that process. Once we have it, we will be very happy to explain where we are at. As Nick says, Nic Hailey, who is holding the pen on this, is focused on getting it right and making sure we do what the Prime Minister has asked, which is to build something that is greater than the sum of its parts, not in silos but integrated.

Q165 **Mrs Latham:** I can understand that you do not have a plan yet. Is it going to be a blend, a side-by-side merger or just a simple takeover? Will there be an identifiable overseas development administration structure within a recognisable FCO?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: The mission that the Prime Minister has set us is absolutely a blended new organisation. That is what he wants to see. That is what he passionately believes will be the most impactful way that the UK can demonstrate in practical terms and reach out with its values to the rest of the world, providing us with a strength behind the issues of the day, alongside that continued commitment to helping fragile states become stronger and working with partner countries. He absolutely wants it to be blended. It really is not going to be the FCO with an ODA department inside it.

Q166 **Mrs Latham:** Can we look then at the leadership model to see where you are with that? Is there going to be an identifiable Minister in charge of the bulk of the UK's ODA and will UK aid have its own accounting officer, as it used to in 1997?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: There will be one accounting officer for the whole Department.

Mrs Latham: So the answer is no.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: The 0.7% spending, whatever that figure happens to be year on year, will be the bulk of that accounting officer's spending portfolio. Therefore, by definition, a huge amount of focus will be on making sure that that is spent well.

DFID has a really sophisticated and developed risk profile in the way we manage and think about risk, and in how we do our programming within the context of fragile countries, getting the best and most impact, and pushing the boundaries to help those countries develop. That is an area that we are keen to embed in the new Department as part of the whole way of thinking. We are one of the largest, richest countries in the world with world-class experts across so many fields of technical expertise that



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are important to the countries that we want to help to grow. Making sure that that is absolutely coherent is critical.

I honestly do not know yet what the ministerial structure looks like, but I would point to the fact that our joint Ministers, which the Prime Minister set up after the election, have been a really powerful model, because they both own part of the globe and an area of DFID policy.

Mrs Latham: That happened before the election.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: It has really been interesting to see how it has shaped thinking and the way decisions are made. It has shifted the dial already because you are looking at things, as a Minister, in two different cuts. It makes a much more coherent way of understanding how the UK is seen and is delivering abroad. I hope and believe that that will continue to be the foundation on which we sit. Of course, the Foreign Secretary will oversee all of it and therefore will have at his fingertips all those tools of delivery, from the diplomatic service through to Charlotte Watts and her scientific team driving that forward.

Q167 **Mrs Latham:** As a follow-on to Richard Bacon's questions, what are the expected one-off costs of the merger and the expected ongoing costs? Do you expect administrative cost savings from one or both of the Departments? You mentioned in one of your answers the First Secretary. Are you talking about a new definition of the Foreign Secretary? Is he now the First Secretary?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: No, there are two different things. I am sorry if I was not clear. The Secretary of State in charge of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will be the Foreign Secretary. I do not know whether he officially becomes the Foreign and Development Secretary. That is possible and might make sense. As an individual, he also happens to be the First Secretary of State. It is in that role that the Prime Minister asked him to oversee the ODA prioritisation programme, so that someone who did not have any skin in the game, as it were, was acting to look on behalf of the Prime Minister. Sorry, those are two separate things. The Foreign Secretary will sit with the full oversight of the new Department.

In terms of costs, we are not aiming to make great savings anywhere. We are trying to create a new and much more impactful single global affairs organisation for the UK to be outward facing. I am not sure what the administrative costs are for the merger. Nick, do you have any figures? We are not really at that point, are we?

Nick Dyer: No, we do not have any figures at the moment. There are differences in terms and conditions, in salaries and allowances, and there is a big question around how you create a pay and allowances structure that is balanced and fair across both organisations. That may lead to additional costs or it may not, so that is going to be worked through now. I would expect—and I have said this to DFID staff and FCO staff—that



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some people's job descriptions and what they do on a day-to-day basis may well change, but that is one of the inevitabilities of this kind of merger. We do not have precise details of the costs.

Q168 Chris Law: I wonder if I can ask you for a straight yes or no answer, because you were a bit prevaricating on whether there would be a future Cabinet Minister. We have just heard from Nick Dyer that a strong vision and a strong commitment is needed, which means strong leadership. Is that going to come from you, or are you to lose your job and not be replaced?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: When the new Department comes into place, there will be one Secretary of State, who will be the Foreign and Development Secretary in charge of this new Department. We are still drawing up the plan of how we manage the ministerial framework around that but, yes, I will officially be retired on whichever date in September the new Department appears.

Q169 Chris Law: I just have an additional point because it has not been touched on yet. Of all the other partner organisations and NGOs that you are involved with currently and have been up to now, how many have been consulted about this merger? What ongoing consultations are going on just now?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: As with any government change like this, the announcement came first to Parliament but, since then, the Permanent Secretary, alongside Baroness Sugg, who is always the lead with the NGOs, has been meeting with them regularly. Nick, I do not know if you want to update on your latest meetings.

Nick Dyer: The steering group for the NGO group with Baroness Sugg and me met last week. We had a conversation around the merger with them at that point.

Q170 Chris Law: What I wanted to know is that there were no prior conversations. Thank you. Who will maintain the development perspective in cross-Government discussions on processes such as arms export control and within the National Security Council?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: The Foreign Secretary will be the person who, in his role as head of the FCDO, sits on the NSC. The ongoing work between DIT, the present FCO and the MoD on arms control and licensing will continue. It is one of those areas that we are looking at, at the moment, in terms of the workstreams and how it manages in practical terms.

Q171 Chris Law: You are referring back to the current Foreign Secretary, who will be in charge. Is that correct?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: Yes. Sorry, it is confusing. We need to give him a completely different name. Then we would know who he is now as opposed to who he will be in September.



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Q172 **Chris Law:** I have to say, I do not envy his brief because it has become so enormous that I would find it unwieldy. What assessment has been undertaken in this process of the powers, duties and responsibilities encoded in the various international development statutes?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: The Prime Minister has been very clear that the 0.7% is going to carry on and remain, and that the focus on poverty reduction continues to be critical. As I always say, and perhaps we forget it, in making that our focus, we are supporting the UK national interest, the global economy, the reduction in fragile states and an absolute focus on helping countries become peaceful, stable places, where their populations can live longer and more fulfilling lives. That focus is unchanged and the Prime Minister has been very clear about that.

Q173 **Chris Law:** There is another really important question that I wanted to ask. You have talked about this blending rather than side-by-side merger. In terms of structure and operations, what is going to change for DFID's staff and DFID's areas of responsibility of government?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: There will be a team of staff who are all part of the new organisation and they will be specialists in their area, in the way that the security services will continue to be specialists in that area. My experts in healthcare will continue to be experts in healthcare, and the same for education specialists and so on. My perm sec, Nick Dyer, is a specialist in economic development. Those teams of experts will continue to provide that expertise within the new organisation and help the UK deliver the focused programmes that it wants to, in order to help the countries we partner with become stronger, safer places for their citizens. That will not change.

How the reporting lines work to Ministers, in terms of whether we do something that we have now, as I just mentioned, will be where we land in the weeks ahead, as we put it all together. The reality is that the commitment to how and what we deliver to help the countries we partner with, and to investment in our multilateral spending as part of our global commitment as a leading nation, remains absolutely consistent and will continue to be so.

Q174 **Chris Law:** On that point, you talked about Whitehall and about it being blended. One of the key priorities for me, coming from Scotland, is that there are almost 1,000 jobs based at East Kilbride. If that is to be blended as part of this overall merger, are we to expect FCO jobs to be in Scotland? If that is the case, we know about the commitment to no compulsory redundancies, but is there a target for reduced complement overall and is that going to be spread between Whitehall and East Kilbride? What notice should be given? Lastly, what discussions have there been with unions on this matter?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: There is no intention to reduce the headcount in that sense. Abercrombie House is a critical part of delivering, in every practical sense, much of the work that we do. There is no target at all in



that sense. We will blend it together. There will, without doubt, be a few roles where there is overlap but very little in practical terms. That will continue.

It has been really interesting that, through the Covid crisis and lockdown, with everyone working from home where they could, we have discovered that we have the opportunity to employ people as part of our teams wherever they are. While we will continue to have hubs in Whitehall and Abercrombie House, we will be able to harness the skills of experts and teams across the UK to work with us in a way that perhaps we never have before. I am quite excited. In terms of finding opportunities out of the crisis, the very best people who are committed to FCDO's vision going forward will be able to be part of that family of experts, even if they are not always based in Glasgow or Whitehall.

Q175 Chris Law: On that note, maybe you should have a word with the Leader of the House so that we can all contribute in debates in Parliament through hybrid and virtual means.

Australia has seen 2,000 years of experience and skills being lost through its merger. One of the issues was about harmonising terms and conditions. What is the plan for harmonising terms and conditions of DFID and FCO staff? Clearly they will often be in different structures.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: Nick can probably answer. Again, we are not there yet but it will be a harmonised system. One of the technical issues that we came across early on is that there are quite a lot of DFID staff who work in-country and are not UK citizens. There are technical issues to be resolved, which we are therefore working on, but I do not know whether Nick wants to add to that. It is not an area that I am concerned about.

Nick Dyer: Staff retention is one of the real risks with any merger. In Australia, their merger happened at the same time that they cut their ODA budget. Our ODA budget is shrinking because the economy is shrinking, but in Australia they actually cut it as a percentage of GNI. We are not going to cut the budget as a percentage of GNI, so it is a slightly different circumstance.

On the terms, conditions and allowances, there is a lot of misinformation out here in this space. A lot of people will say that DFID staff get paid more than FCO staff and that FCO staff get better allowances than DFID staff. That is not always the case; that is not actually true. There are circumstances where it is like that. The issue of terms and conditions of service for home civil servants in the diplomatic service, our staff appointed in-country and locally engaged staff in the Foreign Office is going to be one of the most challenging issues to grapple with during this merger. We are looking at it and we are starting the process of considering it. We will move as fast as we can on it, but we have not made any decisions at this point on that.



Q176 **Navendu Mishra:** Please accept my apologies for being slightly late; I had a Defence question earlier in the Chamber. Secretary of State, this builds on the question from Chris Law earlier about consultation. I had conversations with the PCS Union earlier today regarding this merger. They have major concerns regarding staff members. Could we have a firm commitment that the representative bodies of the members of staff in both Departments will be consulted? I know all members of this Committee have concerns about the House staff who look after this Committee as well, if the Select Committee was to be abolished. Could we have a firm commitment that staff members will be looked after and that we will not be in a situation where there are forced redundancies?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: The parliamentary Committee system is an issue for Parliament to sort out, and sadly not one that I have any influence over. It seems that Parliament tends to match the departmental frameworks, whatever they are, and obviously over the years they change from time to time. That is an issue that Parliament will have to reach a conclusion on. As Chris said, this is going to be a big, chunky Department with a lot going on, in terms of taxpayer money spent on development investment alongside the continuing questions of UK foreign policy, diplomatic effort and so on.

There will be an enormous amount of policy and investment that will need parliamentary oversight. How that lands from a parliamentary perspective is not a question I can answer, but, on the basis that it will be a big, chunky Department, there will need to be a very substantial parliamentary oversight Committee, or Committees, to make sure that Parliament has the level of involvement and transparency that we would all expect.

Q177 **Navendu Mishra:** Secretary of State, I take your point regarding the Select Committee being a House matter. I fully accept that, but when it comes to the representative bodies of the staff in your Department or the new Department, will you be going through the proper channels? Will you be consulting with PCS and other representative bodies?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: I do not know if you have started having conversations with the unions, Nick, but it is very much on our list. Do you want to update on that?

Nick Dyer: First, there will be no compulsory redundancies. Everybody has been very clear about that. The whole consultation and engagement plan is being put together right now. If we get to a point where teams are being restructured, we will go through the right processes, and involve the people we have to involve, to do that properly and well.

Q178 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** In terms of needs assessments, Secretary of State, and operations, budgets and policies, how do we propose embedding DFID's considerable institutional memory and expertise in this new Department? How are we going to harness that?



Anne-Marie Trevelyan: There are a number of ways, but the key is the fact that we are not proposing to lose anybody or, indeed, the expertise and areas of focus in which it has long been known that we can be most impactful. We have world-leading status in the international development field for good reason. We are really good at what we do and we have any amount of evidence to demonstrate that the way in which we spend taxpayers' money makes a clear and identifiable difference.

I love the description we have of best buys with taxpayers' money. I love the concept that we have got so good at assessing what we do that you can spend money in a vaccine space because you know it is a best buy. It genuinely shifts the dial on people's chances of survival and future success as a country. All that will move and be a core part of the new Department in that sense. I am not afraid that we are going to lose them, because they will be core to that.

The challenge, if anything, in terms of policymaking, will be to take the time to blend. That is both cultural development as one organisation and educating those on both sides as to the effectiveness of the different tools that exist in both Departments, with everyone learning about everyone else's. It is a shared journey in that sense, in terms of career development and talent management, with broadly everybody feeling that they are genuinely part of that global affairs organisation that thinks in a coherent and strategic way with the tools that we give it. A big chunk of that, financially, is ODA spending, but a big chunk of it is also the people who are driving that policy thinking.

For me, the challenge—and it is a great challenge—will be to find ways to make sure that everybody really starts to see the values and strengths that each are bringing to the party and that they harness them together. There is a real opportunity. It will be an education piece as much as anything else, and knowing or not knowing what goes on up the road is key to that.

Q179 **Brendan Clarke-Smith:** Following on from that, what is going to happen to DFID's country offices? Has a decision been made on that at all?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: We have not made a decision. We had already started bringing coherence in-country around how we did that and we had just started making that happen when Covid hit. Nick, you could probably explain how that was starting to be rolled out in a practical sense.

Nick Dyer: Before the merger was announced, we had already agreed that the DFID country directors, the heads of the DFID offices, would report into the head of mission. This will just consolidate that. The reality is that the FCO side of the FCDO has a particular task or role to do and the DFID side has a particular task or role to do. Those tasks and roles will continue. The question is how we integrate them, blend them more coherently and start giving people skills and training so they can move more seamlessly across the two sides. I would expect, certainly initially,



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that all the skill and capability that DFID has in-country would remain, because it is needed to spend a £10 billion or £11 billion budget well.

Q180 **Chair:** Secretary of State, you will be delighted to know I have the last few questions. They are quick-fire mop-ups and fact checks. How are you making sure that NDPBs like the British Council are not disproportionately affected by the ODA cuts? Because they have a role in supporting other ODA projects, it is particularly concerning downstream if they start facing big cuts.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: As part of the ODA prioritisation, the First Secretary has looked at that in the round. While each Department with its own particular part of the budget has assessed for itself, that is the beauty of having him look at the whole lot. He has been able to think, across the piece, about the importance of each constituent part and where we want to make sure that we do not lose critical tools that have long-term investment. He is looking at that in the round, to make sure that there is as limited an impact as we can achieve.

Q181 **Chair:** Excellent. On the UK aid match, a number of NGOs are quite concerned because they have already done their fundraising campaigns with the expectation that DFID will be match-funding. They are now concerned that, because it is paused, they might be in breach of Charity Commission obligations or at least their obligations to the public who supported them to deliver. Could you give us an update on what is happening with UK aid match, please?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: I do not expect there to be any cut in that part of our spend because it is within my priorities. All those projects are invariably humanitarian and at the sharp end of delivering support and aid. That will be in the most protected part of our budget space.

Q182 **Chair:** Are you expecting the tap to be turned on quite quickly?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: Which tap?

Chair: The match funding will be coming through.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: We are still ticking along in the nicest possible sense. Activity happens every day and that is part of the day-to-day activity that is in DFID's remit, so we would expect to continue to see that moving forward as normal.

Q183 **Chair:** Excellent. I am concerned about safeguarding, so it was very reassuring that the Secretary of State raised it as a priority for her. The FCO has done some great work ending gender-based violence and ending violence in conflict, for example. The safeguarding department in DFID is very much looking at sexual harassment and abuse by aid workers of other aid staff or beneficiaries. It is a very distinct thing from in-country abuse. Can she give reassurances that that particular focus on safeguarding will be retained in the new Department?



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Anne-Marie Trevelyan: As far as I am aware, it is an area of real focus and concern both to the Foreign Secretary and, indeed, to the Prime Minister, so I would expect that to continue. We have been looking at different parts of that challenging area within DFID and the FCO. I hope it would be an opportunity to grow something even stronger, to continue building on our world-leading edge in that, and to drive that message and that belief, which is critically important across all our partners, both the countries we partner with and, indeed, the donors for which we want to make sure this is an absolute focus.

Q184 **Chair:** That is very reassuring. Next week this Committee is starting its first evidence session on abuse by aid workers of beneficiaries and we hope to have the report to you quite quickly. We hope that that will be influential and will prove the need for that safeguarding.

Moving to scrutiny in general, can the Secretary of State commit to the future of ICAI and a properly resourced ICAI at that?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: I cannot because I will not be in charge of the Department, but we have made it clear—I think the Foreign Secretary would agree, although I do not wish to speak for him—that oversight of spending of taxpayers' money and its effectiveness is always important. In relation to Navendu's question earlier, if the framework of the parliamentary Committee sits in a different way, where those reporting lines might sit would change accordingly, but I would be genuinely surprised if there was any appetite to reduce the amount of oversight available. As all of us as MPs know, it is incredibly powerful to know that you have independent oversight looking at these things, to help us make sure that we deliver the best we can and, if there are problems, to pick them up early on.

Q185 **Chair:** Thank you for your support of parliamentary scrutiny. This Committee is looking to morph its remit into an ODA spend scrutiny Committee, so we hope that the House is favourable to that approach. When will DFID's annual statement be presented to Parliament this year?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: Nick, do we have a date?

Nick Dyer: If we do, it is not quite at my fingertips. We will get back to you on that one.

Q186 **Chair:** Could we have that clarity, because that is a condition under the Act? Looking at transparency, DFID has a fantastic reputation and is always in the top echelons around the world for transparency of its ODA spend, the FCO less so. Secretary of State, in the negotiations going on at the moment, how is that scrutiny of ODA spend being embedded into the new Department?

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: That is one of the critical areas where we bring something really important to the party as DFID. It will be one of the constituent parts that help us to be much more than the sum of our two existing parts, and to be more effective and punchier as we get out there



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to speak and deliver on the world stage, so that we can all be proud, as UK taxpayers, that we are delivering the right thing and the most urgent thing as effectively as we can.

That is how we will bring others with us, to help change the dial on the countries that we can see need that support and, as they go up the ladder of SDGs, take them to a place where they no longer need international development investment, but can stand tall and proud as partner countries in trade, with the values that we all believe help freedom and individual support to be the best it can be. That is always going to be the Prime Minister's aim and passion in creating something new and more impactful. DFID brings a very large proportion of that skillset to the party, to make sure that the FCDO is something that we will all be really proud of.

Chair: Thank you for being so open in all the answers. The Committee is planning to release a report into the effectiveness of aid on the 17th of this month, which puts forward what good looks like when it comes to the practicalities of a merger and, going forward, how to embed the commitment to ODA spend throughout the work of the new Department. We hope that that will be of use.

This Committee, in the first part of that report, warned against a merger. Personally, I have to say that I feel for all of the staff involved in this. It comes at a very challenging time. May I express my regard that they are all continuing to act in the most professional way imaginable and deliver the aid that is so desperately needed in the developing world? Thank you to all of you and to the Committee for this session today.