

## Written evidence submitted by the CBM UK (INR0076)

CBM (Christian Blind Mission) works with partners across the world to bring change at an individual level, challenge systemic discrimination and support the voice and autonomy of people with disabilities and mental health conditions as agents of change, in development and humanitarian settings.

This Integrated Review provides a significant opportunity for the Government to consider the impact of all of its foreign policy decision-making on the lives of the most marginalised people across the world. In particular, the **one billion people** with disabilities, **80%** of whom live in low and middle income countries<sup>1</sup>, are amongst those at most risk of being stigmatised, marginalised and left behind - in all areas of life.

Aid, development and humanitarian responses are increasingly taking into account people with disabilities, yet we also need to be asking questions such as: What diplomatic interventions should the UK be employing to further the inclusion of the most marginalised across the world? What impact do the global economy and UK trading decisions have on the livelihoods of people with disabilities and the marginalised in LMICs?

This review is also an opportunity to analyse where greater effectiveness in some areas of foreign policy decision-making can alleviate pressure on other areas and develop a strategy for diplomacy, development, defence and trade to work together better towards a peaceful, healthy and stable world. However, there are a number of risks that need to be considered.

### The process of the Integrated Review

#### *Efficacy of the Review's process*

1. CBM UK is deeply concerned by the opacity of the Government's Integrated Review process. Despite claims by the Prime Minister that "there has been massive consultation over a long period"<sup>2</sup> CBM UK has seen no evidence of public or stakeholder consultation by the Government. We believe the exclusion of key stakeholders from the Review will only serve to weaken its accuracy and efficacy, and the quality of the new foreign affairs strategy, especially where buy in is later required. It is vital for the Government to collect evidence from a broad range of actors, including Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) and other underrepresented groups, as well as NGOs, academics, the public and the private sector, in order to gain the insights of those who are expert in their field and who have lived experience of the issues.
2. Parliamentary select committee inquiries have provided the only formal engagement opportunity during the Review process; and CBM UK commends the chairs of the Defence, International Development and Foreign Affairs committees for tenaciously holding the Prime Minister to account over this Review.

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<sup>1</sup> World report on disability. WHO and World Bank, 2011 World report on disability. WHO and World Bank, 2011

<sup>2</sup>Global Britain debate, House of Commons, 16 June 2020. Hansard, volume 677 column, 678 <https://bit.ly/2zNv16m>

### **Role of FCO in the process**

3. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) plays a key role in this Review process, even more so in light of the news it will house the work of the Department for International Development (DfID) from September 2020.

### **Strategy in UK foreign policy**

#### **Priorities**

4. The UK's new foreign policy strategy will need to bring together the priorities of the FCO and DfID, both of which are important to the soft power that the UK is renowned for. The commitment to **tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable** should be explicitly included in the new department's list of top priorities – as Ambassador Power highlighted in her oral evidence to this inquiry, the UK clearly demonstrates a desire to change the world for the better and recognises the link between British security, stability and prosperity, and events beyond its own borders.
5. The new strategy must be **ethical**, with a commitment to peace, human rights and justice for all, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With the merger of DfID and FCO, CBM UK is concerned the Government may prioritise narrowly defined national self-interest at the expense of the UK's commitment to overseas aid, development and humanitarian work; yet now more than ever we realise how interdependent our world is and how closely national interest is aligned to international cooperation, for example in working together to curb disease and preserve life.
6. The new strategy should be **inclusive** and provide regular pointers to consideration of marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities, who will be affected by UK foreign policy decision making. CBM UK encourages the government to use impact assessments, including on disability and mental health, to identify benefits or risks of UK action to people in relevant countries.<sup>3</sup> We would also support Lord Hague's call to reinvigorate the work on preventing sexual violence in conflict, ensuring that it is inclusive of women and girls with disabilities.
7. The new strategy needs to be **holistic** and **consistent**, especially where policy areas are difficult to align or reconcile, for example as Lord Hague highlighted in his oral evidence to this inquiry, how the UK's environmental, economic and security policies might be at variance with each other in relation to its relationship with China.
8. The new strategy should include action points on **international commitments and cooperation** such as the SDGs, climate change agreements and the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Whilst much of the world has retreated its attentions to the impact of COVID-19 within national borders, the same virus flags the importance of international cooperation in national security and wellbeing. In this context, the UK is only as strong as the world's weakest health system.
9. The new strategy should be **transparent** with strong **accountability** mechanisms in place and we would echo Alexander Downer's recommendations to the inquiry on making the UK's

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<sup>3</sup> For examples of further considerations on people with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities, see *Creating a global enabling environment for mental health to flourish*, CBM UK, 2019 [https://www.cbmuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CBMUK-mental-health-policy-paper\\_Creating-a-global-enabling-environment.pdf](https://www.cbmuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CBMUK-mental-health-policy-paper_Creating-a-global-enabling-environment.pdf)

foreign policy priorities and values crystal clear and without fear of speaking out against human rights abuses. It is also essential that there is proper Parliamentary scrutiny of the work of the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and spending of the aid budget.

### ***Relationship between FCO and OGDs***

- 10.** The FCO may well need to use its diplomatic expertise to help identify areas of tension and workable solutions in the new strategy, especially between the different policy areas of the new FCDO, and with the Ministry of Defence.

### **FCO resources and capabilities**

#### ***Key assets and obstacles for FCO capabilities***

- 11.** The merger of the FCO and DfID provides the opportunity for the new department to perform as well as DfID, and improve upon the FCO's ratings, on aid delivery and transparency.
- 12.** DfID has also built up considerable work to improve disability inclusion, mental health and gender equality in the world's most marginalised communities and this knowledge should be retained and inclusion expertise built throughout the new department. Inclusion must also be demonstrated at the heart of the new department, especially at senior leadership level, if it is to become embedded.
- 13.** There are a number of strategies that should be considered assets and therefore continued in the new strategy by the FCDO, including the **Disability Inclusion Strategy** and delivery plan, the **Global Disability Summit commitments**, the **Strategic Vision for Gender**, and the **National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security**.
- 14.** Whilst the impact of the merger on UK high commissions and DfID country offices is as yet unclear, we would reiterate the importance of accessibility to ensure that partners with disabilities delivering UK aid are fully consulted and able to access meetings and other relevant events, thus helping to ensure UK aid is inclusive in its approach.

***June 2020***