



INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Written Q&A in lieu of oral evidence: Effectiveness of UK Aid (HC 215)

May 2020

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Members of the Committee: Sarah Champion (Chair); Mr Richard Bacon; Theo Clarke; Brendan Clarke-Smith; Mrs Pauline Latham; Chris Law; Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger; Navendu Mishra; Kate Osamor; Dr Dan Poulter; Mr Virendra Sharma.

Written Questions 45-103

Witnesses

I: Frances Guy, UNDP Regional Gender Advisor, Amman (former UK Ambassador in Yemen, 2001-04, and Lebanon, 2006-11)

II: Peter Millett (former UK Ambassador in Jordan, 2011-15, and Libya, 2015-18)

III: Sir Stephen O'Brien, (formerly, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, 2010-12, and UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, 2015-17)

IV: Chris Mullin (formerly, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, 2001, and for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2003-05)

V: Hajir Maalim, Regional Director, East & Southern Africa for Action Against Hunger

VI: Mauro Tadiwe, Head of South Sudan Programmes, Saferworld

VII: Su'ad Jarbawi, Regional Director, Middle East, Mercy Corps

Notes

1. The Committee conducted an exchange of written Q&A in lieu of an oral evidence hearing planned for 12 May. Normal practice was constrained by steps taken in mid-March 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This process was started before facilities for online virtual oral evidence hearings were developed and authorised.
2. Written responses to the Committee's questions were received for the week starting 4 May. The Q&A are set out below.



Exchange of written Q&A with witness

Witness: Frances Guy, UNDP Regional Gender Advisor, Amman and former UK ambassador

WQ45 **Committee:** During your diplomatic career, how did the proportion of government departments responsible for administering UK aid projects in your postings change?

Frances Guy: I appreciate that this question is targeting changes that have occurred in the last 10 years, however my experience in dealing with overseas aid from within British Embassies started at a time 25+ years ago when ODA was administered by the FCO. So, I have seen a number of changes throughout my career in the way that UK aid has been administered.

When ODA was a separate agency but answerable to the FCO there were attempts to administer aid separately but there were also parts of the budget, including small grants, that were open to manipulation by ambassadors and others who supported their favourite projects, which did not always follow aid criteria and were of questionable benefit to either those in need or wider foreign policy objectives.

The creation of DFID and the publication of the 1997 white paper marked an important change in setting out more clearly what development assistance should be spent on and meant that overseas officials were more accountable. Subsequent white papers demonstrate the evolution of development and political thinking, but they were all helpful in providing guidance. The one joint programme that I managed in Lebanon was the joint FCO/DFID/MOD conflict prevention fund (which has changed names since). Whilst both the FCO and MOD tried to get money from DFID to help pay for defence priorities, this was a jointly run fund with fluctuating levels of DFID engagement.

WQ46 **Committee:** Do you feel that this change had an impact upon the effectiveness of these projects?

Frances Guy: As indicated previously the move to DFID in the first place offered a very important opportunity for aid to be spent more accountably. Effectiveness is a different question. In my experience the most effective projects are those that are well planned at the beginning and which take the time to do proper socio-economic analysis, including gender impact assessments. Having a separate specialised ministry staffed by experts in project management should help make aid more effective but this needs to be balanced alongside the need to be politically aware. Whether aid effectiveness is improved by spending aid money on defence objectives is a different order of question, but I would suggest that overseas defence objectives even where they are focussed on improving peace and stability should not be funded from an aid budget targeting the poorest unless such projects can demonstrate a clear impact on the lives of the poor. I would separate out these budgets in the UK not at Embassy level.



WQ47 **Committee:** Did administration and reporting requirements increase?

Frances Guy: The joint fund had complicated reporting requirements but I don't think they were necessarily any more complicated than DFID requirements.

WQ48 **Committee:** Did the types of intervention change?

Frances Guy: When I was in Yemen the separation between aid and defence spending was very clear. In Lebanon it was more fluid because of the joint fund and the lack of much other aid funding at the time. But that was also a reflection of the country specific context so it may be hard to generalise.

WQ49 **Committee:** Did you feel pressure to make up a growing proportion of your embassy budget from ODA-eligible projects?

Frances Guy: As defence budgets were cut I can see that this might have become an issue but embassy budgets in terms of what was spent on projects were largely decided in London, so I don't think the pressure was really on ambassadors in the way this question implies.

WQ50 **Committee:** What differences did you observe between UK aid projects and those undertaken by other funders?

Frances Guy: Drawing on my more recent experience in an international NGO and now with UNDP as well as managing DFID funding in Yemen and Lebanon, I would say that UK aid was respected for being transparent and clearly targeted and open to being implemented by a range of national and international partners (unlike some German and Italian aid that seemed to only go through German or Italian organisations). In humanitarian situations it also seemed to be flexible and responsive (but I am not sure if that is still the case).

WQ51 **Committee:** What differences did you observe between UK aid projects and those undertaken by other funders; and

- The UK administers a large proportion of its aid budget through contributions to multilateral organisations. How effective is this method of administering aid?

Frances Guy: Multilateral organisations, as with international and national NGOs really benefit from long term core funding to allow them to develop longer term interventions which are the only way to have a real impact on the underlining reasons behind poverty. Funding from DFID allows agencies to plan and agree targets and approaches which can be done in cooperation with DFID. As most UN agencies and international NGOs have strong and transparent processes spending aid in this way avoids a multiplicity of oversight and monitoring which could take up a lot of resources. Although UN agencies and INGOs can have expensive overheads, it can be quite cost effective to administer aid in this way and it can help the UK influence a wider range of impact on the ground.

WQ52 **Committee:** In your opinion, does the UK coordinate its bilateral aid work effectively with other donor countries?

Frances Guy: Aid coordination depends greatly on the people involved on the



ground. The best aid coordination I saw in my diplomatic career was in Ethiopia where the government clearly took the lead role and coordinated all donors in regular meetings. Where governments are less engaged, or it is politically tricky to engage them in such a way, then aid coordination is harder work and not always successful. I would not say the UK is better or worse than others. Where DFID is the biggest donor in country, they were not necessarily good coordinators.

WQ53 **Committee:** Is there an argument to align UK aid spending more closely with the UK's foreign policy goals and national interests?

Frances Guy: Debates around DFID spending in India, and arguably in Egypt would suggest that aid spending is quite closely tied to national interests in reality. I am not sure I understand what "more closely" would mean; ultimately it is in our national interest that the poorest are lifted out of poverty so that global markets are inclusive.

WQ54 **Committee:** In your opinion, do the UK's international aid commitments support the UK's soft power? In what ways does it do this?

Frances Guy: There is a good deal of respect for UK's international aid commitments and the manner in which DFID administers aid. This counts towards general respect for the UK in multilateral institutions and gives the UK a bigger voice in multilateral meetings, including in the Security Council. Knowing that the UK can and will put aid money into post conflict tragedies or help in a response to a climate catastrophe gives the UK voice weight in helping organise international responses.

WQ55 **Committee:** In your experience, did UK aid interventions help you to achieve influence in other areas of UK Government work overseas, such as in diplomacy and trade?

Frances Guy: In Yemen having a big aid programme certainly helped in discussions on other issues with the government, including on international terrorism and meant that the UK's views had to be taken into account. Being less of a player in Lebanon meant that the UK was less influential relatively with the exception of some security work. In neither case was there much impact on trade but trade is fairly limited with both countries.

WQ56 **Committee:** In recent months, there have been changes to the ways that the Foreign Office and DFID work together. For example, the junior ministerial teams of the Foreign Office and DFID have been merged; and DFID country directors are now answerable to Ambassadors in country. What are your views on this development and how do you think it will impact upon aid delivery?

Frances Guy: I don't really understand the point about DFID country directors being answerable to Ambassadors because when I was Ambassador it was clear that all staff had to report to the Ambassador. There were occasional turf wars about whether staff of other government departments were answerable to the Ambassador first or their department first but in my experience this was more problematic in the case of the Home Office than with DFID. To run an Embassy in a foreign country where the rules and laws of that country must be respected, the



Ambassador needs to be accountable for all staff. I also enjoyed considerable influence over budget decisions. This arrangement helps also ensure that the political realities of the country in which aid is being spent are taken into account. So close working between the aid and political sections of an Embassy is vital. I can see some value in joining up at junior ministerial level too as recipient countries are unlikely to always differentiate and visiting ministers in my experience always had to deal with all aspects of a relationship.

As long as DFID officials are fully engaged with ensuring aid transparency and effectiveness I would think being joined up at ministerial level should help aid delivery be more responsive.

Exchange of written Q&A with witness

Witness: Peter Millett, former UK Ambassador

WQ57 **Committee:** During your diplomatic career, how did the proportion of government departments responsible for administering UK aid projects in your postings change? Do you feel that this change had an impact upon the effectiveness of these projects? Did the types of intervention change?

Peter Millett: My main experience of delivering aid programmes overseas was as Ambassador to Jordan (2011-15) and to Libya (2015-18). Neither Embassy had a DfID office and neither country was a traditional recipient of UK aid.

In Amman in 2011 we had a small, newly-established Arab Partnership Fund budget which was dedicated to political reform (mainly technical assistance to Parliament and municipalities) and economic reform (mainly encouraging entrepreneurship through training and mentoring). These programmes were administered by a DfID expert on secondment to the FCO supported by a small locally-engaged team. Most of the programmes were run through UK-based organisations (e.g. Global Partners, Mowgli Mentoring) or local bodies (e.g. Business Development Centre, Oasis 500).

Following the outbreak of civil war in Syria, the Embassy was deeply involved in international programmes to support refugees and the establishment of the massive camp at Za'atri in the north of Jordan which housed over 80,000 refugees. Our assistance was mainly channelled through multilateral bodies like UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and ICRC. Budget decisions were mainly taken in London based on advice from us in Amman. A team of DfID experts was seconded to the Embassy to help us to advise on policy, co-ordinate with other stakeholders and monitor the effectiveness of this aid. I personally visited Za'atri camp frequently to keep tabs on the UN's progress. I also took many senior visitors from London, including the DfID Secretary of State (Justine Greening), Prime Minister (David Cameron) and Prince Charles.

During my time in Amman, the Embassy's aid work benefitted from strong cross-Whitehall engagement, both in the design of the CSSF strategy and in the selection, approval and implementation of programmes. For both CSSF and



refugee support, we were able to draw on expertise deployed from London, mainly from DfID: humanitarian advisers, education advisers, conflict advisers, governance expertise, economic advisers. The range of expertise we used, the strong understanding of these sectors and of how programming should work, made our aid programmes effective and ensured that we supported UK interests in Jordan and the region.

I am aware that, since I left Amman in 2015, the UK has ratcheted up its economic support for Jordan as a key partner in the Middle East.

In Libya we had £10-12m CSSF funds which were dedicated to three main strands of activity: political reform, security sector (including migration and counter-terrorism) and economic reform. This cross-government funding was managed by a team of 7 based at the Embassy in Tunis, led by a DfID expert with staff from DfID, the Home Office and locally-engaged staff. I chaired the CSSF Board with input from our in-house team and from departments in London.

The effectiveness of all these programmes benefitted from the expertise of DfID staff, some in post and many visiting from London. The level of understanding of programme work could not be matched by the FCO. Our experts designed and obtained approval for programmes and then monitored their implementation and effectiveness. Monitoring and evaluation in Libya was difficult given the security limitations of travelling in Libya. For example, much of our assistance to refugees and migrants was channelled through the International Organisation for Migration, but we were unable to visit many of the camps where this assistance was being delivered.

WQ58 **Committee:** Did administration and reporting requirements increase [as the number of departments administering UK aid projects increased]?

Peter Millett: Reporting requirements were often seen by these teams as onerous and unnecessarily detailed. During my time in Jordan, reporting requirements differed under the CSSF depending on which Whitehall Department was leading on each programme. Programme management by the FCO was cumbersome and ineffective. There was a strong focus on paperwork and frequent reporting rather than trying to ensure that meaningful results were being delivered. The FCO project teams in HQ lacked the latest agile project management systems for the adoption of programmes, obtaining beneficiary feedback or learning. This short-term focus was also reflected in budgeting cycles and the lack on longer-term financial horizons. The FCO seemed to be more focused on the micromanagement of activities to the detriment of meaningful results.

In Libya, some members of the CSSF team felt that they were unable to get away from their computers because of the requirement to send frequent reports to London. This constraint limited their ability to monitor the delivery of our programmes and co-ordinate effectively with other donors and organisations. We all understood the need for the centre to guarantee compliance and audit requirements, but there was also a sense of the centre wanting to micro-manage programmes, whereas we were the people with the right level of knowledge on the ground.



WQ59 **Committee:** Did you feel pressure to make up a growing proportion of your embassy budget from ODA-eligible projects?

Peter Millett: The increasing focus on the ODA target was clear in both posts. In Jordan, we came under increasing pressure from the centre to classify as many elements of our aid as possible as ODA. In Libya, some programmes were ODA-eligible (e.g. economic reform), but some were not (e.g. some elements of our support for security sector reform). We felt some pressure from the FCO to maximise our ODA-eligible programmes, but this did not lead to significant distortion of the programmes or divert their effectiveness. I shared my experience with other heads of mission who certainly felt that the target was distorting the purpose of CSSF programmes. Our aim was always to maximise value for money and have significant impact on the ground to support our country strategy. The ODA target sometimes made that central objective harder to meet.

A key constraint with CSSF was the lack of clarity on budgets. We usually did not have a clear view on our allocation until the start of the financial year. We also had a constraint in terms of multi-year programmes. Delays in clarifying our allocations meant that we had a limited amount of time to spend our budget before the end of the financial year. A better approach would be to devolve budgets to posts, lighten the reporting requirements to ensure compliance and audit and allow posts to run a small proportion of multi-year budgets.

WQ60 **Committee:** What differences did you observe between UK aid projects and those undertaken by other funders?

Peter Millett: In general, UK development programmes matched and were consistent with the work of other donors and aid agencies. I sometimes had the impression that some countries, e.g. France and the US, were using their aid to secure short-term commercial and economic advantage. But in most cases all donors worked together, shared information and were willing to co-ordinate.

WQ61 **Committee:** The UK administers a large proportion of its aid budget through contributions to multilateral organisations. How effective is this method of administering aid?

Peter Millett: The refugee assistance programmes in Jordan were a good example of the importance and value of multilateral organisations. The key UN agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP) worked closely together and the huge amount of assistance required to provide shelter and food to the thousands of desperate Syrians crossing the border could not have been delivered without their involvement. The success of this enterprise was partly due to the personalities involved; the strong leadership of the UN Country Co-ordinator and the other key agency heads; and the urgency of the common purpose all the agencies shared. (I have to say that the lack of inter-Agency rivalry and turf-battles was unusual for UN operations.)

In Libya, the UK was a major contributor to the Stabilisation Facility run by UNDP which assessed the development and reconstruction requirements in the health, sanitation and education sectors in Libyan towns that had suffered major



destruction. Part of the aim was to build legitimacy for the new Government of National Accord. The UK was a major donor to this fund and, as a result, I had a position on the Board. This role gave us a lot of influence over the design of the various programmes and projects to ensure that it was effective in bringing stabilisation to a war-torn country where stabilisation was a central part of the UK's objectives. The aim was to bolster the government and municipal authorities by helping them to provide tangible and visible support to the Libyan people.

We also channelled part of the economic support programmes via the World Bank who were capacity-building in the Central Bank of Libya to help support stabilisation through economic reform. Another multilateral programme concentrated on support for the nascent National Election Commission. All these programmes enhanced the effectiveness and influence of the UK in Libya.

WQ62 **Committee:** In your opinion, does the UK coordinate its bilateral aid work effectively with other donor countries?

Peter Millett: The UK is generally at the heart of efforts towards international co-ordination. The DfID experts who were running our programmes in Jordan and Libya all recognised the importance of working with other organisations and diplomatic missions and were effective networkers.

In Jordan, the UN briefed Ambassadors frequently and I enjoyed good links with all the agency heads. We would also co-ordinate closely among the main donor countries to ensure that our messaging to the Jordanian government was coherent and consistent.

In Libya, the UK pioneered international co-ordination with an international conference organised in London in October 2015, co-chaired by the FCO and the UN Country Co-ordinator. We then led on a follow-up conference in Tunis in April 2016. Once the new Libyan government was installed in Tripoli in 2016 we tried to follow-up these meetings to put in place a dedicated co-ordination mechanism covering diplomatic missions, UN agencies and the Government of National Accord. The UK contracted an IT company to provide software to facilitate this co-ordination. The main difficulty in delivering effective co-ordination in Libya was the lack of capacity within the new government to identify and provide detail on their priorities.

WQ63 **Committee:** Is there an argument to align UK aid spending more closely with the UK's foreign policy goals and national interests?

Peter Millett: All the aid and development programmes I saw in Jordan and Libya supported the UK's interests, notably to support the stability, security and prosperity of those countries, to prevent terrorism and illegal migration. Programmes focussing on good governance and the rule of law had a direct link to the UK's objective of supporting stabilisation and security in the Middle East. Economic programmes focussing on job creation, education reform, innovation and mentoring were also linked to stabilisation: one of the biggest sources of frustration in many parts of the Middle East is the lack of jobs.

In both Libya and Jordan, we considered bidding to the Prosperity Fund as a way



to develop our support for economic reform measures and to boost commercial opportunities for UK firms. The bureaucracy around this fund and the short-term focus on countries that offered immediate returns meant that we did not succeed in obtaining funding. My discussions with other head of mission colleagues at the time revealed a lot of scepticism about the value of this funding stream.

I am in favour of aligning UK aid spending to foreign policy goals and national interests provided that those interests incorporate our national values. The balance between interests and values will vary from one country to another. Promoting values such as human rights, gender equality and poverty alleviation should be recognised as a central part of our national interests.

WQ64 **Committee:** In your opinion, do the UK's international aid commitments support the UK's soft power? In what ways does it do this?

Peter Millett: UK aid certainly helps to support the UK's soft power. The UK's presence and contribution to supporting stability in Jordan was heightened by the visibility of our aid programmes. By using Twitter, Facebook and innovative methods such as video blogs, we enhanced the UK's reputation as a close ally of Jordan and the Jordanian people.

WQ65 **Committee:** In your experience, did UK aid interventions help you to achieve influence in other areas of UK Government work overseas, such as in diplomacy and trade?

Peter Millett: Our programmes certainly enhanced our influence. For example, education reform is at the heart of the Jordanian government's economic reforms. As Ambassador, I could call on the Minister of Education and on the Royal Court to discuss their plans for reform accompanied by DfID and British Council experts. Education reform was essential to give young Jordanians the skills necessary to find jobs. Youth unemployment was a major source of social frustration and political protest; reform was therefore directly linked to the UK's interest in Jordan's prosperity and stability.

With our programme budget in mind, we were not going in empty-handed: we could offer the prospect of programmes based on DfID's expertise in education reform in other countries. Our support could thereby be viewed, not as lecturing or patronising but as a tangible contribution to Jordan's reform efforts. These programmes also built good-will and enhanced the UK's reputation as a friend of Jordan. This in turn ensured that our views were given credence, by the Jordanian government and people and by other international partners.

This kind of development aid is a long-term investment and the payoff may not be immediate, tangible or measurable. In Jordan, UK aid was clearly seen as beneficial to the people and to the government. The positive view of the UK generated by this aid helped in many policy areas where we were seeking to influence the Jordanian government. In the economic field, our support for entrepreneurship identified immediate potential for Jordanian start-ups to grow and enter the UK tech market; I worked hard to foster those relationships.

The same approach worked well in Libya. The Libyan government had ambitious



plans for reform but lacked the capacity to deliver them. We could help them to focus on areas which were important to the future stability of the country and offer direct support where needed. A specific example was the provision of two experts, one on governance and one on communications, who were seconded direct into the heart of the new government in Tripoli, following a request from the Deputy Prime Minister. The fact that we were a major donor meant that Ministers would listen to us and make requests for support which, if we deemed it in our interest, we would try to deliver. Our help for the refugees and migrants in Libya supported UK interests in trying to reduce the plight of migrants in North Africa, return some to their countries of origin and reduce the problem of illegal migration into Europe.

WQ66 **Committee:** In recent months, there have been changes to the ways that the Foreign Office and DFID work together. For example, the junior ministerial teams of the Foreign Office and DFID have been merged; and DFID country directors are now answerable to Ambassadors in country. What are your views on this development and how do you think it will impact upon aid delivery?

Peter Millett: From Tripoli and Tunis I followed the creation of the North Africa Joint Unit, the department shared by the FCO and DfID supporting Ministers on policy areas in that region. The Ministerial role then also became a shared FCO/DFID role. This helped to ensure proper co-ordination of policy between officials at the London end. I did not find it made a huge difference to the way we worked in post. In our office in Tunis, I was co-located in an open plan office with the CSSF team so was closely involved in the design of programmes and the development of policy for our CSSF programmes.

In Jordan I supervised and supported the Arab Partnership team and was deeply involved with the DfID team seconded to the Embassy to manage our refugee support programmes. I was able to open doors for them at a senior level and use my media connections to broadcast their work.

Since leaving the FCO, I am not sure what changes have been made in management structures to make DfID country directors 'answerable to' Ambassadors. Strong consultation, co-ordination and collaboration is essential between FCO and DfID staff overseas. Embassies have increasingly become mini-Whitehalls with many government departments operating under the same roof and engaging with the authorities and people of the host country. My DfID team leaders reported to me since they were not designated as DfID country directors.

If something goes wrong, the buck will stop with the Ambassador. If a DfID programme goes wrong or has major problems, the government will turn to the Head of Mission. He/she must therefore be aware of and understand the work of all the people in his/her post. A good manager will delegate and depend on the expertise deployed to post, especially from DfID's development and programme staff. This does not mean that the Head of Mission should dictate policy or try to micro-manage the work of other departments. Nor does it mean that the Ambassador must be the DfID country director's line manager, though he/she should feed into the reporting cycle. But it does mean that all policy issues relative to that country must be co-ordinated with and agreed by the head of mission. In most cases, that should not be a problem. Common sense should prevail between



the individuals involved.

Exchange of written Q&A with witness

Witness: Sir Stephen O'Brien, former DFID minister

WQ67 **Committee:** Is there a case for the Government to explore options to use its own definition of aid, rather than the OECD DAC definition, to broaden the scope of what counts as aid?

Is there an argument to align UK aid spending more closely with the UK's foreign policy goals and national interests?

In your opinion, do the UK's international aid commitments support the UK's soft power? In what ways does it do this?

Does the alignment of UK aid towards national interest objectives risk undermining the UK's credibility on the international stage as a leading aid donor?

What in your opinion are the key challenges facing international development now and in the future? And what would your message be to the current Secretary of State for International Development in trying to tackle these challenges?

In her evidence to this Committee on 28 April, Secretary of State Trevelyan stated that Coronavirus "could undo 30 years of the UK's international development work". What are the implications of Coronavirus for the Government's Integrated Review?

Sir Stephen O'Brien:

Background and Policy

We, the UK, do overseas aid because it is rationally and morally the right thing for a relatively wealthy, expert, peace-loving 'first-world' nation to do. It aligns to our values, and as a leading international, outward-facing, trading nation. And it is patently in our UK (selfish) interests to do so to help preserve peace and security, and thus our way of life and our future, and maintain prospects of hope which, demonstrably, diplomacy has not, and cannot do alone. The world is a safer and more secure, more peaceful and thus more confident, place as a result. It is well-evidenced that without it (and the aid by others) there would be more avoidable death and suffering, with even more man-made conflict (and, sadly, it is mainly men who resort to violence and intimidation).

I know from my time as the world's humanitarian chief (UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs & Emergency Relief Coordinator 2015-2017) that



conflict drives about 90% of the humanitarian need around the globe currently across 40 countries, with natural disasters and the response to them being accountable for the other 10%. The international, multi-lateral co-ordinated, community are pretty good at sudden onset, episodic natural disaster relief, supported by funding, materiel and skilled personnel from a number (but not all) the wealthier nations. The world is collectively not good at avoiding and stopping conflict (with the prime arbiters/international rules regulators over Member States, the UN Security Council and the UN Secretariat, retreating from dynamic resolution, or being by-passed by proxying in support of local or civil wars – e.g. Russia in Syria; Saudi Arabia on Yemen), nor gathering and preserving evidence, enforcing international laws and rights (International Committee of the Red Cross being the honourable exception to this). The world is also reluctant to prepare or fund in advance prevention before the stark facts are proof of need in front of their eyes. Globally, the impact of aid is less efficient because of that distrust to act preventively and avert catastrophic need, although the UK has a broadly good track-record of leadership in trying to prevent human and economic disaster on a worldwide perspective (with, sadly, some serious lacuna, such as the UK's (and US's) sway over Saudi Arabia ('KSA') currently in its bombardment and persecution of the Yemeni population, causing the world's largest humanitarian disaster since, as USG, I "called" that out in 2016. KSA's unilateral airstrikes continue today even after KSA is claiming it has entered a ceasefire in answer to the (largely ineffective) call by the UN's Secretary General for a global ceasefire since the emergence of the greater global pandemic threat of the Coronavirus).

Encouraging and bolstering young and emerging States, and getting funding and capacity directly to affected populations with the greatest needs is the best way of mitigating the drivers of conflict and instability, caused primarily by power contestations, proxy interference and violence, in a context of dis-respect and breakdown of borders and sovereignty, identity and confessional 'tribalism', resource scarcity coupled with increasing rapid mass urbanisation, and climate change exacerbating climate cycles. The most effective way to meet these imperatives is to target support on the poorest - many of whom will risk all, including violence, for survival. Most are innocent civilian victims. Life, security and health are the essentials of survival and protection. Without these, hope is lost and the chance to thrive is expunged. Our global inter-dependence towards these goals, underpinned by the incontestable, globally agreed UN SDGs, is now underscored by the global Covid-19 pandemic.

Apart from being a good and desirable thing in itself, the relief of poverty is regarded, on the evidence over decades across the World, as a precondition to enabling citizens' security with peaceful, functioning societies and Governments, with working economies and aspirational, safe citizens. Those who have sought to build up power bases even when they are in fact non-State actors, terrorists or insurrectionists have perversely proven this many times, viz: Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS who have all won over large swathes of populations by being the provider of essentials (water, food, shelter, medicines, health facilities, education, transport), and even sometimes subsequently sought to legitimise themselves through elections, in addition to allying people to their 'cause' or confession, however



unacceptable to a wider world. They have taken their chance and ‘bought’ some of the hearts and minds of people in their desperation and poverty when the State into which people have been born or arrived has failed them – it doesn’t have to be just a failed state, it is also where the State actively seeks to threaten or ignore its own citizens and their rights (or even declines their right of citizenship such as Burma/Myanmar and the Rohingyas), such as we have seen in Northern Mali or catastrophically, as we speak, in Syria, where the most vulnerable (irrespective whether they have participated in armed insurrection or part of the larger non-combatant population) are corralled in Idlib City and Idlib Rural and the broader Governorate, whose cramped camps, and appalling conditions are ripe for imminent decimation by the Coronavirus without any chance of effective counter-measures. There are many factors for insecurity – including collapse in the respect for Westphalian borders and citizenship, or freedom under the rule of law; absence of access to health or education (particularly for girls and women); denial of impartial and free access to a timely justice system and a systemic use of corruption in state institutions; or, in terms of global humanitarian need, 90% of the 145 million people who need life-saving or protection tonight are suffering because of man-made conflict and violence. The peace and stability of the World is served by enabling all people (whatever circumstances they are born into, or find themselves thrown into by natural disasters and conflicts), to survive and have agency over their own lives.

OECD definition

The OECD set out the principled target and aspiration some decades ago that the richer nations should spend 0.7% of their GNI on Overseas Development Assistance – basically defined as the relief of poverty, more recently described as ‘extreme poverty’, taken across the globe so that the relative poverty argument didn’t impinge on the ambition being directed to the poorest of the world. Post WW2, along with the creation of the UN and its affiliated Agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions and arrangements, in exchange for the responsibility for the peace and security of the World being delegated and vested in the Member State-governed, diplomatic body, the UN, primarily through its Security Council (with the P5 of which UK is one reflecting the ‘winners’ of WW2). Once the Decolonisation process had been almost completely achieved (through the UN’s Trusteeship Council – now defunct in all reality), the peace and security of the World, through our membership as global citizens within respected and defended national borders defining Member States, was designed to be underpinned by a development programme making significant fiscal transfers from the ‘First World’ economies to the Developing economies and Emerging nations (previously rather patronisingly called the Third World). That carried with it the expectation of some equity, so all peoples had the chance to hope and thus avert the temptation towards conflict.

For many, today as much as the generation who had come through the privations and suffering of WW2, this was a moral imperative and the moral case needed to be enacted and maintained to enable peace. But, today, that is probably not the impeller for the majority of people – some are hard-set against that moral case (as they are entitled to be of course) – and many take no view, or simply accept as normal (without the need to refresh or defend this underlying international



institutional model) these now broadly 75 year-old arrangements. They have served us fairly effectively insofar as we have not suffered a third world war, even if there has been horrendous warfare somewhere on the planet in all of the years except 1968 since WW2. On the positive side, until very recently each generation has grown more self-sufficient and economically successful than the last, not least because of our recognition of inter-dependence amongst all that we have to create and maintain the best paths to peace by a rules-based system in which the global population can survive and aspire to thrive. I don't include Regional trading bodies (EU, ASEAN etc.) as global peace and security issues, pandemics, climate and poverty don't respect regional boundaries any more than they respect national boundaries.

Even when I was DFID Minister, this question was something of a constant – and we always, rightly in my view, came back to the same answer: don't change the definition or the rigour of the reporting requirement to an objective body to measure the UK's Annual ODA spend. It is admired, of course, even as the UK, to its credit, has the habit and reputation of pushing vigorously at the edges of the definition of the ODA envelope, arguing that State capacity-building, for example, is for the relief of poverty, on a staged causal analysis. Similarly, that infrastructure and investment in economic goods lead to the reduction of poverty and the increased chances of self-agency denied to the poorest and those living at merely subsistence levels. The downside in changing away from the current position far outweighs any perceived benefit of the UK being able to strike out on her own, where any impact or remit expansion were very far from measurable, attributable, or deliverable let alone proven. Too many examples abound where non-DFID UK Departments have sought to spend ODA (FCO, DECC, DEFRA) where the programmes have failed to achieve the impact because the sustained monitoring and accountability mechanisms were absent and the motives were to access ODA budget rather than the relief of extreme poverty overseas, leading to media sensationalism, embarrassment and poor VFM – and DFID itself has not been immune from criticism of a relative few of its programmes.

The UK through DFID has always been at the forefront of the discussions, at times arguments, about what is encompassed in the definition of ODA under the OECD's DAC. Where does State capacity building lie? How do you deal with the prosperity agenda through infrastructure spend which can have a remote number of stages of causation between the spend, the asset, the economic and social effect in a locality and the relief of poverty over time? Does training soldiers in the Nigerian Army on human rights law count as ODA? Does sending our own soldiers to train anti-poaching patrols in Gabon count as ODA? How do you justify and account for cash transfers – by far the best way to support people who will largely be rational and do the right things when left to their own agency (just as we do with benefits in the UK)? The risk of making the wrong judgment is serious and for DFID with almost no non-ODA budget very rigorous. For non-DFID Departments there has to be non-ODA budget to cover the expense of anything which cannot be included in the ODA return or is rejected, a nightmare worry and real risk for the Accounting Officers, the Permanent Secretaries, in those non-DFID, non-Treasury Departments.



It is of course tempting in these times of 'take back control' to extend that policy principle to all matters way beyond the reach or remit of the EU. We have left the EU, not the OECD. We are not proposing to leave NATO – nor should we, in my view. The OECD is a separate and independent body which the UK continues to support and subscribe to. I am not aware of any proposals to alter this. The Treaty and associated arrangements of our membership of the OECD apply to the whole of the UK as does all policy and budget under the remit of the DFID and its Ministers on behalf of the UK Government of the day. None of this is devolved to the Devolved Administrations (save any exceptional minor concessions such as the relatively small amount granted by DFID to Scotland to deploy to support her long-standing and historic relationship with Blantyre and its people in Malawi).

So, what counts as 'aid' - in whose eyes? Is it an accounting mechanism for parts of HMG to have access to a dedicated element of National Budget, or is it to ensure that others around the World see the actions and example of the UK people, through the political commitment of Ministers, on behalf of the British people at a scale the UK people on their own could never achieve through the UK's laudable commitment to charitable giving? Is it a way for the neediest to benefit from the global centre of excellence that is DFID – where, with their experience and expertise in partnerships and specialists in the field, 'DFID' is a deeply admired brand of its own carrying huge 'soft power' alone? And to ensure the UK Government and people are accredited with this international form of philanthropy, that was one of the background reasons why, as Ministers in 2010-2012, we decided to put the Union Flag on the packaging of physical aid/letterhead/branding as "DFID" did not indicate country of origin. It mattered to reflect our collective British will and engagement (especially for the long haul because of 3 year programming and the confidence that the UK was not going to chop and change its ODA budget).

There is in the UK (and elsewhere) a Party political angle to this; the OECD DAC authorised/certified against annual 'returns' 0.7% ODA spend is an objective measure which all the main political parties support in the UK and underpins the law in the promise that every year the UK will spend 0.7% of its GNI on qualifying ODA. The rationale spelt out above persuades and sustains the Conservative policies that this is right and, in the Coalition Government of 2010-2015 it was a proud moment for that Government to be responsible for constructing the majority and technical approach (using the Private Members' Bill route) to introduce this law. That delivered on a Conservative manifesto promise (it was equally in the manifestos of the other parties other than UKIP) in the run up to the 2010 election. It was frustrating for the Labour and LibDems as it closed down the space for them to be able to argue the 'untruth' that the Conservatives were foreigner-hating hard-hearted Little Englanders (which non-Conservatives were keen to do) as this was clearly an issue which was supported across the political spectrum and, in effect, like my campaigning on malaria over many decades, 'above Party politics', and demonstrated a united commitment to our internationalist, non-protectionist, outward-facing (as throughout our history) and multi-lateral role in the World. It is worth noting that the effect of the 0.7% Law in the UK is that it is Declaratory and hypothecates public money (an objection in principle some have); were it not be



met in any year; no-one goes to prison. But it would be a political embarrassment reflecting badly on that Secretary of State and HMG of the day and a disappointment to the UK people (a continuing majority, despite occasional lurid media stories and a few MPs from all sides of the House of Commons) who feel this is the appropriate way to generate the impact globally that the UK, as a good global citizen, should.

OECD-DAC 0.7% of GNI on ODA

The UK's 2015 '0.7% Law' is there to be recognised for that commitment and I know from first-hand experience how much that was deeply respected and gave the UK enormous political and influential authority with recipient partner countries and their peoples, and with the other major economies of the World (e.g. Germany, Nigeria, Australasia, Japan, Turkey, Qatar, the USA) and the Multi-lateral and international institutions, INGOs and local NGOs and community groups. The 0.7% commitment has been reached by a notable few (the UK with mainly the Scandinavian countries so that means the UK, with the size of its economy, is the *primus inter pares*) who have stepped up to their obligations in this engaged way. Germany is making a serious effort to emulate us, but is hampered by the monies being often expended via the EU (as we have found until the UK exits the Transition Period on leaving the EU). France has taken the opposite approach (folding its Development Ministry into its Foreign Ministry with a dramatic reduction in the relatively small ODA spend it was already granting) and the link is now inescapable that France's influence is diminished because of its dilution of aid in its Francophonie partner countries (as the UK has significantly increased its aid, for instance, in the Sahel, where the UK's influence has grown exponentially and to great good effect). Delivering on the 0.7% commitment is also the one of the UK's most potent 'soft power' tools to encourage for other countries to join the 0.7% club and ambition by moral suasion and practical politics and outcomes in relationships.

About 15-17% of UK ODA spend was going through the EU. That will now in any event be coming back to UK Ministerial direction and oversight to enhance our already significant reach and predictability. It will also avoid one of the criticisms that EU ODA spend was/is very inflexible, granted on a project basis against minutely defined spend lines, often to the detriment of greatest impact and relevance to the need and opportunity at hand. Moreover, whatever cannot be spent in the period on the specific cost lines has to be handed back – with very few no cost extensions and little ability to adjust to reflect experience and context. DFID, on the other hand, has a well-regarded ability with its expert local and central project and programme managers to adjust where the circumstances best demand it under Ministerial direction and sanction, thus enhancing impact.

Mutual best interests as Global Citizens

Well-constructed, predictable and accountable, transparent aid is in everybody's interests, not least the people of the UK. With peoples and nations who are the recipients or partners in aid, or fellow donors, this is of major influence, leadership, expertise and example. Being 'aid', which is seen to be objectively defined under the OECD DAC rules for the relief of (extreme) poverty is the better way to carry international influence, otherwise it is always tainted with 'what's in it for them?' in a



rather resented 'post-colonial' way. That sharply reduces soft power and influence – as the USA demonstrates, particularly when coupled with the USA's policy of not outlawing 'tied aid' as we do in the UK. The question of 'tied aid' is a discussion and argument for another day where the issues are more finely balanced, between increasing the capacity of the UK to service its own ODA relevantly and efficiently, and the objections that programmes are designed with a 'producer/donor' bias at the expense of hypothetically the most relevant impacts for the recipient/partner country, the latter position being supported, perhaps over-vigorously, by the UK and International NGO lobby who pray the Malaysian Pergau Dam affair from over 30 years ago in aid.

It is notable that the 0.7% spend has always been reported through DFID but is made up of budgets from across various HMG departments; for instance, the IMIs' expenditures by Treasury are accounted for this way. As part of the pragmatic solution to the political challenge of budgets being frozen or cut in recent times in other Departments, some of the 0.7% DFID budget authority to spend has been given to other Secretaries of State, including the FCO, BEIS, DEFRA, DECC and the MOD. So, DFID only accounts for about 0.56% of that 0.7% (roughly where the ODA spend was in 2010 when the new set of Coalition DFID Ministers (of whom I was one) worked to push that up to 0.7% in time for the passing of that into Law by towards the end of that Coalition Government in 2015. What is even more notable is that during that time the decision was taken to reduce the number of countries and entities in receipt of ODA monies by about a quarter, including coming out of China and India. These were difficult decisions against the principles as India, even now, has 450,000,000 of the bottom billion of the poorest people on the planet (mainly concentrated in the 3 states of Orissa, Madyar Pradesh and Bihar), but because of the prejudicial stories about India having a space programme it was necessary to pull out of India, to maintain credibility and confidence with those who are influenced by the editorial approach of, say, the Daily Mail which is dead-set against overseas aid and our predictable commitment as a good partner. When the FCO received a portion of ODA spend the programmes they supported in China and India (as part of their influencing and soft power argument), without the benefit of the expert scrutiny of DFID practitioners, ran into reputational and funding problems when their programmes turned out to be sub-optimal in terms of impact for the intended benefits and some inability to link to the relief of poverty. Those almost all emanated from the programmes and spends by the non-DFID parts of HMG, but DFID was not immune from such errors.

The argument for 0.7% is that the programmes to support the relief of poverty can be planned and sustained through to impact. The predictability of the monies means that the early balloon costs of 'set-up' are not wasted when there are the almost inevitable delays at renewal and the international people carrying out the programme pull out or, increasingly where local, cannot continue in the absence of salaries and funding, and the impact, let alone value for money is seriously impaired. Having to set up again is also very costly and damages confidence so that the second time around there is a reluctance to use the best methods for fear of the programme being interrupted or there being 'stock-outs'.



Accountability

Of course, as with all Government taxpayer-sourced expenditure there is the need for very close scrutiny and accountability. Many places of operation for DFID programmes – be they humanitarian response in conflict zones or development initiatives can be exposed to fraud and corruption. The evidence appears to support the incidence being of the same order of magnitude as in a business in the UK or Benefit fraud on the DWP in the UK, despite the lurid media – excitable stories about corrupt leaders, fleets of Mercedes vehicles etc. Whilst venal examples of course exist they are but about 2% of the total (a figure produced in answer to Secretary of State/Ministerial questions whilst I was a DFID Minister). This does not compare unfavourably with similar bad practice in the UK in its public expenditure programmes. In my experience, the best antidote (and pour encourager les autres) was simply to demand the money back from the countries where there had been unjustified or irregular expenditure and demand that the perpetrators be investigated, prosecuted and imprisoned if found to have diverted funds for their own benefit. This had a marked success rate, with an increase in immediate recovery and deterrent effect. Whilst that interrupted vital aid, it meant the funds, once recovered (e.g. the girls' education programme in NE Kenya) could be re-deployed by a different method to secure the same intended benefit.

The creation of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact in 2011 was deliberately designed to report straight to your Select Committee (House of Commons International Development Select Committee), by-passing Ministers to ensure a rigorous examination of about 10 ICAI-chosen exemplar projects per annum by expert forensic independent, financially acute professionals to measure impact, VFM and process. That has indeed been a stick to beat Ministers and the ODA-engaged civil servants with to some good effect in shining a spotlight on process and averting problems at the design and implantation stages.

Soft Power

I would argue that what we are doing is already delivering on UK's international aid commitments and thus serving our influence, reputation and interests well. In fact, our aid spend probably is one of our most significant soft power tools, not least because it is NOT operated (largely) by the FCO (thus with a clear self-interested agenda). If one accepts the case that the relief of poverty is one of the best underpinnings towards a more peaceful world, even if you don't buy into the moral argument that that is the right thing to do as a global citizen or as a matter of principle or equity, then it is also justified and true that it is in the interests of the UK and her people to partner with the countries where there is most need as we are making a significant impact on the ability of people to be their own agents and call for good governance for themselves in the countries where they find themselves. Our DFID expertise is highly regarded, and the rigour of process has led to significant impact – and that is what is now measured.

Most questions to DFID Ministers focus on how much money has been spent; the answer I used to give was to say that, of course that is a serious question for any taxpayer-funded programme in the UK or overseas, but the prime question 'you meant to ask' is how many lives have been saved/women protected/children at



school, especially girls/resilient grains and staples sown/increased access to clean drinking water/energy infrastructure spend/WASH compliance/reduction in open defecation/economic activity/climate change mitigation/free and fair elections etc. etc. have you achieved which can fairly be attributed to this spend and helped poor people to get onto the path of 'survive and thrive'?

Without wanting to dwell on my own past Ministerial experience, it was hugely significant in 2010 to recognise that the culture within DFID had to change from being seen by itself and its people as 'a grand NGO moored offshore Whitehall', rather than being a full blown Department of State there to carry out the directions, policies and bidding of its Ministers and give impartial advice about priorities and what worked/s. In that culture it was hugely rewarding as a Minister to work up a proposal from zero to put in place approx. £300 million programme for Neglected Tropical Diseases, in addition to the massive uplift given to the Malaria eradication programme, where as a direct result of that predictable 3-4year DFID funding and programming/partnerships that UK money in my estimation has saved something in the region of 2-4 million lives across sub-Saharan Africa alone as well as making significant inroads into beating back, even towards elimination of, about 15 infectious tropical diseases. And, consequently, that can only contribute to a better, more peaceful world, I believe. A lot of this is now in peril as a result of the global Covid-19 pandemic if we don't take action to secure the gains, maintain programmes and train people anew to cope with the new context and Covid-19.

So, 'Yes', our influence and capacity to gain influence is hugely underpinned in relation to both those countries which are recipients of UK Aid but also those with whom we partner or wish to encourage as donors. As I know from my time at the UN where I was regularly meeting the 193 Member States' Presidents and Diplomats singly or collectively: they would remark voluntarily on the respect the UK's aid budget and example, and not least its expertise in programming towards impact, generated with them, as much as recipient nations, because it was real, tangible, exemplifying the earnest of our commitment to underpinning a peaceful and engaged free world where we all stepped up to our international obligations as citizens of the World. Donor Agencies of other countries look to DFID for leadership and technical assistance (e.g. Australia and many others).

The idea that the UK 'should' do this because of some post-colonial guilt was outdated in the extreme – only the odd political dinosaur would even utter such a phrase, about as frequently as some might spout Malthusian ideas in today's discourse or amongst younger generations. It underpins democratic institutions and relationships between peoples and their leaders and forces accountability for monies spent to measure probity and impact. If that is done over 3 years or more there is a chance to see input convert to intended and targeted outcomes, to learn what works best and to adapt to new facts and behaviours, with the prospect where appropriate of building a sense of partnership and trust. This has been enhanced over more recent times by the withdrawal from 'Budget support' as an instrument, so that the temptation by incumbent overseas Governments, Ministers and leaders to divert or adjust funding streams to other priorities is avoided and the people in need, always the best and rational judge of their best interests. Managing large



programmes is a skill vastly different to the skills of diplomacy or military posture and warfighting capability; those skills are found in DFID with its clear remit, as opposed to other parts of Whitehall who would dilute that rigorous skill base.

Effect of Covid-19

Sir Stephen O'Brien: As we are recognising with the Covid-19 pandemic, there is an inherent reluctance, even anxiety, for Governments to set aside taxpayers' money for a rainy day – self-insurance if you like. Taxpayers don't tend to trust Governments to spend their money well (even when they do!) and worry that if vast sums are spent on contingencies (e.g. medicines, drugs, PPE, warehousing, materiel, even Nightingale Hospitals) and if they are not used then that is seen as a colossal waste of their money and Ministers get it in the neck. BUT imagine in today's scene if those Nightingales weren't built, even if now being mothballed, and then they had been needed, the outcry for failing to be prepared would have been shrill, not least by media who tend to be first in line to suggest we shouldn't be spending any money to prevent famine or stop poverty overseas....if we care about creating the conditions for a more peaceful world, then how much more should we be concerned to back the initiatives that reduce the drivers of instability?

There is no doubt that the Coronavirus, with its global reach and without a vaccine, nor any science of sufficient rigour to enable policy-makers to base any assumption on immunity in those humans who have contracted the Covid-19 virus to date and come through it, will remain a potential and potent threat to human life on earth. Any vaccine will need to be deployable on such a mass scale that all the earth's 8 billion population can be vaccinated or at least 'covered'. Systems of Government, as much in mature democracies as in emerging nations with much earlier stages of Governmental development and probity, will come under continuing challenge and doubt, undermining trust and confidence which are pre-requisites to enabling the necessary collective compliance with behaviours when dealing with, ultimately, a herd (human in this case) response. This risk is multiplied manifold where there are poor resources or weak governance. The imperatives of maintaining the equilibrium between global populations, faced with this continuing and frightening sense of existential fragility will reinforce and exacerbate the need for collaborative, cooperative, co-funded political will to manage and mitigate our ways of life and our economic security. It is politically and economically rational and sensible to focus the maximum effort on those with the least resilience – in short on the poorest. All of us will only ever be as strong against a world of ever-present Covid-19, as the weakest link in the chain (of transmission). That means pan-globally if we are to have any chance of recovering our economies and societies, and coping with the histories-old powerful human driver of kinship, let alone 'business and leisure travel', which is now diffused across all 5 Continents. Sticking our heads in the sand behind closed borders (the virus respects no notion of a Westphalian construct!) will not be feasible, even if, however futile, desired or imposed.

This is not a recipe, nor any kind of advocacy, for some form of supposed Socialist utopia, far from it. There will always be the so-called 'Little Englanders' who do not see (or wish to see) the inter-dependence of our planet and the populations upon it, and see the use of taxpayers money (the only source of funds at sufficient scale for



a pandemic – and many other disasters and emergencies around the world, as well as development opportunities) to be applied purely within our own borders. There will even still be those who in a Darwinistic way have no compunction about the notion of the survival of the fittest in the human species. Our long history in the UK is proof, if proof were needed, that those approaches are self-serving and short term, unsustainable and selfish, counter-productive and not in the best interests of the UK and her people, nor the rest of the world.

But the vast majority of people wish to see humanity in action, and our Government taking the lead in delivering that well with best impact. The internationalist and multilateral approach spreads the risk of a targeted strike or a serious under-performance in our behaviours, governance or economic underpinning; and that goes for all Nation States around the globe. Those who retreat behind their borders, as well as commonly the collapse into degrading human rights abuses and the malign gaining the political ascendancy, end up with broken-backed economies and lower life expectancy and survivability, let alone sustainability. There becomes no chance to thrive – viz. Soviet Union; Venezuela; North Korea. So, in my view, the best antidote as we project to a world post Covid-19-peak but with Covid-19 (and its mutations) an ever-present danger with sporadic spikes, is to double down on the multi-lateral system and influence it afresh for the modern world. Don't ditch or scrap what we have, however imperfect, unless and until we have a better alternative in place and working! That appears nowhere on the horizon. The UK's significant role in creating and utilising the international rules-based system, not just by its history of commitment to the existing (but tired) global arrangements, is reinforced by our care and thought-leadership, our expert pragmatic implementation and by setting an example of how to raise issues of decency, rights, law, health, survival, opportunity above the necessary and continuing need for political and economic competitiveness. For us to recede from the internationally acknowledged leadership the UK has in performing the OECD development scope, by a combination of DFID's execution and our 0.7% commitment – all giving us huge soft power because of its objective legitimacy - is precisely why the UK's Ministers and Governments should, in my view, tread exceptionally carefully in damaging that decades-built reputation for the UK acting on the global peace and security arena with such impact, respect and admiration. This, in turn, is in our own best interests, especially as we transition away to the new sunlit uplands of our sovereignty as an outward, peace-loving trading nation enabling the confidence to re-emerge to let business – incentivised by profit, take on the economic development and recovery challenge the world over.

The WHO does need to be reconfigured I believe to become the expert overriding health watchdog with its emergency function then delegated to the coordinated impact of pulling on all the expert emergency responders around the globe as appropriate. If the WHO 'calls' a disease, it should not be for the Nation State to second guess and hold onto its economic, social and political interests when the importance of the health of its people and globally has to override that. Currently under the mandate from the World health Assembly, mirroring the UN General Assembly as part of the UN family, is dictated by the Member States who will tend to put their national interests before the global interests of the people on the planet



as a whole, thus condemning many to unnecessary and avoidable death and suffering. The deficit is not in the WHO Director-General, but in the mandate he is granted by Member States. The UK can lead to change that restraint. As Co-Chair of UNSG Ban Ki-Moon's Global Health Emergencies Task Force 2015-2016, I did an extensive examination of these issues, but my views did not prevail against the interests of Member States, but there is a template for a better approach available to be picked up and debated, adjusted and adopted.

Conclusion

Sir Stephen O'Brien: The evidence to underpin these arguments in this overall submission were exhaustively tested and laid out at the World Humanitarian Summit (which took place in May 2016 in Istanbul under my leadership in my UN USG role) where we had over 9000 participants over 2 days with about a third of the World's Heads of Government/Heads of State, donor agencies including DFID, multi-laterals, the private sector, media, INGOs, local NGOs and actors from all 5 Continents resulting in the ground-setting Agenda for Humanity (see link: <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org>)

The UK, through DFID, and the deployment of its ODA budget untainted by explicit 'soft power' motives, can be a confident leader for change for the better in this and thus create an agenda and path to avert the very real threat to the remarkable and noble gains the UK has made and contributed to in leading and partnering to relieve poverty – the greatest driver of instability – and give people a chance both to survive and to thrive. The 'soft power and influence' that the UK demonstrably earns and will earn and gain from this approach will continue to multiply across all the regions of the globe and amongst the Nations and communities of the world's citizens tuned to the modern world, including a post-Covid-19, or more realistically, "living with Covid-19" world.

Exchange of written Q&A with witness

Witness: Chris Mullin, former FCO and DFID minister

WQ68 **Chris Mullin:** Two preliminary observations. First, I draw the attention of the committee to my article entitled 'At DFID' in the March 19 edition of the London Review of Books, which is available [online](#).

Second, may I respectfully suggest that the committee take evidence from Clare Short? She, above all, was the architect of the policy that led to the establishment of DFID as a separate department, over which she presided for six years. She is overwhelmingly the person best qualified to address the committee's questions as to the thinking behind both the creation of DFID and the International Development Act 2002. By comparison I served only five months at DFID and two years as Africa minister at the FCO, during which time I worked closely with the DFID Secretary of State, Hilary Benn.

WQ69 **Committee:** Is there a case for the Government to explore options to use its own



definition of aid, rather than the OECD DAC definition, to broaden the scope of what counts as aid?

Chris Mullin: No. It will potentially open up a huge loophole in the purposes for which aid can be used and could open the way for a repeat of past abuses. In the light of recent statements by ministers, from the prime minister downwards, and with the best will in the world, I do not trust ministers to resist pressure to spend non-emergency aid money on projects that are not primarily targeted on the long term relief of poverty. There may be a case for revising the DAC definition, but only by consensus. As one of the world's largest donors of development aid we are well-placed to press within the DAC for any reasonable revisions.

WQ70 **Committee:** Is there an argument to align UK aid spending more closely with the UK's foreign policy goals and national interests?

Chris Mullin: Absolutely not. It will lead inevitably to the scandals of the past. This is exactly the issue which came to a head with the Pergau dam scandal of the early 1990s in which the Foreign Office authorised the payment of £234 million in aid money towards the cost of a vast dam in Malaysia apparently as part of an incentive for the Malaysian government to sign a £1 billion arms contract with the UK. It was one of the more blatant but by no means the only example of such abuse and it was to avoid any repetition of that DFID was set up as an independent department. It did not prove easy. The FCO and other parts of Whitehall fought a strong rear guard action (they are still at it). DFID, however, has been an outstanding success. Its' activities are – rightly – rigorously scrutinised and it is far less wasteful of public funds than those departments currently seeking to get their fingers in the trough. I note that during the passage of International Development Act, its principal aims (which included the untying of aid) had the support of all parties. As Andrew Mitchell, the Conservative spokesman on International Development (and subsequently DFID Secretary of State) remarked in a speech to the Royal Africa Society in September 2009, 'There is not a Labour and Conservative policy on international development. There is a British one.'

WQ71 **Committee:** In your opinion, do the UK's international aid commitments support the UK's soft power? In what ways does it do this?

Chris Mullin: They certainly do. This is the one area where indisputably we punch above our weight. It means our arguments are listened to and taken seriously in international fora, precisely because we put our money where our mouth is. Although a relatively junior minister in the Foreign Office, I was able to operate at head of State level throughout Africa, because we were recognised as major player and our motives were not suspect.

WQ72 **Committee:** Does the alignment of UK aid towards national interest objectives risk undermining the UK's credibility on the international stage as a leading aid donor?

Chris Mullin: Of course, it does. And not only our credibility, but that of the entire international system. If we start bending the rules, others will follow. We are by no means the only developed country to have untied our aid, but if we are not careful we could well trigger a reversal of what until now has been a healthy trend. Quite apart from which there is evidence to suggest that untied aid is significantly better



value for money than aid which is tied.

WQ73 **Committee:** What in your opinion are the key challenges facing international development now and in the future?

Chris Mullin: International development is about much more than emergency aid to victims of flood, famine and war (important though that is). In the long run it is about creating functioning market economies in countries where none exists. This requires conflict resolution, the rule of law, free elections and the provision of basic public services funded by a credible system of taxation. All areas where the UK can, and does, make a difference. The fact that the UK is a world leader in helping to address these issues is something of which every British citizen can be proud.

WQ74 **Committee:** And what would your message be to the current Secretary of State for International Development in trying to tackle these challenges?

Chris Mullin: You have one of the most important and personally fulfilling jobs in government. Assuming you are left in post long enough to make a difference (and I appreciate that is not in your gift), take it seriously, do it well and you will look back upon it as one of the most rewarding periods in your life. An early test of your success or failure will be whether or not you succeed in fighting off attempts by other departments and vested interests to undermine or destroy what thus far has been a great British success story.

I also have a message for the prime minister: constant reshuffling is the bane of effective government. There have been five secretaries of State for International Development in four years. Find someone capable and committed and leave them in post for the duration.

WQ75 **Committee:** In her evidence to this Committee on 28 April, Secretary of State Trevelyan stated that Coronavirus “could undo 30 years of the UK’s international development work”. What are the implications of Coronavirus for the Government’s Integrated Review?

Chris Mullin: Long-term threats to UK, and indeed European, security include climate change, cyber-security, terrorism and mass migration arising from the collapse of failed states. In addition to which we must now add, if they were not previously included, global pandemics. The danger with Coronavirus or any subsequent virus is that, were it to spread out of control in heavily populated chaotic countries such as those on the Indian sub-continent and parts of Africa, it could lead to national break down on an unprecedented scale, severely undermining progress made so far. I should perhaps add that none of the above threats to our security can be addressed by one country acting alone.

Exchange of written Q&A with witness

Witness: Hajir Maalim, Regional Director, East & Southern Africa, Action Against Hunger

WQ76 **Committee:** Could you tell me us about the UK aid projects you are responsible



for? Who they are targeted at? What outcomes are being achieved? How are they changing the lives of beneficiaries?

Hajir Maalim: I had the privilege to be engaged on a number of DFID-funded projects for Action Against Hunger since 2008; a journey that involved working on the Somalia 2011 famine response, Yemen's humanitarian response during the Arab Spring & the Civil War; 2017/2018 Famine Prevention efforts in Somalia and today in the Eastern Africa region leading the humanitarian & resilience building efforts. I am a witness to the great impact that DFID funded projects have had on millions of vulnerable population; who were saved from the brink of death and granted the opportunity to thrive.

In my 13 years with Action Against Hunger, I have been to many nutrition & health treatment sites and I was always heartbroken to see young lives, sometimes a few days old, go through untold suffering because their lovely parents can't afford a basic meal. What keeps me going is the results we see at the end, when they leave the treatment centres with a new hope for life. DFID made this possible. The British People did.

Let me illustrate how the British People are making real differences in the lives of many by highlighting two DFID-funded projects in Somalia, one that has its roots in the learning from the 2011 famine while the second is revolutionising health care provision in Somalia.

Following the devastating famine in 2011, jointly with DFID officials on the ground, we had to ask the hard questions: how can we prevent such a tragedy from happening again? The answer was simple though challenging to achieve: we needed to build the resilience of the local population to the multiple shocks they faced. Almost a decade later, through the Building Resilient Communities in Somalia project, we are making steady & incremental progress in achieving this result. Today, we have managed to stand by these communities during hardships and offered a certain degree of protection while promoting self-reliance and dignity. This was only possible due to DFID's willingness to shape their investment along different lines, re-inventing the map of humanitarian investments in Somalia along multi-year, flexible and adaptive modalities.

The 2nd project is even more revolutionary. I have a great feeling that this project is setting the foundation for NHS-style health care system in Somalia, which is a big dream in a country that has had no functioning government for decades and have relied on poorly trained private healthcare providers and charities for basic health services. By strengthening the health system under the stewardship of the Somalia Health Authorities at the regional, district and community level, this project is increasing access to, utilisation and quality of health and nutrition services at community, primary and secondary health levels. Simply, this project is rebuilding Somalia Health Infrastructure from the community to the district level one block at a time. Somalia are proud of the status of their healthcare prior to the civil war and I witnessed those who were alive then having the feeling that they are getting that back when this project was launched in Mogadishu in early 2019. Initially started in 10 districts of Mogadishu, this project is now been replicated even to reach more across Somalia by other donors.



WQ77 **Committee:** What makes an effective aid project?

Hajir Maalim: From my experience, an effective aid project needs to be provided at the right time: it can't be one day late as this has massive implications for the people we assist and also increases the costs of bringing the desired change. In addition, an effective aid projects have to be adequate to the needs of those been assisted. Aid projects that are delivered in piece meal won't make a difference and could even be counterproductive.

While people often welcome any form of assistance, for it to be effective, it needs to meet the appropriateness criteria or else it will just deepen dependency. More importantly, I would stress that an effectiveness of an aid project is determined not by how it meets today's needs but also anticipate & proactively address future needs. This is vital as it helps strengthen communities' capacities to be self-reliant and render the need for aid less likely in the future.

All these criteria while important could be undermined if an aid project doesn't meet the acceptance criteria. I have witnessed multiple times people in desperate situation rejecting what appears to be a 'good' aid when they felt there were other motives behind the assistance. I have always been asked by communities we assist what is in it for us to come a long way, often traveling along a difficult inaccessible terrain to assist. If they don't like what they see, they don't hesitate to say 'No' to the assistance been offered. Q2. What makes an effective aid project?

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WQ78 **Committee:** Are there any differences in administering DFID projects compared to those from other government departments? If so, how?

Hajir Maalim: My experience has largely been limited to conflict zones and in this environment, we often access only DFID funded projects, sometimes out of a



deliberate choice due to the perception that other government department funding streams comes with conditionalities that makes them unsuitable for such contexts. DFID's work in building a safer, healthier, more prosperous world for people is something that communities we assist identifies with. Millions are alive today due to the investment made by DFID in its life-saving nutrition and health work; millions more were able to go to school due to DFID work in education including women & girls who are now more engaged and leading a fruitful life. I have personally had a fulfilling experience working on a number of DFID projects and found my DFID counterparts in the field as highly supportive and appreciative of the challenges presented by the contexts in which we operate. These achievements were made possible by the perception that DFID funding is not linked to other non-humanitarian/development agenda, and maintaining this image is critical for us and DFID to remain relevant where it is most needed.

Due to the administrative burden of managing contracts, I have seen that DFID has reduced the number of bilateral engagements they have with actors on the ground, often preferring consortium approach or going through pooled funding mechanisms administered by the UN. While the merits of this approach are obvious, I also felt that this has created a gulf between DFID and its downstream partners. There is a need to re-establishing these direct engagements as this will greatly add value to us as downstream partners. I understand that this might require appropriately staffing local DFID offices and making them more accessible to all partners, including local actors, especially in fragile and difficult contexts. We are appreciative of the support provided by DFID to local and international charities across the globe. With the increasing scale and complexity of the challenges we face, we need more of DFID.

WQ79 **Committee:** How does administering a UK aid funded project differ from those funded by other donor countries?

Hajir Maalim: Due to its history and investment in learning and evaluations, UK aid funded projects often tends to be more robust in its scope. This was also made possible due to DFID engagement across the full spectrum of humanitarian & development work. The adoption of flexible adaptive program stands as a clear difference with many other donors who at times have a fixed approach on how to deliver aid. In addition, the shift to longer-term funding which maximizes gains from the project is exemplary and needs to be further reinforced.

While the focus on value for money in project development is instrumental in designing more cost-effective projects, DFID has also adopted an approach that allows for operating agencies on the ground to meet their actual costs in the implementation of projects. Overhead costs for projects are important as agencies use these resources to strengthen capacities, identify new solutions and deal with the risks they face. This needs to be safeguarded especially at this time when charities are facing significant financial strain due to the impact of COVID-19.

WQ80 **Committee:** In your opinion, does the UK coordinate its investments in international development effectively with other donor countries?

Hajir Maalim: DFID is a key leader within the donor coordination forums,



established formally or informally, and have made significant investments in coordination. They do fund a number of coordination forums that gives it more leverage to bring the needed change. Stronger partnerships and alignment with governments have also deepened DFID's capacity to effectively coordinate with other donor countries. This coordination has significantly helped in sharing of knowledge and mapping of where resources are allocated to avoid duplication. However, I feel there is a need to do more in identifying better opportunities for co-funding projects together with other donor countries. I understand that they are national or other interests that might inhibit this. However, the level of coordination today isn't sufficient enough to eliminate redundancies, often relying on partners on the ground to share information on what is been delivered by the different donor countries. We have seen some successes of pooled resources and this needs to be further replicated and expanded to include new actors.

WQ81 Committee: What in your opinion are the key challenges facing international development now and in the future? And what would your message be to the current Secretary of State for International Development in trying to tackle these challenges?

Hajir Maalim: We are today at an important point in our lifetime. With the multiplicity of crisis due to conflict, drought, floods, desert locust, and now coronavirus, we are at a difficult but opportune moment to stand up and meet the challenge. When I reflect about the numbers of vulnerable population we are assisting every day and with the increasing frequency of disasters resulting in more been pushed to the brink, I am concerned that the level of investment we are making isn't sufficient enough to create a "tipping point", and the more we delay, the more the situation deteriorates. However, I also see hope: I see hope in the grandmother who wakes up every morning to go out from dawn to dusk to find food for her grandchild, who lost her mum during childbirth. The scale of the challenges we face today is evident: deaths, hunger and suffering due to conflict, drought, floods, poor governance and climate change among others.

The Secretary of State for International Development is in a unique position to make a difference. While it might be a statistic on internal reports, there are millions of mums, children particularly those under-5, who are reliant on DFID's assistance to stay alive. I have seen many pulled from the brink due to the assistance provided by DFID. This should keep her going to tackle the challenges we all face; as more is needed to bring the desired change.

I understand the incentive to focus on trade and other investments. It is also critical that we don't lose sight of those who desperate need our assistance in disadvantaged communities. DFID represents the best of the British People and we count on the Secretary's leadership to maintain the focus on serving those in most need. With the predictions of famine of biblical proportions on the cards, DFID have the ultimate responsibility to prevent it, as DFID successfully led famine prevention efforts in Somalia in 2017/18. "We can do it, Madam Secretary."

WQ82 Committee: In her evidence to this Committee on 28 April, Secretary of State Trevelyan stated that Coronavirus "could undo 30 years of the UK's international development work". What are the implications of Coronavirus for the delivery of



your aid projects?

Hajir Maalim: While there is a high likelihood that the investments we have made in the past decades could be lost due to coronavirus, we are learning more everyday about this pandemic and given that we are in the early stages of the outbreak in the region, we do have a great opportunity to protect those investments, even though we are already witnessing serious threat to people's lives and assets. Access to health care is getting further compromised as health workers including private providers are withdrawing services to avoid been infected by the virus. Economic livelihoods are seriously threatened as social distancing measures impact those who rely on daily earnings to keep their families alive.

The fear, the deaths and the uncertainty faced by the world today due to coronavirus has been and is the daily reality for millions who continue to suffer and die from treatable and preventable conditions such as hunger, malnutrition, cholera and complications related to pregnancy. Sadly, they are the ones again most impacted by this coronavirus turning their pain into a tragedy.

We are seeing early but limited efforts to prevent this already as DFID reprogramme existing projects to address the impact of coronavirus, but more needs to be done collectively to adequately meet this challenge.

Exchange of written Q&A with witness

Witness: Mauro Tadiwe, Head of South Sudan Programmes, Saferworld

WQ83 **Committee:** Could you tell us about the UK aid projects you are responsible for?

Mauro Tadiwe: My name is Mauro Tadiwe and I'm Saferworld's Country Director in South Sudan based in Juba. I lead on a (DFID funded) project called 'Contributing to Poverty Reduction Through Community Security and Peacebuilding' which is being implemented in six of the ten states of South Sudan. As many of us know, that despite the many attempts at peace and reconciliation, many communities in South Sudan continue to experience violence up to this day. The conflict itself has been exacerbated by the fact that the conflict has taken ethnic lines as well as political lines due to poor governance and the collapse of the economy of the country. So, the project we are implementing aims to bring together communities, authorities and civil society to jointly work together to identify, prioritise as well as draw up action plans for community security and peacebuilding challenges that they are facing and together to find solutions to these challenges in South Sudan.

Saferworld in South Sudan also hosts the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, which is led by the Department for International Development (DFID) and also funded by the governments of the Netherlands, Switzerland and Canada. The facility provides analysis, tools as well as guidance on conflict sensitivity to donors to ensure that donors, various UN agencies and development partners in South Sudan invest in programmes that are conflict sensitive. In other words, that they do



not inadvertently fuel conflict by benefiting one side or disadvantaging another side. To ensure that donor investment is conflict sensitive, does no harm and contributes to sustainable peace and development in South Sudan.

WQ84 **Committee:** Who they are targeted at?

Mauro Tadiwe: The peacebuilding programme that Saferworld implements in South Sudan is targeted at four tiers of beneficiaries or partners.

The first tier are the communities we work with. We work very closely to equip them so that they are able to identify as well as suggest ways of managing their security and peacebuilding challenges.

We also work with authorities at the state and county levels to equip them with the tools they need to engage with communities to identify community needs and to respond to those needs as wished for by their communities.

We also work with civil society to equip them with the tools and the skills that they can use to collectively advocate with authorities and other development partners for the community security and peacebuilding needs of the communities.

We also use evidence from our work to influence policy at the national level, as well as international level to ensure that all of us are working together to contribute to bringing about lasting peace in South Sudan.

WQ85 **Committee:** What outcomes are being achieved?

Mauro Tadiwe: The overall outcome of the project is that through community security and peacebuilding, people are able to improve their livelihoods, people are able to live in peace, people are able to get on with their lives. Otherwise the specific project outcomes are four:

One is that, as I said earlier, communities but particularly women and youth are able to participate in peace-building processes, are able to take charge of their lives, and be able to contribute to bring about peace in South Sudan.

Secondly that security providers and other authorities at the local level and the national level and various levels are first of all consulting with their communities, responding to the needs that are identified and prioritised by the community and are able to provide services, including security, to the various communities that they work with especially women and children and other marginalised groups.

The third outcome relates to civil society, including women and youth-focused or women and youth-led organisations, are able to build consensus and contribute to bringing peace into their communities.

Outcome four is that external actors, including in-country donors, are investing their resources in conflict sensitive and gender-sensitive ways so that we are able to build together an inclusive South Sudanese society that is able to take care of its own development and is able to live in peace with each other.

WQ86 **Committee:** How are they changing the lives of beneficiaries?

Mauro Tadiwe: Fundamental to our approach is working through national partners,



South Sudanese civil society organisations. In each location where we work, we work in partnership with South Sudanese organisations who are embedded in their communities, who understand the needs and aspirations and desires of their communities, and who are able to advocate on behalf of the communities. And we also work with communities through a structure that we call 'Community Action Groups', basically a group of about 30 people about ten of whom are women, ten of whom are young people and the rest of the ten are members of the community. The community action groups are the voice of the communities. They represent the community in various fora, but they also work with the communities to identify specific challenges regarding security and peacebuilding and we support them to draw up action plans and we also provide them with seed funds to be able to implement [their] action plans.

So, for instance, in Jonglei, one of the States where we work, there was a dispute among one clan, that has five sections, over a strategic piece of land that is claimed ancestrally. But, also, the land itself is [a] prominent grazing land. The communities came together through one of these dialogues that we organised and facilitated. One of the [five] communities that originally claimed rights to this land was willing to cede ownership and the five clans of the Ajuong community in Jonglei agreed they will turn this into an area where they will build a secondary school and each clan was mandated to raise funds. And they raised funds to the tune of \$22,000 and as we speak now they are constructing a secondary school in that piece of land. It shows that if people come together and identify their mutual interest they are able to find ways and means to coexist around that shared resource.

Also, in another location, in South Sudan, in Malakal, the community action group that we supported and in fact they have only been in existence for a year, were able to mobilise the communities, UN agencies and other donors to chip in and come together to clean up the town. The town of Malakal is divided into two sections, there are people who live in the UN facility called 'protection of civilian' sites and this is [where] people who had run to the UN for protection in 2014 and 2015 live, and also people who live within the town and these two communities are separated along ethnic lines. Yet the community action group was able to bring together these two sections of society to undertake work that benefited everybody in the town.

WQ87 **Committee:** What makes an effective aid project?

Mauro Tadiwe: I should say that I have worked in peacebuilding in South Sudan for 11 years with three different organisations each of which was funded by either or both DFID and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and I have seen how peacebuilding work has evolved in South Sudan now for 11 years. So, in my opinion the key thing to effective [aid] delivery is that it must respond to the needs of the beneficiaries, of the participants in the project and the communities that the project is seeking to assist. And also aid agencies should be able to communicate the results of their work to the communities that they serve.

The second thing for me would be that an aid project, for it to be successful, it must be inclusive of gender, of disability, young people, older people and other



vulnerable groups in society. This is crucial in a society like South Sudan where some of the values we espouse may not be a priority in such patriarchal and hierarchical societies.

Number three, also for aid projects to be sustainable and long-lasting they have to be delivered in a manner that leaves behind a legacy and that is empowering communities; but most importantly, empowering them to begin to demand services of the authorities and authorities to recognise that it is their duty, it is their responsibility to provide services to communities including security.

The fourth important element of sustainable aid projects for me is sensitivity to context, sensitivity to conflict, sensitivity to dynamics in that particular society. Otherwise by introducing new resources to complex situations, we may inadvertently be fuelling conflict or fuelling the division in society.

Lastly, [and] I can only speak of South Sudan, it's amazing how working in South Sudan can be challenging as well as rewarding. That you know you can draw up your plan today to have a community dialogue tomorrow and one thing happens in the afternoon and then you have to postpone or re-plan that activity because there's no way that you can get there, [nobody] can get there when a conflict erupts. So, implementing peacebuilding projects entails that both the implementers and donors have to be flexible, have to be adaptable and have to be creative. Otherwise putting a lot of emphasis on bureaucratic monitoring, rather than impact and results, defeats the purpose of peacebuilding itself.

WQ88 **Committee:** Are there any differences in administering DFID projects compared to those from other government departments? If so, how?

Mauro Tadiwe: Yes, as I said earlier, I and other colleagues with whom I worked have worked on both DFID as well as FCO funded projects and our feeling is that DFID tends to be more flexible compared to, for example, the FCO. This is despite, I think, DFID is still heavy on monitoring and processes. Nevertheless, compared to the FCO I found it more flexible.

Also, other colleagues in Saferworld have suggested the Conflict Stability and Security Fund, CSSF, that relies more on analysis is still dependent on monitoring of implementation which undermines the flexibility and the need to be more adaptable in conflict contexts.

Number three, with the experience we have now with managing the UK Aid Direct project that I described earlier on, that is being managed through Mannion Daniels, we find that they have been very flexible and quite responsive in working with us.

WQ89 **Committee:** How does administering a UK aid funded project differ from those funded by other donor countries?

Mauro Tadiwe: Yes. We have had funding from other donors and my feeling is that other donors such as the Netherlands, SIDA which is the Swedish Development Corporation, the European Community and the Swiss Development Corporation, tend to be more flexible when I compare them to DFID. As I said earlier, DFID tends to be less flexible. They have a long drawn out process of development and approval and are less risk tolerant when I compare them to the



other donors, the Dutch, the Swiss, the Canadians and the other donors I mentioned earlier. Q4. How does administering a UK aid funded project differ from those funded by other donor countries?

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WQ90 **Committee:** In your opinion, does the UK coordinate its investments in international development effectively with other donor countries?

Mauro Tadiwe: Yes, I would say definitely in South Sudan. I know that many donors who are either newcomers or who have been there but are smaller donors always look [to] DFID for leadership when it comes to how they want to invest in South Sudan, and I should laud DFID for that. I know that [the] Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, which we host, is led by DFID and my colleagues have had very good dealings with DFID.

WQ91 **Committee:** What in your opinion are the key challenges facing international development now and in the future? And what would your message be to the current Secretary of State for International Development in trying to tackle these challenges?

Mauro Tadiwe: Intercommunal violence in South Sudan has been incessant. Grievances are deep-rooted. Animosity and distrust is rampant. So, at the same time, while investing in national-level peace processes, I think we were getting it wrong if also equally we don't invest in local level peace processes. As I said earlier, I have been working in South Sudan for 11 years and have seen it with my own eyes, where communities are empowered enough to be able to push back on political manipulation, when they realised their mutual interest, they are able to push back. So, while focusing on the national-level peace process and the division of power between the elite, the most important place to invest is at the community level. Once communities are able to coexist along their next door neighbour, then they are able to withstand any attempt at manipulating them. And this is not just the case in South Sudan but other countries including Yemen, Somalia that I could equate with South Sudan.

The other thing I would say, about [international community] providing services to communities in South Sudan, which we have to do, [because] we have to save lives but we have done this for more than 35 years up to now and I just feel that the time has come for the international community to impress upon the government of South Sudan that this is the responsibility of the government, of any government including of South Sudan: to provide services to its citizens and to its populations. So, by continuing to be providing humanitarian services and especially also specialist services such as health and education as we continue to do, we have to start to be clear to the government of South Sudan that this is your responsibility.



Otherwise we absolve the government of [its] responsibility and then we'll see tomorrow we pack up and go and leave the people in the lurch.

Number three, I think we need to invest in projects that empower people to start demanding services from their government. Sometimes, I feel ashamed that when something happens in the community, officials or the county commissioner don't go to the government, they say NGOs will respond. They do not ask "what do we need?" and go to the government in Juba and say, "we have a problem here, we need resources, please help us". We need to talk about this culture of dependency, and we need to start unwinding that way of looking at things.

There have also be instances, not so much with DFID, of duplication with different agencies doing the same thing in the same location or also between donor partners funding different partners with the same programmes in the same locations. I think about co-ordination and collaboration and I think DFID is doing this well, but I think could do more to champion among the other donors. Finally, I'd like to see more investment in employment projects for people, particularly young people. The youth have a lot of energy and unless their energies are used constructively it can be destructive to their communities and their country.

WQ92 Committee: In her evidence to this Committee on 28 April, Secretary of State Trevelyan stated that Coronavirus "could undo 30 years of the UK's international development work". What are the implications of Coronavirus for the delivery of your aid projects?

Mauro Tadiwe: The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving and will continue to unfold in South Sudan within the context of a very fragile peace process. As we know the government of national unity was formed in February and to date the parties to the agreement have not been able to name the state governors nor have they been able to agree between themselves which state goes to which party. So, the risk of the peace agreement [collapsing] or the risk of the pandemic being used as a way to return the country to violence and armed confrontation is not negligible. Hence we need to be investing in projects and measures that not only respond to the immediate health needs of the citizens of South Sudan, but also we need to invest in projects that also takes care of the changed context of the pandemic. I know that today there are communities in South Sudan that do not believe that there is a thing called COVID-19. The government has put in place measures to contain and to prevent the spread of the virus, of the pandemic. Yet many communities are not even aware of the dangers so whatever intervention we are supporting, or we are implementing, in South Sudan continue to be cognisant of and address this reality.

Of course, women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities tend to be on the wrong end of these situations. Women in South Sudan have endured gender-based and sexual violence for decades and they continue to experience it. So, we have to ensure that we are catering for this section of society in South Sudan which includes women, children and people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

The situation has also led to many people, including myself, to explore and find new ways of working such as working from home, teleconferencing. Of course, we did these things in the past but now it is the only way of working and we have to



capitalise on this. Going forward we will explore this more in how we will implement projects.

Finally, I think I would say that the pandemic has underscored the imperative to invest in local, national capacities, the capacities of South Sudanese to be able to take charge of their own development and take charge of their aspirations. South Sudanese civil society organisations are best placed in terms of where they are based, in terms of who they work with, the communities trust them, and they have a track record of delivery. Especially if the drawdown of international expertise continues, these people are able to step in and are able to continue to deliver services to their communities. We in Saferworld have been constantly working with our partners to adapt our programmes and to find ways that we can continue to work with communities within the current context, so that we are able to maintain cohesion as well as tolerance between communities.

Exchange of written Q&A with witness

Witness: Su'ad Jarbawi, Regional Director, Middle East, Mercy Corps

WQ93 **Su'ad Jarbawi:** Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Su'ad Jarbawi and I'm the Regional Director for Mercy Corps for the Middle East. I have been working as the Regional Director for the past three years and prior to that I was the Country Director in Iraq. I have been in the sector for over 17 years. I hope that my testimony today can show you a little bit of the insights from my experience growing up within the humanitarian domain. In the Middle East, Mercy Corps covers six countries Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Yemen. All of them have their fair share of complexity, but also have such enormous potential for us.

WQ94 **Committee:** Could you tell me about the aid projects you are responsible for?

Su'ad Jarbawi: We are currently implementing five UK aid projects in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan (two projects) reaching over a million people and with a total value just over £89 million. We work in rural and urban centres, especially in secondary cities where increasingly large populations looking for employment remain underserved by stressed infrastructure and limited resources.

WQ95 **Committee:** Who they are targeted at?

Su'ad Jarbawi: With UK aid, we work with both the household level and the community level. Humanitarian programmes predominantly focus on a household level. And what we try to do is make sure that we're building on the resilience of families as they go through repeated shocks or as they go through the protracted effects of those shocks. We are with them side by side to make sure that they are surviving the shock, but also thriving to be able to build a better today and tomorrow for them and for their family members. As for the community level, we work with, for example, refugees and host communities to make sure that



tensions are reduced to enhance stability in that community. We also work with youth that are usually seen by community members as a negative force rather than positive force. We try to work with them to change that dynamic, again to ensure that as a community there is momentum for further growth.

In Syria and Iraq, we work with the most vulnerable, conflict-affected individuals and communities, including people displaced by the conflict, host communities, and those in areas with scarce access to basic supplies or services. These people are among the most food insecure, with few to no coping strategies remaining.

In Jordan and Lebanon, our work targets vulnerable communities who are important for stability, such as refugees and host communities, and young people aged 12-25 at risk of supporting or engaging in violent conflict. We take holistic approaches that engage local actors - communities, local authorities, civil society, and the private sector.

WQ96 **Committee:** What outcomes are being achieved?

Su'ad Jarbawi: Through a 5-year DFID-funded programme in Syria, Mercy Corps is focusing on the agricultural sector, the largest livelihoods sector in Syria, supporting households and communities to promote both income generation and food production along the value chain.

Crisis affected populations in Syria continue to face persistent protection concerns, including psychosocial distress and sexual and gender-based violence due to the breakdown of structures and institutions. Mercy Corps is working with participants and local actors to ensure that the most vulnerable have access to safe and dignified protection services.

Mercy Corps leads the Cash Consortium of Iraq, formed in 2015 and to which DFID is a generous donor. Vulnerable families who receive unconditional, unrestricted cash assistance are better able to meet their unique profiles of basic needs, with top expenditures typically on food, health, and shelter.

In Jordan, our DFID-funded social cohesion work with more than 700 community leaders, across 35 communities in 11 governorates has culminated in the independently registered 'National Negotiators Network'. This network has engaged in conflict resolution processes at the national and local level. With CSSF/FCO funding, we are providing youth at-risk of engaging in violence and their parents with strategies to handle stress and aggression while also connecting them in healthy ways to engage with their families and their communities. In parallel, we are strengthening institutional capacities - including within the Ministry of Social Development and Juvenile Detention Facilities - to sustain long-term impact.

In Lebanon our CSSF/FCO funded project aims to reduce drivers of tension amongst and between Lebanese communities, refugees and local government through fostering dialogue and peacebuilding mechanisms such as mediation and dispute resolution, and providing rapid stabilisation response, particularly in relation to solid waste management.



WQ97 **Committee:** How are they changing the lives of beneficiaries?

Su'ad Jarbawi: We're changing the lives of those that we serve by recognising their sense of agency and the potential they have in changing their own reality. What we do with UK aid is recognise that people's potential and people's strength is affected by the circumstances they live under. And if we work together to change the circumstances, then those people can thrive on their own. The idea of the change that happens is working hand-in-hand with them, with the generous contributions of UK aid, to either break the barriers that they're facing or figure out creative workarounds.

Our Syria programme has assisted over 1 million people (year four, March 2020). Surveys revealed that:

- 81% of individuals reached have reported a reduced Coping Strategies Index Score.
- 96% of individuals surveyed have reported food assistance provided was sufficient to meet intended needs.
- 87% of local Mercy Corps partners have improved capacity based on joint assessments.
- 93% of individuals surveyed who received livelihood inputs resulted in improved / maintained / stabilised economic coping.

Since its inception, the Cash Consortium for Iraq (CCI) has reached more than 80,000 vulnerable households. Over 99% of vulnerable families indicate a preference for unconditional, unrestricted cash assistance. Amongst recipients, 94% of families report that they are better able to meet their basic needs, while a majority (61%) report they are able to reduce the use of negative coping mechanisms, such as selling household items, borrowing from relatives and friends, child labour, early marriage, and/or engaging in risky behaviours to provide for the household.

The CCI also funded legal assistance, which has helped 3,600 people to obtain missing civil documentation to date. These critical documents allow their holders to claim basic civic rights such as freedom of movement, access to healthcare and education, and the government's social safety net.

Our work in Jordan has had a strong and positive impact on overall social cohesion between hosts and refugees, through greater interaction and acceptance of each other. It has improved gender attitudes and behaviours towards female community leaders, both Syrian and Jordanian; and strengthened conflict management skills of community leaders who have participated in resolving 1,670 disputes out of the 1,929 disputes they intervened in to resolve. The youth programme is in an early stage and has been paused due to COVID-19.

The first year of implementation in Lebanon in the Solid waste Management sector, identified as a key flashpoint for tensions, has been successful.



Employees of Municipalities and Unions of Municipalities, Community Based Organisations, and refugee and Lebanese community Key Focal Mediators report their training and engagement in non-violent conflict resolution and collaborative mechanisms to date both sensitive and effective.

WQ98 **Committee:** What makes an effective aid project?

Su'ad Jarbawi: First and foremost, it's one that honours the dignity, the choice and the potential of those that we serve. And I cannot overstate the importance of this.

The Second one is a project that meets people halfway, rather than coming from the top-down saying "here is the solution to your problem". And in that sense, it is very important to always walk in with a positive angle, understanding the strengths and already built in resilience families and communities have and build on that, rather than coming in and saying, "what are your vulnerabilities and why do you feel weak"?

The third one is accountability. Accountability to those that we serve. We come in, we're putting a lot of time, effort and resources into projects that need to be effective and have impact. And the only people that could tell us that those projects are impactful are those that are receiving them. So, it's important to make sure that we're accountable to those that we serve. It is very important that we are also accountable to our standard operating procedures to make sure that programmes are run with compliance and the integrity required. We are accountable to the governments that we work under and in the communities where we serve. And finally, we are always accountable to the taxpayer payers that have generated the generous contributions that allow us to be able to do programmes in the field.

And finally, it is important that all the programmes we are running are measurable and have evidence that is concrete that allows us to tell a story of what we have done. But most importantly, that allows us to learn, reiterate and to do when we do it the next time.

Continuous learning and adaptive management: In these times of uncertainty and constant change, we also need to develop extraordinary peripheral vision, and be able to change and adapt when necessary to keep our focus on the impact we wish to achieve. Multi-year funding allows DFID to provide flexibility which in turn permits Mercy Corps to quickly adapt its programmes to help those in need. DFID's multi-year funding in Syria results in a more consistent delivery of assistance and more sustainable and structural changes in the lives of project participants.

Partnership between donors and implementing agencies: A collaborative approach between informed and engaged donors working with implementing agencies is key to determining and addressing the root causes of humanitarian and development challenges. A close working relationship allows both parties to communicate effectively about realistic expectations and ad hoc challenges, creating a solid ground on which programmes are designed and activities are



implemented.

Improving practice in aid delivery: In Syria, DFID and Mercy Corps contribute to the Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream through comprehensive support to civil society development and capacity building; and to the Cash Workstream through a documented cash-first response and support to the cash coordination infrastructure. Furthermore, the holistic nature of DFID's funding not only allows Mercy Corps to provide comprehensive assistance to populations in need, but also supports the larger aid infrastructure for Syria. As such, Mercy Corps' 'Humanitarian Access Team' and crucial positions within the Whole of Syria approach are funded by DFID.

A systems and integrated approach: Seeking to strengthen or create sustainable foundations and systems that allow communities to take control of their own development pathways, rather than extend dependency. For example, in Iraq we have worked in partnership with the Iraqi Government and the World Bank laying the groundwork to transfer the most vulnerable humanitarian cash recipients to long-term, government-led social protection schemes once they are fully functioning.

Building on strong foundations - these include qualified staff, contextual awareness, good management systems, and continually striving to improve Value for Money for DFID and UK taxpayers. For example, the CCI's analysis against DFID's '4Es' value for money framework identified drivers of effectiveness and costs, and where gains could be made. It found CCI delivered cash quickly, at scale, and with a targeting methodology that ensures the most vulnerable households receive assistance.

WQ99 **Committee:** How does administering a UK aid funded project differ from those funded by other donor countries?

Su'ad Jarbawi: Compared with many other donors, the UK tends to be more engaged and fosters more collaborative working relationships. The UK also permits greater flexibility than some donors, using risk analysis/registers and programmatic adaptations effectively to meet contextual changes. For example, rather than the traditional relationship between a donor and an implementing organisation, Mercy Corps and DFID Syria have established a partnership, based on close engagement and mutual trust, with impactful programming at the forefront of all efforts. Regular face-to-face meetings (both technical and administrative) allow for better understanding and, consequently, programming on the ground.

Quarterly programmatic reviews, detailed reporting requirements and ad hoc information requests mean more detailed conversations than with other donors. By requesting high standards of information and project implementation, DFID actively challenges Mercy Corps to improve and optimise both internal and external processes through, for example, the development of yearly recommendations. Yet reporting requirements take substantial staff time - often more so than with other donors.



Unlike some donors, DFID has a bank of technical experts who at times offer technical support, for example on safeguarding, gender and disability inclusion. This open and two-way communication also facilitates Mercy Corps providing input for DFID policy development and decision making.

In Iraq, the UK's clear Value for Money (VfM) framework orients much of the grant design and stewardship. This generally provides a useful accountability tool, but it can also pose a risk or potential shortcoming in the desire to distil programmatic quality and nuanced complexity into a simple number. We should note, however, that DFID does not have a standardised approach to VfM across the region.

UK aid programme leads affect introductions: CSSF/FCO in Jordan and Lebanon regularly connect implementing partners with each other and to other donors, sometimes advocating on our behalf when we discuss an idea or a programme concept that they are not well positioned to fund.

WQ100 **Committee:** Are there any differences in administering DFID projects compared to those from other government departments? If so, how?

Su'ad Jarbawi: Please refer to Mercy Corps' general written submission to this inquiry for a broader response. It is difficult to compare DFID and other government departments in the Middle East as we are implementing either DFID or CSSF/FCO in each country. Teams did however provide the following feedback:

In Iraq, the application process for a CSSF contract was less collaborative than we are used to with DFID administered funding opportunities. Our experience delivering a CSSF/FCO contract in Lebanon is that contracts are more bureaucratic and are tightly tied to fiscal year programmatic and financial reporting, rather than programme cycle logic. That said, we have fantastic support and cooperation from our local FCO focal point in Lebanon, who has helped navigate their processes and limitations.

CSSF/FCO is funding INGOs in Palestine but DFID does not directly fund INGOs at present due to concerns about risk management and diversion of funds. Other donors do support INGOs directly which in many cases is more efficient and leads to innovative programming.

WQ101 **Committee:** In your opinion, does the UK coordinate its investments in international development effectively with other donor countries?

Su'ad Jarbawi: The UK often engages in more country-level advocacy than others. The UK was, for example, pivotal to ensuring unconditional, unrestricted cash assistance remained prominent in the Iraq 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan.

Coordination works particularly well between donors in Lebanon, with regular discussion on needs, challenges and funding options among themselves, with UN



agencies and the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF).

DFID actively pursues a unified and productive response in Syria. They co-chair the Syria donor working group and lead on key issues including the cross-border resolution for humanitarian aid¹ and WoS architecture. They have shown interest in coordinating their financial contributions with other donors and they are one of the largest donors to the pooled fund globally, to the OCHA coordination architecture in Syria, and NGO coordination bodies.

WQ102 **Committee:** What in your opinion are the key challenges facing international development now and in the future? And what would your message be to the current Secretary of State for International Development in trying to tackle these challenges?

Su'ad Jarbawi: I would like to answer the question in two ways. First, with more of a bird's eye view. And on that front, in a world that is now filled with political considerations, I do think that it's very important for us to always keep the humanitarian imperative alive and to look beyond it. The problems that we are trying to solve today have become far, far more complex than a simple solution or a time bound solution. And rather, what they require is a multi-pronged approach where assistance is given to communities at the granular level through the work of organisations such as Mercy Corps, but at the same time working hand-in-hand with diplomacy to make sure that we're moving away from this notion of managing a crisis to actually solving a crisis.

I do feel right now and in this time and era, that we have the liberty to start thinking differently about what aid is. Previously, aid was under this pretext of, 'it is the saviour, we're coming in to help those poor people'. And I do think that now we have a vastly different, or should have a vastly different perspective on it and should come in with that humble approach of partnering with those that we are trying to serve because of the importance of their sense of agency, the power that they carry, the resilience that they have, and the expertise and potential that they always have with them, irrespective of the shocks they've gone through.

And in that sense, it brings to the forefront the conversation of localisation. How does it look and how do we make it more effective, not only for us as a funding stream, but also in terms of impact. I share this with you in a very humble way, because I myself am a Palestinian. And so, I grew up in a context that was reliant, continuous until today, to rely on foreign assistance. And despite all of the odds of living under occupation and having to go through multiple crises during my childhood, I am here today sitting with you, speaking as a leader in an international agency, looking across multiple other crises and looking on how we can be more effective in our programming for those that need it the most. All of this came from a sense of potential and different people or different systems

¹ United Nations Resolution 2504 authorises the UN and its partners to deliver humanitarian aid across borders into Syria.



throughout my life, recognising that I am not a poor, depressed, weak Palestinian, but rather a strong, empowered woman that just requires a break or a breakthrough of a barrier in order to succeed. That's exactly what we're trying to do in a system level approach. And that would be the power of foreign assistance moving forward.

The second way that I would like to answer this question is precisely and specifically to the Middle East. I do think that in the Middle East we're facing multiple shocks. COVID-19 has exacerbated those shocks. But the main ones that we're looking at:

- First and foremost is a shrinking middle class. And by a shrinking middle class, it's not the upper class that is increasing, but rather it's the poor class that is increasing. And so, we have a commitment of looking not only at vulnerabilities that are from a humanitarian shock, but rather poverty and how do we start alleviating that.

- The second one is unemployment. This region is known for youth and highly educated youth. And we know that by 2025, we're going to have the highest number of educated youth being unemployed in this region. The Middle East is required to create 300 million jobs by 2050 in order to be able to survive. COVID is putting 1.7 million jobs out by 2020 alone. And so, the challenge of tackling unemployment is a real one and will continue to be a real one.

- The third one is a feeble social contract in this part of the world, where grievances from citizens are going to continue to increase as governments try to deal with a shock of COVID, a shock of an oil crisis, inability of potentially being able to provide the services that they have always provided, this leading to more of a displacement or a movement from rural to urban centres. Secondary cities are going to become prime targets of dissatisfaction because more people are going there, and government services are not going to suffice. And so, this is going to enhance this notion of conflict and tension at a very granular level and also at a large level where you might continue to see protests and manifestations against governments such as the ones that we're seeing today, even under COVID in Iraq and in Lebanon.

- And then finally, and most importantly, climate change. Climate change in the Middle East is water change really, in essence. And it's a conversation that has not attracted as much attention as required, because, of course, the eye sees conflict first. But it is very important for us to not move our focus away from a water dearth region that is going to continue to become water dearth, causing those tensions and conflict to further magnify.

In Iraq, we are worried there is insufficient funding and financing channels for 'nexus' oriented humanitarian and development assistance. Specifically, in the transition from the 'end' of the conflict with ISIS, we are concerned about a severe decrease in humanitarian assistance. There are populations in continued displacement with high levels of needs and a chronic lack of services and critical



infrastructure in areas of return. A lack of development funding is already fuelling the risk of future cycles of violent conflict and displacement. Social ties are being eroded, due in part to an unstable partnership with government stakeholders. We expect this to worsen due to COVID-19, particularly as the longer term funding landscape for INGOs globally is set to decrease.

While Jordan itself does not necessarily have an oil-based economy, many Jordanians work in the Gulf and elsewhere, providing a valuable source of remittances into the Kingdom. As the price and demand for oil collapses, these workers may be laid off, likely without a long-term prospect of being rehired. However, while all vulnerable segments of the population have been hit hard, this is especially true for the large Syrian refugee population in the country, many of whom struggled pre-COVID to earn a sufficient income.

Lebanon is beset by a confluence of systems-level crises: an economic and financial crash, currency crisis with tight restrictions, social unrest and protests, continued stark partisan divisions, deep-seated corruption and ineffective governance, thousands of businesses closed and hundreds of thousands of jobs lost – all pre-dating the COVID-19 outbreak. SMEs constitute more than 90% of businesses in Lebanon and will be at a high risk of failing without financial support. While the situation Lebanon faces now is certainly dire, Mercy Corps also sees this as an opportunity to overcome calcified business-as-usual resistance and partisan divisions.

While Palestine faces similar economic challenges, the over-politicisation of aid and bias towards placating domestic interest groups has also significantly hampered the impact of aid in Palestine and the ability of the industry to meet the humanitarian imperative and support the resilience of Palestinians.

International development actors in Syria are worried about the ‘Whole of Syria’ response continuing, as the UN has signalled they will continue shifting focus to a Damascus-based response, despite 4 million Syrians remaining out of reach of Damascus actors. We are also bracing for a tough fight to preserve the UN-authorized cross-border response. As donors begin to fund stabilisation projects, we fear humanitarian projects for millions in need of basic assistance may be diverted or politicised. Aid must focus on resilience of communities, regardless of who is in control.

Yemen is beset by multiple longstanding issues that the international community must look at holistically, both geographically and with sights set on longer term peace and stability, not just a humanitarian response. This starts with building community resilience and deconflicting the economy. Parties to the conflict are pushing policy agendas within the COVID-19 pandemic. Ensuring the COVID-19 response includes an effective information and awareness campaign and continuing to tackle bureaucratic impediments to delivering aid are top priorities today.

To tackle these issues and the latest trends, we ask the Secretary of State (Sos)



for International Development to prioritise:

- *Economic opportunities:* Break down barriers to economic growth - whether it is the restricted movement of people and goods, the constrained capacity of youth and businesses, the limited levels of financial inclusion, or other obstacles. In the current climate, urge Central Banks to provide more cash and ease interest rates and Scale up support to SMEs that will otherwise fold due to COVID-19 measures. This will be more impactful for livelihoods than providing support to individuals.

- *Self-reliant households:* Support the self-reliance of households in humanitarian crises through evidence-based decision making and responsive programming. Where possible, develop clear pathways to graduate from cash assistance to government-administered social protection mechanisms.

- *Community connections:* Work with communities to enhance social connections and cohesion for improved management of conflict at a local level to meet needs and advocate for change. Investing in efforts to build social cohesion, manage potential conflict and address issues of inequity and transparency is more important than ever.

- *Water preservation:* Enhance water management practices to help this water-scarce region conserve water and move towards climate-smart resource management.

WQ103 **Committee:** In her evidence to this Committee on 28 April, Secretary of State Trevelyan stated that Coronavirus “could undo 30 years of the UK's international development work”. What are the implications of Coronavirus for the delivery of your aid projects?

Su'ad Jarbawi: We also refer you to Mercy Corps' written submission to the April 2020 IDC COVID-19 Inquiry which sets out the direct and indirect impacts of the outbreak ([link](#)).

Programme Pivots and Delivery:

- In Lebanon, our CSSF programme is operating remotely and implementation has not been heavily affected by COVID-19 restrictions. We have however redesigned activities for next year.

- Due to the nature of the programme, Mercy Corps Syria has been able to adapt and largely continue programme implementation. Targeting criteria has been adapted as necessary to include COVID-19 vulnerability and continuity plans have been drawn up. Partners have accommodated safety measures on social distancing and hygiene items for participants and staff.

- In contrast, implementation in Jordan has been seriously curtailed, or in some cases suspended by COVID-19 and the resulting restrictions on movement/gathering. Where possible, many activities have shifted to technology-



based platforms for remote delivery or otherwise adapted. While these shifts are not meant to be permanent, they have provided valuable learning and experience in adaptive management and remote programming.²

Reflections on the General COVID-19 Response:

We are concerned about a myopic interpretation of COVID-19 needs that will drive the majority of resources to Health/WASH programming without any nuanced appreciation for the need to maintain funding for basic needs or the level of economic ramifications of COVID-19 (and its containment measures) on vulnerable populations.

In many countries in the region, including Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have its most durable impact on the food and economic security of vulnerable groups. We commend the UK where it is focusing on these secondary impacts and ask that the UK encourages other donors to do the same. *We urge the SoS to invest in micro-, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), basic services and youth programming.*

As aid in Lebanon turns to humanitarian needs, we note the risk to micro-, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Their loss will set back development gains by decades, require expanded and protracted humanitarian interventions, and significantly higher development investments in future. Take a comprehensive market system approach that addresses market inefficiencies hindering growth rather than training for non-existent jobs.

In multiple countries, (USD) currency restrictions and liquidity issues are hampering the ability of aid projects to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations and will slow economic recovery. There are also growing concerns about the disruption to supply chains.

Threat of increased violent conflict:

In conflict affected countries across the region, dire and worsening economic situations are exacerbating social tensions within communities already fraught with tension and hostilities towards one another as a result of the conflict.

In Lebanon, National and local level government will need to be and be seen as engaged, inclusive, transparent and effective. These capacities are sorely lacking and have led to nationwide protests, distrust in government, and a failure to address pressing concerns. There are growing push and pull factors for youth to consider political movements with a more aggressive agenda and intensifying anti-Syrian refugee sentiment.

We urge the UK to be forward thinking in their conflict prevention and mitigation strategies. We urge donors, host governments to ensure security responses are

² Please see [How to ensure that your COVID-19 remote management strategy empowers local partners](#) for additional information. Mercy Corps - Ryan Sheely and Hannah Kazis-Taylor, May 2020



'human centred' and all activities are conflict sensitive.