

International Development Committee

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

Tuesday 18 June 2019

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Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Richard Burden; Mr Nigel Evans; Mrs Pauline Latham; Chris Law; Paul Scully; Mr Virendra Sharma; Henry Smith.

Questions 75 - 114

Witnesses

I: Baroness Sugg CBE, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development; Gerard Howe, Head of Inclusive Societies Department, Department for International Development.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Baroness Sugg CBE and Gerard Howe.

Q75 **Chair:** Good morning, everyone. Minister, can I welcome you to your first oral evidence session with us? Gerard, welcome back. We have nine questions that we are seeking to cover with you over the next hour. Let me kick off. There has been a lot of change in the ministerial team at the Department in recent months. Does disability inclusion remain a priority for the Department?

Baroness Sugg: It does indeed. There has been change, as you point out. Disability inclusion was really championed by the previous two Secretaries of State—and will continue to be championed by this one—and by my predecessor, Lord Bates. I have been very lucky that I have inherited a lot of ongoing work and a great framework for delivery, so my role now is to really ensure we continue to prioritise it across the Department and that we deliver on the commitments we made at the summit and since then.

Chair: Thank you. You are also leading on the voluntary national review and the sustainable development goals.

Baroness Sugg: I am.

Q76 **Chair:** We await the final review's publication, I believe quite soon. Looking at the emerging findings document that was published a little while ago, disability features in there, but only with reference to goals 8 and 10. Are you able to give us an indication that disability will feature more prominently in the final review document?

Baroness Sugg: Yes, it is referenced across the SDGs and, therefore, across the VNR, which will be a much more lengthy and substantial document than the emerging findings document was. The disability inclusion team has emerged from the start of the process of the VNR. As you know, DfID has been holding the pen on that, but we have been working very closely with other Departments. The main goal that we have inputted into is probably goal 10, which you mentioned, but there are also 4, 5, 8 and 16, and the whole leave no one behind agenda is absolutely key on this. You will see it referenced throughout the VNR.

Q77 **Henry Smith:** Welcome. What specific guidance has been given to DfID country offices, business units and so forth to ensure that disability priorities are being mainstreamed and prioritised?

Baroness Sugg: We really want to make sure that this is mainstreamed across all our country programmes, as well as the London office. We think we have sufficient resource and staffing on that and we are seeing really good progress. We did a baseline assessment in February, when we were starting from a low base, to be honest with you, but we are seeing really promising progress on that.



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We have 14 country offices, which is about 61%, carrying out a stocktake of programmes to look at whether they are taking into account proper inclusivity. We also have a senior level delivery board, which has met twice and is meeting again in September, to really check on progress on that. Quite recently, in the last couple of months, we have started a helpline¹ for country offices to contact experts and ask questions on whether they are properly taking this into account. There was a recent women and girls family planning programme that contacted the helpline² with questions about how it can best ensure that it is taking into account the needs of people with disabilities in its programming.

Q78 Henry Smith: I am very pleased to hear about the progress since February. Further to that, what efforts are being made to ensure that those minimum standards are being met? There is the classic question that this is having meaningful impacts on the ground rather than the box-ticking exercise that this sort of initiative can sometimes be.

Baroness Sugg: That is a danger sometimes, but there is real enthusiasm and drive in the Department and country offices. We have disability champions now in every business unit, who are responsible for making sure that this is not just a box-ticking exercise. You mention the minimum standards and the aim is for every country office to reach them by the end of the year. We are on track for that. It may not be that we get a full 100% on that, but we are, through the delivery board and through the disability champions, making sure that we are progressing towards that for the end of the year and learning from where we are.

Gerard Howe: Also within our delivery plan, we have committed that four DfID country offices will meet the higher end of those minimum standards. I wrote to eight country offices around six weeks ago now inviting them to take part in these higher standards. Those are country offices where we already know that work is ongoing and there is commitment at that country office. I said to them we would provide them with a set of the following things: a dedicated point of contact from our disability inclusion team, resource to review both their stocktake and any action plans on disability inclusion, access to the helpdesk, first notice of any learning and training, and accompaniment as they move towards those high standards.

Exactly as Baroness Sugg said, we also have this network of now 68 champions across the Department. There was one more this week. They are engaging and the disability inclusion team is making sure that resources and learning are flowing through that network.

Baroness Sugg: We are seeing really good examples in-country of this happening in the real world. We have a disability action plan within DfID Syria and DfID Kenya, which we partnered with on the summit, where we are seeing real programmes being delivered.

¹ Witness correction, helpdesk not helpline

² Witness correction, helpdesk not helpline



Gerard Howe: The Syria point is a really good one. When you are thinking about capability, DfID Syria has two inward secondees from humanity and inclusion, who are world-leading experts on disability and humanitarian affairs, and that is shaping the action plans. That is us providing capability into that country office.

Q79 **Henry Smith:** In that response from both of you, you have really anticipated my next supplementary, but I will press a little further. You mentioned 14 country units, which you said was 61%. What is the progress looking like in terms of reporting across all country units? There will be a variation with some being ahead of others, but this is just to clarify and confirm a priority across all country units.

Baroness Sugg: It is fair to say that is a work in progress. The aim is for the end of the year and that is what we are building up to. The next delivery board, which I mentioned, is happening in September and that is going to be a proper stocktake on progress, trying to highlight where there may be some gaps and making sure we are speaking to those country offices and giving them the resource they need to reach those standards.

Q80 **Henry Smith:** As we speak now at the halfway point of 2019, you believe you are on track to meet the end-of-year targets.

Baroness Sugg: We are at just over 60%³ at the moment. As I say, we want to see 100%. Whether we get there or not is a different matter, but that is what we are aiming for.

Q81 **Chris Law:** It is really helpful to hear some of the things you have put in place to try to get offices up to a higher standard. I want to know what further mechanisms DfID has set up to track and report progress against commitments that were made at the global disability summit.

Baroness Sugg: One of the great outputs of the summit was this long list of commitments from our international partners, from the private sector and from DfID itself. We are responsible for making sure we reach them. On the more general piece, we launched a self-reporting survey in April to see how everybody is doing on those commitments. About 75% of the commitments are underway, 10% are reported as completed and 70% say that the summit made it easier for them to work in this area.

One year on from the summit, we will be publishing an update on those commitments. At the moment the commitments are there for everyone to see online, but we have not yet published the progress on them and we will be doing that in the autumn this year.

Q82 **Chris Law:** Can I ask a bit about the self-reporting surveys? Is it a scripted questionnaire? How does it work?

Gerard Howe: One hundred organisations responded to that. It was asking them to give account to the very specific commitments they made

³ Witness correction, witness clarified 'in some of the standards, not all'



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at the disability inclusion summit. For example, for the 10 national Governments that said, “We will integrate the Washington Group questions in our census and surveys”—which no doubt we will come to—we simply said to them, “Tell us about the progress you are making in meeting that commitment”. That is being led by a small team of people who are pulling it together for us.

To add further detail on the reporting, we are aiming for an independent analysis and reporting in the future. The one-year-on report is the first stage of that. One of the really interesting things for us is how we align this with the formal reporting under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The team who were at the conference of state parties last week in New York, which is the premier event on disability inclusion, were talking to the commission⁴ responsible for that convention and agreeing that perhaps in the future the secretariat for looking at the global disability summit commitments would sit within the commission⁵ to enmesh those, so they become a formalised part, where possible, of a state report. That step of accountability is critical. We have always been led by the UN convention. We have always worked within it and that is just aligning it more strongly.

Baroness Sugg: It is making sure there is that independent judgment on us as well, rather than us marking our own homework. Within DfID itself, we made 17 commitments and 11 of those are complete. Six are not due yet, but they are on track to do so. I am happy to share a bit more information on that in writing, if you like, but that will also be published in August⁶ alongside the rest of the commitments.

Q83 Chris Law: DfID is also leading on monitoring the progress of other countries and organisations, which you have touched on. How do you ensure that the progress updates are systematically collected and results publicised? Is that still within the self-reporting survey with a view to next year doing an independent analysis, or is it done differently?

Baroness Sugg: The one-year-on report will cover all those commitments and where we have got to on that. How are we collecting that information, Gerard?

Gerard Howe: We are also doing three in-depth country studies in Kenya, Nepal and Jordan on those commitments. Ultimately, the degree to which national Governments are held accountable for the commitments they make towards their citizens with disability⁷ will depend on that political settlement, so this is also part of how we engage with

⁴ Witness correction, Committee not commission

⁵ Witness correction, Committee not commission

⁶ Witness correction, Published in the autumn, not August

⁷ Witness correction, Disabilities not disability



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disabled people's organisations and mechanisms in-country, which our country offices are doing.

At the conference of state parties a Nigerian DPO came up to the disability inclusion team and said that there had been two bits of legislation, one in Jigawa State and one in Kano State, that have been passed this year. Kano State has a population of 9 million people in terms of scale. These disabled people's organisations have been arguing for this change for 17 years. They came to the team and said, "Finally, after 17 years we have seen this legislation change". They were thrilled by it. We are creating that momentum, both in law and in practice.

Q84 Chris Law: Once you get that information, how do you review it and is there a follow-up process? I was looking at what VSO had suggested, that reviews should be every six months and follow-up processes every two years. Do you agree with that?

Baroness Sugg: That is something we are considering. As I say, we are focused on the one-year-on report, and then working with the UN on how regularly we report against it and how we report against it, so it is not something we have decided on yet.

Q85 Chris Law: Lastly, in terms of DfID's country offices offering assistance in co-ordination with state partners, how far are you going with this in developing implementation and monitoring frameworks for commitments those states have made?

Baroness Sugg: As Gerard said, the country offices are working very closely with the Governments in-country on that. They are aware of the commitments that were made and we are offering assistance where we can on that. There was an example in Afghanistan, where we supported a member of the statistical office to go to a Washington Group training session in London to help them use those better. There are a number of different examples of where we are giving that direct support to Governments, in order for them to deliver on their commitments.

Gerard Howe: Another good example is in Ghana, where a member of our disability inclusion team who leads on mental health went and sat with the country team for two months to develop a £39 million programme working on mental health and social protection, which was part of the Government of Ghana's commitment to step up on mental health. That is going to reach a quarter of a million people. We are providing direct support to meet those commitments.

Q86 Mrs Latham: When we last saw your predecessor, Lord Bates, he seemed to accept that the strategy and its delivery plan needed to be more specific on the deliverables, attached resources and how delivery is being measured. Are you intending to republish that report?

Baroness Sugg: The original strategy, the first ever one, was ambitious and comprehensive. It has that high ambition that has led to a lot of positive work being done, but we have also heard that feedback from



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DPOs and NGOs during this inquiry, so we are planning on publishing a revised version of the delivery plan itself by the end of the year.

- Q87 **Mrs Latham:** You talked about Nigeria and you have talked about disability champions. Are the country offices encouraged to develop their own contextual theories, so that they fit in with their priorities?

Baroness Sugg: We have a central theory of change on disability inclusion, but I absolutely agree that it needs to be country specific, so they can work out what action they need to prioritise. The example Gerard just gave of Ghana is a good one. They took that central theory of change and then developed a country action plan on what they were going to do. From that came the £39 million programme, which is going to benefit 250,000 people. The central staff within DfID are helping country offices develop that action plan itself. We are also developing a further theory of change based on the four pillars within the strategy, which will help country offices develop programmes within those specific areas.

- Q88 **Mrs Latham:** Going back to what Henry was saying about the numbers of country offices that have produced their action plans for disability inclusion, I have here 14 out of 32. Was that what you said earlier?

Gerard Howe: If I may clarify, in February, 61% of DfID country offices had done a stocktake of their programmes and 40% had an action plan in place. That has developed since then, but we have not gone back to reassess that, because we will be doing that as part of our one-year-on reporting and looking at that in the disability inclusion delivery board.

- Q89 **Mrs Latham:** How are these action plans measured?

Gerard Howe: As I said earlier on, one of the things that we are doing is offering support from the central team to the evolution of those action plans. For example, for the four at least high-achieving country programmes, we are offering direct support from our policy team in London and Scotland to review that action plan to test.

Within the minimum standards, as you know, is engagement with disabled people's organisations. We would expect those country offices to be sharing their action plans with disabled people's organisations as a vital part of the process going forward.

- Q90 **Mrs Latham:** If the top four are being helped by you, what is happening to the bottom ones?

Gerard Howe: The rest will meet the minimum standards. That is what we have set out in the implementation strategy.

- Q91 **Mrs Latham:** Only the minimum standards.

Gerard Howe: That is our commitment, yes.

- Q92 **Mrs Latham:** Do you encourage them to share expertise and best practice between countries?



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Baroness Sugg: Yes, and having the stronger disability inclusion team within London helps on that, because we can share there as well. I am not sure if we have regular country sharing.

Gerard Howe: We do. There is a disability inclusion network across DfID that the disability inclusion team runs. Those 68 champions are all part of a learning network, so they are sharing. We have trained the advisory cadre, so social development advisers, who are present in every country, and are playing a very active role in this and sharing learning across.

I would emphasise that achieving the minimum standards within the period we have set out is for any organisation quite challenging. While we talk about them as minimum standards, they are quite advanced compared to where we were a couple of years ago. We fully expect that some countries will evolve far further than that and we are already seeing that happen.

Q93 **Richard Burden:** One of the worries we have expressed before is about the issue of cross-cutting strategy themes, and in correspondence your predecessor confirmed that the Department is unable to track spend on cross-cutting strategy themes. Therefore, it is really difficult to assess progress against spend and make informed decisions on investment going forward. Is that something you are addressing and, if so, how?

Baroness Sugg: It is difficult to do that and to differentiate between what would and would not count in this area. The very fact that they are cross-cutting themselves means they are covering lots of different programmes, which has been difficult to analyse.

We have made a series of pledges in that area and we are looking at what we can do further to see the detail of that, but we do not think there should be separate policy markers on this area of spend. Instead, we need to track spend where we can, but make sure that across all our programmes we are dealing with those cross-cutting topics.

Gerard Howe: Across the cross-cutting area, as you know, which are gender, stigma and discrimination, and assistive technology, we track gender. There is a policy marker for gender inclusion. We can see through our systems that over £2 billion of spending is marked against some impact on disability inclusion and some aspect of gender inclusion, so we can track that.

There is no way of tracking stigma and discrimination, because that can cover a whole range of inputs and activities. At this point there is no way of tracking mental health, because we take a broader view on mental health and psychosocial support, which can mean preventing people from experiencing stress, anxiety and depression as well as the mechanisms to treat them. There is no one single denominator on that at the moment. On assistive technology, we have shown spend and provided that to the Committee in the earlier responses.



- Q94 **Richard Burden:** Presumably it would be possible to adopt a budget code on psychosocial disabilities or mental health. That could flag up what is happening there, could it not?

Baroness Sugg: Yes. Deciding what budget codes to have adds to the complications around tracking spend and the resources of it, so we have to decide quite carefully which markers we use. On mental health in particular, we are looking at publishing a position paper by the end of the year on how we better integrate mental health within all our projects, but at the moment we do not think it would be a good idea to allocate a specific marker for that.

- Q95 **Paul Scully:** We have had a number of witnesses, in both oral and written evidence, who have raised questions about the inadequacy of the Washington Group questions, coming back to those, and in particular the inherent data gaps. How is DfID planning to address the data gaps on people with disability?

Baroness Sugg: That was raised with me when I had a meeting with disability organisations. They are not a perfect tool, but they are the simplest and most practical way of collecting disaggregated data. We were one of the first champions of them. We are encouraging the use of the extended set of four additional questions across all the different organisations.⁸ One of the other benefits is that they are internationally recognised. They are an internationally accepted set of questions.

While recognising they are not perfect, they are the best way of doing things at the moment, rather than trying to come up with our own. I know there are various longer surveys that could be done, but that can then add to the cost and complexity, which is not what we want to do, because that may well discourage further work in the area.

- Q96 **Paul Scully:** I have a handle on the six short questions. How does it encapsulate mental health?

Gerard Howe: There are four additional questions on anxiety and depression. To give you an example, the question on anxiety is, "How often do you feel worried, nervous or anxious?" That is the first question. Then it asks people to talk about the levels of worry, anxiety or nervousness. Those are translated and made contextually relevant, so they are meaningful to people. The depression question is the same. Exactly as Baroness Sugg said, we began this in 2016, partly because we felt we needed to draw attention to it, but it has created its own momentum as a conversation about disability inclusion.

There have been two really good examples recently. Through our work, we persuaded the Government of Ghana to take on the short set, but now to include the additional four questions in their Ghana household survey and in the census. That is a first for Ghana and that is really

⁸ Witness correction, Enhanced (not extended) set of Washington Group questions on mental health



important. Equally importantly, that has created an environment where they have asked disabled people's organisations to come in and talk to them about that.

Similarly, under the girls' education project in Zimbabwe, they wanted to know whether they were reachable to disabilities. They took the Washington Group questions and they found out there were far more girls with disabilities than they thought. Now they are working with disabled people's organisations to reach those girls as a consequence of that knowledge.

It is also worth saying, under the disability in development programme⁹, we are funding the London School of Hygiene and others to do further work on other forms of questions that can reveal further forms of disability and exclusion, so we do not put all our efforts on the Washington Group questions, but it was a really important first step.

Baroness Sugg: There will be instances where more in-depth questions will need to be asked. There is an example of one of the disability summit commitments from the Government of Myanmar on doing a much fuller survey on that, so we are also seeing that happen.

Q97 **Paul Scully:** The interesting gap is not just the questions, but the answers, with there being just four answers or four levels of answer. Tom Shakespeare spoke to us about the thresholds being wrong. Either you have some difficulty, which is too low a threshold for disability and suddenly 25% of the population is disabled, or you have a lot of difficulty, which is too high a threshold and you have a prevalence of about 3%, so there is a gap there. I was wondering if you have a comment on that.

Baroness Sugg: You are quite right to point that out and Tom was the person who raised that with me as well. As I say, they are not perfect. We are looking to improve the data we collect and the tools of how we use it. We are investing in the Washington Group questions on e-learning and encouraging the use of those wider questions, as you say, but we are also working closely with the Washington Group on seeing how we can develop things as we go.

Q98 **Paul Scully:** Are people within DfID, including in the country offices that are proficient in the proper use of the Washington data, able to use other qualitative data to plug any of the gaps?

Baroness Sugg: On the Washington Group questions, as I mentioned, we have an e-learning tool on how to use them. With the country offices, this is a bit of a work in progress. Some will be expert, but some are still learning how to do it. We are setting up a new community of practice, where people can share best practice on that. As I mentioned previously, we are supporting national statistics offices to learn more about the Washington Group questions and how to use them.

⁹ Witness correction, Disability inclusive development programme



Q99 **Paul Scully:** You mentioned Ghana and Myanmar specifically, did you not? I was going to ask you about how you engage with Governments.

Baroness Sugg: Afghanistan was the previous example I did, where we supported someone from the national statistics office to come to London and take part in that training session. We are also working on more training offers across the network.

Gerard Howe: I would add two further reflections. First, up until a few years ago, there was no information at all and we felt that using something that had some international legitimacy was better than nothing at all. We recognise that there are various variances to come. The second one, and the point I made to Baroness Sugg yesterday, was that lots of people want to know about prevalence and prevalence is important. You want to know how many people are living with disability, but what really matters to us is whether we are changing the lives of people with disabilities and whether they are experiencing better outcomes.

Looking at the way in which the Washington Group questions can help us get to that point, and building up better data analysis to understand that, is really important. Our statistical cadre is engaging, as Baroness Sugg says, with rolling this out, but it is always only the beginning; it is not the end.

Baroness Sugg: The VNR process has been really interesting, looking at how much data we can disaggregate in our own country. We are nowhere near 100% on that. We are at about 70% at the moment. There is definitely this thirst for much more detailed data, and through the DID programme and through the country offices we are trying to develop that further, but for now, as we said, the Washington Group questions are what we have on an international basis, so that is what we are investing in improving at the moment.

Q100 **Mr Sharma:** Lord Bates previously suggested that DfID could find ways to ensure ODA spending outside DfID adheres to disability inclusion standards. What progress have you made so far?

Baroness Sugg: It is fair to say our focus has been on DfID. As you know, it spends about 75% of ODA and that is really what we have been focusing on within the strategy, but there is still the other 25% within other Departments, so we are working proactively with other Government Departments, such as DWP. As Gerard mentioned, last week Baroness Buscombe led the delegation. That was the first time we had a Minister at COSP.

Gerard Howe: It was the very first time in the UK.¹⁰

Baroness Sugg: DWP is a key partner for us, as are the FCO and the Cabinet Office. We are doing what we can to share the learning that we

¹⁰ Witness correction, A first for a domestic Minister to CoSP



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have got over the last year with those other Departments, encouraging them to collect data on their projects, to monitor if people with disabilities benefit from their programmes and to engage better with people with disabilities and their representative organisations. There are a couple of inter-ministerial groups where we do that. There is the ODA inter-ministerial group, where it is on the agenda to be discussed, and then the domestic IMG on disability. Lord Bates went to the last one and presented a paper on what we are doing, in order to share that best practice.

Q101 Mr Sharma: I know you partially answered the question, but do other Departments collect data on disability inclusion in their ODA spending projects and share it systematically with DfID?

Baroness Sugg: I do not know the answer to that question.

Gerard Howe: At the level you have just asked, the answer is no. They do not systematically share that data with DfID. The only additional point I would make is that the helpdesk we have established is also available to colleagues across Government, so we are encouraging colleagues to approach the helpdesk with the questions they might have on how to ensure their spend is disability inclusive.

Baroness Sugg: We are also encouraging them to start using the marker, so we can properly track what they are doing, but there is not that automatic report at the moment and we need to work on that.

Q102 Mr Sharma: Lastly, do the minimum disability inclusion standards apply to ODA spending by a Government Department other than DfID?

Baroness Sugg: No, they do not. This is for the DfID business units, but that is a very good point. I am sure we have shared it with other Government Departments, but that is something we should be encouraging them to do.

Gerard Howe: In our overseas network, where DfID country offices are inviting disabled people's organisations or engaging with them, where that is led and where we are co-located with other parts of Government, which we are almost everywhere now, we are going to see some of that impact as well.

Q103 Mr Sharma: Generally, I worked in the disability field before becoming a Member of Parliament, so I have some understanding of the subject. You look first at whether the system is in place where the other Departments automatically start monitoring and evaluating. On the other side, it is encouragement. I personally would be interested to see whether there is a system in place where the Departments automatically start—I am not saying they get a tick mark—to see it seriously and evaluate the position we are in.

Baroness Sugg: I am afraid there is not at the moment and we have really focused on that 75% of ODA. We are trying to share the best practice we have within DfID with other Government Departments, but



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we are not there yet. We are not at the automatic reporting or, indeed, even the tracking of the spend, so that is an area we need to start our focus on once we have our own house in order.

Q104 Chris Law: As a small supplementary, when we were looking at the sustainable development goals, one of the suggestions that had been made was for Cabinet Office to lead on that kind of systematic procedure. Do you think it should be DfID or perhaps the Cabinet Office that should be leading on this particular area?

Baroness Sugg: On this particular agenda, we have the real expertise in DfID and, from an ODA perspective, we should be leading on that. We have come a very long way over the last couple of years and certainly since the disability summit. We have the people now and the expertise in-house, and we should be using that to share with other Government Departments.

Q105 Mr Evans: Are you using the expertise you have in-house to ensure that the private sector has a proper disability-inclusive development strategy? Can you explain to us exactly what you are doing to ensure that they are playing their full part?

Baroness Sugg: That is a really important point to make and we are never going to reach our global goals unless we have proper engagement from the private sector. We have our own private sector department in DfID and the disability inclusion team is working very closely with them to develop more detailed plans. We saw some really good commitments and engagement from the private sector at the summit, and we need to follow them up and make sure they have been reached.

We have a number of different programmes that we are doing with the private sector. We also recently sponsored a new disability inclusion category at the *FT* Awards to praise and encourage the private sector where it does things right. We need to do more on that. For one of our funding programmes, Aid Connect, there is a disability window on that, where we are encouraging partnerships between NGOs, DPOs and the private sector to come together to apply for funding from DfID to work in this area.

Q106 Mr Evans: You are relatively new into the post, so when you look at it from the viewpoint of the private sector do you think, "Gosh, this is far more advanced than I thought it would be", "About right" or, "We have to do a lot more here"?

Baroness Sugg: We need to do more. I have found, in all our private sector engagement, that there is some really good best practice and really good partners out there, but sometimes they are the usual suspects. That is great and we need to continue working with them, but it is that breadth of private sector involvement. Unilever and Cisco are great. There are various different private sector organisations that do great work in this, but we are not seeing that wide breadth of engagement and we really need to encourage it. By trying the consortium



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approach and the Aid Connect, we are hoping to bring more private sector companies in to be involved in the delivery.

Q107 **Mr Evans:** It will be interesting to see the recognition of some of these private sector companies as well, so we know which are working with best practice and those that are deficient for whatever reason. That is important, as is the knowledge perhaps that some contracts will be dependent in the future on ability or at least you knowing that they are doing their level best to do best practice.

Baroness Sugg: There are some specific issues that are naturally going to be more appropriate for the private sector, so assistive technology for example. We are really scaling up our funding for that. Almost picking out the ones where private sector companies are going to be able to feel a bit more comfortable, I suppose, to come in and deliver these things is going to be important.

Gerard Howe: Could I add a couple of specifics? On engagement with our private sector department, Baroness Sugg talked earlier on about secondments. We have agreed with the private sector department of DfID that it will take on an inward secondee from a disability inclusion organisation to help flesh out that engagement. Under the Aid Connect programme, we are going to be training 280 Kenyan disabled people's organisations in-country to engage with the private sector, reaching 1,200 young entrepreneurs.

Finally, we are really proud of the fact that CDC at the summit agreed to a guidance note on disability inclusion by the end of 2019. That will include not only CDC, but IBRD and IFC, so three of the premier lending institutions of private sector finance globally have said, "We are going to take disability inclusion seriously". That is going to have a massive impact going forward.

Q108 **Mr Evans:** Funnily enough, I wanted to drill a little deeper into that guidance note. You say it is going to be available at the end of 2020.

Gerard Howe: 2019.

Q109 **Mr Evans:** Oh, great. How is that going to be disseminated? Is it going to be made public? Will people be able to see that and will the guidance from it be made compulsory or just advisory?

Baroness Sugg: It will be made public. We will be disseminating it out through all our distribution networks. It is going to be advisory.

Q110 **Mr Evans:** Why not compulsory?

Baroness Sugg: For CDC investment or whatever it may be?

Mr Evans: Yes.

Baroness Sugg: It will be best practice. It will be aimed at the private sector companies and investors in developing markets. We think it is



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going to be really influential, but currently advisory is best, as it is something for them to work towards for the time being. We would not want to exclude, I suppose, people on this, but it will be interesting to see what influence it has and how many of the companies involved are meeting the guidance.

Q111 Mr Evans: How will you properly monitor that and will those who are deficient in this field be made public?

Baroness Sugg: I am not sure that we have got to that point yet. CDC is working this up at the moment. They have specialist consultants in over the summer to look at that. I will feed that back to them on how we will be able to monitor and praise the people who do meet it. CDC is doing lots of interesting work on this. They are doing a strategy on job quality, for example, and making sure that disability inclusion is included in that as well. We are really trying throughout everything CDC does, which has great reach and great influence. On how we mark the companies, we will feed that in to the development of the guidance.

Q112 Mrs Latham: Your predecessor, Lord Bates, expressed in this Committee that there is a "strong case" for protecting DfID staff working on disability inclusion from deployment to other Departments under Operation Yellowhammer. After last week's vote and maybe today's vote, that may be coming back into play. What do you plan to do to protect your staff from being deployed elsewhere?

Baroness Sugg: The first thing I would say is that everybody is back now from Yellowhammer when it was up and running, but, as you say, we may well be back in that situation. We are increasing the levels of disability experience across the Department, both staff numbers and the training across the whole organisation. I mentioned the helpdesk. We are also looking at secondment posts, as Gerard said, but if Yellowhammer resumes DfID is likely to have to offer staff to help support other Government Departments. We expect that to happen again.

We have not yet made a decision on which specific staff that will be and it is a difficult decision to make, because staff not working on their DfID role means that we will not be delivering some things. We have not yet made the decision on who will be going, but it will be a tough decision when it comes.

Q113 Chair: Drawing to a conclusion and taking perhaps a slightly more macro look at the barriers to disabled people's participation, there are two areas, one of which we have touched on, which is around jobs, livelihoods and access to work. I am very impressed with some of what you have told us about, particularly CDC's engagement there.

The other is education. When this Committee looked at global education we highlighted some really good practice on education for disabled children and young people, but also recognised the scale of the challenge in terms of the numbers of disabled children being left behind globally. How far is disability really at the core of the work the Department is



doing on education, and then how far is the Department able to influence other donors and multilaterals to ensure that disability is right there as a top priority in education policy globally?

Baroness Sugg: We have done a lot of work in supporting children with disabilities through our Girls' Education Challenge, our big flagship education programme. We have reached 46,000 girls with disabilities through that. We have given lots of grants to grassroots organisations in helping advocate for the rights of children with disabilities. Also, we have invested quite a lot in providing accessible toilet facilities, for example, to make it easier for children with disabilities to go to school, and providing the skills training and apprenticeships for that next step on.

Another thing that came up in my discussion with Tom was the importance of mainstreaming disabled people's involvement in all the projects we do as teachers, construction workers or whatever it may be. We are making progress on that, certainly working with our multilateral partners and other donors on it. There is probably more we can do on that, but both within those big, central programmes, and within the country offices as well, it is just making sure we are properly mainstreaming inclusivity.

Gerard Howe: You are aware of where we are in a planning cycle at the moment and how we are thinking about planning and preparing for the spending review et cetera. The new disability inclusion delivery board is a really important mechanism for answering that question across the institution as to whether we are meeting the commitments we set out in the disability inclusion strategy.

One of the really important conclusions we came to as a board, on which I sit, a few weeks ago is that, in our September meeting, we would step back and look at the totality of the offers into the spending review against the quantum of commitments in the disability inclusion strategy to ensure that not only in education, but in our international influencing work and elsewhere, we were operating at the scale and level of ambition that we committed to. There is going to be a process of alignment going forward.

Specifically on education, the Girls' Education Challenge has really helped generate that momentum, but increasingly, as we think about promoting long-term health systems, that question about how you help create a long-term health system that includes all its populations—children with disabilities, those from ethnic minorities et cetera—is a really important point and part of the leave no one behind agenda.

Baroness Sugg: Developing on the multilateral stream, we are seeing real progress in that area. We are, as the UK, big donors to some of these organisations, so we should be ensuring that our influence is heard in this area and it is being. There is disability through the IDA19 replenishment and the UN disability strategy, which we were delighted to



see published last week. We held a side event on the commitments from the summit.

We are genuinely seeing a shift in people's perception of this with our multilateral partners and we need to keep the pressure up on them on that. We need to make sure we maximise the international influence we are able to have, both from the summit itself, which really put this on the agenda, but also through our leverage within these international organisations.

Q114 Chair: That is really encouraging. The other issue we focused a lot on as a Committee is the situation for disabled people in emergencies, for example refugees and IDPs. We looked at this in the Syrian refugee context. We have looked at it in the east African context and the Rohingya context as well. I guess it is just to encourage, as part of the process that Gerard described, relationships with the CHASE team in the Department to ensure that disabled people are at the heart of the focus the Department rightly has on humanitarian emergencies.

Gerard Howe: We welcome that encouragement. Again, one of our inward secondments will be to CHASE. We are also seeing the translation of the Washington Group questions into Arabic, Spanish and French for use in humanitarian settings. That is, again, work in progress. The needs of people with disabilities, particularly in rapid onset conflicts and disasters, are acute, but the UN disability inclusion strategy will address some of that, because that is also about how we shape the international response.

As a small vignette from that, Vladimir Cuk, who is the head of the International Disability Alliance, sent me an email a few weeks ago from a meeting in Paris on the interagency security committee¹¹, where the principals of the UN gather to look at humanitarian action. He said for the first time ever there was a discussion among those principals, as in heads of UN agencies, about disability inclusion in humanitarian. He was celebratory in his email to say, "This is showing a profound shift". Those sorts of moments, such as the COSP, where the UK was heralded for its work and influence, are very precious, but are going to lead to change on a whole totem of international development. That takes us towards the impact and scale we wish.

Baroness Sugg: The fact we have humanitarian action as one of the core four pillars has been really important and that has helped push that change, from delivery of resources, but also including psychosocial support within that. Whether we are talking about disability or gender, it is one of the most difficult things to get right. There is the automatic reaction of getting everything out quickly, and we are trying to ensure that, in all our planning for crises, we are taking this into account before it starts.

¹¹ Witness correction, Inter-agency standing (not security) committee



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: Thank you very much. That completes our session this morning.
Can I thank you both very much indeed for coming along?