

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: [DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind](#), HC 639

Thursday 26 January 2017

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Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Fiona Bruce; Stephen Doughty; Pauline Latham; Jeremy Lefroy; Albert Owen

Questions 81 - 110

Witnesses

I. Rt Hon Gordon Brown, UN Special Envoy for Global Education

Examination of Witness

Witness: Rt Hon Gordon Brown, UN Special Envoy for Global Education

Q81 **Chair:** Gordon, welcome. Thank you very much indeed, for taking time to come to see us as part of our inquiry into DfID's work on education. The main focus of today's evidence session will be education, but we would like to cover a couple of broader issues first. Debate has resurfaced around some saying that DfID should no longer be a stand-alone Department, and that instead it should be folded back onto the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. You played a big role in the creation of DfID in 1997. Do you think it should remain independent? If so, why?

Gordon Brown: These are big questions for the future, and the atmosphere in which we are talking about international aid has clearly changed over the last 10 years. We have to be aware that the public always need explanations about why we are doing what we are doing, how the money is spent and how well it is spent.

We are meeting in the Wilson Room, and I think it was Harold Wilson who first recognised the importance of international development in his Government, with the appointment of someone I knew well, Judith Hart. I think in 1997 we made the right decision, and DfID as an independent

Department is renowned throughout the world. It is highly respected. It is one of the leaders in any area of development aid that you choose to name. It has a particularly good record, obviously, in leading in humanitarian aid recently, but previously it has been important to health and to education, and led the way to the creation of a global fund for health, the Global Vaccination Safety Initiative, and what came up at the International Health Partnership. All of these things would not have happened if DfID had not been as strong as it is with the reputation it has across the world. It is also important to remember that we did untie aid from trade and from other political considerations, and the independence of the Department is important to ensuring that remains the case.

Of course, there will always be a battle publicly about how well aid is used. I will just give you one figure about education that people sometimes forget: take all the aid agencies in the world together, including DfID, the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF, and the average expenditure per child in low and middle-income countries on education through aid, with all these agencies taken together, is less than \$10 per head per year. This is less than the cost of a textbook, so nobody can say that we are overspending on aid for kids who are desperately in need of educational opportunity. In Ethiopia, the figure is \$8 per head, and Ethiopia is a country with 2 million children still out of school. Togo, which is one of the countries that is reforming at the moment, has \$6 per head, and the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, which should obviously be more because it has the greatest needs, with half the out of school children, is something like \$12. We have to get this debate about aid into perspective: we are not overspending on the education of children in the poorest countries; there is a crisis, because everybody is underspending. The role of DfID in this is going to be incredibly important.

Q82 Pauline Latham: Certain sections of the media are campaigning for the Government to end the 0.7% commitment. Was it right for the United Kingdom to enshrine that in law?

Gordon Brown: Yes, because, as I found in government, there are always emergencies, there are always crises and there are always pressures. When we had the financial recession, the easiest thing that we could have done was to cut overseas aid, and suspend our determination to get to 0.7%. Remember, when we came to power in 1997, the figure was 0.28%. By the time we left, it was on its way to 0.7%, which I think it reached two years later. There will always be easy justifications for cutting back. You have to have a consistent policy on aid, which lasts across Governments, which is long term and not short term, and therefore I think the target is an important way of recognising how central overseas aid is to the success of anti-poverty policies around the world, but to the success of our objectives in international relations.

When we talk about health, everybody knows that you have to spend around 8% or 9% of GDP on health. With education, people talk about 5%. There is nothing unusual about talking about a figure that means something about your commitment, and 0.7% was originally part of the

Pearson Commission report in the 1970s, which suggested that, between private and public aid, it should be 1.7%.

Q83 Pauline Latham: One of the things people are saying is that we have pressures on our own health service, and we should be spending the money better on that. If we were to do that, what impact would it have on Britain's reputation?

Gordon Brown: First of all, we depend on doctors, nurses and others coming from overseas, and that is something that is difficult for the countries that are losing doctors. I remember meeting the President of Sierra Leone and him telling me that he only had 200 nurses, 100 doctors and 100 midwives, because there was such a loss of staff from his country. We have to recognise that the British health service does not operate in a vacuum. It depends on workers coming from overseas and it depends on the skills that they bring to bear, and so the most likely person you will see in a hospital from abroad is not a patient but is a doctor or a nurse, and people should remember that.

We also have to remember that in an interdependent world, the pressures of migration that people are concerned about in part arise from poverty in the poorest countries of the world. It is not just conflict; it is poverty. If you realise you are better off poor in a rich country than rich in a poor country, then the pressures for migration will grow. There is absolutely no doubt that pressures will grow from Africa over the next few years. Africa has a population of 1.2 billion at the moment, and it will be 2.5 billion in 2050. It will be five times the population of Europe. The pressure on people in poor countries to leave will be strong indeed, and unless we can help the countries in Africa do what these residents who eventually migrate at the moment want to do, and that is to have prosperity and the chance of a decent standard of living in their own country—and international development aid is important to that—then we will be dealing with many of the pressures that people are concerned about in greater numbers in future. Aid has to be understood in the context of an interdependent world, where if we do not help each other and help ourselves deal with some of the problems we all face together, then we ourselves in Britain will face greater pressures as a result.

Q84 Pauline Latham: As our economy improves here, and therefore the amount of money being 0.7% will grow, and as developing countries become middle-income countries, we could end up spending more and more money on fewer countries. Do you think that is right?

Gordon Brown: The first thing we have to recognise is that we have a huge crisis with refugees and displaced persons. Ten or 20 years ago, people did not see this as the huge pressure point it is. Whatever happens, as the number of lower-income countries diminishes, and you have more middle-income countries, you are going to have a large population—there are 60 million displaced people, there are 20 million refugees, half of them are children in need of education, and most of them are not in school at the moment. By the way, most of them are in middle-income countries—the displaced people and refugees—so we will

need to help the middle-income countries in future to cope with this refugee problem.

The United Nations—and this is not just education—is \$10 billion short on its humanitarian aid budgets alone. Once you include organisations that are dealing with refugee problems outside the UN system—charities, NGOs and organisations like the Red Cross—you are talking about \$20 billion. In 10 years' time, people estimate that figure will be at least \$30 billion. There is no way under present circumstances that the demand for help, whether it is humanitarian or development aid, is going to fall. It would be unrealistic to expect that in the short term we have to do anything other than increase our support for humanitarian aid.

Q85 Stephen Doughty: One of the key things, apart from the money, the commitment to the Department and the 0.7% target, is personal leadership by Prime Ministers, by Ministers and others, on these issues, on a global scale. I wondered if you could say a little bit about why that personal intervention is important and, in that vein, what should the Prime Minister be saying to President Trump on these issues when she meets him?

Gordon Brown: Personal leadership is important, and we look to see what President Trump is going to do about overseas aid, and particularly about this story reported today that the American Government might be planning a 40% cut in their contributions to the United Nations.

I have found, and I think others in my position will find, that when it comes to health or education, or even support for agriculture or some of the economic initiatives that developing countries have to consider taking, it does come down to the leadership of the President and Prime Minister in these countries. If they want to see something done on education, like President Kikwete, for example, who took a huge initiative with big results now in Tanzania to improve education there, they can make a difference, and therefore the leaders in the developed countries, who are in communication with leaders in Africa, and are willing to spend some time with them, can have an influence. Particularly because we have a Commonwealth of which so many of the poorer countries are members, our leaders can have a huge influence on them as well. It is leader-to-leader in Africa and Asia where you can actually make some big differences, and I hope that Britain will see that its role continues to be, not just through the Commonwealth but through the United Nations, to be very much part of a strategy for economic and social development in the poorest countries of the world. That depends on the leader taking that seriously.

Q86 Albert Owen: Just to follow on from that, Gordon, with the first two questions about a stand-alone Department and the 0.7% aid target, to be fair there is cross-party support in Parliament for it. Do you think it is a failure of our parliamentarians to get the message across that it is 0.7%, that it does vary and, when we have a recession, the amount of actual aid goes down? Do you think we need to have a clearer message from Parliament, so that sections of the press cannot misinterpret what we are

saying?

Gordon Brown: There is a post-truth economics as well as a post-truth politics. Figures can easily be manipulated. What you may see as a big figure others people see as small, and other people will see a small figure when you think it is big. However, the issue for me is to show, in concrete terms, what aid is achieving.

I will give you this example in Lebanon today. Lebanon is the most troubled of countries. It is divided, they find it difficult to form a Government and there is obviously religious conflict within the country. However, about a third of Lebanon is now refugees, and in a unique project, which is called the double-shift school system—you are using the same school in the morning for Lebanese children and in the afternoon for Syrian refugees—they have managed to get almost 250,000 children into school in this country. Justin van Fleet, who is here with me, works with the United Nations with me, and he has been directly involved in this and could say more about it, but the issue is for \$600 per child, using existing schools, 250,000 refugees have gone into education, and the only thing stopping that figure going up to 400,000, which would cover almost all the Syrian refugee children in Lebanon, is a lack of funds. If that child, because a parent then sees there are no prospects for getting education for that child in the vicinity of Syria, is then taken to Europe, the cost of education for that child will be \$6,000. If it were Germany, if it were Britain or if it were other countries, that would be roughly the figure. However, \$600 allows us to educate a child in Lebanon, in the area where parents still want the children to live. They do not want to move; they want to stay there. However, for lack of funds we are unable to get these children to school.

I do not think there is a parent in Britain who, if it was put to them directly, "Do you want to allow your Government to spend \$600 per child to enable, with other countries, just one young child to get that education?" would refuse it. Particularly when you talk to the children; many of them simply want to get back to their home countries to help rebuild it.

Chair: We went to Lebanon as a Committee recently, and we were very impressed with them, and in Jordan as well.

Q87 **Albert Owen:** Absolutely, and it leads me nicely to the next question I wanted to ask. As part of this inquiry in November, Alice Albright—I would have liked her to be the Democratic candidate, but the Chair will not allow me to go there, I do not think—told this Committee that there is a funding crisis in global education. Do you agree?

Gordon Brown: Absolutely. We have just finished a global commission, which was supported by the Norwegian Government, on which we had many people from all over the world: Presidents, Prime Ministers, education experts. We concluded that the money spent on education at the moment in lower and middle-income countries is \$1.2 trillion per year. For us to be able to meet the sustainable development goal that

every child should get secondary and primary education by 2030, we need \$3 trillion. The gap is \$1.2 trillion to \$3 trillion.

Even if we increased overseas development aid spending and funding by other countries who do not, like Britain, meet the 0.7%, and even if we devoted 15% of all aid to education—and Britain only devotes 7% of its aid to education, which we might come onto—there would still be a funding gap in education, such is the crisis we face. The crisis is greatest for refugee and displaced children, and let me just say that at the Syria pledging conference last year there were pledges made about the amount of money that would go to education and the number of children who would be in school—indeed, that every child who is a refugee would be in school by the end of this year. We are still almost a million children short. We are still almost \$1 billion short of the money that we need to pay for that education. While Britain has actually paid the money it said it would, and I congratulate them for doing so, other countries have still to redeem or make good the promises that they made at the Syrian conference.

We have a general crisis of education: that we are short in international funding terms of about \$90 billion by 2030. In refugee education, only 2% of humanitarian aid goes to education. Only 0.6%—less than 1%—of our humanitarian aid goes to educating these children in either the Syrian vicinity or Africa or elsewhere. We have both an immediate crisis in humanitarian aid, and we have a long-term crisis through under-provision.

The truth is that over the last 10 years, education as a share of overseas aid internationally has fallen from 13% to 10%. Concessional aid from the World Bank and others to education has fallen from 10% to 7%, and non-concessional aid has fallen from 7% to 4%. As more money has gone into humanitarian aid, shelter and survival, as infrastructure and agriculture have got money and as health has got more money, education has suffered. By 2030 there will be 800 million children, half the children of the world, who will not finish education with any qualifications of any value whatsoever, and in 2030 on current trends 200 million will still be out of school and never finish their primary education, 400 million will only get primary-level qualifications, and as I said half the children of the world will be without the qualifications they need. That is indeed a crisis that has got to be dealt with. It is a crisis in terms of the quality of education, of course, because they are not finishing school with the right qualifications, but it is also a crisis in terms of provision of finance for education, where we have persistently underfunded education.

We have proposals to deal with that, but it is important to recognise that this crisis is going to get worse if we do nothing about it, because, as population rises, particularly in Africa, there will be more children who will not be getting the proper education.

Q88 Albert Owen: Specifically, what can we in the UK do to encourage the support for development with these Governments, and is DfID doing enough?

Gordon Brown: First of all, of course, the Governments must do better themselves. They must raise the standards of education to the level of the top performance, and there is no reason why, by concentrating on good teaching and good school leadership and a good curriculum, and bringing technology into the schools, they could not do that. The poorer countries themselves then have to recognise that they have to invest in education. You cannot get 11 million children who are out of school into school in Nigeria if you only spend 2% of your national income on education. You cannot get the 7 million children out of school in Pakistan into education if you are only spending 2% of your national income, despite promising to spend 4% in Pakistan. The first thing to do is that these countries have not only got to improve performance, but they have to raise spending on average from 4% to nearer 5.5% to 5.7%. These are the sort of figures that are necessary.

That would cover 97% of all spending on education. The international community has a duty to step in when we know that countries will not meet their targets, and we know we have a duty we have agreed to meet, that every child will be in education. We need to do something about international aid and funding. I say that 15% of aid, at least, should go to education. I say that countries that are failing to spend 0.2% to 0.4% should get up to the levels we are talking about, and at least 0.5%.

However, even then we need a new facility. We have a global fund for health. We have a global fund for vaccination. We have the Global Partnership for Education, which does a great job, but we do not have a global fund for education that is providing new money to education. Our proposal is that the World Bank has a special capital increase, and so do the regional development banks, earmarked for education. This is a credible and realistic proposal that could be implemented.

If you are a Finance Minister in a middle-income country, at the moment the only way you can get money from the World Bank for your education system is to borrow money at 3.5% interest from them—to pay back over 30 years of course, but to borrow. There are very few Finance Ministers who are going to borrow to pay for teachers' salaries. You have to do something that makes it more attractive for middle-income countries, particularly lower-middle-income countries, to invest in education. We propose buying down these loans, so they are effectively credits or grants, and we then inject more capital into the World Bank. If you injected \$2 billion into the World Bank, it can borrow \$8 billion on the strength of its capital base, and it has a perfectly strong triple A credit rating. You could create \$8 billion of extra revenue for education by doing so.

This is the way we have to move to deal with this education crisis, and I would urge the Committee in your report to support an innovation for education, which is the creation of this international finance facility that would go side-by-side with the Education Cannot Wait fund, UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education; they are great delivery

organisations, but we lack what the global fund for health has, which is a means by which we raise funds at a multilateral level.

Jeremy Lefroy: Thank you for the work you are doing, Mr Brown, and your passion for education.

Gordon Brown: Let me thank the Committee for taking the time to conduct this important work.

Jeremy Lefroy: It is a personal mission of our Chair, who is to be congratulated on this.

Gordon Brown: And all of you for following the advice of the Chair.

Q89 **Jeremy Lefroy:** DfID currently, according to the figures we have, in 2016-17 is spending about £680 million on education, compared with more than £1 billion on disasters and nearly £1 billion on health. Given that, I am sure you would agree, it is vital we commit money to humanitarian aid, and indeed the very important issue of health, and given we are at the 0.7% so there is no room for increase, although there is no room for decrease, where would you see additional funds for education coming from? You have mentioned an international facility, which I think is an extremely interesting idea and we have seen the excellent results on vaccines and other areas. However, where in terms of DfID's current work would you see them do less so that they could do more on education?

Gordon Brown: I was involved, I may say, in the creation of the GAVI facility, IFFIm, and that is a use of private as well as public money, so that you could frontload expenditure on vaccinations, which makes sense. What is the point in vaccinating 20% in an area, when you get the gains from inoculating 100%? The same thing goes for education, if you could frontload expenditure. The first thing I would do is look at how overseas development aid, paid for by DfID, can go further. How can we make the money more effective? If you were in any other area of life, you would look at how you could maximise the use of the money you are putting up. Can you find a partner? Can you find a means by which you can build a relationship with a bank or an international institution, so that this happens? I would urge that to be what DfID does, because DfID is not to be criticised for not reaching 0.7% at all. Other countries have failed to do so, and DfID has a strong advocacy role in telling other countries, "Your aid can be made to be more effective. We are doing this through the international facility."

As far as the shift is concerned in aid, I think you will find that around the world there is a discussion around infrastructure and about how much aid is going to infrastructure. Infrastructure has the opportunity—roads, rail and energy for example. You have the opportunity, if you are an infrastructure provider, or developing an infrastructure scheme, of getting a private partner. There is no shortage of people prepared to consider investing as private investors. There is a surplus of savings around the world. There are sovereign wealth funds, there are pensions and

insurance funds, and there are many individual savers who would be prepared to invest in infrastructure. If the terms were right, the amount of money that goes in aid to infrastructure could actually go to global public goods, which are health and education.

This is the strategy of Jim Yong Kim at the World Bank at the moment. The German Government just brought out a report yesterday calling for a Marshall Plan with Africa, and that is the spirit of what they are saying as well. So yes, I do regret the fact that DfID has reduced the share of education in its aid budget, from something like 12% to 15% in the last decade, to 7% now. I do understand that some of that is for humanitarian aid, but there is money to be found for education in other parts of the DfID budget without affecting health, for example, which I know you and I think is important as well.

There are ways forward, and remember when it comes to humanitarian aid that, while I think 12% is now going to humanitarian aid, currently 0.6% of that, only a twentieth, is actually going to educating schoolchildren. If you deal with only the problems of survival, and you do not deal with the issue of education and employment for displaced people, then you are not solving their problems at all. You are not helping them either prepare for the reconstruction of their country or have skills if they have to stay out of their country for a long time. Even in the humanitarian budgets, we have to do more for education.

Yes, I think we have to consider the balance. Britain, of course, is least to be criticised for that, because we have got to 0.7%, but even Britain is spending too little on education, at 7% or around that. It is far too small, given the challenges we face.

I think you will find that other countries, apart from America, are doing far more on education. I have the figures here, and maybe I should hand them to the Committee, but you will know them as well. France is 12%, Germany 11%, Norway 10%—sorry, that is not the right paper. That is the multilaterals. I will send the Committee the right papers, but it is definitely far greater for other countries.

Q90 **Jeremy Lefroy:** In terms of the split between primary, secondary and post-secondary education, which is about 45%, 19% and 6%, do you think DfID has got that about right?

Gordon Brown: There was an unfortunate decision made by a lot of countries a few years ago to get out of primary education before we had completed our commitment to get every child to school. I think you will find, particularly in Africa, large numbers of children remain out of school, with no plans to get them into school because successive aid Departments made the same decision: that it was time to move to something else. I do not think we should cut primary until we have finished the task, and obviously the pressures will come on secondary.

The irony about higher education is that a lot of Governments, as you will find, are using their education aid to finance higher education in their

own countries, by giving scholarships to people coming from Africa or Asia to Germany or France. Perhaps that is not the best use of aid, given the cost that involves. A lot of French and German aid is going to higher education institutions in their own country. I do think we have to consider how we build up the higher education institutions in Africa and Asia.

By the way, only 1% goes to early childhood education, and we cannot, as a nation, say that we think early childhood education is absolute crucial and that the first 48 months of a child's life is the most important determinant of their prospects, and then say in other countries we are ignoring the need for pre-school education. Both in health budgets and education budgets, it has to feature more strongly, and it might be a better use of resources.

- Q91 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Finally, in respect of the actual curriculum, do you think more could be done in terms of preparing children and young people for future life, in terms of soft skills, education, education about entrepreneurship? Most of the children who are educated in schools will end up, probably, self-employed, working for themselves, certainly working in the private sector.

Gordon Brown: The African and Asian economies are changing very fast. We have to be aware that a lot of the jobs we have been training people for are going to become redundant in themselves. You have to help children learn how to learn. That is the essence of a good education.

I think it is true that a lot of countries can learn from other countries' successes, and there ought to be a greater exchange of information about what works and what does not work. Technology allows us to do far more things than we are now doing. The classroom is probably the most unreformed institution. The factories have changed, the office has changed, the home has changed, every aspect of our lives has changed, but if you went into a classroom in the 21st century, it looks remarkably similar to a classroom in the 19th century, in every country of the world. We ought to be far better at using new technology.

The curriculum can come in on tablets and iPhones. Expenditure on textbooks could be better used to give people the books they want on the technology that is available: iPhones, tablets or something like that. We have to not only reform the curriculum along the lines you have suggested, to make it more effective for the education of people in this modern era, but we also have to use technology more effectively.

- Q92 **Chair:** Can I move on to UNESCO? In DfID's recent multilateral development review they scored UNESCO poorly, and when we heard from Kevin Watkins from Save the Children he likened the organisation to the Dementors from "Harry Potter", sucking the enthusiasm from the room. What is your opinion of UNESCO? He did not hold back.

Gordon Brown: I think you have had quite enough said about UNESCO.

Q93 **Chair:** What is your opinion? You have worked with them on education.

Gordon Brown: Kevin Watkins is very good friend of mine, but UNESCO is an organisation that is often misunderstood, because it is doing a great job in certain areas, and sometimes we expect it to be doing a job that is not either funded or equipped to do.

UNESCO does not run schools. People assume that UNESCO is providing education on the ground. It provides a number of things that are used for education, like its box and everything else, but it does not run schools. I think there is an assumption that it does, but it is a standards organisation. It is providing information about how you can meet educational standards, it is helping people structure the planning of education systems, and of course it is a big cultural organisation, which is where it has its prominence, as well as being a scientific organisation.

If you look at education internationally, UNESCO is one delivery organisation in terms of standards and structuring of education systems, and you have GPE, which is a delivery partner in many countries. You have Education Cannot Wait, which is now providing help for humanitarian situations. You have UNICEF, which is actually providing education on the ground and delivering education programmes in places you must have seen, like Lebanon itself. You have a range of delivery organisations in the international field, but in my view the role that each plays is often misunderstood, and they are all underfunded, because we have not seen the value of education, both education in itself and education in unlocking the health goals for the sustainable development goals. If we have an educated girl, the figures are that an educated girl will have two children—and this is in sub-Saharan Africa—but an uneducated girl will tend to have five children. Education unlocks a whole series of other things that we have to be aware of, and education is also important if you want to slow migration. It is also important if you want to educate children about citizenship and prevent some of them who are discontented—rightly discontented—from being prey to extremist influences, which would be terrible.

Q94 **Fiona Bruce:** Good afternoon. We have talked about how the world did not meet MDG 2, and that there are about 250 million children who still do not have access to primary school. Now, of course, we have SDG 4, which is saying not only that there should be access to primary school, but it should be quality, and there should be vocational and tertiary school education. How can DfID support this? How can DfID support meeting this challenge, and do you have any examples of best practice that DfID could replicate or scale up?

Gordon Brown: I maybe sound as if I am banging a particular drum, but I come back to the leadership that DfID and other development Departments can play in making our development aid more cost-effectively deployed. If DfID and other Departments came together and created, with the World Bank and the regional development banks, a better means of financing education, then the money that is spent could be two and a half times more effective. If you were to spend \$2 billion in

the way that I am suggesting, you could actually raise revenues for education of \$5 billion. That is where the innovative thinking has got to be done. There are a number of people around the world saying, "Look, we have to think more imaginatively about how we use development aid."

The other thing is that only a third of development aid in education is spent multilaterally. With health, we are perfectly happy with the global health fund and GAVI, and with these initiatives that are providing immunisation and so on at a multilateral level. Two-thirds of health money—even in America—is going multilaterally. However, in education it is a third only, and DfID could play a big role in changing that. Now, DfID does a third. It is about 35%. It is no higher than the average, but on the figures I was going to give you before, the USA has only 13% multilaterally. Germany has 11%, and France 12%. We could persuade these other countries to pool with us and share in a way that we could actually make the money go further. There are obviously standards, and we can look at how we could meet them better by emphasising teacher training, the role of school leadership and a better curriculum.

However, I am also aware that the money that we are spending at the moment could get bigger results, and we could be more able to broadcast the successes of aid, if we could persuade countries to work more closely together and co-operate, and if we could use the fact that the World Bank and regional development banks are banks; they are there precisely for the purpose I am saying. They are there to raise money for important purposes, and to use the triple-A rating we have invested in over many years to make it possible for us to raise more money for projects that we think are important.

I would suggest DfID take the lead in convening on a multilateral basis individual aid agencies, and DfID also take the lead in making sure we use the money more effectively, through working with the regional development banks and the World Bank.

Q95 Fiona Bruce: As you have travelled around the world, as you have done a lot, have you seen inspirational examples that you would like to share with the Committee?

Gordon Brown: Of course. Look, if you have a place like South Sudan, where I was a few months ago—I do not know if the Committee has been there recently; you were there some years ago, I know that—you meet mothers who have come across the border from Sudan into South Sudan, virtually refugees. I met a group of mothers. The one thing they want for their children is education. We forget that they put shelter, sometimes, secondary to the importance of their child having the best chance in life. I was in a village just outside Juba, and there was a project by BRAC, the Bangladesh group who do these small huts as schools. There were places in that school for only about 20 kids, and I remembered being in that hut, and there was a small porthole, and looking in at that porthole were about 100 kids, who were unable to get the education they want. There was a mother who told me she had to

choose between her twins, at eight years old, to decide which went to school.

There are great examples of voluntary organisations like BRAC doing great work in a country like South Sudan, where they do not invest enough in education, proving that you can raise the standards of education by these initiatives, but there are not enough of them and we are not supporting enough of them.

If you go to Nigeria, where I have been again recently, one of the great tensions in Nigeria is that there are extremist schools that are run by zealots, who are trying to attract lots of children away from schools that we are supporting in aid. If we do not invest properly in these schools, and many of the schools we are supporting have ridiculously poor facilities—no computers, no desks; it is a scandal—these kids are then lost to extremist organisations running separate schools and indoctrinating people. We have to realise that there are consequences for our failure to invest in education, even in a country like Nigeria, which has certainly not got the most difficult problem with extremists, but has got one of the big problems with extremists.

Q96 Pauline Latham: The Education Commission report says that there are also 330 million children in school but not learning. Why do you think this is?

Gordon Brown: It is because we have not trained teachers properly. We have not put the technology in places that would enable teachers to be more effective. We do not have proper systems for recording what we are doing in some countries. We do not have proper textbooks. We are not able to develop a curriculum that prevents kids from losing interest in education at a very early age.

I do not think any of the problems are unsolvable. You can go to any country in the world and find schools that, if they had that commitment from the head teacher and teachers themselves, and the investment that showed people cared about these schools, that parents and others were involved in pushing for it, would be far better schools. The problems are there, and of course teachers are very poorly paid in many parts of the world, and there is no incentive, which is unfortunate, for many of them to do better. We have to think about that carefully. We need a compact with the teachers, so that we are prepared to use the new technology and not see it as a threat. All of these things can be done, but none of these problems are unsolvable.

What we need is a compact, if you like, between the international community and countries that are struggling to do better. We help them, in return for them tying themselves to high standards that they are determined to get.

I mentioned Tanzania because I think your Committee is going to Tanzania soon. Big Results Now has just been adjudicated by the World Bank, and it is regarded as one of the most successful programmes in

getting teachers to teach and getting standards up in schools, and getting a more optimistic atmosphere about the power that education can have in improving people's lives. I hope you will be able to look at some of the successful initiatives, because in our work in that commission we are going around Africa at the moment. President Kikwete, who has just retired as president of Tanzania and led that experiment, is going around on our behalf and talking to all African Presidents about how they can adopt the reform proposals for education. Yes, you need more money, but you need reform, and both have to go hand in hand. You cannot have one, I am afraid, without the other.

Q97 Pauline Latham: In many countries, of course, children go from finishing their education to becoming teachers with little, if any, training whatsoever. Teachers are not seen as a high-status profession; it is not seen as important, and they are not paid well, as you said. How do you think DfID can help that? Should they be providing teacher training colleges? Should they be sending British teachers out to help? What would the best thing be for DfID to do?

Gordon Brown: I know the Open University is doing a huge amount in Africa in the training of teachers, and I know that there are other organisations, like Teach First, that are trying to persuade other countries to adopt some of the things that have been successful in America and are now seen as successful in Britain as well. There are many, many things that can be done. I think we have to encourage innovation and we have to encourage higher quality teacher training. If you go to South Sudan, one of the problems is that they do not really have an effective teacher training college that they wanted. If you go to Nigeria, they are short of teacher training colleges. I understand South Africa had a surfeit of teacher training colleges, and was prepared to share them with Africa, and again that is an example of where co-operation could actually yield places quickly. These are the things we should be thinking of.

Q98 Pauline Latham: You talk about innovation and embracing new technology, but without electricity, they cannot. It is not possible.

Gordon Brown: That is right, and one of the other projects I have been involved with is trying to help solve some of these problems of energy in Africa, because there is a shortage of energy; the balance between different energy resources is wrong for Africa, and something has to be done about it. However, I know that the new President of the African Development Bank has made that his priority. In fact, a few days ago when I met him he gave me a document he has just written on the future of energy. Yes, that goes hand in hand, but there are obvious ways of using solar power and everything else by which we can get education to remote areas.

Q99 Stephen Doughty: The sustainable development goals are founded on the premise of leaving no one behind, and obviously reaching some of the most marginalised children and getting them into school, particularly those in the poorest communities, particular ethnic groups, girls, those with disabilities and so on. It is very difficult, complex and challenging,

and often costly. What do you think we should be doing more to get those very marginalised groups into school, and do you think there is an inherent tension between the incentives to, particularly with the value for money agenda in DfID, quick returns, easy wins, rather than perhaps the more difficult cases?

Gordon Brown: A total of 90% of children are in primary education, but the last 10% are the most difficult to get in, partly because they are in remote areas, partly because they are street children and not encouraged to go to school. Sometimes it is because of discrimination against girls, which is something that is abhorrent and has to be dealt with in places like Pakistan and elsewhere. You have to recognise it costs more to get the marginalised into education, and you have to do more to make it happen. That is why Kevin Watkins has enunciated—and Amartya Sen is behind this—this idea of progressive universalism, so everybody should get a basic investment in their education, but for those who need more, we need to do more and we need to provide more. That has to be said; if you are looking for an easy win after 90%, it is probably not there. If you are looking to get the marginalised 10% into education, you have to be prepared to invest in doing things that encourage them away from child labour, maybe with conditional cash transfers, but that is also an expense. You have to do something about child marriage, which is a huge problem when children should be staying on at school and are being forced into marriage. In poorer countries, about 10% are married under the age of 15, so you have to do something about that as well. It is a mixture of incentives and laws.

Remember, the only way in the end that we got 100% education in Britain was by making it compulsory and inspecting it. Banning child labour and everything else was part of it, but it was actually inspectors making sure that that child went to school. I think that has to happen in poorer countries as well. If we believe in education, and believe it has to be universal as well, we have to also ensure that it is compulsory.

Q100 **Stephen Doughty:** Specifically in the UK role, particularly given us meeting the 0.7% commitment and the leadership we have shown, do you think we should be playing more of a role in focusing on those hardest to reach?

Gordon Brown: I see the UK as a leader, and I want it to continue to be a leader. I went to Mozambique with Nelson Mandela in 2006, and we launched this programme for £15 billion over 10 years that we would invest in education. I want us to continue to be a leader.

Girls' education is an area that concerns me, but I know also concerns large numbers of people who do not share my political views but who want to do more to deal with the reality of discrimination, and the fact that if an educated girl becomes a mother, she has a far better chance—because of her education—of avoiding child deaths, infant mortality and maternal mortality. There is a health benefit from that as well. Focusing on girls' education is one thing that could be done.

Focusing on disabled and blind children as well, it is an absolute scandal that the technology now exists, on an iPhone, to give accessibility to learning, to books and to information to blind children beyond braille, and they do not know about it. We should be putting forward the technology that is available, that allows text to be turned into audio instantly, that allows you to be able to know who the person in front of you is and to read any label or any information. That is all available now, and it is easy and it is actually cheap, once you have the initial machine, which is an iPhone of some sort, but we are not making it available to people. There are millions of blind children around the world, and I have met many of them in some of my travels, who have no access to computers—they are not being taught braille—they have nothing, and yet the technology exists to liberate them from their blindness.

Q101 **Jeremy Lefroy:** You have already referred, Mr Brown, to the marginalised children who are caught up in conflicts, and the UK played the leading role in establishing the Education Cannot Wait fund. Is this scaling up fast enough? Is it reaching enough children?

Gordon Brown: No, because we do not have enough money. We have had, I think \$120 million put into the fund; almost all of it has been allocated, not just to Syria, but to places like Nepal and Yemen, and conflict and emergency areas in Africa as well. We could have spent 10 times as much, given the crisis that we face.

This is a point of decision, and maybe you will want to look at this as a Committee at a later moment. We cannot forever continue with this situation where the only way we fund humanitarian aid, whether it be for education, health, shelter or food, is through a begging bowl. We have no assessed contribution system. We have no guaranteed funding. We have no year-to-year promises that you can hold people accountable for, as we will find, perhaps, with America. You have the most needy people in the world—and I think everybody at this Committee would accept this—and the most vulnerable children, uprooted from their homes, their countries, their schools, and from the possibility of seeing their friends and everything else, and we do the least for them. We do not even have a system by which we could say that if you got into this position, we would be able to help you.

We are going to have to solve this problem: that humanitarian aid has risen from, I think I am right in saying, \$5 billion 10 years ago, and it is now \$20 billion we are asking for this year. The numbers affected are 60 million, as we have said, and we have no proper system of funding. There has to be a new relationship between the United Nations and the international financial institutions, the World Bank and the IMF. What was built on one side in the 1940s for the UN, and on another side for the Bretton Woods institutions, we have to find a way of working together.

The first stage of that is a proposal we made for education, because it covers the education of refugees and displaced people, and it would be a huge breakthrough because then we would have guaranteed funding in that area. However, I think you would want to look at this system as a

whole, because you cannot say that the future of the world should have to depend on a begging bowl when you know that you already have 60 million displaced people.

- Q102 **Jeremy Lefroy:** We have a situation, for instance, in Burundi at the moment where, because of the actions of the Government, there are hundreds of thousands of refugees. Tanzania is again bearing the brunt. Do you see a very substantial difference in the approach towards the education of children, those refugees, and all the problems faced by the Syrian refugees who have at last begun to get some of the education they need? Do we need to see much more equal treatment between refugees across the world? At the moment we are seeing refugees, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, who are getting no emphasis?

Gordon Brown: Justin van Fleet, who is with me, compiled a list, which I will send to the Committee, of the underfunding of education appeals. In Africa, in the last few years, there have been appeals made for refugees and displaced people for educational needs. There were appeals made for health needs and everything else, but for educational needs. They, I think, are on average less than 10% funded. You have a need. It has been assessed as being urgent, and you could have an appeal and you get 3%, 5%, 7% funded in CAR, Niger, Mali, wherever. That is the problem. Syrian refugees eventually had a higher proportion of the appeals met, but around the world we have to understand that the begging bowl is not working, even to the extent of getting 1% or 2%, sometimes, of what is appealed for.

- Q103 **Albert Owen:** In countries where public education is scarce or low quality, is the mix of public and private provision necessary to ensure all children have access to quality education?

Gordon Brown: This is a difficult question, because people have the freedom to choose what kind of education they want for their children, and nobody would want to take that away from them. The problem we have is that, if we are going to meet our goals, we must be able to say that there is public provision that is free of charge and universally available for children in every area of the world. We cannot rely on either the charitable sector or the private sector providing the guarantee of universal education, because they cannot. What we have to do is ensure there is sufficient public provision and funding of education so that we meet our goals.

- Q104 **Albert Owen:** Should DfID be supporting these low-fee private schools, or should it stick to its policy and encourage more—

Gordon Brown: To some extent, this is a matter for the Governments of the countries that they are dealing with. In my experience, most leaders in most countries want universal free education for the children of their countries. Yes, if people want to go off, if they have the money, and buy education, that is up to them. However, the leaders want to guarantee that every child will have education and will not have to pay for it.

- Q105 **Albert Owen:** The reason I mention this is that in the evidence we were

given, we talked about Kevin Watkins and indeed Alice Albright; they expressed their concerns that the low-fee paying schools are encouraging Governments to abandon their responsibility towards moving towards universal free education.

Gordon Brown: It cannot be allowed to do so, and therefore I share their concern. We have set a goal for the world that by 2030, every single child will be at school, universally, available to every primary and secondary child. We have to make provision for that. That is free of charge. That is the understanding.

Now, if people then want to buy their education, that is a matter for them, but as a Government in a developing country, in my view there is a duty to make provision so that every child has the chance of free education.

Q106 **Chair:** One specific example is Bridge. Bridge International Academies have recently encountered some difficulty in Uganda, with provision there. We saw a Bridge academy when we visited Nigeria last year. I agree with you, Gordon, that the Governments of the countries concerned must take the lead on this, but my sense is that they are being encouraged by DfID to take up these low-fee school options. What is your view on that?

Gordon Brown: Whatever happens, this interest in fee-paying will always be marginal to the general requirements of education in any country. I think we should spend our time concentrating on how we can ensure that there is universal and free education for every child. Again, as I say, it is a matter for individual parents, if they feel they have the money and they have support to do so, what kind of education they choose for their children, and nobody is trying to deny people that right.

However, what is the duty of a Government? I do not find leaders telling me that they want anything other than universal free education in their country, and that is how they are going to be judged.

Q107 **Stephen Doughty:** Just following on from that, we have found a number of other examples, where, for example, the Commonwealth Development Corporation is funding fee-paying schools but also fee-paying healthcare. Particularly when it comes to the use of our aid spending, whether that is through bilateral funding, CDC, other multilaterals, would you say that that should be resolutely focused on supporting public education, and particularly those most marginal, hard-to-reach children?

Gordon Brown: Our sustainable development goal is interpreted by everyone as universal free primary and secondary education, and if we do not meet that by 2030, while having spent money on other things, we will be rightly condemned.

Q108 **Chair:** Earlier you highlighted Tanzania as an example of a country from which we can learn positively. Are there other country examples that you think it would be useful for us to study?

Gordon Brown: When we did the Education Commission—and I am very happy to send to every member a copy of the summary, and the report, because the report is long—we looked at Vietnam as a very good example in Asia of a poor country that has now moved quickly. Of course, you have examples in China, Singapore, Taiwan, Japan and Korea, where education is turning out more higher education graduates than, for example, Britain. You also have some countries that are making big progress despite the fact they are very poor countries. We draw attention to some of them. I mention Togo, for example, where they were given \$6 per head but they had actually made some progress.

I think you can look at countries that are poor that are doing better and countries that are middle-income countries that have actually made a decision to focus on education as the route to economic development. It is very important to understand that countries are doing that. However, then you look at Latin American countries, and say, "Look, these are middle-income countries that have not become high-income countries, precisely because they have not invested enough in both the quantity and the quality of their education.

If you are talking about the role of education in economic development, there are many middle-income countries that are being prevented from becoming high-income countries because they have not invested in education. That is an important point I think you can make.

Q109 **Chair:** Can I finish with a broader question? DfID are planning to allocate an increasing proportion of UK aid via other Government Departments, so Departments other than DfID. From your experience, both as Prime Minister and Chancellor, what sort of challenges do you think this will present for us?

Gordon Brown: I have been worried, I will be honest, in the last few years about how much aid is being essentially reclassified. It is right that we make provision for refugees who come to this country. The question is whether it is right to include that as overseas aid. I know technically there have been interpretations that allow that to happen, but most people would not consider that international development aid. They would see that as domestic support for people we have agreed to accept as people who are going to become citizens of our country.

In Afghanistan, it is quite clear that some of the aid money has been used not so much for development purposes but for strategic and defence purposes, and I think people have to look at that carefully as well. To hold to 0.7%, and then to redefine aid, it may be that traditional aid is getting less than 0.7%. I think people have to be very careful about what is reclassified as aid, because we run the risk of being criticised for saying one thing and in fact trying to use the money in a different way.

I personally think it is to our credit around the world, and we are seen as a country that has done things properly by the poorest in the world, by de-linking aid from trade and economic advantage. I know that other countries have not been as good at doing that as we have. With the

changing international situation, our relationship with Europe and our relationship with other countries in the world, we must want, as a country, to be a leader, particularly in our relationships with the poorest countries, who are members of or close to the British Commonwealth. We should think about how we can lead, in future, and where our leadership would make a difference. It is undoubtedly the case that aid and what we do for economic development has an effect on migration. It has an effect on discontent, and potentially on terrorism. It has an effect, obviously, on economic development and it has a big impact on health and unlocking some of the health goals we know are very important to achieve.

I hope that the Committee, in its assessment of education, will see education as unlocking many of these new goals. You can go through a number of examples, but I think it is important to recognise that education has been undervalued by too many of us in previous years. It now needs to have its rightful place at the centre. For that to happen, we need to be far more innovative in the way we use the funding that is available to education. DfID, with its 0.7% record, is in a strong position to tell the rest of the world that there are better ways we can fund education in future.

Q110 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. I know I speak on behalf of all of us in saying that we are immensely grateful to you for coming before us, and your passion and dedication on development in general, and education in particular, has shone through. All of us, on a cross-party basis, share many of the views you have expressed about the central importance of investment in education to overcoming global poverty and inequality.

Gordon Brown: I want to thank you for having me today but also for taking an interest in this subject. Your very examination of it will increase the chances that people will take the issue more seriously, and some of the funding problems we have identified may be better addressed. I think your Committee deserves the congratulations of the House of Commons, but also of people in the country, for taking up this issue.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed.