

Written evidence submitted by the Institute of Development Studies (INR0023)

About the Institute of Development Studies

The [Institute of Development Studies](#) (IDS) is a global research and learning organisation for equitable and sustainable change. IDS is ranked best international development policy think tank (2019 Global Go To Think Tank Index) and first in the world for development studies by the QS University Rankings, with the University of Sussex.

1.Strategy in UK foreign policy - the priorities for UK foreign policy strategy

Working alongside DFID to retain the UK's reputation as a world leader for international development

- 1.1. We believe a priority for the UK's foreign policy should be to recognise the strength of an independent Department for International Development (DFID) and resist a merger between DFID and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The two departments are highly regarded precisely because they work together but remain distinct, enabling them to focus on what they do best. Folding DFID in to the FCO could reduce the UK's international influence at a critical moment – leaving the EU and continuing the global fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Forging stronger global cooperation and global health governance

- 1.2. Covid-19 has painfully illustrated how interdependent and interconnected the world is. Instead of focusing on national interest, a priority for UK foreign policy should be to lead the way on promoting mutual interest, respect and learning between all nations – high- middle- and low-income.
- 1.3. A priority for the UK should be help strengthen global health governance, to encourage cooperation between all nations with the WHO and UN systems and navigate a new era with new global powers, such as China.
- 1.4. The universal nature of development challenges – made clear by Covid-19 and underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – is that they affect us all, in the UK and internationally. Efforts put in place by UK Government to support those providing research, innovation and solutions in a wide range of lower- and middle-income countries are important for them, but also for the UK. Findings in other counties provide opportunities for learning but can also benefit the UK directly with the emergence of new technologies, approaches, methods and relationships that can be adapted (and in some cases even directly applied) in UK contexts.

Establishing mutual learning and supporting international partnerships for science and research

- 1.5. Many 'emerging' middle-income countries have, or are rapidly developing, strong science and technology capabilities – China, India, Brazil, South Africa are notable. It would be useful for the UK to establish strong 'mutual learning' partnerships with

such countries, and funds such as the Newton Fund are valuable here. Notably these countries have all nurtured diverse research ecosystems involving multiple institutions, and they have put strong state investment behind science and technology.

- 1.6. The capabilities of low-income countries in generating knowledge for vital transformations should not be overlooked. Whether this concerns waste management innovations amongst poor Indian city residents; advances in mobile banking and home solar systems in East Africa; climate change adaptations amongst Bangladeshi farmers, or movements to secure women's gains in power and autonomy, there are numerous emerging examples of valuable innovations 'from the margins'. A vibrant local civil society and a flourishing of local and national think tanks is important in supporting these. The UK has much to learn from them for its own security and prosperity, and should therefore seek to foster knowledge exchanges, mutual learning and joint research/innovation with a wide diversity of partner countries internationally – not just the most obvious strong science leading nations.

Working across government to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

- 1.7. To tackle the (SDGs) and the interconnected global challenges that the world faces, it seems essential to have aid cooperation at an international level and alongside DFID the FCO has a clear role to play in the UK's part in that, working with the UN and other multi-lateral agencies.
- 1.8. To maintain the UK's reputation as a global leader we would urge extreme caution in deviating away from the rules or spirit of the rules of what counts as overseas aid as defined by the OECD. It is not just the 0.7 percent commitment that we should focus on but how that overseas aid is spent.
- 1.9. The focus on sustainable development and poverty reduction must continually be returned to when considering any changes around ODA to be used further in peacekeeping operations or in disaster relief in any small island states, with higher incomes per capita and other forms of financial support than lower-income countries.
- 1.10. Tackling significant global challenges requires cooperation and coherence across policy, both domestic and international. So while it is right for other government departments (OGDs) to contribute to these efforts, they need to ensure that their ODA spending and associated activities are aligned with the four main objectives of the UK Aid Strategy 2015, particularly tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable and work towards the SDGs. The Paris and Busan agreements on aid effectiveness were important landmarks, and it is important that they are also upheld in the administration of ODA with its more disbursed spend.

Adhere to International Aid Transparency Initiative standards

- 1.11. The availability of information that greater transparency brings is an important element in strengthening accountability but also in understanding results and impact. Transparency underpins better learning and knowledge sharing between partners.

- 1.12. Improved transparency is also a vital tool in tackling corruption and other misuses of aid resources, not least through ensuring that local actors are better able to hold their own governments and other aid actors to account. It also provides reassurance to the public and taxpayers in donor countries.
- 1.13. Transparency is essential for all ODA spending and DAC members should publish to the International Aid Transparency Initiative standards. As a department that spends 4.4 per cent of the UK Aid budget (Statistics on International Development report September 2019), the FCO needs to improve its transparency and accountability. In the 2018 Aid Transparency Index the FCO was ranked 40th out of 45 departments. DFID in comparison has led the way on transparency and accountability and was ranked the third most transparent aid department. The FCO needs to learn from DFID and urgently improve its transparency standards.
- 1.14. There also appears to be a lower level of transparency from non-DFID government departments spending UK ODA with regards to their procurement process. From our own experience at IDS, we have identified the excellent online procurement facility that DFID use, which is easy to navigate and provides early procurement notices and Priority Information Notifications (PINS) on expected new programmes and pipeline notifications that outline forthcoming opportunities. This allows for greater forward planning, fostering meaningful collaborations and forging the best partnerships with complimentary organisations. The FCO should learn from this, for example, for the cross-government Prosperity Fund.

2. Strategy in UK foreign policy - the relationship of the FCO with the other UK Government Departments in foreign-policy strategy

- 2.1. The aspiration for a 'joined up' approach to ODA spend across government departments is a positive one and is necessary to make sure their relative portfolios complement one another and avoid duplication. Coordination among departments, particularly between the FCO and DFID, is relevant for areas such as climate change mitigation, global health and Covid-19, conflict and migration and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. However, we would strongly recommend that DFID retains its independence.
- 2.2. Through DFID, UK aid should continue to tackle extreme poverty and support the science that will end the suffering from deadly diseases such as Covid-19, Ebola and malaria, help poorer countries collect the taxes that can fund their own public services, and tackle the urgent climate and environmental problems that will continue to impact on citizens everywhere. Achieving this relies on DFID and the FCO working closely together but retaining their distinct roles.
- 2.3. While there is much scope for a more joined-up approach across HMG to Britain's place in the world, and for DFID's learning to be shared and embedded across departments, any restructuring that diluted DFID's independence, influence or further reduced the share of UK Aid DFID is responsible for distributing, would risk diminishing the UK's global positioning, security and prosperity. Evidence not ideology must drive efforts to improve coordination across UK Government and the

- evidence on merging departments to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness is at best mixed. We would urge the Integrated Review to recognise these points.
- 2.4. The ability to be at the cutting edge of development knowledge and research are critical for the UK to maintain its 'soft power' and to project a level of influence across the globe. This is particularly pertinent now given the rolling back of development cooperation and funding predicted to continue in the US and with the UK leaving the European Union. All government departments should learn from DFID's experience and expertise on building and sustaining the global research partnerships necessary to deliver positive change where it is needed most.
 - 2.5. Related to the FCO and its work with other government departments in relation to spending the UK Aid budget, we welcome ICAI's role in closely monitoring cross-government spending of ODA. This is particularly important as ODA is increasingly disbursed across government departments that are responding to global challenges such as coronavirus which require cross HMG initiatives. ICAI's work brings a vital cross-departmental view and complements the work of individual select committees, as well as scrutiny from civil society organisations, think-tanks and others.
 - 2.6. For example, ICAI's 2017 review of the Prosperity Fund identified key concerns around transparency and the limited information in the public domain about its strategy and ways of working.
 - 2.7. In the context of the Integrated Review, ICAI's reports and analysis play an important role in providing evidence to inform how DFID, the FCO and Defence can complement each other. It should be noted for example that ICAI has previously highlighted the danger of weakening DFID as other departments spend more ODA and eroding DFID's capacity for learning and sharing its expertise on development research and evidence across HMG.

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