HOUSE OF COMMONS

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind, HC 639

Tuesday 21 February 2017

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Fiona Bruce; Dr Lisa Cameron; Stephen Doughty; Mr Nigel Evans; Pauline Latham; Wendy Morton; Paul Scully; and Mr Virendra Sharma.

Questions 185 - 253

Witnesses

I: Julia McGeown, Inclusive Education Technical Advisor, Handicap International UK; Lucy Lake, Chief Executive Officer, Camfed; Professor Pauline Rose, Director, Research for Equitable Access and Learning Centre, University of Cambridge.

II: Dr Joanna Härmä, Visiting Research Fellow, Centre for International Education, University of Sussex; Professor Pauline Dixon, Professor of International Development and Education, University of Newcastle.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Julia McGeown, Lucy Lake and Professor Pauline Rose.

Q185 **Chair:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to this public oral evidence session as part of our inquiry into education and DFID's work on education: leaving no one behind. We have two expert panels this morning. I am delighted to welcome our first panel of three witnesses, with whom we have an hour. We have 10 questions that we are seeking to cover in that hour. Our usual practice is that we go straight into the questions, but please, when you first answer a question, do introduce yourself. My first question is an open one, which each of you should answer. Some questions will be directed at you individually, and I am quite a stickler for keeping to time, so I might on occasion ask you to finish so that we can move on to the next question.

Let me kick off. Sustainable development goal 4, as we all know, commits countries to "ensure inclusive and quality education for all", yet we know there are 250 million children still out of school. Why are these children still being left behind?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** I am Pauline Rose, professor of international education at the University of Cambridge, where I direct the Research for Equitable Access and Learning Centre. I am also a senior research fellow at DFID, which is an independent role advising on their research.

In terms of the sustainable development goals and why we are still being left behind, a key issue driving that is poverty. It underlies the reasons why children are out of school and the solutions we need to find. We really need to focus on poverty and then how poverty interests with other forms of disadvantage, including importantly gender and disability. Another of the key things to bear in mind is that, while the sustainable development goals have become far more broad and ambitious, we still have unfinished business in terms of the millennium development goals.

We need to really focus on access and learning for those early years, for the children who are still not able to read and write. Only around one in five children among the poorest girls are completing primary school. Around 5% of the poorest girls are completing secondary, and 1% are getting into higher education. Unless we tackle that problem at the basic level, in terms of both access and learning, we are never going to address the needs of those being left behind.

Chair: What is your definition there for 1% of the poorest?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** Accessing higher education.

Chair: How are you defining the poorest? Is that globally?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** In particular in the poorest countries in the world.

***Julia McGeown*:** Hello. My name is Julia McGeown. I work for Handicap International UK, but I am representing Bond Disability and Development Group on this panel. My focus is on disability, and I wanted to start by mentioning the huge number of children with disability who are out of school. This is a figure that gets changed around with different research. The recent report from the Education Commission said that half of the 65 million primary and lower secondary school age children with disabilities are out of school in developing countries. That is the most recent figure that I could find.

The point is, as Pauline was saying, that they have always been the ones left behind. In the millennium development goals, they were not mentioned, so moving through to the sustainable development goals it is excellent that we now have inclusive education and a focus on disability in these new goals.

As to the reason they have been left behind, we might want to put it into three main categories, the first being political system-wide barriers, so issues to do with the separate ministries—for example the ministry for education and the ministry for social welfare. They will deal with children differently if they have disability. They will be cared for by the ministry for social welfare, as opposed to educated by the ministry for education. That is one example. There is a lack of quality legislation, action plans and all of those kinds of things. There are separate, standalone policies for children with disabilities; these kinds of segregated policies mean there is very little budget allocated in that instance. That is one main area.

Another main area would be school-level barriers, which are probably what most people would think of. Classic things would be accessibility issues around ramps, around the classrooms and all those physical barriers, but also the transport, the safe passage, to and from school. We are not just talking about the school itself. Then there are also the issues around the curriculum. It is not just to do with the physical; it is to do with how the teaching is carried out. Are the teachers trained to adjust and differentiate their teaching style according to different children with different disabilities? That is a huge area.

The third one would be the attitudinal barriers, which is a major area that we cannot cover completely now. The main area is stigma in the community and the negative beliefs associated with disabilities, before the child can even get to the school. If all the other things were in place, they still might not get to school because of those things in the community. Those are the three main areas.

Chair: We will return to each of those areas in questions. Thank you so much.

***Lucy Lake*:** I am Lucy Lake, CEO of Camfed International. I will be very brief, because I completely agree with what Pauline said about poverty, in all its manifestations, being the underlying and driving factor. We at

Camfed, since the early 1990s, have set out to prove that, if you take poverty out of the equation, marginalised girls are in school alongside boys. We have proven that time and again. We always say that it is not the poverty of culture that is the issue; it is the culture of poverty that underpins the various reasons why, in particular, girls and children affected with disability are outside the school system. Poverty is the underlying issue we see.

For girls, as they go through the system, the wraparound costs associated with them being in school increase, due to the need for safety and the need for decent clothing as they reach adolescence. The cost-driver issue comes more into play for girls, particularly at the higher levels.

Q186 **Dr Lisa Cameron:** You mentioned particularly, Julia, stigma and societal norms. I wonder if we can find out from the panel a bit more about that. They present considerable barriers to education, particularly for girls and, as mentioned, children with disabilities. How can DFID work with communities to address that, and are there any examples of best practice that DFID could learn from or scale up?

***Julia McGeown*:** Absolutely. We mentioned that it can compound the exclusion felt, so obviously it is something that we need to tackle. There are lots of examples of good practice out there. Various different organisations run programmes in different countries, working very much at community level. I know that we, and I am sure many other members of the Bond coalition, have lots of different practices at the community level such as awareness-raising with teachers, parents and peer groups.

I will give you an example of something that we did in Sierra Leone as part of the Girls' Education Challenge. We were working very much at community level, with community-based rehabilitation volunteers, who train people to be the bridge between school, parent and community. They build trust with parents. For example, a child might not be in school and the parent might not understand the need for the child to go to school: "What is the point? They will not learn anything. Why would we bother?" There are those kinds of issues, in addition to the associated stigma.

Rather than going out there and doing one broad-brush campaign day, which can be helpful in itself, it is sometimes important to build up trust with people, and to do more one-to-one building up of trust rather than just those big campaigns. The CBR volunteers can be that interlink between the home and the school, and can build up trust, explain to the parents the need and then help to encourage the child to be enrolled in school. That is a big one to focus on. There has also been some research to say that that is quite effective. VSO Kenya did it, and there are reports that have said it is effective, as well as anecdotal evidence in our programmes.

Q187 **Dr Lisa Cameron:** You mentioned infrastructure barriers, etc. We tend

to think about children with disabilities in terms of physical disability. What about learning disability?

***Julia McGeown*:** Just to follow on from that, I was looking at some research, and we also find this in our projects. There was a study in Burkina Faso; 40% of children with physical disabilities were in school and only 10% of non-verbal children, as they were labelled. Children with communication impairment, intellectual disabilities and those kinds of disabilities—so learning disabilities—are often the ones who are most likely to be out of school, whereas we might assume it is the children with physical disabilities. That might be whom we think of when we are thinking of children with disability, but we often find it is not. It is communication, hearing impairment and intellectual impairment as well. That is an issue.

Q188 **Pauline Latham:** This is to Professor Rose. In your evidence, you state that learning inequalities start in the early years. How important is the provision of early years education to reducing those inequalities later on?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** There are two things. One is about the education before children start formal school, so the early childhood development programmes. The evidence is quite clear that that makes a huge difference to their readiness to learn once they are in school and has greater benefits once they go through the system, particularly for the most marginalised. The most marginalised can benefit the most from those early childhood programmes, although as we know they are least likely to get access to them.

In addition, at the moment those early childhood development programmes are quite restricted in terms of who gets access. What are really important are those early years within the primary school that the vast majority of children in most countries are getting access to now, at least one, two or three years, but if they are not learning in those first three years they are either going to drop out or they are going to be sitting in classrooms without being able to progress in their learning. One of the big issues is the pace of the curriculum being set at the pace of the most advantaged learners within the class, leaving those who do not have the very basic literacy and numeracy skills behind; they are never able to catch up.

Then we find that, by the end of primary, only around one in 10 of the poorest children are learning the basics, while the richest have had far greater opportunities to be learning. If you do not tackle those problems in the early grades, make sure that they have the best teachers, the most qualified teachers and teachers who have been given training in how to teach basic literacy and numeracy, which is a skill—it is often thought that that is the easiest thing to do, when it is not; it is probably one of the most difficult things to do—then those children will continue to be left behind.

Also, picking up on what Julia said, they need to be trained in terms of the diversity within the classroom and how to deal with inclusion when they have an ever-increasing, diverse population within their classes. They have first-generation learners, whose parents have not been to school and do not have literacy and numeracy. They have children with disabilities, who are now increasingly getting into school. It is quite interesting to see the shift in a country like Pakistan, where enrolment has been very low. Based on a study that we are doing, children with disabilities are increasingly getting into schools. On that issue of stigma, the barrier is sometimes being overcome, but once they are getting into the classroom they are not getting the support that they need.

Q189 **Pauline Latham:** In terms of DFID's allocation of resources, what do you think the balance should be between pre-primary and early primary?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** My view is that, as it is both where DFID has the comparative advantage and where the majority of children will have access to some form of education, the majority should still go to the early years. There is a question as to how best to expand access to quality early childhood, and DFID, along with other donors, is giving a very small amount at the moment. There is certainly an opportunity to give more, but I would say that should come from the higher education budget and not from the early years. It should not be a trade-off between those. At the moment, there are amounts that not just DFID but other donors are giving to higher education that, as I mentioned earlier, the poorest and most marginalised are not getting access to. That is where we should be looking at the rebalance.

Q190 **Pauline Latham:** Maybe you all would like to comment on whether DFID has the balance right, because at the moment it is allocating about 45% to basic education, 20% to secondary and about 6% to tertiary. You suggest taking more from tertiary, but there is not a lot going into that anyway. Is there a case for DFID to extend its support to adolescents and young people who have already dropped out of the formal system?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** I absolutely agree, and I certainly do not think that DFID should squeeze what it spends on secondary, inasmuch as what it is spending is focused on the transition and targeting the marginalised. Primary is more about the system-wide approach. Secondary is about a targeted approach to the most marginalised. Also, I would agree with you in relation to then focusing on those adolescents. We calculated that there are about 200 million young people aged 15 to 24 who have not completed primary school. They need the basic skills, alongside vocational skills, to allow them to get jobs that help them to get a living wage. At the secondary level age group, those are the ones I would suggest focusing on.

***Julia McGeown*:** Can I pick up one small point from the early years? I just wanted to add that there is also the issue linking to disability, in that if you focus on early years education, particularly in the first few years of life, you are more likely to reduce the potential effect of developmental

delays on children, so there is that other link to bring in. This is why I would also, moving to the next question, agree that the amount spent on pre-primary should be increased. I would not necessarily then say rob Peter to pay Paul, but I just think that that particular group should have more of an allocation of the fund.

In terms of the different allocation of resources, although DFID itself might be relatively low on the tertiary, it is worth mentioning that if you look at domestic education spending at country level it is far greater the other way around. Something I looked at said that in Malawi and Eritrea government spending on a tertiary student is over 100 times higher than what is spent on a primary school student, for example. Perhaps DFID could also use its influence to try to encourage a shift in spending at country level. That is just another point I wanted to highlight.

***Lucy Lake*:** I would absolutely reinforce Pauline and Julia's points. There is an opportunity to close the loop here, in recognising that today's adolescent girls are tomorrow's mothers. We have to recognise that there is a loop to be closed here. They will be responsible for the care, education, nutrition and health of the new generation coming through. If we invest today in education for adolescent girls, then we will be solving issues in the short to medium term for the new generation, including the fact that, of course, adolescent girls who have that level of education will have far fewer children. The loop is not explicitly closed enough to be able to see the opportunity for wider impact there.

To your point on the issue of children who have dropped out and what additional opportunities need to be made available, there is an opportunity not to look at that as a separate track but to recognise that there are many children within the school system—to answer Pauline's point—who are not learning effectively. It is one thing for a child to get into the school system; it is quite another thing to bridge the distance between them going to school and actually engaging and learning. Some of the solutions could be much more blended to deal with the lack of learning within the system, as well as the opportunity to fast-track and enable others to catch up.

Q191 **Pauline Latham:** If girls have dropped out of school—and we all know there are lots of reasons why they do—should we not be looking at an all-round system that encourages them to go and provide the things that are the barriers to them going? For instance, they have to go and collect the water for the family; why do we not put water at the school so they can take it on their way home safely, because they are going the normal route and not off the track? Is there not an argument that you should be doing it all-round and not just saying, "We do education, so we will pay for education, but we ignore all the other things"? You cannot do that.

***Lucy Lake*:** Absolutely. I completely agree with you there. To pick up on Pauline's earlier point, the targeted approaches need to be intentionally cross-sectoral approaches, recognising that the barriers to girls' education and to children with disability go beyond the school gate. There

is a real need to promote that cross-sectoral approach to tackle barriers to girls' inclusion.

Q192 **Wendy Morton:** Just very briefly, my question really is for Lucy. We hear a lot in Africa about the high levels of youth unemployment. Given that we are talking about getting the balance right on education—I appreciate our focus has mainly been on girls, but we should not forget boys as well—how do you see the level of spend on tertiary education having any impact on this young unemployment issue?

***Lucy Lake*:** The vast majority of young people are going to be leaving school into, as you say, a complete dearth of employment, so self-employment and entrepreneurship will be the most relevant track for many of them. There is a real need to ensure that school systems are better positioned to ensure that young people are acquiring the relevant skills to enable them to make that progression.

There is a lot that we could be doing to look at what currency young people need in their back pocket to be able to make that transition, and to look at literacy and numeracy, but also to be open to what the broader skills are. That is where there is an opportunity, again, in looking at a cross-sectoral approach, to see how private sector providers and others can interplay with the school system to incubate the kind of innovation that enables young people to explore pathways in progressing on from school.

Q193 **Fiona Bruce:** You have touched on my first question quite a lot already: assuming that you would say that DFID is not allocating enough resources to securing education for the most marginalised children, should it be targeting more funding in specific ways, such as to children with disabilities? Perhaps Julia would like to start on that one.

***Julia McGeown*:** Yes. I am glad you asked this question, because as a disability organisation we are sometimes worried that there is a focus on girls and other aspects, which are important. Yes, we can work with girls and disability, but what about the boys? For example, within the recent GEC second round, there is a focus, absolutely importantly, on the adolescent girls, but then again primary age boys, and primary age girls in fact, are not part of that.

While it is important to have these education challenges so you have a specific focus, it is important to have a push on disability specifically, because it has been left out in the past and disabled children are the largest group of out-of-school children. The proportion of children with disabilities is the largest. Disability is the biggest reason why children are out of school. It is about one-third of out of school children.

Q194 **Fiona Bruce:** Are there other marginalised groups?

***Lucy Lake*:** DFID has the opportunity to be a lot bolder on this, because the issue of marginalisation is as yet a relatively underdeveloped area, in terms of exploring that and what the various barriers are. The best of

programmes do not take one dimension of marginalisation. They take a multidimensional approach to marginalisation. In research that we have been collaborating together on, for example under Camfed's programme, it is very much being able to disaggregate marginalisation by gender, by disability, and to look at what interventions can be effective.

It requires a much more nuanced approach, if we are to achieve the level of system change for the most marginalised children. DFID is in a very strong position to drive that, not to have a one-issue agenda, but to look at marginalisation and take a nuanced approach to tackling the various dimensions to it.

Q195 **Fiona Bruce:** I wonder whether any of you on the panel have any specific examples in certain countries of where this nuanced approach could really make a difference.

***Lucy Lake*:** I would say that the Camfed programme is that. The lens that we are known for is girls, but we are looking at the most marginalised children and ensuring that there is a level of disaggregation in the data and the approach, so that the most marginalised girls, who are often affected by disability, are in the spotlight. We always say that the experience of the most marginalised girl in the system is an important barometer for that system, and that she will be the first to fail in a system that fails her. If we can improve that system to the extent that she can succeed, then we are improving it for all. It is that approach that is working.

***Julia McGeown*:** Can I just add something on that? Going on to the disaggregation, as well as having our own standalone programmes, where we are making sure we disaggregate for all the different marginalisations, it is important to ensure that at the state level the education management information system, EMIS, is disaggregated for disability, in addition to the other factors. Going on to having that as a national thing, something that is happening at country level rather than in our own programmes, is really important. That can help with the nuanced approach that you are talking about.

Q196 **Fiona Bruce:** Can I ask you about the Independent Commission for Aid Impact? Are you aware of its report that awarded DFID an amber/red rating for its approach to marginalised girls' education? That included the Girls' Education Challenge. We are interested to have your views on the Girls' Education Challenge, which has, to be fair, received mixed reports. Certain programmes have been cited as best practice in evidence to our inquiry. Could I have your views overall as to whether you think this has been a success or whether there are concerns that ought to be addressed?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** I have been an external person on the steering committee of the Girls' Education Challenge since its inception, so I have seen it through the different stages. One thing I felt, in relation to some of the things that were said in the ICAI report, was that

marginalisation was central at the outset of the design of the programme, which has been a bit lost in translation.

We know that that is more difficult to do in reality. One needs to take risks. That can sometimes be in tension with payment by results, which the first round of GEC was established with. Whenever I go round to different events across different countries, people know about the Girls' Education Challenge; they know about programmes that are going on on the ground; they will know about some of the successes and they will know about some of the challenges, but unless we take risks with these groups of children we are not going to be successful. If we try to do something that is business as usual or that one can implement relatively easily, then we are probably not reaching the most marginalised.

There are a lot of things that the GEC has achieved. There are a lot of things that it has learned that the design of the GEC 2 has taken into account. On the whole, there are a lot of positive lessons that one can learn.

One really important thing from my point of view is how strong an evidence base they have had throughout. One of the things early on was that the projects were all expected to collect baseline data. For some organisations involved in it, that was okay. Others have never done this. They did not know how to go about collecting it. It took quite a lot of time to get set up because of this, and yet a lot of them then turned round and said, "This was really useful, because we realised that we were not focusing on this group of children or we were not focusing on this particular problem, like violence against girls, but this has come out really strongly in the baseline".

Q197 **Fiona Bruce:** I am really interested in your phrase "unless we take risks", because sometimes one can be concerned that DFID is a little too risk-averse, bearing in mind the public spotlight on it. What did you mean by that? Could you put some flesh on the bones, some examples?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** It is about doing some things that are more innovative, doing the things that we are talking about that have not been tried before, taking cross-sectoral approaches, which are quite challenging to do. We need to bring people together who might not otherwise, within those countries, settings or communities, be used to working together, and to try to do things differently. Disability is one area where there has been very little experience of how to reach children with disabilities, both in terms of getting them access, but also importantly in terms of what is happening with them once they are getting within the school setting.

We need to try different things and different approaches, to make sure that we are doing the right thing. We do not want to do things that are dangerous or unethical. In terms of taking risks, I do not mean that, but doing things differently.

Q198 **Chair:** Do you think ICAI's rating on this was fair?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** It was harsh, given the content of the report and given the work that I know DFID is doing on girls' education.

Q199 **Mr Nigel Evans:** Pauline, just give us an example of what sort of risk you would like to see being taken. I accept what you said earlier about nothing dangerous. If it was up to you, what would you do, if you were in charge?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** Say I was in charge of leading a girls' education programme in a conflict-affected setting, for example, where the majority of girls from poor backgrounds had not had any access to school. It is a very good question. It is going to be very context-specific, but there are things about going beyond the ramps in school for children with disabilities. It is about how you support those children with intellectual disabilities, how you provide support to teachers differently to the way that teachers have been provided support. How do you use technology in a way that supports the classroom, not in a way that replaces the classroom? It is not as specific as I am sure you are looking for.

Q200 **Chair:** I am conscious we have had half an hour and we have done four questions. We have another half an hour to do six and everyone wants to talk. I am going to go to the next question.

Q201 **Stephen Doughty:** Given what you have all said, do you think that DFID needs to produce a new overall education strategy to set out how it is going to meet its priorities on global education? Specifically, given what you have been saying about the needs of marginalised groups, do you think there should be specific targets on marginalised groups set from the beginning? To what you have just said, Pauline, how do you then ensure that they are not lost in translation as programmes go forward?

***Lucy Lake*:** I will pick up on that. DFID's current education strategy stands strong and has been quite formative around the SDG agenda. There is an opportunity to recalibrate and take the learning from some of the major investments and challenges that DFID has taken on—the Girls' Education Challenge being one—because there is an extraordinary opportunity to position the evidence that is being reaped from that programme at scale, in order to inform onward direction, to look at the kind of outcomes that we are driving for now and to bring behind that the value-for-money agenda. The principles are sound, but there is an opportunity for recalibration based on recent evidence.

***Julia McGeown*:** I just want to add to the last question—it links into this question on the education strategy—because it is really interesting to see GEC 2. Pauline touched on it. The differences in how that was brought about, with more focus on really hard-to-reach groups, for example, and on sustainability, so linked to national Governments as opposed to standalone programmes, show that that kind of thing can really work in a

round two. That is not to say that we should not be doing more of that. It should be part of the new strategy.

In terms of an overall education strategy, it has been a while and it is important, like Lucy was saying, to recalibrate and get more of a focus on these areas that may have been missed off before. A big part of that needs to be working much more with the national Governments and looking at what they are doing in their own education sector planning, their own policies and their own implementation. That link needs to be part of this education strategy. What does DFID recommend? It is a hugely influential donor on education and on disability. For us, that is a winning combination, so it is important to be able to draw that into a strategy.

Q202 **Stephen Doughty:** Given what you have said, how do you ensure that we do not lose focus?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** The 2013 education strategy has a lot in there. Spending a lot of time doing a new one may not be the best way that education advisers can spend their time, but I would certainly agree with Julia and Lucy about updating, strengthening and, importantly, giving a strong focus on leaving no one behind. There is a bit of a danger that it is trying to do too many different things. Through giving that strong focus, we can then have clear, monitorable targets for DFID, just as we expect for countries. We are increasingly expecting countries to have disaggregated targets that tell us how many of the poorest girls with disabilities they are reaching in terms of access and learning. Those targets should also apply to DFID, which in a sense they do, but maybe at a more average level rather than at that disaggregated level.

Q203 **Paul Scully:** Do you think DFID could be doing more to support national education systems, and maybe to ensure that they are inclusive and more likely to reach the most marginalised children?

***Julia McGeown*:** I already touched on that a bit, but I absolutely do. The single most important thing we could do in terms of inclusive education is to get that within the education sector plan. That is very important, and that is part of the national education system. For DFID to be part of that and to be part of the LEG—local education group—discussing what is going to be in the education sector plan is crucial, because that then sets out the budgets. Whatever we are doing in our projects or in our focus, if that is not in there, then it is not going to be carried out after the time that the project has finished or the funding has finished, so that is absolutely crucial.

It is also about helping Governments to work out how they can make strategic use of their own resources. It might not always be a case of more money; it might be more to do with better collaboration between ministries and better collaboration between sectors. We mentioned this before. There is a lot of systematic reform that you can look at, without it

needing always to be about more money, although that is always important.

It is also about effective management of the supply side factors. As we said before, there are a lot factors in education. It is not just about the teachers; there is all the support-side staff. You might need learning assistants, social workers or rehabilitation workers for children with disability. There is a much wider workforce involved, and managing all of that is something that DFID could help countries with. It is a whole big system.

***Lucy Lake*:** DFID has an important convening role to play in that respect, being a significant donor to education systems and being a part of the Global Partnership for Education, to ensure that for any programme that DFID is invested in, whether it is through multilateral, bilateral or civil society, the linkages to the education sector plan and to the national school system are very clear.

Q204 **Paul Scully:** Lisa, Camfed is seen as a good example of how to engage with marginalised children. I wonder if you have any particular examples of how your organisation has done that, through national Governments and through the work with national Governments.

***Lucy Lake*:** We do not deliver through our organisation; we deliver through the local government infrastructure, in order to build its capacity to reach out and deal with the issues facing marginalised children. It is a very intentional, integrated approach that draws together local authorities and authorities at every level in that regard. There are some strong examples of DFID-funded programmes that reach those who are most marginalised, but which are embedded in the school systems. There is an opportunity to bring some of those reference points to the forefront, as a replicable model for ways of engagement in other countries.

Q205 **Fiona Bruce:** I want to ask about value for money. The recent ICAI report on marginalised girls raised concerns about the "risk that the value-for-money approach creates disincentives to focus on marginalised groups". DFID has yet to adapt its education value-for-money framework to reflect the "leave no one behind" principle. I would like to ask how you feel DFID could adapt its VFM approach, when targeting the hardest to reach. How could it balance these two requirements?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** As we know, value for money does not mean that you are only looking at the averages, but the way it is calculated, partly because of the data types that are available, often looks at the average unit costs. In fact, this is something that we are working very closely with Camfed on, to try to identify an approach to calculating value for money, through the data that we have from the Girls' Education Challenge programme that Camfed collects; that is a strong equity approach. We do not have the results yet, unfortunately, but we are both going to have the findings from that to say what is it about Camfed's programme that is value for money from an equity perspective, but also

hopefully to provide a methodology that will be helpful for others who are also undertaking these programmes.

One thing we are finding is that it inevitably requires a lot of cost data and a lot of organisation of that data. It is not an easy thing to do, so we should not underestimate the type of work that is involved in doing it. Plucking a unit cost out of the air and using that for value for money could be dangerous, for the reasons that you indicate, so it is important to do it properly.

***Lucy Lake*:** There is a received wisdom that it is more expensive to reach the most marginalised, and there is an opportunity to look at some very cost-effective, decentralised and community-led approaches to reach the most marginalised, which can scale. Within the Girls' Education Challenge, there should be some important reference points emerging for the ways to reach the most marginalised in cost-effective ways. To Pauline's point, bringing through the analysis to be able to provide those benchmarks is going to be critical.

Q206 **Fiona Bruce:** Clearly, you are working on this. I wonder whether you could write to us with some conclusions, but when would that be? Obviously, we are in the middle of an inquiry.

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** We are going to get some very initial results out in the next couple of weeks or so, but we will need to look at the data to know how useful it is. We can certainly send you whatever we can.

Chair: If you can share as much as you can, as early as you can, that would be really helpful for our inquiry.

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** We can also explain the approach that we are using. We can definitely do that.

Fiona Bruce: Thank you so much.

Q207 **Chair:** On multilaterals, the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education are both crucial in this field. Do you think they are sufficiently focused on reaching the most marginalised and, if not, what can DFID do to leverage that?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** As I am sure you know, DFID has a secondment within the Global Partnership for Education, which has a specific brief on equity. That is great and important. That can sometimes, as we know from both disability and gender programmes, mean that you have something that is running along parallel to other work. We have to be careful that that is mainstreamed and part of their everyday work. One of the big challenges with the Global Partnership for Education is that it can try to do everything to please all its board members, rather than focusing on what should really be its core objective, about the most marginalised and how to reach them, in light of the things that we are discussing here.

Similarly, DFID puts a reasonable amount of its funds through the World Bank. That gives it leverage to say what the World Bank should be spending that money on, and there is an opportunity for DFID to perhaps have more of a voice in that, given that, while the World Bank will sometimes debate the data when we present it with our analysis, it appears that at the moment its funds are not necessarily going to the low-income countries; they are going to some of the middle-income countries, which do not necessarily face the same challenges.

Q208 **Chair:** Right. There are two issues, then: which countries the money goes to, and then, within the low-income countries, how we make sure the money reaches the most marginalised. As a follow-on question from that, do you think DFID has the balance right in terms of its education funding between bilateral funding, multilateral funding and, indeed, funding through civil society?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** I do not have the figures to hand, but, in recent times, there has been a shift from the bilaterals to civil society, perhaps at the expense of the bilateral programmes that can help to strengthen the systems. It is not to say DFID should not work with civil society, provided civil society organisations are working within national systems, but sometimes they are not, so it is about making sure there is that link. In terms of the multilaterals, what DFID is giving is probably about right. I would not necessarily suggest it should provide more than it is already giving through those routes. Its influence at the bilateral level is important, in particular if it is focusing on the sorts of issues that we are discussing today.

Q209 **Chair:** In particular, following up your point about the shift, part of that is bound up with the shift away from budget support and education sector support. Are you saying that DFID should look again at that?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** We know that there are risks with budget support and there are reasons why one needs to be careful, but there was a lot of evidence from the 1990s and 2000s about sector support having a very positive influence on the strengthening of education systems—the ownership of Governments themselves to deliver and, therefore, the long-term impact. There has been a bit of a danger that it has shifted too much to the other extreme, so it is about getting that balance right and working within and strengthening systems.

It is not to say that DFID is not doing that. For example, in Uganda I know that is an important part of its work, in terms of working with the Government on strengthening the early years in relation to learning in particular, so it is not to say that that is not happening, but getting the balance right is important.

Q210 **Chair:** Are there other countries you would cite as success stories of such an approach? You mentioned Uganda.

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** Ethiopia is another one. Ethiopia is interesting, because, when there was a problem some years back, it was able to

adapt the system flexibly without fully pulling out of a sector-wide approach. Support went to a more regional level which, given the form of decentralisation there is in Ethiopia was a worthwhile thing to do in any case. There are examples of that kind where it has helped to continue strengthening the systems, but there are other countries where it has moved away from that, Pakistan being an example.

***Julia McGeown*:** I have only one small point, because you have covered most of the issues. In terms of GPE, as a civil society representative I would say that we are doing a lot to lobby GPE to be more inclusive, especially in terms of children with disabilities. I feel like there has been a sea change recently. For a start, it has an aim in its 2020 strategic plan to increase equity and gender equality, and inclusion is one of its goals.

Within that, disability is becoming more of an issue, but I feel like DFID could use its influence as a global leader on disability to push that a bit more, because this is a ripe time at the moment. Particularly on GPE, I feel like there are some changes and suggestions that it may take on board, with perhaps a facility of some kind for the GPE secretariat and a focus on inclusive education, particularly for children with disabilities and other marginalised groups. That is being spoken about. It is not anything specific, but I feel that it is a good time for DFID to use its influence in that sense.

***Lucy Lake*:** I would support Pauline's views.

Q211 **Pauline Latham:** This is to all of you. To what extent should DFID be supporting teacher training, including training in disability and gender sensitive methods? Why do you think it is important? Is it just to improve learning outcomes and encourage retention? What difference would it make?

***Lucy Lake*:** It is a very important issue, Pauline. Coming back to the earlier point we picked up on, there are many children who are in the system but who, in effect, feel excluded from the classroom, even when they are in it. There is an opportunity to provide more teacher training that picks up on these wider issues. The level of stress that children have on their shoulders by virtue of their family or household situation means that there are many psychological barriers to engaging in the classroom. There is an opportunity to look at and bring in new low-cost and quick-win teaching approaches, to address that engagement in the classroom. In the context of the SDGs and with 14 years to go, we need to look for some of the quick wins to improve engagement and learning in the classrooms. There are alternative models we can be looking at to improve and push up capacity and quality in teaching.

Q212 **Pauline Latham:** You say quick wins, but many of the schools are rural schools. How do you get quick wins when you have four hours' drive or more to get to some rural schools, which have teachers who are doing their best but have never been trained themselves?

***Lucy Lake*:** We have a great example that has come through under the Girls' Education Challenge; girls who are reaching the end of secondary education and are among the first to do so in their communities can step up, with minimal training, to become learner guides, working alongside qualified teachers within the classroom. They can provide that bridge between home and school; they will be speaking the mother tongue of the students there; they can enhance and deliver alternative and complementary curricula that help to deal with stress and other issues that are preventing young people's participation in the classroom. As a result, we have seen an extraordinary push-up in children's learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy, as well as the broader academic self-esteem and other outcomes. There are ways to deal with the under-resourcing in rural schools through mechanisms like that, which have the potential scale.

Q213 **Pauline Latham:** That is in very much the minority of cases. It is not going to be the majority of cases in rural schools, and it is also very difficult to get teachers to go and teach in rural schools. How do you get any quick wins? I do not see where you think they are going to come from.

***Lucy Lake*:** We are talking about cohorts of girls who are coming through the school system, who represent the human capital that can be drawn upon in delivering that kind of opportunity in the rural school system. There is a massive opportunity for scale there. They also then represent the pipeline for the future teaching profession, because that, positioned well within ministries, can provide a stepping stone into formal teacher training. They provide the onward pipeline of trained teachers who will be prepared to go into those rural areas, because that is where they come from. That will break the cycle, whereby you have urban teachers who see placement in rural areas as a punishment assignment and are less likely to stay. I can provide some further examples of that at scale, in follow-up evidence, if that is helpful.

***Julia McGeown*:** Can I just add something small? It is more about the larger-scale nature of teacher training. In the same way that DFID a few years ago introduced a ground-breaking policy on accessible schools—that all DFID-funded schools would be accessible—there should be a policy stating that all pre and in-service teacher training supported by DFID should contain inclusive education or inclusive teaching methodology, so that it is within the ordinary teacher training that it is already funding, rather than being something separate. Going back to the point about whether and why it is important to educate children with disabilities, we absolutely believe it is important and should be incorporated within what is already being done in existing teacher training, so it is not separate. There are also better learning outcomes for children, not just those with disabilities but those without, if you do the inclusive education training.

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** We need to have more fundamental reform of teacher education in many countries. There is a bit of a danger that one adds that on to what is a failing system in many countries, which is very academic, can be long and expensive and is not giving them the classroom-based experience that we know in other countries has worked. DFID could play a key role in helping to support more fundamental reform, including the training for inclusive education and diversity, and training for where you have a classroom of 100 children who are first-generation learners, etc., which is totally different to the training they are getting at the moment.

It is about knowing the teachers themselves, their initial knowledge and skills, and starting at the starting point of the teachers. We are too often blaming teachers for the problems of the education system, but they are not getting the right start in their career to do what they need to do.

Q214 **Wendy Morton:** I wanted to ask about low-fee private schools. We know from some of our own visits that these types of schools are a reality in countries where the government system is failing. My first question is whether you feel DFID is right to be supporting low-fee private schools in certain circumstances. If so, why? If not, why not?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** First of all, it is important to acknowledge that low-fee private schools are a reality. They are reaching populations that at the moment the Government have not reached, but we also have to recognise that they are not reaching the most marginalised in many countries. For example, our analysis in Pakistan shows that around half of the richest 25% to 50% are going to private schools, but fewer than 10% of the poorest are going, so there are far more children who are out of school than are in private schools, and they are not going to get into those private schools because they cannot afford it. The only way you are going to get those children who are out of school into school is by strengthening the government system.

The other thing some of our work has shown is that, if you look at the performance of rich and poor children in private and government schools, poor children in private schools are less likely to be learning than rich children in government schools. This is not to say that government schools fail all children. We know that there are systematic failures and we need to do something radical about those government systems, but they are not failing all children. We need to look at what is working for those schools, what we can do, whether it is to do with resources, what it is that is making sure those rich children are getting an education in government schools and how we can replicate that.

In relation to your question about whether DFID should be supporting these schools, its resources would be far better placed in strengthening government systems where the vast majority of the most marginalised are. I suspect that many private schools systematically do not include children with disabilities, for example. There is screening that goes on, either formally or informally. If DFID is really going to focus on leaving no

one behind, the strengthening of the government system is where it should place its main focus.

Q215 **Wendy Morton:** In the absence of a complete government system, as it were, would you accept that DFID supporting the low-fee private schools, while perhaps not the ideal situation, provides an education for some?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** The low-fee private schools exist anyway. They are a reality and will continue to be a reality, and that is not a problem. The question is about where DFID should be putting its resources. I would say it should be putting its resources into rectifying the problems in the government system and why it is not operating where it is not operating. In the most marginalised communities, civil society organisations are more likely to be operating than the low-fee private schools, and are more likely to be providing the type of education that we want those children to get.

Q216 **Chair:** In civil society, would you include churches and other faith organisations?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** Yes.

Q217 **Wendy Morton:** Does anybody else want to cover the low-fee schools?

***Lucy Lake*:** It is not so much the low-fee schools; what has been of value is the way that DFID has supported exploring how the private sector can engage with government school systems. We have seen some interesting examples of how innovation can be incubated within government school systems and then scaled. It is probably more, from our perspective, about looking at the opportunities for that cross-sectoral collaboration, rather than looking at private school provision.

Q218 **Chair:** We have a few minutes; I am going to give you a minute each. If there was one recommendation that we could make in our report on DFID and education, what would it be?

***Professor Pauline Rose*:** Focus on the learning in the early years, to make sure all children, by having spent four years at school, are able to do the very basics in literacy and numeracy. That means getting children into school, supporting teachers, looking at the curriculum and how it is structured and addressing some of the problems outside of the school, such as poverty and, as we were talking about, access to water, etc.

***Julia McGeown*:** Something I have not mentioned but is very important is to have a broader look at what learning is and learning outcomes. Sometimes, especially for children with disabilities and learning disabilities, it can be detrimental to say that something does not look effective because they have not achieved their literacy and numeracy scores, when they have achieved a lot in terms of quality of life and other aspects of their improvement and learning. This is not always reflected. Having a wider view of that and how it is measured is an important aspect.

***Lucy Lake*:** Finally, there is a need for a continued focus on education for adolescent girls, because they are tomorrow's mothers. Unless we take the opportunity and the incredible returns on investment of education of adolescent girls now, we will not be able to break that perpetual vicious cycle. For the returns on that investment, we should be focusing on adolescent girls, and we should be reinforcing a cross-sectoral approach to do that.

Chair: Can I say a big thank you to all three of you? This has been a fantastic hour, and we have covered a lot of ground. Please feel free to stay to listen to the second panel. I invite Dr Härmä and Professor Dixon to take the stage. We had a question just now on the issue of low-fee private schools, and in the second panel we are going to focus specifically on that issue because, as Wendy said, this is one of the areas on which we have had a lot of evidence. Obviously there is some controversy about the focus on low-fee schools. There are different points of view and we are keen to hear t.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Joanna Härmä and Professor Pauline Dixon.

Q219 **Chair:** Welcome to Dr Härmä and to Professor Dixon. Thank you very much indeed. We have 45 minutes with you, and we are seeking to cover seven areas in that time. When you first answer a question, please introduce yourself.

Wendy Morton: My first question is about the low-fee private schools, and I will put my question to both of you, if I may. As we are aware, the world is facing a global learning crisis. What role do you feel the growing number of low-fee private schools can play in addressing this crisis?

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** Good morning. I am very happy to be back here again, after having been in the session on Nigeria last year. I am Joanna Härmä. I am an independent researcher specialising on this topic. I have been working on this for quite a while. Basically, the low-fee private schools are shouldering some of the burden of educating many children in certain areas where there has not been enough provision by the Government, specifically in places like Lagos and Kampala, which I have recently worked in. There is not really much evidence to suggest that they are a solution to fixing the global learning crisis, given the fact that there is not conclusive evidence as yet that they are doing very much better than other schools, when you control for the socioeconomic background of the household.

There is a lot of evidence that you can draw on from many different contexts, not just in Nigeria and India but looking at cases in the United States, for example. There is good evidence out there to suggest that

charter and voucher school programmes have not done well in raising the learning outcomes of the poorest, and private schools have not been any better in raising outcomes for the poorest. I would like to echo what the last panel said: poverty is the key driver of this issue. When you take out the most relatively advantaged in the private schools, they are able to do somewhat better, but we are talking relatively better, not good quality versus bad quality. We are talking about bad quality versus slightly less bad quality.

Q220 **Wendy Morton:** Just before I come to Professor Dixon, just to be clear, do you think then that the proliferation of these low-fee private schools is having a positive or a negative effect in developing countries, such as Nigeria?

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** There are two aspects to that question. If you took away the private schools now, you would have 60% to 70% of primary school children out of school. The classrooms in Lagos have 200 to 300 children in certain schools. Right now, they are serving a gap in certain places, but they are not having any positive effect. I do not believe the so-called competitive effect on government schools exists; I have never seen it.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** I am Professor Pauline Dixon from Newcastle University. On the question about good or bad and the learning crisis, I have a specific answer for the learning crisis. I have been carrying out research now in developing countries for about 20 years, doing randomised controlled trials, geospatial mapping and censuses in slum areas and shanty towns in seven sub-Saharan African countries—Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Liberia, Tanzania—India and China. Actually, not just the research of Tooley and Dixon but other research shows that facilities, teaching activity, student outcomes, school accountability and parental satisfaction are typically statistically significantly higher in low-cost private schools than government schools.

Therefore, low-cost private schools are contributing and contributing well to the crisis. Low-cost private schools are outperforming government schools, but also at a fraction of the teacher cost. It is not just the work of Tooley and Dixon, but if you want to look at teacher activity and absenteeism you could look at the work of the World Bank, Michael Kremer et al 2004-2005, Shiva Kumar et al 2009 and the PROBE revisited survey by De et al 2011. I can forward all these on to you at a later date. On facilities, Pratham have done quite a lot of work. On student attainment, in Pakistan, Andrabi et al 2010 and 2007 found that children in government schools would take about a year and a half to two and a half years to catch up with children in low-cost private schools. As for school accountability, these low-cost private schools are accountable to parents who are paying a fee, and we can talk a little more about accountability.

If you look at what UNESCO says in 2013 about the global learning crisis, it states that access is not enough. Therefore, it is no longer education

for all, but learning for all. It recommends transforming classrooms, improving teacher working conditions, revising school curricula, providing engaging learning materials, expanding learning outcomes and including global investment. When we talk about the role of DFID with low-cost private schools, that is something that DFID could support in specific ways.

Q221 **Chair:** Let me pursue this with each of you, because obviously you are taking different perspectives, which is really helpful for our inquiry, but let me start with Professor Dixon and pick up on the evidence you have just given us. What is the impact of the growth in some countries of low-fee private schools on the government system of education as a whole? Does that pose any challenges or difficulties from your point of view?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** There is very little rigorous evidence around the impact. Some research papers would say there has been a ghettoisation or a cream-skimming, so children left in government schools are now in ghettos. Unfortunately, looking at the rigorous, unbiased evidence, I feel that is a bit anecdotal and, I suggest, unsubstantiated. I therefore recommend the funding of unbiased, rigorous, large-scale research, to look at the effects of competition on government schools within a radius of low-cost private schools. There has been some work done by Muralidharan on school choice and vouchers in 180 rural villages, where he carried out a randomised control trial. He suggests that the positive effects of voucher winners did not come at the expense of other students left in the government system in those 180 rural villages.

In the US, more research has been done on the effects of charter schools and school choice programmes on traditional government schools. The most rigorous studies show that competition by charter schools boosts achievement and, at worst, has no effect on traditional government schools.

Q222 **Chair:** Can I interrupt on that, because Dr Härmä obviously referred to charter schools as well. Is the difference, though, that charter schools are free of charge, whereas we are talking about schools where families have to pay, in some of the poorest countries? Is that not quite an important distinction?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** It is, but we are talking about parents choosing to take children away from a state system into a different type of state school. These are the only people who have done rigorous research into the effects of children leaving one type of system and going to another. That would be the work of JP Greene 2006, and Wolf and Jacob 2012. There is also something very interesting called the Florida A-Plus plan that I can send you information about as well.

Q223 **Chair:** Instinctively, my sense is that, if you are the poorest, you will simply not be able to afford this, so what does your evidence show on

that?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** We have done some work in Makoko in Nigeria, as well as in India, with the low-cost private schools, and there is some philanthropy from within. The great thing about these schools is that they come from within the communities themselves: they burgeon from the community. The entrepreneurs who are running these schools are from the community; the teachers and parents are from the community, and they all know this. A lot of philanthropy goes on—about 10% to 20% from our research, Dixon and Tooley 2005—which shows that private school owners do try to target some of the poorest children. I agree with Pauline Rose, in that they are not targeting disabled children, but I have seen deaf children and blind children. There is this philanthropy, where the school owner will allow concessionary fees or lower fees for children from the very poorest families within their own communities.

Q224 **Chair:** What about a gender effect? If a family can afford to send one of their two children to this school, and one is a boy and one is a girl, do you have any evidence to suggest that they are more likely to choose the boy?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** No, most of our work finds that they are equal across genders.

Q225 **Chair:** I want to give Dr Härmä a chance to respond to any of those points.

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** It depends on the context. In the sub-Saharan African context that I have looked at, there is not much choosing between the girls and the boys. In India, definitely; of course, I have not worked in India for a little while, but I have in sub-Saharan Africa. In the very poorest parts of Makoko that Professor Dixon just mentioned, if you go out into the slums on the water, where the houses are on stilts, these are often people who have come illegally from Benin and there is absolutely zero access to any kind of schooling for them. These are the very poorest of Lagos state, and there is a definite gender skew there. Girls are definitely getting left behind in those communities. You asked so many questions.

Q226 **Chair:** The opening question I asked Professor Dixon was about the effect on the system, and the answer in the previous panel from Pauline Rose was on what DFID's focus should be. We will come on to some more detailed questions on that. Would is the impact, negative or positive, of the focus on low-fee schools on the wider system?

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** There is definitely ghettoisation going on. I have been in countless schools. I was privileged enough to be working with the education sector support programme in Nigeria, which predominantly focused on the government system. In all the places where the richer children have gone off to the private sector—I am thinking specifically of the three government schools in Makoko slum, in this instance—the

parents tell us specifically that, if they go and complain to the government school, they are told, "This is a government service; what can you expect from it?" I severely doubt that that would be happening if the whole community was using that school.

In rural India, I also found that the teachers do not have a respectful attitude towards the very poorest households, and I do not think that would be the case if the entire community and the richer farmers were going there. It has definitely had a negative effect, and the peer effects are extremely important. I call your attention to the case of Finland, which may seem like another world, but people of all groups go to the same schools together and you get the positive peer effects of the different socioeconomic levels all together. It is my experience in all these places that it is definitely not positive to be leaving all the poor together, and we are talking about people working all hours, who do not have time go to their school and complain to the teachers, because they are trying to make ends meet.

Q227 **Stephen Doughty:** I want to follow up on the point about philanthropy, Professor Dixon. Can you just be clear what categorical evidence there is on this? How many free places are being offered? How many marginalised groups are being supported? What percentage of low-fee-paying private schools are offering free places, and what percentage is that of their overall cohort intake?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** I do not have that information with me, so I will have to send you the papers, but we have done a lot of work on philanthropy.

Q228 **Stephen Doughty:** What about roughly? It seems to be highly likely to be personalised to individual schools and teachers, and the ethos in a particular location. What is the rough percentage? Have you any idea?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** The schools are spending about 10% to 20% of their expenditure on philanthropy.

Q229 **Stephen Doughty:** All schools?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** The low-cost private schools that we looked at in Makoko and Hyderabad. We have done a paper on it, so I can send you that.

Q230 **Stephen Doughty:** That would be very helpful. On a wider issue, do you both think that there is an issue here, thinking of what the Chair was saying, about the system overall? Is there potential here for a wider undermining of the expectations of citizens as regards public services more generally? Where you have a proliferation of fee-paying schools, is there an effect in terms of people's expectations of what they get for paying taxes and the impact on corruption and other such issues? If they are not expecting that schools will be provided by the state, but rather will be provided by philanthropic sources, is there a wider issue here about the functioning of a society and its public services?

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** Can I come quickly back on the philanthropy aspect? I have had parents laugh at me when I ask about this, and they say they will never offer philanthropy. In Uttar Pradesh, where I studied, and in Lagos, interestingly in such different places, they routinely offered a three for two, so you would get the third child within a household free, for just the tuition fee. Also, I have just finished a big survey with Gaurav Siddhu, interviewing 1,229 households in Lagos. Especially now, in the current context of recession there, people are just hanging on. They are really struggling just to pay the fee.

There are a few things I would like to come back on, to do with that just hanging on to the highest level that you can be at. A lot of private school proprietors let people in, and they let the fees slide a bit because they are really hoping that eventually they are going to be paid. A lot of households that I have interviewed have said, "No, they always expect to be paid the full amount". Some bargaining goes on, but if you talk to the households and you talk to the schools, you get very different pictures of this philanthropy issue.

Q231 **Chair:** When we were in Lagos last year, one of the arguments given in favour of the low-fee schools was that the state schools were really not free of charge either, because there are certain costs associated. Dr Härmä, from your experience in Lagos can you comment on that?

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** That is absolutely the case. I know you are going to east Africa soon. I do not know whether you are going to a public school in Kampala or outside of the city, but I had a really interesting experience in Kampala. I was doing the same kind of sample census, combing these neighbourhoods for little private schools, so I went round the side of a massive government school compound and found one or two private schools right next to each other. As we were coming out, I spotted this little thing going on in a shipping container, so we went and talked to them. I was expecting the same old answer when I asked the teachers why people were sending their children to this school right next to the government school. I was completely expecting the usual answer that you hear: "The government school is not working; it is not good; they cannot teach well".

This woman said "These children cannot afford the government school. They charge a fairly high fee." I would encourage you to ask in Uganda about it. I found quite a few charity schools in my searching for private schools in Kampala, so there is a huge spectrum, from the charity schools to the government school fees, to the low-fee private school fees, and then upwards to Bridge and whatever.

Q232 **Wendy Morton:** I wanted to touch on the issue of philanthropy as well, given that in the previous panel it was mentioned that civil society is picking up some of the education space as well. Putting the two together, when you talk about the philanthropy of providing free school places—I would be interested to see your report on that—is there a suggestion that civil society is helping with that as well?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** I think so. For example, we have done some research in fragile states such as Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Liberia, and we have done this geospatial mapping to look for schools. In fact, we probably would not have this if it had not been for our initial geospatial mapping through the John Templeton Foundation in 2003. That started there, and it was a former Secretary of State for International Development who said that everybody who worked for DFID had to read the research we had done in a book called *The Beautiful Tree* by James Tooley.

What was happening, as Joanna would concur, is that a lot of these schools were operating underneath the radar, so international aid agencies did not know they existed. For example, when we did our geospatial mapping a couple of years ago in Monrovia, Liberia, we found that, as you suggest, Wendy, there are not just low-cost private schools and government schools, but, as Dr Härmä suggests, there are religious schools, church schools, NGO schools and charity schools. It is now not necessarily a choice between government and low-cost private; lots of other providers have sprung up where governments cannot afford the gross domestic product percentage in order for government schools to cater for everyone. That is a great thing, because the majority of parents, not the marginalised or disabled, have a choice of lots of different school providers.

Q233 **Chair:** Is there a risk that that lets the government off the hook, in a country like Nigeria that should be able to afford this?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** If I were a parent in Nigeria, I would want the best for my children, whether I was letting the government off the hook or not.

Q234 **Chair:** Of course the parent would; we are not holding the parents of Nigeria to account. We are holding the British Government and how it chooses to allocate its money to account. It is anecdotal evidence admittedly, but when we were in Lagos we saw a very impressive state school, but the number of kids in each class was massive. My sense was that, if you could spend a bit of money to support Lagos education, it would be best spent improving that school, rather than giving money to low-cost private schools. That is an observation, rather than a question.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** In another question, I am sure we can talk more about what DFID's role should be in low-cost private schools anyway.

Chair: Thank you. We will come on to some of these questions.

Q235 **Mr Virendra Sharma:** I think back to India, because we both have experience of working there. There is a huge gap between the state schools and the private schools. Have you had any experience concerning social status, of parents asking their friends which school to go to, or any experience of initial contributions being asked for by schools, even charity schools and schools run by others, of a few thousand rupees or pounds,

before a child gets admission to the school? Have you had that experience?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** I have worked in India for the last 17 years, and some of my favourite places to work in were Hyderabad, Punjab and Delhi. Because the low-cost private schools are within the communities themselves, they are typically of the same caste or social standing. The school owners are typically the same. Local private schools charge monthly fees, but they also charge enrolment fees initially, so there is a whole array of different fees.

Q236 **Mr Virendra Sharma:** Is the initial enrolment fee a standard fee, in your experience, or is it according to the parents' status that demands are made?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** In the research I have done, it would be a standard fee.

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** It is generally roughly standard. Prachi Srivastava points out that there is fee bargaining, where you can try to change things a little bit, but I would like to point out that, during my doctoral research, I found that caste and minority religion—in this case, mostly Muslim—was not statistically significant in your chances of attending a private school. It was just about the cost. I do not think that any private school would turn someone down, at least in this area, because of caste. I know that there are parts of India where the caste is so extreme that low-caste children sit separately. This is not the case here. Pretty much any of my study schools would have taken any child whose family could put the money up. It is just the way it worked out; the lower caste and the Muslim families tended to be poorer. The registration fee did not have anything to do with your social status. It was about whether you were good or willing to bargain which, of course, is a pretty standard practice in India.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** There is a range of schools, so there are low-cost private schools and lower-cost private schools. There is a large range of fees that parents can choose from. There are two types of low-cost private schools: recognised and unrecognised. The recognised schools supposedly abide by the on-paper laws and rules, whereas the unrecognised do not. Typically, if you have a graph of monthly fees, the recognised schools are charging a bit more, and they charge more as you go up the standards. Nursery and kindergarten are charging a lower fee, and then as you go up it increases. In India, it is typical that the schools are all-through schools, so they are not just primary or secondary schools, and the parents really like that their child can stay at that one school where they know and trust the school owner.

Q237 **Fiona Bruce:** I have a question about the comparable quality of teacher training in the different schools. The Global Campaign for Education has raised concerns that low-fee private schools rely more heavily than the public sector on untrained or unqualified teachers and that in some of the

low-fee private school chains such as Bridge or Omega teachers have only three weeks of training. Are these valid concerns and are such practices widespread across low-fee private schools?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** Thank you very much for that question. Typically, teachers in low-cost private schools are trained to graduate level; they are young; they are enthusiastic; they come from within the communities themselves; they are trained by the school owner, sometimes, as you say, for a minimal amount of time; and they typically are without a teacher qualification given by the state.

Q238 **Fiona Bruce:** Did you say they are without training? They do not have the state teacher training.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** No, they do not; none of them have it. If the teacher did have it, they would choose to work in a government school, because they would be qualified. I have some anecdotal evidence to set this scene. I was talking to a very dear friend of mine in Hyderabad. I asked, "Why do your teachers not have the state qualification?", and he said, "The state qualification is useless", as we have heard in the previous panel. He likened it to learning to swim without a swimming pool; he did all the strokes—breast stroke and front crawl. Teacher training is a BEd in India, because they do not go into schools. It is not like our PGCE. The training teacher sits in a classroom, does a course, writes some essays and does not get to go to a school to practise their teaching activities.

If you want some evidence on this, I can send it to you. There is work by Aslam and Kingdon in 2007, which says, "Most of the standard teacher résumé characteristics (such as certification and training) often used to guide education policy have no bearing on a student's standardised mark", in developing country contexts. Also, higher teacher pay is not associated with improved test scores. According to Aslam and Kingdon 2007 and Kingdon and Teal 2010, government teacher programmes are "poor when available, extremely dated with little innovation" and have "little relation to teaching the teacher how to teach once in school".

Q239 **Chair:** Where has that research been done?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** India.

Q240 **Fiona Bruce:** Please answer that, but also, if you can tell us what training Bridge and Omega provide, we would be very interested.

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** In the study that I just did in Dar es Salaam, 83% of private schoolteachers were trained to the national standard, and 64% in Abuja in Nigeria.

Q241 **Fiona Bruce:** How were those statistics measured? How did they know?

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** I collected the data with a team of researchers. I did not write down my sample size, but in Dar es Salaam it was somewhere between 200 and 300 schools; 83% of the teachers were qualified in Dar, 79% in Lusaka, 89% in Kampala, 64% in Abuja. In Lagos, I just did a

study of 179 schools with Gaurav Siddhu, and it was somewhere around the 60% mark, so Nigeria is quite low. In these other countries where the numbers of schools have not taken off to such an extent, a lot of the teachers are so-called qualified. These are all private schools in specifically low-income areas; these are not rich areas. I think teacher training for all schools in rural areas should give a good amount of training for multi-grade settings, for example. During my PhD fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh, the government schoolteachers did in-service training and refresher training, but they said that it was not very relevant and contextualised to the situations that they were facing: one, two or three-teacher schools for all the primary grades. There are definitely serious issues, and I know from my work with the ESSPIN programme in Nigeria that the teacher training colleges need a huge amount of help.

On the Bridge training, I know that its original approach was to take high school graduates and give them—I have heard different things said, so maybe it is different in different countries—three to six weeks of crash course training in the Bridge method, a lot of which I understand involves training in marketing the school to the community. That you can find out from Education International. The teachers in Bridge International Academies have a heavy emphasis in their training on marketing. In Nigeria, my impression is that Bridge is once bitten, twice shy, given what has been happening in Uganda and Kenya. I hope you are aware that the Busia County in Kenya has just closed down 10 out of 12 of their schools, or there has been a court decision to do that.

In Nigeria, it is, as I said, once bitten, twice shy. Immediately, when they started entering Nigeria, they started to negotiate the regulations with the Government. For example, they do not use those flimsy shack-like things that they use in East Africa with the wood and the metal. They have to use sturdy concrete buildings in Lagos, and I believe they are taking only NCE-qualified teachers—that is, national certificate of education—in Nigeria, and then giving them the crash course, because they were scared of running into more trouble with this. There are a lot of NCE-qualified people kicking about in Lagos, so they are not that difficult to find. Then they do their initial screening test, so a lot of potential applicants are thrown out at the initial screening, which is fine. Any school should make sure that its teacher knows the subject content. That part is absolutely fine. Then they give them this training.

I just did a study around the school choices of Bridge parents in Lagos. This is going to be launched during the Global Action Week of the GCE, so nobody has seen this yet, but you will get a copy of it. One parent could not find out anything about the teachers in the Bridge international academy. She was a qualified teacher herself, so she went covert, undercover, to pretend that she was applying for a job as a teacher at the Bridge school, just to find out, because she wanted to know how qualified the teachers were. She said that they gave absolutely no regard to anything above an NCE, because that is the minimum legal requirement, and they did not really want people with a bachelor of

education, because those people expect to be paid more and there is basically a flat starting salary at a Bridge school.

Q242 **Fiona Bruce:** You have both mentioned teacher pay. Teachers in low-fee private schools are typically paid less than teachers in government schools. What do you think the impact of that is on teachers' morale, attendance and the quality of teaching?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** Research shows that teacher wages in government schools are typically higher, probably four times as high as in low-cost private schools. Somebody on 4,000 rupees in India would be on 1,000 rupees in a low-cost private school. The argument would be that the teachers in low-cost private schools are being paid the market rate and it is what the schools can afford. About 80% or 90% of schools' income goes on teacher salaries, so if the wages went up the fees would have to go up. It is all relevant, because if the teachers are paid 1,000 rupees, that is what the school can actually afford to pay those teachers. If there was a minimum wage imposed on the teachers, then the market would probably collapse.

Chair: There are so many more questions I want to ask, but we have 15 more minutes and there are three more areas that I am keen we cover.

Q243 **Pauline Latham:** There seems to be a proliferation of Paulines this morning. Do private low-fee schools need any financial support from donors?

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** No, they are doing it themselves. I have a list here of all 36 Nigerian states, with the Federal Capital Territory. A huge number, about 12, have above 28% of primary school children in the state attending private schools. I doubt many people have heard of Oyo State, which had 46% of its primary school children in private schools in 2015. This is from the DHS EdData Survey. They are doing it by themselves. They are small businesses. I totally agree that there is no way they can raise teachers' salaries and stay in the market segment that they are in. If they are ever going to serve vaguely poor people, they could not raise the salaries any more. They do not need donor support, because where there are people using them and wanting them, and there is enough of a population base, they are doing it themselves. Proprietors say that they struggle to find finance to invest in school improvement.

I am mindful of time, but I would like to say that it is just not a good use of donor money. First of all, how are you going to support 18,000 private schools in Lagos, which is the estimated number now? There is no way that donors could meaningfully support 18,000 schools. They are doing what they do; they are wanted by parents; and it is quite frankly a bad use of donor money to try to support these schools. As has already been pointed out by Kevin Watkins in his evidence to this Committee, they do not reach the marginalised or the poorest. Professor Dixon has just said that herself. They do not need it.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** DFID does not want to destroy the market with good intentions. Joanna and I are starting to agree. I wrote a book called *International Aid and Private Schools for the Poor*, where I set out a recipe for DFID and donors, as to how they could support the market in which these schools operate, not just by throwing money at the schools. The schools do not want that, but they can support the market and the schools that operate. The four areas where DFID could help to make the market more effective and efficient would be to fund gold standard research, so that all the questions we are asking today are informed by rigorous, robust evidence. It could expand access. We have talked, Pauline, about the marginalised not being able to attend low-cost private schools; what about targeted vouchers or unconditional cash transfers? There is lots of research to show the success of unconditional cash transfers, possibly through mobile money.

You could read Hanlon et al 2010, *Just Give Money to the Poor*, Riddell 2008, Dixon 2013 and Wolf, Egalite and Dixon 2015 on targeted voucher programmes. There have been a couple of targeted voucher programmes set out in India, one by myself with Absolute Return for Kids, ARK, where we did a randomised controlled trial and followed the children for five years with the targeted vouchers, and another one in the 180 villages that I mentioned earlier by Muralidharan.

We have talked a lot about quality and what it actually means. We could improve quality by doing research into pedagogy and different ideas that low-cost private schools could adopt, but making those ideas, such as phonics or peer learning, which I have also done some research in, affordable, so that the private schools can buy into them. It is not about giving something free; it is about giving them the information and something they can afford. Also, there is the information problem. We have not really talked about state regulations and the corruption that goes on with state regulations. DFID could really help by looking at private evaluation programmes, such as Gray Matters Capital and Gray Ghost Ventures, to evaluate these schools. That would solve the information problem, so that parents had a better idea of the different quality of low-cost private schools.

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** The DEEPEN programme that DFID already has in Lagos and the work that we started under the ESSPIN programme support private schools very indirectly by helping Governments to collect data on them; to realise what they have, what is there and what is really happening, because there has been so much denial of what is really happening in low-fee private schools in so many countries; to recognise the contribution that they are simply de facto making; and to take a more practical approach to the regulation and work with those schools. It does not serve anyone to have them driven under by tough regulations that are black and white, registered and unregistered. I would support asking DFID to keep pushing in the direction of this graded assessment of the private schools system that we have been trying to roll out in Lagos through the DEEPEN programme.

Q244 **Stephen Doughty:** There are a lot of different examples of what DFID is doing at the moment, and there are lots of different ways in which we can get involved in education. We have talked about vouchers, conditional and unconditional cash transfers, direct investment in low-fee private schools, in higher-fee private schools and directly in the public system. Can you just be really clear for the Committee? Do you think we should be investing in all of those, some of those or one of those in particular?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** It depends what your aim is. If your aim is to assist the marginalised to get into low-cost private schools, it would be unconditional cash transfers.

Q245 **Stephen Doughty:** If our aim is to meet the SDG and to get more marginalised children into schools.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** For low-cost schools, it would be not upsetting the market that already exists but trying to improve it somehow by the four methods that I just said. If DFID wants to help government schools, that is great. There is nothing wrong with that.

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** I would like to call the Committee's attention to the evidence that Roy Carr-Hill submitted to the Committee and to his paper about the anti-corruption tool for the Punjab Education Foundation. That is a voucher system, and it seems to be missing the poorest. The poorest families struggle with literacy themselves. If they happen to be out working, which many poor families will be, then they get missed by the voucher system registration teams. It is a positive thing that people are going door-to-door to try to register you for this voucher scheme, but if you are out working, which many poor people have to be, then according to that paper you are just passed over. This voucher scheme has missed the poorest.

The other Punjab education foundation, the Foundation Assisted Schools, apparently does not even have a stated aim to be reaching the poorest. I reiterate, time and again, that only fee-free schools are going to reach the poorest. Something needs to be learned from our little friends in the container on the side of the Ugandan government school; people are not even going to the government school, so the idea that a low-fee private school is going to reach the poorest is wrong. If you are serious about leaving no one behind, you can forget about the private schools, let them get on with what they are doing, and focus on getting the poorest and the most marginalised into government schools.

Q246 **Stephen Doughty:** If you were Secretary of State for International Development, you would put all the money into public systems aimed at the most marginalised, and that is where our value-added should be.

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** Yes.

Stephen Doughty: Professor Dixon, you say we should be investing in a wider portfolio of activities, because they all have different routes.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** Yes, that is correct.

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** I would specifically be setting up accelerated stable programmes for pastoral families in the north of Kenya and north of Nigeria, because those families move around most of the year and they cannot attend a normal school. You run an accelerated programme in the place where they are stable for three months. There are so many interesting and innovative things, but this has to be done through fee-free provision.

Q247 **Chair:** As a follow-up to that, can I ask you both where you stand on DFID through CDC investing in Bridge? I know what one of you will say, but I am not sure about Pauline.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** There are lots of benefits to chains of private schools, because they allow for teacher development, CPD work and curriculum innovation. Chains of private schools could be a good thing. In fact, you have to wonder why chains of private schools have not already materialised from within the market themselves. The reason they have not is often the lack of property rights and the lack of finance. If a school does not have property rights, it cannot go to a bank and say, "Here is my collateral; I want to expand my chain of private schools". I think Joanna calls them "mom and pop" schools.

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** That was not me.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** Was that not you? It was somebody else. Oh, it was Prachi Srivastava. What they do is form federations. Because they cannot afford to make a chain of private schools, they form a federation where the individual school owner keeps his individuality in the school, but the federation tries to allow them to do the CPD, to do the training, so they act as a whole.

Q248 **Chair:** When we were in Lagos, we saw a school like that. Would you characterise Bridge as a low-cost private school?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** It is a very different beast.

Q249 **Chair:** That is a polite no.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** We need much more evidence. There are lots of vested interest groups here, and we need some really gold standard research about the impact, not only on the children but on the community around Bridge academies.

Q250 **Chair:** I understand that what you are saying is that, in so far as there should be direct spending, whether by DFID or CDC, your concern is the regulatory system, and the possibility of vouchers or cash transfers, but you are more sceptical of directly investing in chains like Bridge. I do not want to put words into your mouth; is that what you are saying?

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** You would have to look at the evidence. I do not know what the evidence would say.

Q251 **Chair:** You are here to give us the evidence.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** I do not think there is any, though. That is why. There has not been any gold standard research on it yet.

Chair: That is a very fair answer.

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** I was concerned to go on the CDC website and see that it gives money to businesses in developing countries struggling to find the investment they need to grow. CDC finds scarce and patient capital for businesses and entrepreneurs in Africa and Asia. Is that what we mean by Jay Kimmelman from Harvard Business School? I imagine that as being an African-owned enterprise that you are trying to support, because capital is scarce there. I could point you to to Livingstone College, which is a chain of Nigerian-owned private schools that I want to do follow-up research on. We have not had a chance yet.

On low-fee private schools and Bridge, no. I just did this study of 179 private schools in Lagos, and our schools cost the complete family anywhere between $38 and $44 per year for the lowest fee. For Bridge International Academies in Lagos, it is $130. They say that they are $6 a month. My families who go to low-fee private schools are living on $6.45 per day. Bridge talks about an average of what works out as $10.60, because there are 5.3 people on average in a Lagos household. They are not low-fee.

Q252 **Paul Scully:** My question has been pretty well been answered. What about profit margins? You were talking about teacher pay and other bits and bobs. I wonder if, from your experience, you have any sense of the profit margins for the profit-making schools that you have come across.

***Dr Joanna Härmä*:** I can provide you with my reports from Dar, Lusaka, Kampala, Abuja and Lagos. It really varies. Some of them are seriously in loss. Some start up in loss, so the family has to put money into it.

Q253 **Paul Scully:** Sure, but is there a working model? Typically schools in this country would have a working model that they would average out at. It would be interesting to know that when looking at teacher salaries. We were all quite aghast when we were looking at the gap between government and private.

***Professor Pauline Dixon*:** We have done some research on that, so I can send it to you.

Paul Scully: That would be really helpful. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you both so much. That was an amazing 45 minutes. It was immensely helpful, and, as Dr Härmä said, we are visiting Africa shortly to look at some more examples here. We want to get this right and listen to the evidence. You have obviously come from difficult perspectives, but you have some areas of common ground as well. It has been very informative and constructive, so thank you both very much indeed.