



Department
for International
Development



Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP
Secretary of State

Department for International Development
22 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2EG

Tel: 0207 023 0000

Email: PrivateSecretary@dfid.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dfid

Sarah Champion MP
Chair
International Development Committee

By email at: indcom@parliament.uk

Our ref: 203161

18 May 2020

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your letter of 29 April, regarding follow up to the oral evidence session. I am grateful for the Committee's time on the 28 April. Please find additional evidence below with regards to the Department for International Development's (DFID) work on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, oversight of UK Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) spend, oversight of the Cross-Government Funds, and COVID-19 and UK aid projects.

Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI)

While PSVI has an institutional home in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), my Department works closely with both the FCO and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to support the policy campaign. The Minister of State and Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, Lord Ahmad, is now a joint DFID/FCO Minister, which will further enhance cross-Whitehall collaboration.

The UK continues to be recognised as a global champion on this agenda and is the only government in the world to have a dedicated team working on preventing sexual violence in conflict. DFID makes important contributions to PSVI through programming and evidence generation, including pioneering approaches around the world that have shown reductions in violence of around 50 per cent.

Oversight mechanism for UK ODA spend

It is important that all ODA is spent effectively. Multiple oversight groups exist for overseeing UK ODA spend, depending on the sector and region of the world.

The UK Aid Strategy, published in November 2015, set out an approach to aid spending, taking advantage of expertise across Government, putting in place governance arrangements to manage this, including a new Director-led Senior Officials Group, reporting to an ODA Ministerial Group.

The ODA Senior Officials Group is co-chaired by HMT's Director of Public Services and DFID's Director of Strategy and meets quarterly. The Officials Group supports high standards of value for money and ensures effective cross-Government spending control to meet the commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI), enshrined in the 2015 International Development Act. Official-level governance also oversees climate, global health and research ODA spend. Spending allocations for the cross-Government funds, which spend significant amounts of ODA, are signed off by the National Security Council.



www.gov.uk/sustainabledevelopmentgoals

The Senior Officials Group reports to the Ministerial Group, chaired by myself as Secretary of State, together with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Its objective is to ensure value for money, review the coherence of ODA spend as a whole in relation to the objectives of the UK Aid Strategy, and provide strategic guidance on finance and policy issues. It meets as required but has not needed to meet since 2018. Where reallocations of ODA have been required in-year, this process is led by Treasury, and individual departments provide advice to their ministers about reallocations and effective use of ODA.

In line with HMT's Managing Public Money guidance, departments and their accounting officers hold financial responsibility and accountability to Parliament and UK taxpayers for their ODA spend. Oversight is provided by parliamentary committees, the National Audit Office and the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, the independent body responsible for scrutiny of all UK aid.

Oversight of the Cross-Government Funds

The National Security Council (NSC) Sub Committee responsible for the cross-government funds was disbanded as part of wider changes in committee structures in the Cabinet Office. Instead, the Funds report directly to the NSC as and when appropriate. Overarching Ministerial oversight and accountability is provided by HM Paymaster General, Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt.

COVID-19 and UK aid projects

The current outbreak of COVID-19 is unprecedented and we recognise the potential impact on businesses of all sizes. DFID has stepped up its engagement and analysis with partners since the crisis hit. We have spoken to many of our major suppliers and partners to discuss contingency planning and their concerns. A dedicated mailbox has been set up and guidance is available on the DFID Supplier Portal.

DFID's Director General (DG) for Corporate Performance meets regularly with representative bodies within the sector to discuss the most effective ways DFID can support the supply base and partners at this crucial time. We have also held a series of roundtables with the private sector, small and medium-sized enterprises, and civil society organisations to discuss the challenges that face our supply partners and explore how to mitigate the threats posed by COVID-19 to the sector's resilience.

My Department is working collaboratively to find pragmatic solutions, including adjusting work plans, moving resources to focus on continuing work, and implementing changes in ways of working, such as the use of technology and remote working.

DFID's technology and smarter working team have continued to enable DFID staff to communicate with our partners using online collaboration platforms, including enabling partners to join a Microsoft Teams collaboration space to work on shared documents or join video calls. DFID staff are also supported in using other common video platforms used by our partners.

I hope this reassures the committee of the effectiveness of aid spent by DFID, including in response to COVID-19.



Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan
Secretary of State

