

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: DFID's work on disability, HC 1880

Tuesday 26 March 2019

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Members present: Stephen Twigg; Richard Burden; Mr Nigel Evans; Mrs Pauline Latham; Chris Law; Mr Ivan Lewis; Mark Menzies; Lloyd Russell-Moyle; Paul Scully; Mr Virendra Sharma; Henry Smith.

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Witnesses

I: Dr Tamsyn Barton, Chief Commissioner, Independent Commission for Aid Impact; Paul Spray, Team Leader on ICAI's Rapid Review into DFID's approach to disability in development, Independent Commission for Aid Impact.

II: Rt Hon Lord Bates, Minister for International Development; Darren Welch, Director of Policy, DFID; Rachel Kean, Disability Adviser for the Disability Inclusion Team, Department for International Development.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Tamsyn Barton and Paul Spray.

Q1 Chair: Good morning and welcome. This is our first oral evidence session as part of our inquiry into DFID's disability strategy. We have two panels today. Welcome to our colleagues from ICAI. We will be with you for half an hour, and we will seek to cover four areas with you. I will kick off with an opener and then, perhaps, you could each introduce yourselves in response to the first question. How far does DFID's strategy on disability take into account the recommendations of ICAI's rapid review last year? In particular, are there areas where you have concerns that they might have fallen short in pursuing your recommendations? Tamsyn, do you want to kick off?

Dr Barton: Thank you very much. I am Tamsyn Barton, the chief commissioner at ICAI, and I am picking this up from my predecessor, Dr Alison Evans. I know when Alison instigated this rapid review she was intending to ensure that attention did not die away after the summit and that the plans were detailed, specific and sustained. There has been impressive leadership from successive Secretaries of State, which has led to the plan that we now have. It is important to recognise that, but there is always a risk that things could change and the emphasis could die away, so this plan is an important step. We feel that it has taken into account many of our recommendations.

First, it is a step change compared with previous plans. The Committee first asked for a plan and expected something like this in 2013. What we had before was a non-directive disability framework. We had a one-page disability action plan. Here, we have much more detail and high-level monitoring on an annual basis. We would specifically pick out as progress the minimum standards for all Departments, which correspond very much to the areas in our recommendations, for example an annual consultation with disabled people's organisations, a specific plan to increase staff with disabilities, and some flagship programmes to pilot an in-depth approach to mainstreaming. There is also a focus on stigma, discrimination and people with psychosocial disabilities, although a bit less on intellectual.

You asked us about gaps, and it is always ICAI's job to focus on gaps. An important gap for us is not requiring country offices to do theories of change. It sounds theoretical, but actually the worry is that the offices will just be operating a tick-box system, saying they are going to do something on disability and that will be the end of it, rather than an interactive effort with disabled people's organisations to look at the barriers to doing something and what DFID can specifically contribute to that.

There is one other thing I will point out before I finish. We are concerned about the lack of targets for staff with disabilities appointed in country.



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There is a target overall, in the context of an HMG-wide target, but, if you think about it, how could there be a more impressive influencing on DFID's part than an evident effort to prioritise employing people with self-declared disabilities?

Q2 Chair: Before I come to Paul, I will pursue those last two points about the countries. One was about theories for change and the other was about targets for staff. Are there countries that you know of, through ICAI's work or other sources, that have adopted the fuller approach that you advocate with the theory of change, or even countries that have had a positive record in terms of recruiting disabled staff?

Dr Barton: On the first, I would like Paul to say more, because I know four countries have established a community of practice and have had some good experience. Burma and Rwanda are a couple of them. I do not know whether any country offices have set an example with employment of staff with disabilities appointed in country so, if I may, I will pass to Paul.

Paul Spray: I am Paul Spray, and I was the team leader on the review last year for ICAI. There are some country offices that we know are doing some kind of analysis. In particular, DFID Bangladesh was trying to do a theory of change. We have not seen that; this was reported to us as happening. There are countries that have been in the lead more. Rwanda is one. DFID identified four countries that are trailblazers for "leave no one behind", so not just for disability but for broader marginalised groups. Those four countries, which were Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Nepal and, I think, Bangladesh, worked well together, so I could speak to somebody in DFID Rwanda and they would say, "This is what they are doing in DFID Zimbabwe". They were learning from each other, which is something that is really important if these minimum standards are going to be implemented as fast as DFID wants.

Q3 Chair: Can you identify any additional gaps to those Tamsyn set out in her response?

Paul Spray: The bigger gaps will come when we look at implementation, because there are issues about staffing people with expertise and resourcing in general in order to implement this ambitious strategy.

Chair: We are coming to that next. You have just anticipated the next question.

Q4 Paul Scully: You are looking into the implementation of the strategy as part of the follow-up exercise. Are you able to share any early insights with us today?

Dr Barton: It is still very early. ICAI has just had its follow-up meeting with DFID on this, and we do get the impression of a definite enthusiasm across DFID. There is definitely lots of discussion about this, but uncertainty about how to implement, particularly in the country offices. That is where we get to this question of resources and, specifically,



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expert resources—people who have had real experience of disability inclusion work. To give you an example of where we can see that has made a difference, on mental health there has been a much improved focus across the Department. One person has pushed the agenda, and that has made a difference because they have had that specific responsibility and they have been very effective at it. We were interested to hear at our follow-up that there was potential to recruit an additional six staff through the disability inclusion programme. We do not know if that is something that has been agreed.

The other issue about expert resourcing is the expertise between country offices that was just mentioned, so being able to learn from each other's experience. That again comes back to the central team being able to facilitate that happening on a regular basis. That is the broad picture, but perhaps Paul could amplify.

Paul Spray: The most important target that the Department has set is that all its business units will have adopted the minimum standards by the end of this year. That is an ambitious target. Our recommendations call for speed and it is there. If they are going to implement it that fast, it is important that country offices have the information about what will work and what will not, insofar as it is known, and quite a bit is known. There are examples of where country offices have been able to draw on central expertise. It seems important to us that whatever is done has a reasonable chance of being effective, hence the importance of more staff with capacity.

There has been a big increase. At the beginning of 2018, there were still only two staff in the disability team and now there are eight; it was eight the last time I looked and it may have increased, but that is very few. One of the lessons we have learned from other Departments around the world trying to implement work on disability is that it is difficult and expertise is required.

Q5 **Richard Burden:** If I have read it correctly, your answers so far have suggested that, as well as having some questions around the implementation of the strategy, you are not convinced that DFID has sufficient robust mechanisms in place to monitor that implementation and systematically improve the situation. Am I right about that?

Dr Barton: We should give some credit, in that one of the reasons that the plan or strategy is better than previous ones is that there are some monitoring teeth, if you like. Most importantly, there is a board that will meet at senior level to review quarterly, which will make a big difference. There is the obligation for every Department to submit an annual report on progress, which is a big plus for ensuring that this cannot slip away from the agenda.

There are some areas where we see a risk of the teeth not quite being there. It is understandable that DFID is using the DAC markers for disability inclusion, and that is widely done. In some senses, it is an



indicator of the extent of progress and is something that can be watched. Nevertheless, at the moment 10% of programmes have not reported anything against that marker and it is still a rather low figure for those included. Two-thirds had nothing.

We might ask whether that is a good enough question and if it might encourage a tick-box approach, rather than a more in-depth approach. That is why we thought theories of change and engagement with disabled people's organisations is the way to go. Australia, which is one of a number of countries that has had a programme for a while—two five-year strategies—has shown an even better way to go than just monitoring the market. I would like Paul to talk a bit more about what they do in relation to monitoring.

There is one other area where I would like to give some credit, which happened before our review started. The cadre of evaluation advisers has been trained in disability inclusion, so you can see, in one or two cases, that this is starting to have an effect. That is important and there needs to be more of it. Lastly, DFID has been active in promoting the use of the Washington Group questions, which is basically disaggregated monitoring. Again, there have been some successes in getting countries to do that in their census, but perhaps you could say more about the Australian model.

Paul Spray: This looks at how far every programme DFID does takes account of disability, so it is how far disability inclusion is incorporated in any programme, whatever it is trying to do. The question that DFID asks is whether some activities in this programme will help inclusion of people with disabilities. That is obviously a good question, but there is a risk that you could put something small on the side and that meant you could tick it and then it would be counted.

Interestingly, the Australians do the same thing. They ask of every programme how it is doing on disability inclusion. They ask two different questions. First, they ask if the programme has identified the barriers that stop people with disability from being included in their programme. That is an analytical question. The second question they ask is if disabled people's organisations have been involved in the programme. By asking those two questions, you get less chance of a tick-box approach.

The other interesting thing about the Australian experience is that they have been doing this for a number of years, and they have found that the proportion of programmes that pass has fallen. In 2015, 60% of their programmes were identified as taking account of people with disabilities; in 2017, it had gone down to 41%. The evaluators said that that is not a problem. It shows that the programme managers now understand better what it means to include people with disabilities. Whereas previously they had a tick-box approach, now they are taking it more seriously. One problem then is that you cannot simply regard the percentage that



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passes, year by year, as necessarily telling you whether you are improving. You have to do something more systematic and careful.

Q6 Henry Smith: You have already started to address this question with your example of the Australian system, but are there any other international examples of Governments working on disability inclusion that DFID could learn best practice from?

Dr Barton: Australia is the most relevant. We should give credit to Finland, Norway, Sweden and Germany, which addressed this much earlier than the UK. In the case of the first four, generally it is the case that the commitment was not sustained and the resources were not sufficient. There have not been as impressive results as in Australia. I remember it well, because I was on the board of the EBRD at the same time as the Australian Minister, who had been very active in bringing this in, and he did not slacken his will at the board of EBRD in encouraging disability inclusion.

The momentum that was generated there, through two five-year strategies—we are at the beginning of a process that can learn from those 10 years of experience—shows a number of important things about how the UK could best proceed to make a difference. It is about sustaining effort, and I mentioned that is where ICAI's and your continuing pressure will help, building the capacity of disabled people's organisations and this specialist expertise. They recognise in Australia the need for specialists in the disability team, and dedicated funding was important to assist in piloting mainstreaming. We know that DFID has done this with disaster resilience, so that offers an interesting possibility for disability. We talked a bit about the way in which Australia assesses the extent of mainstreaming.

Another area where DFID is following Australia is having a helpdesk. This has been good in DFID with violence against women and girls, so that is a promising area. Then guidance and support for engagement with DPOs is an important area. I do not know if there is more Paul would like to add.

Paul Spray: One interesting finding in our review looked at programmes implemented by USAID. It was an external look, not a USAID look. It saw that those programmes where it was written into the terms of reference for the organisations delivering them—they had written in specific things that would help disability inclusion—led to a better response and more likelihood that people with disabilities would be included than if you just let a general tender. That puts real emphasis on DFID looking at how far, through its procurement procedures, it requires the implementers of its programmes to take account of disability inclusion. I understand there has been improvement in that regard and there have been initiatives in that regard since our review.

Q7 Chair: We have the voluntary national review. Is there an opportunity here for the enhancement of the disability strategy, its implementation and perhaps lessons from other countries?



Dr Barton: I hope the voluntary national review will spur an increased focus on “leave no one behind”. I know there is a huge amount of work going on in the Department and across Government in relation to the SDGs, the voluntary national review and reporting in July. One area we have not picked up yet is that, when thinking of SDGs, the advantage is you are thinking of the whole of Government. Obviously DFID has led the charge here. We got the impression from the follow-up that other Government Departments start from a low base, which is why the central expertise will be more important. I hope it is an opportunity in that regard, and I am sure it is also an opportunity for civil society and DPOs in particular to press the case, because we have seen good engagement around the voluntary national review. I do not know if there is more on that.

Q8 **Chair:** DFID has had a strong emphasis on gender for some time. Are there lessons that can be learned from how DFID’s approach to gender has been mainstreamed, but also given a specific focus?

Dr Barton: There are lessons. That is another area where political leadership was enormously important. One of the things that cheered me very much in looking at the strategy is that there is clear integration between the gender strategy and the disability strategy. Mainstreaming is always challenging but it is essential if we are going to see success.

Q9 **Henry Smith:** This is just a supplementary. You mentioned the importance of political leadership and again used the Australian example, where the Minister was very much driving disability inclusion. Do you think we have political leadership on this issue, as far as DFID is concerned?

Dr Barton: Absolutely. I remember when I was in the chair, wearing my previous hat, at Bond, when Penny Mordaunt, the current Secretary of State, had her first public engagement as Minister. She had chosen her first engagement to focus exactly on disability. It was a fabulous event, and I know that DPOs and civil society generally were cheered by that focus, and we have not seen it slacken. You will see in the foreword to the strategy a real commitment there. It is clearly there.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed and congratulations on being model witnesses, who gave such concise answers that we are running early. I understand that our second panel is here, so we are going to move on. Please feel free to stay if you wish. Thank you very much.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Lord Bates, Darren Welch and Rachel Kean.

Chair: Welcome. Thank you very much for joining us this morning. This



is our first oral evidence session in our inquiry into the Department's disability strategy and, unusually, we are having DFID as witnesses at our first session as well as at the final session, because this is very much focusing on the Department's strategy. We have about an hour with you and, in that time, will seek to cover eight areas. We will go straight to questions, but feel free to introduce yourselves when you give your first answer.

- Q10 **Mrs Latham:** I will start with why you have chosen to focus DFID's disability work on the four pillars identified in the 2018 disability strategy. How did you decide which elements should be pillars and which should be cross-cutting issues?

Lord Bates: Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to give evidence at this stage. It is good to have the opportunity to do so, because we are very much in the formulation phase of the implementation steps of the disability strategy that was launched in December. To come to the heart of the issue about how we arrived at this, the first stage was to look at the Global Goals. There are 17 goals and there are 11 explicit references in the Global Goals to persons with disabilities, so we looked at three and decided to focus on those. Then we added a fourth about humanitarian and conflict situations, as that is an area we have been working on. That was essentially the driver as to how we got there.

- Q11 **Mrs Latham:** Do you think the cross-cutting issues are likely to have less attention and, therefore, less funding? If they are not going to get less funding and attention, how do you intend to divide departmental time, resources and funding between the four pillars and the cross-cutting issues?

Lord Bates: There is always a challenge with this. Where we have gone with this, if I can put down two markers, is first to say that we accept the strategy is ambitious. Therefore, it needs to be long term. Then again, the approach we have gone for with the implementation is to mainstream. We have had some learning from the 2015 disability framework. When we looked at what we could learn from that, we identified that leadership is absolutely critical, that diagnostics are important and that engagement with country offices is very significant as well. That fed into our approach. Let me just bring in Rachel and give the team an opportunity to contribute, as they might want to put something on the record.

Rachel Kean: I am Rachel Kean. I am an adviser on the disability inclusion team and was one of the lead drafters of the strategy, working on the scale-up. On the four pillars, the first thing I want to say is that our approach to disability inclusion, like most successful approaches, is twin-track. That means we acknowledge that we need both breadth and depth. Using the pillars is one of us doing the depth. They were identified, as the Minister said, using the Global Goals, but also we looked



at areas where we had a comparative advantage, where we thought there was most need and we could make the most difference.

The cross-cutting themes are not of lesser importance. They were chosen as we thought they were critical and needed to be highlighted. Just because they are not pillars as such, they are still being monitored. They are in our delivery plan. We are working closely with teams such as the gender team, and are sharing programming and training. Just because they are cross-cutting, it does not mean that we treat them with lesser importance.

Lord Bates: By the way, I should have introduced the team. Rachel is a policy manager within the disability inclusion team, and then Darren Welch is a policy director in the policy division, so I have good support today, and I intend to use it.

Darren Welch: I will add that the four pillars are designed to accompany people with disabilities throughout their lifecycle, so helping children through the education sector, then into work through our work on employment. Then, when people have fallen on hard times, there is a focus on social protection, including elderly people out of work, so we are trying to provide lifelong support.

Q12 **Mrs Latham:** Lord Bates, you talk about it being a long-term issue. We know that the UN published a flagship report on the alignment of disability inclusion with all the SDGs last December. I hope this is something on which DFID is actively engaging, but has DFID included a question on disability inclusion across the SDGs in the current VNR? If it is a long-term prospect, you may not have gone far down the route and, therefore, do not have anything to report.

Lord Bates: We have something to report on the VNR, in the evidence that we gave last week. First, we can put on record the personal commitment of not only DFID's Secretary of State, but also the Minister for Women and Equalities. That brings a huge amount of focus and weight on this particular area. We are regularly engaging on the SDG element as part of the VNR. Just yesterday in this building, we had a meeting with the inter-ministerial group chaired by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, at which we touched on the issues of the VNR. It is something that is being mainstreamed.

I talk about it taking stages and the strategy is important. We had evidence on which to draw for the strategy, which was the Global Disability Summit, which was a significant moment, internationally as well as nationally. We drew on that evidence and the ICAI report, which they spoke to earlier today, and then produced our own strategy. That then feeds into where we go from now. It feeds into the resources and programming going forward, through the standards and tests we have set. That is why I am saying we are at the beginning of what will be a long process.



- Q13 Mrs Latham:** We know there are data gaps from the UN report. What specific indicators does DFID use as part of the strategy to ensure you are gathering the right data to inform future policy planning and implementation because, as you say, it is long term and not just now?

Lord Bates: That was one of the key findings from the ICAI report that identified the gaps. That is why, when we set that out, we announced that we are planning a Disability Inclusive Development Programme, which is a £37 million six-year programme. It is run by research and evidence to gather the sort of data that we need to fill those gaps.

As part of that, in the written answers that we submitted to the Committee—I think it was in answer to question 3, from memory—there was a section where you asked what we were doing in terms of the data. An important part is the adoption of this disability inclusion policy marker. We are one of the first of the OECD to do this, and that marker is going to provide us with an increasing amount of evidence of where our programming is delivering against objectives and where the gaps are. We have also done work on disaggregation. I do not know if there is anything that you want to say about data disaggregation.

Rachel Kean: The disaggregation of data is within our minimum standards. We recognise that we currently do not have the data that we need, but we are improving. We have already seen a 15% increase of programmes that are disaggregating between 2017 and 2018. We have introduced free-access e-learning. We have a community of practice on the Washington Group, so we are making strides in this area. It is critical to both our minimum and our high achievement standards.

- Q14 Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** We have heard concerns that the 2018 strategy, although welcome, is short in detail and lacks resources behind it for specific deliverables. Is that a fair assessment or not?

Lord Bates: We are open to criticism. This is the first one that we have ever had, so there is always a danger. It is a bit like the discussion we were having last week at the VNR on the SDGs: if you take a transparent approach, you open yourself to being criticised, because you are the first ones to produce the data. I suppose we accept that. We are learning ourselves about the resources that will be needed to meet the strategy. At the moment, we have committed about £180 million of programming. This amounts to approximately £33.4 million of spend in that year. I am not quite sure what that is, so let me go from memory, which is easier here. We have the two elements: the £37 million is the Disability Inclusive Development Programme over six years, and then we have a new Aid Connect window on disability, which we will probably come to later, which is £22.4 million. We will get the exact number. Put the two together and that is what we have at the moment.

Our belief is that there will be more in those specific programmes, but the more interesting thing—I would venture to suggest for us and also perhaps for your Committee—is that with this policy marker we can



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determine the amount across all our programme spend on ODA that has the principal purpose of disability inclusion, a significant role in disability inclusion, targets it or does not target it at all. Those numbers for our early efforts, which we supplied in our written answers, suggest about £1.7 billion of programming has some element of targeting disability inclusion within it. I find that number encouraging and we want it to grow significantly over time.

Darren Welch: Can I add a couple of comments on what the Minister has said? There are two ways of coming at the resource issue. One is what we are doing internally, in terms of our own staffing, resourcing and capacity. The other is the programming resource. Within the four sectors that we have identified as those where we think we can have most impact on the lives of people with disabilities, we aim to double the number of programmes that have an element of addressing those needs. There is a clear target there, which we are monitoring through a cross-DFID board, which I chair quarterly. We then report to Ministers who, I can assure you, hold us to account to make sure that we are being rigorous in implementing their level of ambition.

Then we have our internal resource. You will know that our strategy requires every Department to adopt the minimum standards. We have 67 disability champions across the organisation helping with that. Our disability team is now 10 people centrally, so we are building the capacity that we need to deliver an ambitious strategy.

Lord Bates: We say 10, but in 2015 it was two. It is perhaps not at quite the scale of ambition that you or we may have, but it is heading significantly in the right direction.

Q15 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** When you write to us, it would be useful to elaborate on each of the pillars of action and the cross-cutting themes— inclusive education, social protection, et cetera—and how much is spent on each pillar and the distribution of that, and also how much is spent on mainstreaming and the core support. It would be useful for us to see those figures separated. I accept that you do not have them at your fingertips now, but it would be appreciated in the written response, because it would give us an idea of the areas where financial resources have been focused. One always has to focus.

Lord Bates: Can I press you a fraction on that? We will certainly do that. It is a good challenge to get us to set it out in that detail, but the strategy in developing programming in particular has a lead time. When you have a strategy and a commitment, the Secretary of State sets it out. It then flows into the resource allocation process and the single departmental plan. It then flows into design and, eventually, into programming. It may be that the snapshot we get now gives us a good base point, but we need to see it as something that will grow significantly.

Q16 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** That is a good point. I am sure we can come back



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in a year or six months and see where that has moved. We are looking at allocation at a moment. We all understand spend will be different from allocation as well, because things change in the world, don't they?

I wonder if you could tell me how DFID is able to systematically implement the disability strategy, when relevant staff are being redeployed at short notice for Operation Yellowhammer, the planning for a disaster Brexit. On what basis are staff working on disability being redeployed, as opposed to staff in other areas?

Lord Bates: We hoped we might escape that subject. We thought it was a safe haven, but perhaps not.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: Nothing is safe from the B-word, I am afraid.

Lord Bates: I was given the responsibility of no-deal planning—every Department has a no-deal planning Minister—and I assure you there was no competition for the job. I was nominated and went, kicking and screaming, to the meeting, so I know this in some detail. DFID has a significant commitment of staff deployment to that. We have protected certain areas. We have obviously protected everything to do with meeting the 0.7% target. We have protected safeguarding, as we are expected to do. Being quite frank, in preparing for this hearing we discussed these issues as a team. I would want to take back to the Secretary of State and the Permanent Secretary the possibility of ensuring that, because this work is of such importance, it too should be protected. If you give me a little more time, I can clear the lines on that, but I do think there is a strong case for it.

Q17 **Richard Burden:** Can we move on to look at what measures the Department has put in place to ensure that mainstreaming is implemented properly? The first question is whether disability inclusion is included among the job competences required of DFID advisers, in all policy areas.

Lord Bates: Rachel or Darren, would you like to address that?

Rachel Kean: It would be a pleasure. There have been multiple steps in terms of mainstreaming. The standards are core to how we mainstream. They cover the five areas and have also been accompanied by a technical resource hub that all advisers have access to. We have provided technical guidance on several of the standards to start with. We have prioritised particularly office-wide culture and approach, as we know getting transformational change in culture is foundational to everything else. We are starting to see engagement and empowerment of DPOs have a real impact. Some 14 of our offices have already produced their action plans and are engaging with DPOs, and that is 14 out of 32 country offices, which is a significant number.

In terms of how else we are mainstreaming, we have also been providing training. We recently had a conference with social development advisers, and held training and a clinic with them. They have had training in mental



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health. In terms of whether it can be a competency within all job profiles, that is a decision that cadre managers take, but our priority is ensuring that our 67 disability champions are fully equipped to make sure that each office has that champion who is well informed and can uphold the standards. They will then liaise directly with the central team to ensure they have support and also the technical helpdesk that has core expertise, as well as a place where they can share lessons learned and practice with each other. There is a good range; I am confident that the range of resources we have at the moment can ensure that we are mainstreaming well, because it is important that we do it right and not just that it is timely.

Lord Bates: That piece on disabled people's organisations is one of the roles that country offices play in this. In the configuration of our resources, we roughly have a third in Whitehall, a third in Abercrombie House, which you visited last week, and then a third in the field, roughly speaking. This helpdesk, which was established in January, will be a significant part of providing assistance and support to ensure that disability inclusion is across all business cases, annual reviews and that type of thing. How we deliver on the strategy will be important. Here, the disability inclusion board will have a significant impact. Its first meeting was in February, and it seemed to have all the right people in the room and there were some clear ambitions on this. Structure, systems, process and, as Rachel says, culture are in our approach to these areas.

Q18 **Richard Burden:** To clarify, are all existing projects required to report on disability inclusion? Do all new contracts have specific disability inclusion requirements built into them?

Lord Bates: When we are designing a business case, at the commissioning point, the smart rules that we follow in preparing that business case say that it needs to report on disability inclusion. As to whether all the programmes now cover it, I am not sure we are fully there in the annual report but, over time as those changes being made take effect and the legacy programmes move out, it will move to 100%.

Darren Welch: I have two points to add. One is that the board is there to hold feet to the fire, so the mainstreaming does not mean this dissipates in an organisation. Actually, we know we are not going to deliver our objectives unless a whole organisation is pulling in the same direction. That is what the board is there to do.

Yes, all programmes will be required to use the marker, which will show the extent to which they are addressing disability inclusion. At the moment, 96% of live programmes are adopting that marker, so we are nearly there and nudging towards 100% already. That reflects the enthusiasm within the Department to get on with the agenda.

Lord Bates: In trying to be as helpful and specific as possible, our ambition is for 100%. The ones that are not there at the moment would be the legacy ones that currently operate, but we are again setting



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ambitions for specific country offices to get those annual reviews up to 100%. That is where we want to be.

Rachel Kean: To be clear, the minimum standards say that all new business cases, annual reviews and terms of reference must include disability, and all new programmes must use the OECD DAC.

Q19 **Richard Burden:** The mechanism for testing that for programmes is the disability inclusion marker. How do you respond to the comment that, while that is useful in that it logs that disability is being taken into account, it does not measure anything about the extent to which disability inclusion is being taken into account or how it is being done?

Rachel Kean: It is an incredibly useful tool, but it is not the only tool that we use. The standards part helps us with monitoring and accountability. We have a checklist commission that we sent out, where we had teams self-assess against the standards. That comes directly to us. We have the delivery board, as we said. We use multiple mechanisms as well as the tool, because it is not just the number; it is also how it is done. We recognise that, which is also the purpose of providing the guidance and the technical support that we do.

Darren Welch: We will be publishing an annual statement of progress, so there will be a record of how we are doing.

Q20 **Richard Burden:** Would you say that all staff across DFID, in country offices and in other ODA-spending Departments, as far as you are aware of them, are aware of what is required of them in disability inclusion? Are there clear guidelines and training about what is expected?

Lord Bates: I would be interested to hear Rachel's view. We are each hesitating to find out what the opening line is going to be. I do not have that confidence yet, personally speaking, from what I have seen. I do not have the confidence to give that firm answer. There is a roll-out element that we need here. The strategy was there in December, so we are still in the early stages of the plan. I mentioned that we were working with the inter-ministerial group yesterday, and we are working with the Cabinet Office and the FCO in particular. DWP has a particular role in this and BEIS is a big ODA-spending Department. We are working with some of them but, as to whether it is all of them, I do not have that confidence at the moment.

Rachel Kean: That was a two-part question. The Minister perfectly answered about other ODA Departments, but the first part was within the Department and my answer would be a firm yes. We sent a commission to every single business unit and every single business unit responded. We had them self-report on every single one of those standards, and accompanied that with the guidance and strategy, so there is awareness in every team. We also have a network of 67 disability champions in every team so, yes, certainly that awareness is there.

Q21 **Chris Law:** This is a straight question. Have the country offices started



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reporting on their achievements so far in applying the minimum and high standards?

Lord Bates: Here we are starting with a focus on 15 country offices.

Rachel Kean: We have around six to seven high achievers.

Lord Bates: We are rolling it out across all the country offices.

Rachel Kean: First, I would like to say that it has been three months. Yes, they are reporting, but we are being as flexible and responsive as we can with them. They reported in February on where that baseline is and it was incredibly encouraging, particularly in country offices. We saw that over half have already formulated an action plan, which is part of their requirements. Over half had already engaged at least annually with local DPOs, so they are already implementing. With regards to high achievements, they are obviously much more stretching, but we are seeing some work towards that. A high-achievement group, led by Kenya, is being set up, as was brought up before in the trailblazers example. That is being modelled and we are learning from that.

Q22 **Chris Law:** That is helpful. It is quite soon to tell, but you see Kenya as a good role model. Within the 15 countries, which ones are applying the high standards set by DFID? How is applying the higher-level standards going between these countries? You referred to it at the end there. Are they learning from each other?

Rachel Kean: Yes, they are. The Minister can intervene or I can give some examples.

Lord Bates: We have four country offices that we are looking to get to achievement of high standards initially.

Rachel Kean: The standards themselves cover a huge amount. Certain country offices are doing well in some areas and less so in others. We are looking for an incremental rise across the board. We have identified certain ones for doing particularly impressive things. Jordan has produced its own theory of change. Bangladesh, Uganda and Kenya are particular ones that we have identified as striving towards high achievement, but we are hoping that offices will strive as high as they can. That is why the ambition is there.

Q23 **Chris Law:** We heard previously from ICAI of a problem in targets being set by the Department. Would it not be better for them to be set by country offices, so you can compare and they can compete?

Lord Bates: The strategy and leadership have to come from the Department as a whole. That is key to driving forward our ambition and is about the right balance but, from the way we are structured, we are not going to achieve the ambition set out in the strategy without huge buy-in and commitment from the country offices. The engagement with stakeholders and disabled people's organisations within countries has



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been impressive. That engagement in places such as DRC and Uganda, as has been mentioned, and even in places such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh, has been very influential in shaping the strategy going forward, so they have a key role to play, but this is something that comes from an ambition set out by the Secretary of State. The Permanent Secretary and the team have to implement that and show leadership from the centre. We want to keep that leadership, going forward, but to be informed by the country offices.

Q24 Chair: To follow that up, would you consider targets for each country office for engaging disabled people as staff?

Lord Bates: Do you mean in terms of actual numbers?

Chair: Yes, you have an overall target, as I understand it, but I am not aware that it is broken down between different offices.

Rachel Kean: At the moment, the standards say that we want to see all offices increase their number of staff with disabilities. We are looking for this to be a country-office-owned process. As you were saying, we do not want to dictate everything. As part of that, we are asking all countries to develop their own strategies, within which they will lay out their process for recruitment and retention, and their own goals. It is our job as a central team to support them in that, but not to dictate it.

Q25 Chair: You will challenge it, presumably.

Rachel Kean: Absolutely.

Q26 Chair: Another point that ICAI made earlier was around each country office having its own theory of change. What is your response to their concern that that is not explicit in the strategy?

Rachel Kean: It is a point on which we disagree, but we see their point. We developed a theory of change with the strategy itself. The purpose of that was to be a tool that country offices could use and adapt as they wish, which we are seeing. Four country offices are already developing their own. I know that Jordan has already done theirs, and we are also seeing the central theory of change used in programming. A recent programme in Ghana, with over £30 million on mental health, is an incredible programme that used the central theory of change, which is acting for them. We are committed to developing thematic theories of change for those four pillars. That is something that we have said we will do and we are in the process of doing, but we are already seeing results from the approach we have taken.

Q27 Paul Scully: What mechanisms does DFID have in place for rigorous and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the 2018 strategy's implementation, both internally and externally?

Lord Bates: The systems that we have in place are the initial reporting, which we have talked about, the minimum standards we now have and the high achievement standards. We have talked about the policy



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marker, the requirements under the smart rules, the terms of reference and annual reviews of all our new programmes. That is a measure of where we are at the moment. That is the reporting that is coming in.

One area where we feel a lot more work needs to be done is disaggregation. It is about getting down to the granular level of what is happening in country offices, because that is where the change will come and where you will see the problems. It raises questions, and we are not there yet, but this is one of the major programmes that is underway that I was referring to in my first answer. The Disability Inclusive Development Programme will help us to identify some of the gaps that are there.

Darren Welch: The board that we have established to oversee the implementation of the strategy has a really important role. I chair that on a quarterly basis, and we did a stock-take just before the first meeting last month, and it showed really good progress in terms of implementing. All our business units are currently on track to deliver compliance with the minimum standards by the end of the year, and we will meet again in another couple of months to check their progress and make sure they remain on track.

Q28 **Paul Scully:** Within those structures and systems, what are you doing to prepare staff for the evaluations, both centrally and in country offices?

Rachel Kean: For the evaluation and stock-take that was just mentioned, we provided very detailed guidance on exactly what was expected. We liaise in the central team with country offices five to six times a week to provide that guidance and supportive function. In addition to that, we have the technical resources mentioned. We have the help desk and part of its remit is to assist with the standards and that implementation. We have the resource hub I mentioned, which has a facility for learning and sharing best practice, and we have the technical guidance that we are writing and providing. We are trying to make sure staff are as well-equipped as possible for implementation and evaluation.

Lord Bates: All that we have said about reporting might sound a bold claim, except that this is the way that DFID works. It is a very good organisation for that and it is used to somebody setting out an ambition on gender and seeing it rigorously applied across all country offices, sites and programmes. It is used to somebody identifying a safeguarding issue, so, actually, the structures are there already. We are using the existing plumbing of the organisation rather than inventing new plumbing for it, and simply passing it to another area from which we seek to get information and implementation.

Q29 **Paul Scully:** Apart from sharing best practice and knowledge with other Departments, are you doing anything else to ensure that the ODA that is spent by other Departments complies with the disability inclusion standards?



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Lord Bates: I cannot think of anything in addition, other than that these being themes that are picked out by the cross-Whitehall group that looks at ODA spend. There are areas that we could look at to see if we could do more. We can certainly reflect on that question to see if we can come up with some other structure to ensure that all ODA-spending Departments are following the high standards that DFID has set.

Darren Welch: There is dialogue with Departments about that. The team is in touch with contacts across Whitehall. DFID spends the majority of ODA, 76% or thereabouts, so getting our own house in order on this agenda first is important. We are at the beginning but, as we get better, we will continue to push out good practice and guidance. We have worked with organisations such as the Prosperity Fund to make sure their guidance is inclusive, so it is happening.

Q30 **Paul Scully:** The final one from me is to ask what mechanisms you have to ensure accurate and consistent data collection on disability and inclusion across the DFID programmes. What steps are you undertaking to ensure that they regularly feed into planning and improve programming?

Lord Bates: That would be through the normal mechanism by which we capture that information, so through the annual review and annual reporting. When it comes to programming that is the prime way. Are there other ways that we collect that data? It is primarily through the annual reviews.

Q31 **Mrs Latham:** Can I go back to something Rachel said? I may have got this wrong, but I think you were saying that you speak to people in country five or six times a week. Is that every country we are working with, five or six times a week? That seems an impossible task.

Rachel Kean: It is not every single country five or six times. That is in general, out of all our country offices. The way our team works is to have specific leads who cover specific areas, so there is an Africa lead, an Asia lead, et cetera. Country offices know that, so when they have particular queries, they come directly to that lead, as central teams know. Often they can be small queries. They can be over phone calls and IM, or they can be sit-downs to look at action plans. That is a key part of the job for those of us who work internally, and it is accounted for within our time planning and our roles. A key part of what we do is provide that guidance and support function, as a central team.

Mrs Latham: Sorry, but I am still not clear exactly what you do. You speak to people five or six times a week on this issue. Is that one person, one country or every country? I am sorry; you are saying all sorts of things that are not very clear. What do you mean exactly by talking to people five or six times a week?

Rachel Kean: There are 32 country offices. Some of those will have requests or queries and they will contact us.



Q32 **Mrs Latham:** It might just be five people once a week.

Rachel Kean: It could just be five people once a week, exactly. They come to us and that number varies.

Mrs Latham: It was just that it sounded as if you were talking to every country five or six times a week.

Q33 **Chair:** Can I move on to mental health and psychosocial disability and inclusion? The Department has rightly described this as an area that is “woefully neglected by the international community”. When you were devising the strategy, did you not consider giving this a pillar of its own?

Lord Bates: That is a good question. The short answer is that we looked at whether it should be an area of its own, but we arrived at the idea that it should be more cross-cutting. To step back for a minute and look at the core pillars of education and livelihoods, and if you recognise within them health and then look at humanitarian conflict situations, there are specific elements of psychological and psychosocial care that are required under all those headings. It is naturally cross-cutting and to put it in a pillar of its own would have lost something that is needed. There was certainly quite an agonising process going on, as you can imagine, about which ones to select and how.

Rachel Kean: We approach it differently. We have a comprehensive approach to it, but it also covers a broader spectrum than just the strategy. It covers well-being of populations as well as inclusion of people’s psychosocial disabilities. This is where we get all techie, but we do not have an impairment approach; we take a social model to disability, looking at barriers, et cetera, so it was not a natural fit, but we recognised how important it was, hence why it has a particular focus.

Q34 **Chair:** Do you have mechanisms to track the spending that could be identified as related to mental health?

Lord Bates: We can point to some specific projects that we have identified, for example £6.1 million of new funding for mental health and psychosocial support in 2018 in Jordan. Our country programming is providing refugees with mental and psychosocial support in a number of countries, including 98,000 Palestinian refugees, 125,000 refugees in Turkey and 90,000 migrants in Yemen. Under the Syrian educational programme, 59,714 children in 172 schools are being supported. As to whether there is a catch-all number in the way that I mentioned earlier for disability inclusion as a whole, perhaps there is not.

Darren Welch: I have a couple of comments on this. This is a new area for us and, as the ICAI witnesses reflected, we are stepping up quite fast. We have somebody dedicated to work on it now, but the capacity of many countries where we work on this area is very limited. The number of mental health professionals you would find in the Central African Republic with whom you can work and build capacity is very low indeed, so this is going to take time. Somewhere like the Syrian region is a bit



different. If you look at our humanitarian work, we are doing an enormous amount, particularly through the education programmes, to try to get kids back in school and in a normal environment, interacting and playing again, being children, as part of their long-term rehabilitation. In the Syrian region there is a lot going on, but elsewhere it is going to take time.

- Q35 **Chair:** We addressed that in the previous Parliament, when the Committee looked at the Syrian refugee crisis and made recommendations, to which the Department responded positively. What is the scope for taking the Syrian experience in the positive way you have described and applying it to other conflict and post-conflict humanitarian crises? You think maybe of the Rohingya or people escaping the situation in South Sudan. There are a number of situations where lessons from the Syrian conflict could be applied in terms of psychosocial support for refugees and IDPs.

Lord Bates: You touched on an important element within this, which was highlighted at the Global Disability Summit. That is the need to work with our international multilateral partners, specifically in these cases with the UNHCR. We have been working with them on the Global Compact on Refugees, for instance, in seeking to provide that type of care, because they will be the people who deliver it. Across so much of this, there is so much that DFID can do, but the real impact will be from working with international agencies, such as the UN and the World Bank, reaching out in partnership with them to deliver these types of programmes on the ground. That is where we have been raising this more. I do not know if there is anything else.

- Q36 **Chair:** That is helpful. I have one more on this. From looking at the Washington Group questions on disability, only one really relates to mental health, which is the question, "Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?" Do you accept there is a bit of a data gap? If you do accept that, how will you fill that data gap specifically for issues around mental health and psychosocial support?

Rachel Kean: We promote the use of the extended set of the Washington Group for that specific reason, in that we feel it gives a better and more comprehensive image, and that is why. Yes, there is a huge data gap and that is one of the things we recognise and are focusing on. You mentioned a policy marker earlier and we do not think a specific policy marker on mental health is the right approach. Instead, we want a comprehensive approach looking at the impact of our work on mental health and well-being in everything that we do.

- Q37 **Chair:** Are there other donors that we can learn from on this, which are ahead of us? You rightly said it is a relatively early piece of work.

Lord Bates: In some of the work we have done, we have worked quite closely with the Netherlands. Australia has always had a very strong role in this. Norway has also been very much to the fore, but it is a specialist



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area and what we are doing is ground-breaking. In this context, the World Health Organization is another key interlocutor and is absolutely critical in terms of reaching the ambition we have.

Q38 Mrs Latham: How are you incorporating sexual exploitation and abuse? Some or all of the people we are talking about with disability are likely to be more vulnerable than anybody else. They have been through conflict very often or they are in post-conflict situations. How are you embedding that issue into your strategy?

Lord Bates: You are absolutely right to point to it. Both the risks of sexual exploitation and harassment, because of power imbalances, are very specific among people with disabilities. That was one of the reasons why there was a commitment at the Safeguarding Summit. I will get the specific detail on this, but I recall that one of the commitments made was to focus on this protection. On 18 October, 22 donors signed a commitment document that recognised the extent of this issue and referenced individual commitments. Does that actually answer the question? No, it does not. "We are negotiating the inclusion of disability in an instrument to support and improve management and prevention of sexual exploitation and harassment, being developed by the Development Assistance Committee".

We will get some more detail on the commitment made there, but you are spot on to recognise that this is a particular issue. Those are two issues in recent history, whether safeguarding or disability, which overlap in terms of our ambitions. I will get some more details and put them in a letter.

Q39 Mr Sharma: The strategy put more importance on assistive technology to inclusion into education, job markets and other areas of life and livelihoods. What specific steps are you taking to ensure your commitments in this area are monitored, achieved, and scaled up over time?

Lord Bates: Assistive technology is key and very exciting, where we lead some amazing technologies that can improve people's ability to learn in the workplace and earn a livelihood. Those technologies are there. We announced at the Global Disability Summit an investment of around £20 million in the global partnership AT Scale, which is an area that the Secretary of State has put great emphasis on, in the belief that investing more in adaptive technologies is a key thing for us to do. We had a specific standalone programme that has recently doubled in value. Darren, if you have some more information, please share it.

Darren Welch: There are two angles to this approach. One is trying to take some of the learning we have from our market-shaping initiatives elsewhere. If you look at what has happened in vaccines, for example, we have made advance market commitments and used other sorts of techniques to create demand in order that supply will then come. We are now trying to apply those sorts of techniques to assistive technologies as



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well, so it is a big programme that, as the Minister said, we have increased based on some early results.

They are not always terribly complex things that make a real difference to people's lives: for example, a pair of spectacles. We are building that area but, at the same time, we need to work on the enabling environment to make sure the political will is there and that we get the policy reform and the private investment, and strengthen service delivery, so that those technologies can then reach the end users. We are working on both those tracks but, as the Minister says, it is an exciting new venture for us, harnessing the power of the markets.

Q40 Mr Lewis: The 2018 strategy does not provide a clear mechanism for engagement with the private sector through specific programmes or projects. Do you have any particular plans in terms of, for example, the economic empowerment pillar to be more specific and clear about that engagement with the private sector?

Lord Bates: That is a great question, because it is critical to the delivery of a lot of our ambitions to ensure we have that. One of the things I was most encouraged about at the Global Disability Summit was the way we had some serious international players—people such as Cisco, Microsoft, BT and Unilever—there at the summit, signing up to the commitments that had been made. Now we have set ourselves a goal to continue our external engagement on the strategy, both with NGOs but crucially with the private sector, because it has the resources and the reach to assist in a lot of these areas, so it is crucial that we engage.

Darren Welch: The Secretary of State and our Ministers are very keen that we do not do everything, but act as a catalyst and facilitator for broader partnerships. This is one of those areas where we are looking at that approach and how we can help NGOs and DPOs to build relationships with the private sector and vice versa. There is a window under our Aid Connect programme that is trying to do exactly that, build those partnerships, but we do not necessarily need to be at the heart of them; we make them happen.

Q41 Mr Lewis: How long will it take to achieve a step change in terms of private sector involvement? Are we talking 12 or 18 months?

Lord Bates: In some areas, from some of the conversations I have had, some of the large businesses are slightly ahead of Government in what they are doing. They are very innovative. Clearly the ability for that to happen tails off as you move down to the smaller enterprises, but to have the first ever window in Aid Connect of £22.3 million for disability inclusion is a real opportunity to get the private sector working with NGOs and Government to come up with the kinds of solution we are looking at. As a result of the programmes we will commission there, I hope we will see the kind of step change that you are looking for.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed for your evidence today. There is a



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lot from both sessions today that will enable us to get our teeth into this inquiry. There is a sense of disability being given the priority it deserves, but we will want to delve into some of the detail to make sure the impact is maximised. Thank you very much indeed, all three of you.