

Supplementary written evidence from Palladium International

In your opinion, do the FCDO and other donors demonstrate a commitment to equity and justice in the way that they operate?

For us, a donor which demonstrates a commitment to equity and justice in practice means a few things (i) framing aid as an act of solidarity and an investment as opposed to a charitable act (ii) the highest levels of leadership need to actively champion equity and justice and (iii) respect, openness and honesty are the basis of all partnerships, (iv) programmes need to be designed and delivered based on an understanding of the present day effects of colonialism and structural racism and (v) these programmes must be delivered by a diverse and representative workforce.

In its current communications on how ODA is spent, the FCDO does not frame aid as an act of charity, and it does stress the relationship between aid and mutually beneficial interests. However, more can be done to underscore the value of and need for global solidarity when faced with immense and interconnected challenges that affect us all. Canada's 2017 pivot towards a feminist international assistance policy represents good practice, and the FCDO can build on its work on championing girls' education globally to mainstream intersectional ways of thinking about equity and justice across its broad remit of work.

The 2020 ICAI information note on the UK aid spending during COVID-19 highlighted that suppliers found the highly centralised decision-making process in relation to cuts to be challenging, but that does not define the normal conduct of the FCDO in relation to its supply base and we trust that going forward, we'll revert back to meaningful communication on programmes. On the issue of leadership vocally championing diversity and inclusion, we commend the work done by Sir Philip Barton and his team. They have recognised that there is significant room for improvement within the composition of the staff and appear to have a clear plan to address this given how critical diversity of background is to tackling many of the complex challenges that the FCDO aims to address.

Do you think the cuts to the UK aid budget will have a detrimental impact on the efforts of UK aid organisations and private sector contractors to increase diversity and inclusion in their organisations?

At Palladium we have not reduced our investments in Diversity and Inclusion initiatives and are continuing efforts to increase the diversity of our staff both in the UK and overseas. However, there is a risk that cuts to the UK aid budget will lead delivery partners to decrease the level of investment in diversity and inclusion efforts. Cuts may also reduce the diversity of delivery chains as impacts on individual projects flow down to delivery partners. On the other hand, the operational implications of the Covid-19 pandemic may also lead organisations to push forward with localisation efforts both due to travel restrictions and also as part of cost saving efforts. As has been outlined in previous evidence, our experience is that projects that are principally managed and delivered by embedded teams often deliver the best impact

and provide best value for money. Reallocating resources from international to local teams is an effective strategy that can be deployed by organisations looking to maximise their impact and generate savings in response to budget cuts.

What actions have your own organisations taken to modify your communication strategy, storytelling and images used in order to change the “white saviour” narrative?

Palladium is in a slightly different position from many international aid organisations as it is a commercial company, and one important strand of the work that we do is compete to deliver international development contracts. We do not fundraise from the public, and therefore we are not incentivised to use exploitative images to elicit charitable donations from the public. More broadly though, we have organised activities to educate staff on the use of potentially harmful language and imagery within our internal and external communications and will continue to identify further opportunities to do this. At the corporate level, we have a multi-layered process for vetting all corporate communications pieces before they are published to ensure the use of respectful language and imagery.