House of Commons

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: Sub-Committee on the Work of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact – ICAI's review on building resilience to natural disasters, HC 952.

Wednesday 23 May 2018

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Paul Scully (Chair); Richard Burden; Mr Ivan Lewis; Stephen Twigg.

Questions 1 - 22

Witnesses

I: Richard Gledhill, Lead Commissioner, Independent Commission for Aid Impact; Andy Featherstone, Team Leader, Independent Commission for Aid Impact; Matthew Wyatt, Deputy Director and Head of Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department (CHASE), Department for International Development; Sally Taylor, Deputy Director and Head of Climate and Environment Department, Department for International Development.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Richard Gledhill, Andy Featherstone, Matthew Wyatt and Sally Taylor.

Q1 **Chair:** Thank you very much for coming. Thank you very much for taking part in this system that we have been using, where we can actually have a direct conversation. It has been useful over the last few sessions to have that, rather that the artificial separation. I will get started. Richard, do feel free to have any brief opening comments when I talk about the methodology. I am just asking a general question about methodology. Could you provide a brief overview of the methodology for the review and the rationale behind the approach?

Richard Gledhill: Thank you very much. Building resilience has become an important part of the global development agenda, in response to the growing incidence and growing severity of natural disasters and climate-related extreme weather events. The impact of these tends to fall disproportionately on the poorest countries and the poorest people of the world. The aim of this review was to assess the effectiveness of DFID's approach to building resilience, to analyse how well it had mainstreamed resilience across its programmes at a country level—that was a commitment it made in 2011—and also to review how the programmes were contributing to resilience. Throughout this, we looked at learning: how it has informed DFID's approach to resilience, but also how it has informed its approach mainstreaming, which is relevant to other policy priorities, for example at the moment in relation to disability.

Our methodology involved four pillars, which were the four pillars you will see in most ICAI reviews: a literature review; a strategy review, which looked at DFID documents but also involved interviews with stakeholders in the Department and externally; country case studies; and programme reviews.

We visited three countries: Nepal, Bangladesh and Mozambique. We looked at three others on a desk basis. In those countries, we reviewed 48 country-led programmes and we also looked at five centrally managed programmes. We looked at programmes that were designed specifically to address resilience to natural disasters, but we also looked at how resilience had been embedded into other sectoral programmes, for example health, agriculture, social protection and WASH programmes.

I will stop there, if you like, or I could ask Andy to provide a bit more detail.

Q2 **Chair:** I was just asking, for the moment—and Andy might want to come in—about what the limitations are of focusing on countries where the country offices of DFID identified resilience as a priority, and how far you think you could extrapolate the performance across all DFID country offices as a result of that.

Richard Gledhill: We chose to focus primarily on those countries, because there was the longest track record of resilience programming, but also to look at how the learnings from those early movers had been captured and shared with other countries.

The mainstreaming was done in three tiers. We had five countries from tier 1; we had one country from tier 2—OPT—and we had hoped to do a tier 3 country, Afghanistan, but we were asked not to look at Afghanistan because security issues were placing particular pressures on that country team at that time. It is also relevant that, for the tier 2 and tier 3 countries, the majority tended to be fragile and conflict states, which added an additional dimension. We felt that we had quite substantial coverage of FCAS countries, through our other reviews in the current year: the CSSF review, the Somalia visit last year and also the Syria review.

It is very clear to us that many of the conclusions, and certainly all of the recommendations, read across directly to the tier 2 and tier 3 countries. Indeed, many of the issues around resilience to conflict are very relevant to the issues of resilience to natural disasters. Fundamentally, the approach has to involve a thorough assessment and analysis of the risks, then design of programmes to mitigate those risks. Andy, I do not know if you want to add anything to that.

Andy Featherstone: The only thing that is worth adding is to say that by focusing on the tier 1 countries—the countries that opted in—it was also the beginning of the mainstream process. As the mainstreaming process became more embedded then, on paper at least, and certainly from what we saw, tier 2 and tier 3 countries stood a better chance because there was the infrastructure and the support in place. We considered that, while they opted in because they had an interest in resilience, they were also the beginnings of the process, which potentially added complexity in terms of looking at how they embarked on that journey.

Q3 **Richard Burden:** My first question is to Matthew and to Sally. In 2015, you took the view that you did not need a dedicated resilience advisory team at DFID centrally, or a centrally managed fund to help country offices mainstream resilience. We just wondered why you took that view and what evidence you based it on.

Matthew Wyatt: There are two things here. One was that we were trying to mainstream resilience and this was essentially a bit of a change process. We were trying to kick-start a process and get something mainstreamed. Therefore, we had the dedicated team, we had the catalytic fund as well, and we had the senior group that was overseeing and looking at that to see that that got done.

Around about that time we were thinking, "That phase is really over. What we now need to do is to make sure that this is fully mainstreamed and consolidated". The approach we have now is, although we do not have that same dedicated resilience team, which was managing a budget in order to bring about the change, what we have got is a number of things that ensure that work is continued. For example, we have a contact list of resilience experts across DFID, from lots of different sectors, who are able to advise each other and work on mainstreaming resilience in a number of sectors.

We have a group at the centre: a network of what we call resilience leads, of people in the central departments within DFID, who are sharing best practice, making links and pushing forward the resilience agenda. One of the things that we discontinued was this senior group, partly in response to the report. There was a feeling that we need to have a senior group overseeing things, so we are creating a Senior Civil Service group to continue to look at the strategic issues and blockages that might be preventing mainstreaming, and give it that senior oversight. That group will meet for the first time in June.

Although we do not have, as you say, that dedicated resilience team managing the dedicated budget, we have a number of other networks and processes in place, supported by guidance and by a dedicated person in Sally's team, who is supporting country offices to continue to mainstream resilience. I do not know if you would like to add to that, Sally.

Sally Taylor: The overall message that we want to give is that, even though we do not have the team that looks the same as it did before, and we do not have that same team there, there is still central support and there are still some central processes that support country offices to enable learning. There are also things such as ongoing monitoring of emerging risks. There is work that we do on early warning systems. There are things where we would flag to country offices if there is an emerging risk around, such as a yellow fever outbreak or new pests.

In Somalia at the moment, a central team is monitoring and working with the Met Office to say, "Actually, there is a hurricane coming". That is then conveyed to the country office and so they are able to start with planning and working with partners on the ground. As you say, we accept that there is the need to do a little bit more at the senior level, just to make sure it is there, but we are also at the moment preparing to refresh our country diagnostics. We are looking at the guidance that is there. We are looking at the support that might be needed for country offices to take stock, look at where they are and what help they might need.

Q4 **Richard Burden:** What would ICAI's view be on that?

Richard Gledhill: I buy the argument that the resilience had become more business-as-usual in country offices and that the issue was well embedded in policy. To a large extent, the job of the central team had been done. At the same time, we see that country offices have an increasing number of plates to keep spinning in the air on different policy imperatives of Ministers and the aid strategy. Support is required to help keep those plates spinning well and in unison. It does not necessarily need to be a central mainstreaming team. That support comes in a number of different ways: through sharing of learning, through the planning processes that you have talked about and also through just keeping an eye on how a country office is doing. We picked up on a number of these areas in our recommendations. One of the areas that would be useful at some stage in the near future is a stock-check to just see if we are on track with our policy commitments.

Matthew Wyatt: Maybe I could just give one example of something that speaks a little bit to what Richard was just saying. We have something called the Humanitarian Early Warning Service, which is run out of my Department. Essentially, we maintain a watching brief on where we think there are risks of either natural or man-made disasters and what might be coming down the pipeline. We have monthly meetings where we pick a particular country and have meetings with the country office by video to go through it with them. We will ask them if they have clocked it, what their plans are, and whether they need any support from the centre to enable them to be able to respond to it.

It is both a supportive function, in terms of helping them think through what might be needed and so on, but also something of a challenge function as well. That happens monthly, and then quarterly we have a meeting with the director-general for all the country programmes, where we take a more strategic view of what is coming down the pipeline. In that way, that is both providing some of the support that our country offices need to mainstream resilience to what might be coming, while also being a little bit of a chance to take stock of whether things are actually right and provide some assurance to Ministers that that is actually being done.

Q5 **Richard Burden:** One of the things that the ICAI report did recommend was that, where partner countries have significant risk of natural disasters of different kinds, that risk assessments and resilience strategies are kept up to date. Is the process you described the way you do that or are there any other ways that you would try to keep them up to date?

Matthew Wyatt: I would say it is part of the process for that. Under the mainstreaming initiative, we have the multi-hazard risk assessments that were done and the disaster-resilience strategies that were put in place, which the ICAI team looked at. Because the contexts are so different, what is appropriate in each country depends on the country context. What is happening now is some of those countries are updating those assessments. For example, Bangladesh and Uganda will be doing them. Mozambique will be doing them this year. They will be updating those assessments.

Other countries—Ethiopia would be an example—are mainstreaming this into their other corporate processes. Sally mentioned that we have the central development diagnostics process, which is looking at what the challenges are in each country. We then have our business planning process and risk registers. For example, in Ethiopia, the risk of natural disasters features, as it should do in all our country offices where natural disasters are a big risk, in their risk register. In some countries, they will be continuing to do these multi-hazard assessments. In others, they will not do that, but they will make sure that it is done in their own corporate business planning processes.

Q6 **Stephen Twigg:** Richard, you have largely answered this question, but just in case there is anything you want to add to what you have already said, are you satisfied that DFID's response is sufficient in terms of embedding risk and resilience further into existing processes and tools? I think you have said you are, but I want to give you the chance to qualify or add to that.

Andy Featherstone: The approach to embedding was a sensible approach and it has largely been completed. Clearly, the quality of the work in some areas is less strong than in others. I am encouraged by what DFID said about the refreshing of strategies and risk assessments. This is not something you can just tick the box to say, "Okay, that is now done". It is something that needs to be kept under scrutiny and kept up to date.

Q7 **Stephen Twigg:** Perhaps to Matthew or Sally, what has the Department learned from this experience of mainstreaming that you might be able to apply to other areas of the Department's work in the future?

Sally Taylor: Yes, embedding the topic within existing processes is a really important part of it. Just to pick up on the issue about risk, countries would have strategic risk registers monitoring a number of things. That would be tracked and regularly audited by our internal auditors, to check that we are really managing our risks well. That is a hard compliance process.

The lessons on mainstreaming are around consistent messaging from the top and a consistent leadership, over time being very clear that this is central to our work and something that we really need to embed within what we do. We have talked about the processes. It is about giving the guidance and ensuring staff have the skills and the understanding to enable them to respond. There is not going to be a very good response if people do not understand the concepts or they do not have the tools, the guidance and the skills to be able to do that. Those are probably the main lessons we have learnt. I will see if Matthew can think of any others.

Matthew Wyatt: I have maybe just two. One that has been really important is having the evidence. It is about having some pretty clear evidence that investment in resilience actually is a really good investment. Getting that out and understood across our country offices and across the networks builds the enthusiasm and the willingness of staff to make sure that they are doing this. It is not just a compliance thing; it is something that they actually really want to do.

The other thing was that the catalytic fund had a roll in terms of providing some extra resource that country offices could use, so that they were not faced right up front with having to find something to cut in order to do this new work. Having that additional resource and support from the centre was important. I am not saying that will always be the case in everything you need to mainstream, but I think in this case that was useful.

Q8 **Chair:** Richard, you found that articulating how efforts in different sectors and areas will work together to build resilience is important but not always done in practice. Can you tell us a bit more about this, from your point of view?

Richard Gledhill: This is a really important area, not just in resilience but in many parts of DFID's work. We talked in our recent value-for-money study about the need for DFID to have a portfolio perspective on its work to ensure that we are getting two plus two equal five. In resilience, there is also the issue that the weakest link can undermine the resilience of a community or an economy. DFID's guidance on mainstreaming recognises these dependencies. It talks about different programmes within the portfolio to address different sectorial issues, but a clear understanding of the complementarity of different sectors is acknowledged. Each is shown to build a different component of resilience.

Again, we saw a mixed picture on this at country level, with a more fragmented approach in many countries and no clear strategy at a portfolio level of how the programmes work together. We did see some good examples. We saw some particularly good practice in Uganda and Ethiopia. Perhaps I could ask Andrew just to give us a bit of background to those two examples.

Andy Featherstone: Yes, we have mentioned Ethiopia already. Certainly there DFID has taken an approach to mainstreaming risk analysis and resilience across each of its programme pillars. There are very clear linkages between resilience thinking on the one hand and programming on the other, and a dialogue between different programmes as to how programmes can work together to reduce risk and to strengthen resilience. Ethiopia certainly came out as a good example.

Similarly, we saw evidence in the Uganda programme of cross-programme working. In terms of the refugee response, rather than just mount a humanitarian response, other DFID programmes were looking at how they could address longer-term issues and how they could strengthen resilience. Again, we saw those linkages running through from DFID's existing programmes to its refugee response, to strengthen resilience. They were two particularly good examples we saw.

Richard Gledhill: This is not easy. It is a complicated issue, requiring people from different disciplines to work together. There is a real need to share innovations and best practice in this area. It is not just within DFID. This is an issue that needs to be looked at across the donor community more broadly: engaging with other donors to try to ensure that the portfolio of international effort is mutually reinforcing.

Q9 **Chair:** I notice that clearly you agreed with the recommendation. I will ask how you ensure that DFID offices in high-risk countries now articulate how their efforts in different sectors and areas will work together to build resilience.

Matthew Wyatt: I will come back a little bit to that upstream planning. It does start right in the upstream when you are analysing what the key issues going on in the country are and where it is that DFID can make the most impact. That will be the country development diagnostic process. Getting that right and identifying where the key resilience risks are there is really important. That then feeds into the business planning process.

At that point, if you are taking a holistic approach at that level, it is easier, although it does not mean it is always automatically going to happen, to make sure that, once you go down from the business planning process to developing your individual business cases and programmes, if you have a holistic approach it is more likely that they will be cross-fertilising and learning from each other. It is not automatic so it still needs leadership from the country office heads and so on to make sure that it happens in the professional networks.

The other thing that can help to make that happen is the support that we are able to give from the centre within DFID, in terms of some of the guidance and the rules and so on that we are giving. For example, we have recently issued some guidance to countries on how to handle protracted crises. Many of these are man-made rather than natural disasters, although they can be both.

We are providing guidance to countries on how to deal with that, which can provoke the kind of cross-sectoral discussions that can help mean that you are actually bringing programmes together and not missing opportunities in programmes that might be in one sector that can actually bring benefits that might not be primary to that sector, but nevertheless are important for building resilience overall. I will stop there.

Chair: This is to both of you but maybe Richard first. In 2016 the International Development Committee found a gap between DFID's conceptualisation of the importance of resilience and its level of investment. Obviously, it is difficult to measure and we acknowledge that, but do you consider that gap still exists.

Richard Gledhill: It is clear that the level of investment relative to the level of spend on humanitarian responses after the fact is out of balance across the whole international community. It is difficult to measure this precisely, because drawing a ring-fence accurately around resilience work as a whole is really difficult. This is borne out by indicative evidence on spend and anecdotal evidence in countries. It is also reflected in fragile and conflict states. This was the business case underpinning the recent

UN and World Bank report, "Pathways for Peace", saying that the amount of spend on trying to prevent conflict is much less than the amount of spend responding to it. This is very much work in progress.

Andy Featherstone: I would agree. We found it very difficult to track resilience expenditure precisely because it is mainstreamed across programmes and hence difficult to isolate. Perhaps one aspect of resilience, which is tracked, is around preparedness. We are still very aware from reviewing the literature and looking at some of the financing figures that it was still just 0.5% of the international development budget that was spent on preparedness in 2015, which is woefully low.

Q10 **Chair:** Matthew, Sally, do you have any view on that?

Matthew Wyatt: Obviously, in a sense, any development organisation does not want to have to be spending money on humanitarian relief. To say, "Are we spending the right amount?" is a difficult one to measure. It is also difficult quite how you measure what you spend on resilience, as the ICAI report says.

You have mentioned "Pathways to Peace" and so on, which we have been very much involved in within DFID, in supporting that particular report. We very much agree with its broad conclusions about the need to invest in peace. In DFID, we are still cumulatively the largest donor to the peacebuilding fund, which is aimed at trying to support initiatives that can promote peace within countries and so on. We have been doing that and we have been the biggest donors to that for some time.

The other thing I will talk about on this is our humanitarian reform policy, which was published last September. Big focuses within that policy are the importance of building resilience, the importance of disaster preparedness and the fact that we will be doing that ourselves but also using the influence we have in the international system, which is something else that ICAI is doing a report on, to try to push for strength and preparedness, and to push for better ways for the UN and the international system to measure risks, anticipate risks and deal with them.

We have built that into our performance-based funding approach for the UN system as well. Risk is a particular issue that we have asked them to look at there. The direction of travel is clear on that. I have mentioned already the work that we are doing on protracted crises and the guidance that we have given to our country offices on how to handle protracted crises. Again, we are trying to make sure that we are linking up and we are not separating off humanitarian spending and development spending, and that we are bringing those together in the humanitarian, development and peace-building nexus and so on, to try to do as much as we can to prevent disasters happening. Obviously, there will always be the need to respond when they do and to spend resources that we might rather spend elsewhere on dealing with them.

Sally Taylor: Yes. The other thing I would also say, which Richard mentioned, is that it is quite difficult to identify resilience spending. You can talk about preparedness spending as something quite specific, but even though we identified 180 projects that the team looked at, perhaps not everything there would be necessarily targeted on resilience, though they have a strong resilience thread. There is also a lot of other spending that also builds resilience.

Good development is about building resilience, and the economic development agenda around enabling people to earn more money and countries to become more prosperous will of itself build resilience. It is quite a difficult thing to look at. We are having a look at, for example, some of the climate risks that will come in a longer period. There are the very immediate disasters, but there are also changes that will happen where countries will need to think about things like water security or the economy and how resilient it is.

As part of our risk work at the moment, we monitor a set of different things, but the diagnostic work that we are about to start and refresh will be something where we again have a look at what the risks are. What is it that we can see coming and where might we both want to invest ourselves, but also influence the Government to invest their own resources and be ready and also the rest of the international system, and see how we can build that up.

Matthew Wyatt: Perhaps I can add one thing to that. Perhaps I should have mentioned before the work that we were doing to build resilience through innovative financing, which ICAI recognise as an important part of the work that we are doing. We have been involved in the three regional risk insurance pools, trying to find ways to use insurance that will trigger earlier and more certain payments when disaster does strike, so that you can tackle them much quick that you would otherwise be able to if you waited for humanitarian appeals and so on.

There is quite a lot of work, which I am quite happy to talk in a bit more detail about if you are interested, on how we can try to use innovative ways of using financing and insurance instruments and so on to address disasters quicker and build resilience by doing so.

Q11 **Mr Lewis:** Good morning. My first question is to Richard and Andy. You found in most instances that it was not possible to reach a conclusion on the achievement of resilience-related outcomes. The data simply did not exist. Was that disappointing? Was it a surprise to you that that was the case?

Richard Gledhill: It is fair to say that resilience is a difficult issue to measure. It is a complex outcome of many different institutional, economic and social changes. We found that programmes specifically targeted on resilience often lacked strong data on outcomes and impact. The sectoral programmes often only had resilience as a secondary objective that often was not covered by the results framework. Those challenges and problems are not unique to DFID, by any means—all donors face those.

What we would say is that resilience has been a priority for DFID now for seven years. We would have expected more progress to have been made in developing guidance on a monitoring, evaluation and results framework, and supporting country offices to embed this in their programming. I was actually a bit disappointed by the "partially accept" response to recommendation 3 on this. It is a central issue that requires action.

Q12 **Mr Lewis:** My next question is to Matthew and Sally on the same theme. The report says that you are in the process of developing new methodologies to measure change in resilience, but that is where progress is very slow. Do you want to explain to us, after seven years, how much progress you have been able to make?

Sally Taylor: It is a complicated concept. It is quite difficult to measure. Even preceding resilience, there has been a long debate about how to measure vulnerability, which has still not concluded, and there are still lots of vulnerability indexes out there. I started life as a statistician and used to be asked, "We want to know this". I would say, "Tell me precisely what you want to know. What is it precisely?" You need to ask precise questions and you need to collect precise data if you are going to have an answer. It is a multi-factor measure, so that makes it quite difficult. It is quite difficult to think about an individual. What makes an individual resilient? There are lots of issues around that.

We did try with one methodology, which was around really trying to understand people's perspectives and people's lives, and what it was that would enable them to withstand drought or withstand a big shock in the oil price, or whatever those shocks might be. It was quite difficult to use, so we are having another go at that to see if we can improve it and make it easier for staff to use, to make them better able to apply that. Work is going on in sectors. We are part of international groups that are also thinking about it. We are on it, if you like.

The caveat with the answer is not so much that we do not think it is important, but that we do not think we are probably ever going to arrive at an easy measure that says, "This country's resilience is a 4", or "This country's is a 6". It is going to be much more specific and granular levels than that: "How resilient are you to earthquakes?" or "How resilient are you to economic shocks?" or, at an individual level, what different things matter. That is as far we have got.

Matthew Wyatt: Just to add to the point that Sally made about the precision of the question, when we talk about resilience, we might be talking about resilience of individuals, we might be talking about the resilience of communities, or we might be talking about the resilience of countries. There are a number of dimensions to it. Then, of course, there are all of those different dimensions of what they are resilient to. Is it to drought? Is it to cyclones? Is it to various other things? It is very difficult to capture. That is not to say that it is not really important to do the best we can.

We are all struggling with this—not just DFID, but the international community. We are very much plugged into all the international networks of this. We help to finance and we make available to our country offices the INfoRM network, which looks at a combination of the vulnerability of a country to a natural hazard and its coping capacity to try to look at the extent to which it is resilient. We build that into our planning and so on. We are engaged with all of those.

Perhaps the reason that more progress has not been made, as suggested by ICAI, is that this really is a difficult area to work on. If there were a magic answer out there, we would love to have it but, at the moment, we are doing the best we can with the international experts on the subject to try to make progress.

Q13 **Mr Lewis:** I would say in response that resilience is either a buzzword or it is a meaningful priority. If it is a meaningful priority, you have to ultimately be able to measure progress and change; otherwise, it becomes a meaningless concept. The issue for me would be: if all donors are struggling with this, where is the forum? Who is going to take lead responsibility for saying to the donor community, "We all have a collective problem with this. How do we begin to solve it together?"

Sally Taylor: That is a fair enough point and challenge. I would say, at a project level, it should be possible. It is possible to measure it, because you can think about what activities you are doing. You have underneath that an understanding about why those activities are being prioritised, and you can then look at what progress you have been able to make. Have you been able to get incomes up by 20%? Have you been able to put in place effective response strategies?

I was in Sierra Leone before and one of the things that we wanted to do, coming out of Ebola, was to help Sierra Leone be resilient to future outbreaks, not just of Ebola, but of a range of epidemics that may come. We had a very clear programme there. There was a very clear methodology for how you think about that and how you can really assess what parts of the system are good and in place and what parts of the system still need a bit of work.

At a sectoral level and at a project level, there is reasonably good progress. It is about the overall cumulative effect and how you aggregate that and have a meaningful sense of that. That is much more challenging.

Q14 **Mr Lewis:** Can I ask what process you have in place for reporting back on resilience work at a country portfolio level, or maybe for looking backwards, following a major disaster, to assess how the portfolio performed in the context of resilience?

Matthew Wyatt: Maybe I will start on the example you gave of where you have had a major disaster and then looking back. We do very routinely, after big disasters, do assessments of what happened, how the international community responded, whether it was ready to do so and also how we responded. That will also normally look into the efforts that have been made to build resilience before the disaster struck.

For example, I was at an exercise yesterday, looking ahead to the next hurricane season. There have been some reports that we were looking at yesterday on the lessons that have been learned from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. They both looked at how did the response work, how did we organise ourselves, how did the international community organise itself, but also at how prepared those countries were and what things we need to be doing and supporting them with between when the last hurricane struck and the next season to try to build that resilience. There is a learning loop that takes place. That is pretty much the case for most disasters.

Sally, you were involved in Ebola, were you not? Do you want to say something about that?

Sally Taylor: The Committee probably heard quite a lot on Ebola already, but there was an extensive lesson learning that was done there, internationally, within the UK Government and indeed within Sierra Leone. That certainly happened. We adjusted our portfolio when Ebola started and also really changed it coming out of that disaster, because we recognised that the whole portfolio needed to change and we needed to think about it. That was quite a big shock, clearly, to the country.

Richard Gledhill: When I saw the Department's response to recommendation 4, it made me realise that the precision of the wording of the recommendations are so important. At a relatively late stage, I thought I was making a constructive change to it by adding the sentence at the end, saying that this could be done periodically or following significant natural disasters. The Department's response, which was only "partially accept", was in part because they felt they were already doing this in relation to following significant natural disasters. If I could, I would strike that sentence from the recommendation.

There is still an important point here about the periodic stock-checks, even where there have not been natural disasters. It is in part because of the challenge of measuring performance on individual programmes that we feel that this is valuable, both at a country level and across the whole portfolio. You will know that we are slightly changing our process in relation to discussing recommendations and trying to have more dialogue with the relevant Departments before the report is finalised. That will be helpful in future reports.

Q15 **Stephen Twigg:** Richard has slightly anticipated my next question. It is really, first, to Matthew and Sally, but in a sense you have already responded to what they have not yet said, if that makes any sense. You have only partly accepted the recommendation for stock-take. In your previous response to Ivan, you hinted at why, but can you set out more fully why you could not full accept recommendation 4, which is that the Department should undertake a stock-take.

Matthew Wyatt: We absolutely think we should be keeping track of how we are doing. We should absolutely do that. What we want to stress is just how important the local context is. The country ownership is really precious. Yes, we absolutely need to do lesson-learning for natural disasters. Some of it we do already. We want to do that. We want to keep track of how we are doing. As I said earlier, we are setting up a senior civil service-led group to track what is happening globally and take a more strategic overview. We are very happy to do that, but we felt that a single stock-take probably is not going to be the way to go.

To an extent, of course, the ICAI report is a bit of a stock-take of how we are doing, but we felt that an all-singing, all-dancing single stock-take of something that is so broad and context-specific would not be as useful as doing things in a more distributed way, if you like.

Sally Taylor: That is right. It is a bit invidious to talk about your own experience, but I have just come from two country offices. When we have a think about whether or not we need to change the portfolio or whether we are doing well against a range of things, there are any number of changes that might trigger that. An election very often triggers that: what we think of the new Government and where they are coming out. It might also be triggered by changes in key personnel even outside of that, or if there is a major economic crisis, because the oil price has shot up or the commodity prices have gone down.

What we want is to encourage offices to own it and to find the way that works for them. There are, of course, also planning processes that are run from the centre and require a certain amount of analysis and a stock-take, if you like, for countries to really think about what it is that they are seeing at the moment and to do that as part of the planning processes.

Q16 **Stephen Twigg:** How do you ensure that is happening in cases where there is not a trigger event, such as a specific unexpected disaster or an election, in the example answer you gave? My understanding of the recommendation was that this should be something that is done on a periodic basis in all high-risk countries, and presumably there might be a country that is high-risk that does not have one of the sorts of trigger events Sally gave us examples of.

Sally Taylor: I do not know how to answer that. Let me look at Matthew to see if he can answer that.

Matthew Wyatt: To a degree, I would come back to our strategic planning processes, which are done on a rolling basis. The country development diagnostic ought to be taking these things into account. We are working to make sure that the methodology for the new one does. The country business planning process should be taking stock of the current situation within the country, which then leads to the decisions on resources allocations and the kind of programmes that we should be doing.

Those programmes themselves, our smart rules and our compliance procedures, as well as the guidance we give, are designed to ensure that those will be designed in ways that speak to the current situation, as well as having an element of adaptive programming, which is something that the ICAI report also spoke about. Where appropriate, we are doing programming in ways that are always flexible enough to take account of changing circumstances. In some cases, we are doing adaptive programming where we are not quite sure what is going to work and therefore need to do a bit more experimentation. It cascades down that. That ought to mean that we have a rolling approach to looking at resilience, even when you do not have a disaster.

Q17 **Stephen Twigg:** Richard or Andy, do you feel that meets the concerns that led you to make recommendation 4?

Richard Gledhill: I am encouraged by what Matthew has said. We go back to look at reviews a year later in a follow-up process. This is something we will be looking carefully at in the follow-up process next year.

Q18 **Stephen Twigg:** ICAI did not find strong evidence of lessons and experience being shared between programmes within specific countries, or indeed from one country office to another. Do you have an understanding of that and an explanation for why that might be the case?

Richard Gledhill: We were really quite disappointed by what we saw on learning. That was the one area of the review where we gave an amber/red score. It is not that the programmes are not generating good learning. We saw, for example, some academic research funded in Nepal on mapping of landslip risk. Almost all the other donors and multilaterals that we have talked to mentioned this and said what great work it was and how useful it was. It shows the value of the learning that has been generated and the value of sharing it, but we did find that sharing beyond programmes or across programmes and with other countries was generally weak.

Andy, perhaps you can talk about the Mozambique example, with the flooding.

Andy Featherstone: It goes back a little bit to the lack of a portfolio approach perhaps, but different programmes are not necessarily aware of how each other are seeking to strengthen resilience. We found in Mozambique that for the humanitarian programme, which addressed floods and then went on to address issues around El Niño, there was learning from one programme to the next.

However, we also looked at a programme that was modelling flood risk, and were surprised to see that the evidence from there and the information and knowledge from that was not being used in other programmes, perhaps to site water sanitation facilities or to look at health infrastructure. It is learning between different programmes that we consider to be a particular weakness, and then between country offices.

Richard Gledhill: I am in the process of collating the results from this year's follow-up review looking at last year's reports. Interestingly, in all seven of the reports we looked at last year, there were weaknesses and issues around learning and knowledge-sharing. We had recommendations in each of those reports about this. Clearly, knowledge management in a big, complex, matrix-distributed organisation is a challenge. Everyone struggles with it, but it is just so important. This is an area in resilience, but also more generally, that DFID really needs to look at carefully and focus more on, in terms of how we can share all of this fantastic knowledge that our programmes are generating.

Q19 **Richard Burden:** I would be keen to hear Matthew and Sally's response to that. It is an area of concern that I flagged up, about whether learning and experience is shared between programmes within a portfolio in-country or actually across the countries as well. What are you doing to try to address that?

Sally Taylor: We do accept this. There is an awful lot of information out there. There is lot of evidence and we appreciate ICAI noting that there are a lot of lessons being generated. It is just that there is perhaps a challenge about getting them learnt. It is quite a difficult thing to do and it is something that we are trying to work on. We are not the only organisation struggling with this. There are others that perhaps are not living up to the aspirations that they have, to learn and to be able to do well. We have since the report found a new member of staff who will really support this cross-departmental learning work.

We are establishing the community of practice, which ICAI recommended. We are continuing to develop much more user-friendly information. It is really through our professional cadres that we do this. We have heads of profession who lead the learning within the division to share experience and to keep skills up to date. That is where we continue to invest. We really see that as the way in which we would learn.

It would be fair to say that we do that better in some places than in others. The report found that within programmes there is good learning from one phase of programming to the next, and that that is working well. We need to look at how we do that across the portfolio and we need to look at it across countries, although I would say context is hugely important. When we have been looking at designing programmes in a country, we have said, "Let me have a look for what other countries are like. Sierra Leone has managed to tackle economic empowerment of women". It is quite difficult perhaps to find things that will necessarily translate that quickly or that easily, or that are appropriate to that context. It is not always completely straightforward, but we are really trying to invest in helping staff to learn better and for the organisation to learn better.

Matthew Wyatt: I do not really have a lot to add. As both ICAI and Sally have said, it is a challenge facing many organisations. It is a particular challenge for us, because we are very much distributed geographically. We work in a lot of different sectors and so on. We have a lot of initiatives underway to try to improve the learning here. I mentioned some of them earlier on: the contact list of resilience experts and the network of resilience leads. Sally has mentioned the professional cadres, which are really important in DFID for getting knowledge shared within and across professions. The new staff member Sally mentioned is there to support country offices and we are issuing various newsletters, webinars and learning materials. There is a lot happening.

How we crack being able to avoid over-bureaucratising and avoid information overload, while ensuring that the information and knowledge that is needed in one place is in the right place at the right time and is used is something that is going to require continual improvement. We certainly accept the recommendations that have been made on that.

Q20 **Richard Burden:** Perhaps going back to where we started this session, in order to kick-start that kind of progress before 2015 you looked to a dedicated team that would pull those strengths together and make sure that things did not slip over time. Does this not all rather suggest that there may be a role for a team like that, to make sure that best practice is learned and that risk assessments are updated, that being their major focus?

Matthew Wyatt: There are two things there. One is on the compliance point: are risk matrices being updated and is it being embedded and so on? We have corporate systems, in terms of the mandatory guidance that country offices must have a risk register and must keep it up to date, and the guidance that will indicate that they should be taking resilience into account. On the compliance front, the systems are in place, and I am not sure that a separate dedicated team would necessarily add to that.

The other issue is the question about the softer side of things, in terms of making sure that learning is getting around the organisation and getting where it is needed. Now that the mainstreaming has embedded to a degree, that function, which perhaps was played by that resilience team, with the catalytic fund and so on, can be carried out by the network of resilience leads, the contact list and so on, which I have already spoken about. I am not sure that adding another dedicated team, potentially at the centre of DFID, would necessarily add to that. What we need to do with our resources is put them into making sure that these networks are functioning well, rather than setting up something in parallel alongside it, along the lines that we had before when we were trying to do something slightly different.

Q21 **Richard Burden:** We have talked about ensuring that there is a joining-up of work across portfolios in country and between countries. I just wonder if you could say whether your work on developing resilience in conflict situations and your work on developing resilience in situations of natural disaster are areas that are linked up properly. If so, how?

Matthew Wyatt: That is a very good question. What we try to do on the whole is we take a country approach. When we are doing the country diagnostics, when we are working out what is happening in a country, we will look. In some countries, it might be that the main risks are natural disasters. In others, it might be conflict. In others, it may well be both. What we actually do in those countries ought to flow from that analysis. In some countries, you will be building resilience, if you like, against both at the same time.

We have issued guidance to country offices on how to handle protracted crises and how to try to build resilience in linking up what are more classic humanitarian interventions with development interventions. For example, one instrument that is very useful in building resilience both to conflict and to natural disasters has been an increasing use of cash. The Committee has discussed that before. An increased use of cash both enables people to meet their immediate needs and the needs that they may have from facing an immediate disaster, whether it is conflict-caused or a natural disaster, but also enables them to make choices about how they spend and invest their money in order to build their resilience for the longer term, be it through improving their health status or educating children or starting businesses or whatever it might be. There is a join-up there.

There are some things that mean that in some cases the action that needs to be taken in a conflict situation may be very different from the action that you might be taking in a relatively stable country facing natural disaster. There is a limit to how far you can use the same methodology. What I would say is that using the approach, of identifying the risks, working out what the best instruments are to try to address those risks and doing that up front and in advance—that common approach—is common to both. When you get to the nitty-gritty, it is very much down to the individual context.

Richard Gledhill: We will be meeting again in a few weeks' time to discuss the CSSF report. This is a trailer for that. We found there that, in terms of the risk assessment side, the understanding of conflict risk and drivers of conflict was generally good. That reads across to the "resilience to natural disasters" agenda.

Where the performance was less good was in relation to delivery, results management and learning. Some of the challenges we have talked about here were reflected there but made more complicated because of the conflict situation, and also because one is dealing with a cross-government fund. Sharing of learning between Departments is important.

Again, the *Pathways for Peace* report by the World Bank and the UN showed that the role of resilience of communities and resilience of institutions, health systems and other parts of a struggling state can be so important to building their extra travel towards peace and stability. Trying to share the learning between natural disasters and conflict situations is really important.

Q22 **Richard Burden:** The last area I would like to cover, if I could, is that the report also mentioned there being, at best, partial awareness across DFID of the economic case for resilience. I suppose the question back to you is whether you think that is right. If so, what do you think the causes of that are? What can you do about it?

Sally Taylor: Certainly at a project level there is a good understanding of the economic case as part of the assessment. We would look at different approaches that might build resilience. We would think about what the best return is and what it is that we would invest in. I know Bangladesh, for example, is looking at the moment at different responses to deal with water-logging, how you would build resilience, what the economic analysis is around that and what it is that is worth doing.

There has certainly been work done around preparedness, how that saves money in terms of humanitarian response and speeds up response. As part of the production of the humanitarian policy review.

Matthew Wyatt: Humanitarian reform policy.

Sally Taylor: There was a lot of discussion around what countries had done, what was known on evidence and that sharing of experience there. It is very context-specific and it is very intervention-specific. You see different economic returns, ranging from two to one to sometime over 40 to one. It does depend a lot on what intervention you are looking at, where you are looking at it and also how likely it is that risks are going to happen. That is also a part of that, and how big an impact it is going to have.

You have lots of different variables that make it perhaps difficult to hold a view across a range of different interventions in a range of different sectors. It is certainly something where there is a clear understanding that prevention is better than cure. That is certainly well understood.

Richard Gledhill: Matthew spoke about the role that DFID play, in terms of international influencing, helping to shape the agenda, build the evidence base internationally and get the consensus of donors and others behind the resilience agenda. We absolutely saw that, and that is good work. Where we saw the knowledge gap was probably more internally, around sharing the understanding and the business case with people at a more local level. Andy, do you want to comment on what you saw?

Andy Featherstone: There were some specific pieces of work done through centrally managed programmes around making the economic case for preparedness and for making a value-for-money case for resilience. In several of the countries that we visited, where we found the gap is that there was not necessarily an understanding of the evidence that DFID had already generated. That was not consistently used to inform business cases. It was more of a knowledge gap and coming back to this function of ensuring that information and learning is disseminated and pushed around the Department.

Chair: Thank you very much. That is a useful discussion, thank you. I will bring this report and discussion to a close.