

International Development Committee

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From Sarah Champion MP, Chair

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Secretary
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
By email

11 January 2022

Philosophy and culture of aid inquiry

Dear Foreign Secretary,

I'm writing to share with you the key evidence that my Committee has collected during its inquiry into The philosophy and culture of aid. We hope that the discussions we have held, and the suggestions we have gathered, will help to inform the new International Development Strategy.

The inquiry

In February 2021, we launched an umbrella inquiry into The philosophy and culture of aid, to find out what the aid sector is doing well, how it can be improved and the role that the UK Government should play in this.¹ We had recently concluded our inquiry into Progress on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector. During that inquiry we found that the extreme power imbalances in the sector had enabled abuse to occur with impunity; sadly such cases continue to come to light and there is yet more work to be done on this. We also found that the communities who benefit from aid programmes are often locked out of decisions about how programmes are designed, and are rarely, meaningfully consulted by aid delivery organisations.² Because we don't stop and listen, and more importantly ask, their concerns, complaints are not heard, and donors and NGOs miss out on the opportunity to use the knowledge and wisdom of those communities to improve future programmes.

To inform our inquiry, we decided to seek evidence from a wide range of people, including individuals from countries in receipt of Official Development Assistance (ODA). In our first oral evidence session in February 2021, we invited witnesses to suggest which issues we needed to explore in more detail. Charles Vandyck from the West Africa Civil Society Institute quoted social scientist and statistician, Barry Knight:

There are three characteristic behaviours in philanthropy and the development industry that impair progress in achieving the world we want. These are: egos, silos and logos. All three concepts are based on imperialist self promotion of individuals and

¹ International Development Committee: [IDC evidence session on the philosophy and culture of aid postponed](#)

² International Development Committee: [Seventh Report of Session 2019-21: Progress on tackling the sexual exploitation and abuse of aid beneficiaries](#)

organizations on the supply side of the funding relationship, and do nothing for the people who are meant to benefit.³

This set the tone for much of the evidence we heard on racism in the aid sector and on the philosophy of aid.

The aid sector

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) had developed a strong reputation for its aid spending and the UK can be proud of what it has achieved with its aid budget. However, the system is based on colonial era structures that concentrate decision making power and resources in donor countries. Witnesses, including Arbie Baguios, Founder of Aid Re-imagined pointed out that in some circumstances, aid can cause more harm than good. In addition to the scandals involving sexual exploitation and abuse, aid can exacerbate conflict and undermine national service delivery.⁴ The problems with aid dependency in countries such as South Sudan, are also well documented.⁵

My Committee is keen to ensure that the FCDO learns from the successes and the mistakes of the past as it puts together its new International Development Strategy and considers the impact its policies have on the countries and communities where programmes are delivered.

Conditionality

Many of the submissions we received said that aid can be effective at reducing poverty and addressing inequalities, but highlighted conditions that need to be in place to enable this to happen. The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) explained that poverty is underpinned by: “poor and undemocratic governance, weak and corrupt institutions, and entrenched by power dynamics that lead to political and economic exclusion in countries.”⁶ It said the UK Government should have a coherent policy to tackle those systems too.⁷

Despite the need for strong, democratic institutions in recipient countries, many witnesses were sceptical of donors dictating specific reforms in order for countries to receive funding. Bond said it is opposed to aid conditionality, and the practice is not compatible with the principles of locally-led development.⁸ Aid conditionality can undermine strong domestic ownership and equitable engagement between the donor and the recipient country. It puts the risks of not achieving the conditions onto the partner country and often does not achieve the intended reforms anyway.⁹ In the worst cases, partner governments have been forced to implement reforms which were unpopular with their own populations. This can undermine public trust, and negatively affect countries’ overall development.¹⁰

³ Barry Knight: [SystemsToShiftThePower.pdf \(globalfundcommunityfoundations.org\)](#), p25

⁴ Arbie Baguios [Q10](#)

⁵ Gloria Soma [Q20](#), Sanjayan Srikanthan [Q238](#)

⁶ Catholic Agency for Overseas Development [CPA0078](#)

⁷ [Ibid](#)

⁸ Bond [CPA0091](#)

⁹ [Ibid](#)

¹⁰ [Ibid](#)

In 2000, the Department for International Development (DFID) published the White Paper *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor*. It recognised that in the past, too much aid had been given as part of donor-led projects which weren't necessarily in the best interests of the recipient country. In other cases, it was tied to the purchase of goods from the donor country, or it was used as a sweetener for commercial contracts.¹¹ DFID committed to focus UK aid on the poorest countries, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and reduce poverty.¹² Having adopted this approach, the UK gained a strong reputation for being a responsible and trustworthy aid partner; a reputation the UK should seek to maintain.

Cross-government approach

Heba Aly, CEO of The New Humanitarian told us that the starting point should be a more equitable global power dynamic.¹³ This will take a whole of Government approach to how the UK interacts with low-and middle-income countries, including building equitable trading relationships and investment policies. Degan Ali, Executive Director at Adeso, a Nairobi based NGO, went so far to say, "We do not need aid."¹⁴ Instead, she said, a level playing field is needed in terms of trade policies that enable countries to compete with the likes of Europe and the US.¹⁵ She argued that the West does not want Africa and some Asian countries to industrialise, so those countries can continue to be a source of extraction of raw materials.¹⁶

Dr Onyekwena, Executive Director of the Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa, told us the private sector is key to unlocking potential, creating jobs and lifting people out of poverty.¹⁷ He said this is usually done through foreign direct investment (FDI) rather than aid. But for countries to benefit from FDI they need a strong legal and regulatory environment. They also require human capital in the form of a healthy and educated workforce. The UK can help with this.¹⁸ The written evidence from the FCDO demonstrates that your Department understands the interplay between aid and other sources of national income.¹⁹ We expect to see this reflected in the Development Strategy.

However, many witnesses explained that trade often does not overcome inequalities, and the private sector will not willingly fill the gaps that aid currently provides. Nabila Saddiq Tayub said that it is not true that there will be sufficient trickle-down effect to ensure everyone will benefit proportionally from trade.²⁰ Dr Onyekwena pointed out that aid is focused on solving development challenges in a way that FDI or remittances do not.²¹ This is an important

¹¹ [Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor](#), CM 5005, p85-86

¹² [Ibid](#), p12

¹³ Heba Aly [Q188](#)

¹⁴ Degan Ali [Q86](#)

¹⁵ [Ibid](#)

¹⁶ [Ibid](#)

¹⁷ Dr Onyekwena [Q212](#)

¹⁸ Dr Onyekwena [Q211](#)

¹⁹ FCDO [CPA0095](#)

²⁰ Nabila Saddiq Tayub [Q254](#)

²¹ Dr Onyekwena [Q206](#)

distinction and should be considered when the FCDO forecasts the development impact of its development finance institution, CDC (British International Investment from April 2022).

Capital spend and programme spend

We note that the FDCO has an increasing preference for capital spending, for example on infrastructure projects, in place of traditional programmes that might have focused on providing healthcare or education. Dr Onyekwena was very positive about this approach and told us that it is more beneficial to African countries.²² He said it looks more like the Chinese model, which is increasingly well received in Africa and can unlock potential more quickly than strategies that focus on health and education.²³ However, other witnesses warned against this approach. Nabila Saddiq Tayub told us that in her experience, investment in infrastructure had generally been for the benefit of the private sector and rarely generates significant local wealth, nor does it build local expertise, or help to develop local capacity.²⁴

Concerns about China's debt-trap-diplomacy are well documented.²⁵ Tom Wein, founder of the Dignity Project warned us that a report undertaken by AidData found that when people live close to a UK or a US-funded aid project, those people tend to feel more favourably towards the UK and the US. However, when people lived close to a Chinese aid project, they felt less favourably towards China after it was implemented.²⁶ The UK should make sure it maintains this preference and does not fall into unpopular practices undertaken by donors such as China. Your Strategy should set out what you regard to be the key measures of success; we hope that preserving and enhancing the UK's reputation in the countries where our programmes are delivered is among the key measures.

Motivations of donor countries

In its written evidence, the FCDO set out that all UK ODA is delivered with the economic development and wellbeing of partner countries as its goal.²⁷ Your Department also described how benefits can accrue to the UK, such as protecting and promoting our security and prosperity, and delivering global public goods. The Integrated Review also states that the UK Government can use its diplomatic network, aid spending and the armed forces, to help to create goodwill towards the UK.²⁸

As the 2002 International Development Act stipulates, ODA spending should contribute to reducing poverty in the recipient country.²⁹ While it can have mutual benefits for donors too, many witnesses warned against approaches that emphasise the national interest of donor countries.³⁰ We heard that aid spending in the national interest might cause harm or fail to

²² Dr Onyekwena [Q215](#)

²³ [Ibid](#)

²⁴ Nabila Saddiq Tayub [Q231](#)

²⁵ Eg. BBC News, [MI6 boss warns of China 'debt traps and data traps'](#), 30 November 2021,

²⁶ Tom Wein [Q231](#)

²⁷ FCDO [CPA0095](#)

²⁸ [Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#) p49

²⁹ [International Development Act 2002](#), Section 1

³⁰ Themrise Khan [Q8](#), Gloria Soma [Q19](#), Heba Aly [Q198](#), Sanjayan Srikanthan [Q230](#), Leonard Cheshire Disability [CPA0030](#)

achieve its intended goals. Christian Aid described how aid has been used to create favourable conditions for investment by British companies. But in parts of Africa, this came at the expense of internal stability, and caused conflicts over the mining of resources.³¹ The UK Sustainability and Transitions Working Group pointed to research assessing 144 UK aid projects designed to contribute to the 'UK security agenda'. It found that the projects did not positively affect the strength, security or efficacy of recipient democratic institutions, due to over-optimism and a lack of country ownership and accountability.³²

Heba Aly told us that aid should be used as a vehicle to ensure rights and freedoms for all people. She argued that when donor countries are pursuing their own self-interest – for example, European countries intervening in the Sahel in attempt to prevent migration to Europe – then this should not be considered as aid.³³

Over the last ten years, Save the Children observed the UK Government's philosophy of aid shifting from one of moral imperative to assist developing and fragile countries, towards one that justifies aid spending as an issue of national interest.³⁴ This is demonstrated in the 2015 aid strategy *UK aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest*.³⁵ Peace Direct recommended that aid should not be understood as altruism nor self-interest but as solidarity, an investment in our shared global future.³⁶ Themes relating to solidarity and partnerships came up frequently, throughout our inquiry, and point to a desire for a more equitable sector.

Working with governments

Although concerns were raised about working with governments that do not share our values, several witnesses said that aid should normally be channelled bilaterally from government to government.³⁷ The amount of aid given directly from the UK Government to recipient governments fell to £15 million (approx. 0.1%) in 2018, down from nearly 20%, 15 years ago.³⁸ Global Justice Now argue that this type of budgetary support can help to strengthen public institutions and increase local democracy and accountability in the recipient country.³⁹

Degan Ali criticised the marginalisation of governments who are supposed to be responsible for their citizens. She described the situation in Somalia, where there has been a lack of investment in the infrastructure of government. She feels like INGOs and the UN do not want the Government to have the capacity and sovereignty to dictate the terms of aid in their country.⁴⁰ Themrise Khan, an independent development professional from Pakistan explained that aid funding should be directed from the national government, through local

³¹ Christian Aid [CPA0036](#)

³² UK Sustainability and Transitions Working Group [CPA0074](#), [Poverty Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank](#)

³³ Heba Aly, [Q193](#)

³⁴ Save the Children [CPA0017](#)

³⁵ HM Treasury, Department for International development, [UK Aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest](#) Cm 9163

³⁶ Peace Direct [CPA0016](#)

³⁷ Themrise Khan [Q12](#), Degan Ali [Q83](#), Heba Aly [Q200](#)

³⁸ Global Justice Now [CPA0011](#), [Effectiveness of UK AID \(parliament.uk\)](#)

³⁹ Global Justice Now [CPA0011](#)

⁴⁰ Degan Ali [Q83](#)

organisations.⁴¹ This will not always be possible if the government is responsible for abuses against its own people or is unwilling to support particular groups. But where it is possible, it helps to ensure that aid does not undermine countries' own national development plans – and helps governments to fulfil their role to provide services to their citizens.⁴²

Giving more funding directly to governments could raise difficult questions for the FCDO. For example, Themrise Khan raised the issue of women and girls in Pakistan who are not treated as a priority by the national government. But she argued that it is not for the UK to tell the Pakistan Government what its priorities should be.⁴³ FCDO Minister, Lord Ahmad told us that development diplomacy is needed when the recipient government doesn't want the UK to work with certain organisations. He said it is important to ensure that the intended recipient gets what works best for them, and different models will work in different countries.⁴⁴ These are important questions the FCDO must grapple with.

Global Public Investment

Several witnesses suggested we need a more democratic model for aid, that moves away from the transfer of funding from donor countries, like the UK, to aid organisations in low- and middle- income countries, towards something more inclusive.⁴⁵ This could help to shape the international development sector as a shared endeavour that we are all part of. It might also avoid projects ending abruptly when the donor country decides to pull its funding. However, it might also require the UK to cede some power and influence.

Dr Cathy Ratcliff, CEO of EMMS International, suggested we should stop using the term 'aid' and instead talk of 'international cooperation' to solve global problems.⁴⁶ The Sustainable Development Goals were designed to acknowledge that all countries face development challenges and should work towards common targets. Professor Gaskarth from the Open University suggested building more grassroots people-to-people networks and twinning projects in the UK with projects in other countries, that deal with similar issues.⁴⁷

Under the guidelines set out by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC), countries can face a cliff-edge in funding when their Gross National Income reaches the level where they graduate from ODA eligibility. It is right for the FCDO to continue to adhere to the OECD DAC rules in the absence of more inclusive set of guidelines. However, witnesses suggested that efforts should be made to avoid sudden changes to funding. Results UK told us the UK Government should coordinate with other donors and multilateral organisations to avoid programmes being pulled at the same time. A timeline for the transition process should be devised with

⁴¹ Themrise Khan [Q12](#)

⁴² Heba Aly [Q200](#)

⁴³ Themrise Khan [Q14](#)

⁴⁴ Lord Ahmed [Q155](#)

⁴⁵ Eg. Peace Direct [CPA0016](#), CBM UK [CPA0083](#), Nabila Sadiq Tayub [Q249](#)

⁴⁶ Dr Cathy Ratcliff [CPA0090](#)

⁴⁷ Professor Gaskarth [Q9](#)

the host government and communicated to all stakeholders to allow them to plan for how progress can be maintained.⁴⁸

The UK Sustainability and Transitions Working Group re-conceptualises international aid as a global public good.⁴⁹ It proposes an alternative development framework that it calls ‘global public investment’ (GPI). All countries could contribute to GPI in order to provide a permanent force for development within the global finance ecosystem. The GPI model avoids ODA being pulled from countries once their Gross National Income (GNI) rises above a certain point, despite the potential persistence of poverty, inequalities, and lack of service provision in the country.⁵⁰ This is one of several models the UK could discuss with other donors and the aid community.

Building resilience

Often, when we talk about international aid, many people think about humanitarian crises and emergency relief, rather than long-term development programmes. These emergency responses are often easier to explain to taxpayers and are extremely important for saving lives. Witnesses were clear that the UK Government should continue to provide life-saving aid for emergency responses, but it should also recognise that the impact of crises can be reduced, if the communities affected had resilient systems in place beforehand, such as good quality healthcare and strong civil society organisations.

The Institute of Development Studies observed that development and humanitarian actors often operate in silos which prevents them from working well together and perpetuates a ‘paper-over-the-cracks’ mentality.⁵¹ Your Department acknowledged the need for coordination between humanitarian and development assistance in its written evidence.⁵² This should be taken into consideration as it develops its new Strategy.

Civil society

Sanjayan Srikanthan, representing the Start Network told us that one of the problems with the current approach is that the aid sector often ends up setting up a parallel system; a quasi-social service system, delivered by multilateral agencies and funded by donors, rather than investing in national actors in-country.⁵³ Charles Vandyck warned that in some cases, the current architecture has led to ‘passive recience’, where communities are not active participants in the development process.⁵⁴

The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged the traditional structure; INGOs had reduced access to communities and had to do more of their work through local organisations. This has shown what a different approach might look like. The aim should be to build a system that is sustainable because of the investment in local capacity and resilience – rather than donors

⁴⁸ Results UK [CPA0082](#)

⁴⁹ UK Sustainability and Transitions Working Group [CPA0074](#)

⁵⁰ [Ibid](#)

⁵¹ Institute of Development Studies [CPA0086](#)

⁵² FCDO [CPA0095](#)

⁵³ Sanjayan Srikanthan [Q236](#)

⁵⁴ Charles Vandyck [Q4](#)

and NGOs concentrating on undertaking ad-hoc ‘capacity building’ workshops and the like.⁵⁵ Sanjayan Srikanthan explained that strengthening civil society can be a goal in itself as it leads to more democratic countries, and longer-term outcomes.⁵⁶

Furthermore, Sophia Gaston Managing Director of the British Foreign Policy Group, which undertakes annual polling of UK attitudes towards foreign policy, agreed that a long-term approach is popular. She told us that putting the power in people’s own hands, to generate transformative change, and helping societies to become economically productive in a global economy, are the sorts of ideas that resonate with British people. She said that we do not do enough to demonstrate that aid can provide a stepping-stone towards a new, empowered life.⁵⁷

Locally-led development

One of the key themes throughout all our evidence was the need for recipient countries, communities and local organisations to be able to play a much more significant role in designing and implementing aid programmes. Currently, decisions are often made in aid organisations’ headquarters in Europe or America, detached geographically, politically, and culturally, from the intended recipients.⁵⁸ There is a widespread acceptance that it is time for power relations within the sector to be challenged and more funding should go to local organisations. We were pleased to see this referenced in the FCDO’s written evidence.⁵⁹ The Strategy should show how this will be achieved.

The Norwegian Refugee Council said that national and local civil society organisations should be equal or lead partners in programme partnerships and consortia. Instead, they are often considered as sub-contractors to intermediary organisations (often UN agencies or large NGOs).⁶⁰ Many benefits of equal partnership were noted: when aid is delivered through local organisations it can often reach recipients more quickly and the costs are usually lower. It also has long-term benefits; helping to build the foundations for long-term recovery and increasing the capacity of national and local civil society organisations to respond in future.⁶¹

The current situation seems to be in part due to donors’ understanding of risk, and hesitancy to fund these organisations directly. Lord Ahmad told us:

When you work with a recognised international agency and partner, such as a UN-endorsed organisation, the structures and the governance are there to ensure that the aid, support and development funding that we are providing gets to the end partner. Where there needs to be added strength in that, you can combine the two. We have localised partners we can work with within a country, which may be receiving funding through an international agency but are working in a very complementary fashion and also informing what a larger agency can do on the ground. It is a mix of both.⁶²

⁵⁵ Charles Vandyck [Q1](#)

⁵⁶ Sanjayan Srikanthan [Q222](#)

⁵⁷ Sophia Gaston [Q4](#)

⁵⁸ Results UK [CPA0028](#)

⁵⁹ FCDO [CPA0095](#)

⁶⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council [CPA0079](#)

⁶¹ Christian Aid [CPA0036](#)

⁶² Lord Ahmad [Q155](#)

Degan Ali challenged this type of reasoning, pointing out that the FCDO trusts local organisations to undertake 90% of last mile delivery of all its funding in these countries and questioned why it cannot trust them to act without intermediaries?⁶³

There are also questions for INGOs about their role. The West Africa Civil Society Institute has been looking at how INGOs can be involved in a system that shifts more power to the communities where programmes are delivered.⁶⁴ Aid organisations have approached these questions in different ways. Many INGOs are opening local offices in the countries where they work. In 2018, Oxfam International began shifting its headquarters to Nairobi, Kenya to strengthen the legitimacy of the organisation's voice, accountability and relevance in the Global South.⁶⁵ INGOs need to demonstrate that changing their operating models can truly help to shift the power.

Meaningful engagement with communities in receipt of aid

As we recommended in our report into Progress on the tackling sexual exploitation and abuse of aid beneficiaries, witnesses stressed the need for meaningful engagement with, and consultation of, the communities where aid programmes are delivered.⁶⁶ People with lived experiences should play a central role in the conception and development of programmes. CBM UK reminded us of the motto "nothing about us without us".⁶⁷ Aid actors should build authentic partnerships with the communities where programmes are delivered, including the most marginalised individuals, including people with disabilities, and indigenous communities, to ensure they have genuine decision-making power. The Institute of Development Studies said the sector needs to be more humble and move away from its 'we know best culture' based on assumptions of superiority.⁶⁸

Heba Aly was sceptical about current feedback mechanisms and the fact that organisations can choose whether to act on the feedback they receive.⁶⁹ By making an effort to incorporate policies to listen to the affected communities and act on their suggestions, the UK Government can demonstrate that the FCDO wants to give aid the right way.⁷⁰

Funding

There are several challenges in the current funding landscape. It is clear that not enough funding is going directly to recipient countries and local organisations who implement aid programmes. Donors' compliance regimes act as a barrier to local organisations who are less able to demonstrate their capacity and compliance, compared to international actors, with more experience. Furthermore, they may have to put resources into meeting the donor needs

⁶³ Degan Ali [Q82](#)

⁶⁴ Charles Vandyck [Q1](#)

⁶⁵ Devex: [Oxfam tackles the complicated logistics of its move to Nairobi](#), 2 January 2018

⁶⁶ International Development Committee: [Seventh Report of Session 2019-21: Progress on tackling the sexual exploitation and abuse of aid beneficiaries](#)

⁶⁷ CBM UK [CPA0083](#)

⁶⁸ Institute of Development Studies [CPA004](#)

⁶⁹ Heba Aly [Q195](#)

⁷⁰ Tom Wein [Q232](#)

rather than delivering programmes.⁷¹ Humentum suggest that the UK and other donors could invest in partners' good governance and system-wide controls rather than always increasing the demands on aid recipients.⁷²

The new Strategy should address funding arrangements, how they were designed and consider who they are meant to benefit. It could help the authorities in recipient countries if they were able to develop their own systems of accountability, to apply to their own regulations and strengthen their domestic organisations. Heba Aly told us that channelling funding through pooled funds that can be controlled at the local level could also help.⁷³

Sanjayan Srikanthan told us that donors like the FCDO tend to find it easier to give large sums of money to multilateral organisations, such as UN agencies and large INGOs that can operate at scale, rather than making lots of smaller grants to local and national NGOs.⁷⁴ However, the Norwegian Refugee Council found that funds cascaded from the UN to NGOs can take over six months to reach frontline actors.⁷⁵

Several witnesses raised concerns about the nature of government contracts that tend to be short-term in nature.⁷⁶ Concern Worldwide said they often come with unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved in the timeframe.⁷⁷ Tearfund point out they often do not cover the running costs incurred by implementing organisations.⁷⁸ Witnesses made persuasive arguments that increasing multi-year funding would allow agencies to plan and allocate resources more efficiently and help them to address issues across the humanitarian – development – peace nexus. It also helps them to invest core capabilities such as compliance and safeguarding.⁷⁹

The evidence was clear the UK has been a leader in multi-year funding in the past. The Norwegian Refugee Council set out DFID's 'Programme Partnership Arrangements' allowed for multi-year, flexible funding through "strategic level agreements based around mutually agreed outcomes" to enable NGOs "to better plan and deliver programmes, including in more difficult, higher risk environments".⁸⁰ DFID's cost transparency approach recognised the importance of providing full cost recovery for implementing organisations as a mechanism that should be replicated.⁸¹ However, it appears the FCDO has not continued these arrangements. Instead, its grants are tightly earmarked, and it is challenging for implementing partners to move funds between financial years, due to FCDO management systems for meeting ODA targets.⁸² Regrettably, this seems to be a backward step. The new Strategy must describe the path the Government intends to take to move back towards a position where

⁷¹ Humentum [CPA0022](#)

⁷² [Ibid](#)

⁷³ Heba Aly [Q191](#)

⁷⁴ Sanjayan Srikanthan [Q236](#)

⁷⁵ Norwegian Refugee Council [CPA0079](#)

⁷⁶ Bond [CPA0091](#), Charles Vandyck [Q4](#)

⁷⁷ Concern Worldwide (UK) [CPA0076](#)

⁷⁸ Tearfund [CPA0008](#)

⁷⁹ Saferworld [CPA0087](#), Humentum [CPA0022](#), Tearfund [CPA0008](#)

⁸⁰ Norwegian Refugee Council [CPA0079](#)

⁸¹ Humentum [CPA0022](#)

⁸² Norwegian Refugee Council [CPA0079](#)

the inefficiencies and short-termism of tightly controlled grants are replaced with more considered and certain multi-year settlements.

Witnesses, including Peace Direct, acknowledged that more flexible funding mechanisms might require donors to accept a greater level of uncertainty but challenged them to fund courageously and modify eligibility criteria to end the preference for western NGOs and organisations they already have close relationships with.⁸³

Anticipatory action

Several witnesses highlighted anticipatory action before a crisis hits as an effective way to avoid problems turning into humanitarian disasters.⁸⁴ Currently, less than 1% of humanitarian funding is available for anticipatory action.⁸⁵ Sanjayan Srikanthan described an insurance mechanism in Senegal that will pay out when droughts hit, to ensure that women and children receive at least two meals per day.⁸⁶

The technology available today means that we can often forecast when weather-related emergencies are likely to strike and predict the possible impact of the weather event. Therefore, resources should be allocated in advance to ensure vulnerable people are protected and aid pre-positioned for quick distribution. The Norwegian Refugee Council suggests donors should further invest in these early warning systems.⁸⁷

Although these anticipatory approaches are likely to be cheaper and more effective in the long run, it is harder to communicate to a public audience than the traditional response – solution model. But this should not be a barrier to building more anticipatory action into the UK's International Development Strategy. This anticipatory approach could also apply to FCDO initiatives to prevent conflict – rather than reacting to it.

Measuring success

Key questions for donors and the aid sector include: What does success look like? Who decides what success means? DFID emphasised the top-level figures, such as 'lives saved' or children vaccinated. Global Justice Now warns that this approach wrongly suggests an ability to directly attribute outcomes to UK ODA interventions.⁸⁸ It also encourages a focus on things that can be quantified, such as bed nets distributed, rather than long-term outcomes, or results that matter to the local community. This can make it easier to communicate aid spending and impact to the UK taxpayer, but it adds to the tendency to fund short-term projects rather than working towards transformative structural change.⁸⁹

Tome Wein told us the FCDO should have a strong research and evidence division that considers processes as well as outcomes; ensuring the UK's ODA spend upholds people's

⁸³ Peace Direct [CPA0016](#)

⁸⁴ Heba Aly [Q197](#), British Red Cross [CPA0032](#), Norwegian Refugee Council [CPA0079](#).

⁸⁵ Norwegian Refugee Council [CPA0079](#)

⁸⁶ Sanjayan Srikanthan [Q239](#)

⁸⁷ Norwegian Refugee Council [CPA0079](#)

⁸⁸ Global Justice Now [CPA0011](#)

⁸⁹ [Ibid](#)

dignity.⁹⁰ Many witnesses said the metrics of success should not be set by the donor but at the national or local level, and those receiving the aid should have some way of feeding into that measurement.⁹¹ This reflects the need for more local engagement at every stage of the programme cycle.

I look forward to discussing with you the UK's International Development Strategy and the issues we have been exploring throughout our Philosophy and culture of aid inquiry, when you give oral evidence to the Committee as the earliest opportunity you can in 2022.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S', on a light blue background.

Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the Committee

⁹⁰ Tom Wein [Q253](#)

⁹¹ UK Sustainability and Transitions Working Group [CPA0074](#), Peace Direct [CPA0016](#), Samuel Wambayo [Q194](#)