INTRODUCTION

This Inquiry comes at a time when:

1. The UK government has taken remarkable lead as one of the first G8 countries to fulfil the UN commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on aid. In 2013, the UK Government achieved its target, when the UK’s total aid expenditure reached £11.4 billion, or 0.72% of national income.\(^1\)

2. The UK government has demonstrated significant commitment to gender equity by putting women and girls at the heart of its development agenda, which is crucial to achieving the political support needed to further this agenda. Efforts have included:

   2.1. Following agreement by both Houses, the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014 received its Royal Assent on 13 March 2014. The Bill is now an Act of Parliament and will push the UK government to consider the impact of its overseas aid spending on reducing gender inequality.\(^2\)

   2.2. The Department for International Development (DFID) Strategic Vision for Girls and Women aims to unlock the potential of girls and women, to stop poverty before it starts.\(^3\)

   2.3. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) demonstrated strong leadership by organising the “End of Sexual Violence in Conflict” summit. Here, 1,700 delegates, including 79 Ministers, from 129 country delegations agreed practical steps to tackle impunity for the use of rape as a weapon of war, and to begin to change global attitudes to these crimes.\(^4\)

   2.4. DFID hosted the first Girl Summit, aimed at mobilising domestic and international efforts to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) within a generation.\(^5\)

3. The world is facing massive challenges to facilitate the provision of emergency aid in several countries and where humanitarian crises have reached their peak. Therefore,

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\(^1\) The 0.7% aid target (28 July 2014) http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN03714/the-07-aid-target

\(^2\) International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014 (13 March 2014) http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/internationaldevelopmentgenderequality.html


discussions on the UK’s approach to development are crucial and must be carried out in a consultative and inclusive way to ensure that UK’s expertise are capitalised and resources are maximised.

4. The post-2015 negotiations are entering a decisive stage with a very mixed picture of success on current MDGs. This makes global action imperative to continue to reduce hunger, decrease malnutrition, improve the health of mothers and their children, and provide more support for women’s participation in secure jobs.

5. Aid for development (perhaps because of increased spending amidst significant cuts to other government departments’ budgets) is heavily questioned and closely scrutinized by governments, the media and the public. Rising to the challenge, the UK INGO sector has increased their accountability and transparency by complying with quality standards such as the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) standards and by opening to external scrutiny.

6. Aid is only a fraction of the development picture and the investment required to get people out of poverty. DFID is one of many contributors supporting INGOs which, in real terms, represent good value for money because they invest not only DFID’s funds, but their own resources (e.g. donations and other financial contribution by the UK public) in countries where they choose to operate.

7. Nevertheless this investment, by both DFID and development NGOs, might be easily swept away by national governments, foreign policy, trade, conflict, transnational corporations and/or multilaterals. For example, the EU has already recognized that some of its policies can have a significant impact outside of the EU and that either contributes to or undermines its development policy. That is why policy coherence and better coordination between all stakeholders is paramount to ensure that DFID’s investment is sustainable in the long term.

8. DFID is supporting many British Non-Government Organisations like Progressio that are operating under very challenging conditions in countries with weak governance systems and State fragility. DFID and other development actors including INGOs and local CSOs bring a unique understanding of the country and context for overall development. DFID needs to exploit this in its approaches to aid through participatory

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9 Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) is a partnership of humanitarian and development organisations dedicated to ensuring greater accountability to people affected by crises through the promotion of a Standard on Quality and Accountability [http://www.hapinternational.org/what-we-do/hap-standard.aspx]
10 Progressio research (Drop by Drop Report, September 2010) shows that the production of fresh, year-round asparagus for the international market leads to the rapid expansion of the agrarian frontier and the ‘greening’ of the desert to grow the crop. This expansion has become unsustainable given the hydrological context and concurrent demands for water in the Ica Valley, the epicentre of Peru’s asparagus boom. See [http://www.progressio.org.uk/content/virtual-water]
9. Many INGOs commonly share skills and know-how, bringing new ideas and practices to countries that may have been devastated by conflict and the resulting brain drain; or have little infrastructure and no safety provisions. This investment usually reaches those impoverished and marginalised communities, which mostly fall outside their own government radar. Therefore, in contexts where governments are not providing basic public services for their own populations (e.g. clean water, electricity, education, health) or in post-conflict societies, where overall reconstruction and investment is greatly needed, INGOs can play a role in ensuring that a support system is built. This is especially true in countries where there is no international focus or where there is very limited international political will to act.

10. "Real Aid", a report published by Action Aid in September 2011 highlights that, in the last 20 years, aid has helped to achieve astonishing progress for human development and poverty reduction. This includes, for example, increasing services for women who otherwise might have been left out. INGOs also contribute in ways that may have no clear monetary value such as solidarity, philanthropy, raising awareness on specific topics, bringing difficult subjects into the public arena, and giving a voice to the voiceless in contexts with authoritarian regimes.

11. The transfer of appropriate technologies, knowledge, skill development and skill share also support development and are thus a type of aid. This is an area where the UK can invest in building its future approach to development, which will produce lasting and permanent changes. Multi-disciplinary interventions are also required, which requires a new integrated approach and better coordination linked to longer-term development goals.

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14 Humanitarians are paying the price for political inaction (August, 2014) [http://www.trust.org/item/20140818135735-64vut/?source=fiiBlogs](http://www.trust.org/item/20140818135735-64vut/?source=fiiBlogs)

ABOUT PROGRESSIO

12. Progressio has an extensive 40-year track record in long-term development supporting and strengthening local civil society and grassroots led approaches with a strong focus on gender justice, especially in fragile states. It works alongside civil society organisations supporting some of the poorest and marginalised people in the world. For example, it supports training for Yemeni women to become champions who combat the roots of discrimination in the country that lies at the bottom of the global gender gap. This programmatic effort is supported with international policy and advocacy work at UK and EU level.

13. Progressio’s policy-programme approach offers key opportunities for addressing challenges in development policy whilst looking into future approaches to development, especially in terms of:

13.1. Building on genuine democratic citizen participation at the core of all development programmes from needs assessment, through planning & design, into implementation and in M&E. These should be a pre-requisite for ensuring that development funding and emergency aid reaches those with least power and least wealth; thus responding to their priorities and building accountability.

13.2. Supporting transformational changes in gender relations and women’s rights whilst assessing the impact of government policies from different angles, namely the implementation of foreign policy versus military interventions. For example, in Timor Leste, Progressio raised the issue of UN troops and the spread of HIV and AIDS among local women and sex workers.

13.3. Addressing power imbalance, as this is essential to achieving long-term development and human rights. It is Progressio’s experience in the Dominican Republic; for example, that gender based participatory budgeting contributed to re-prioritising government budgets, boosting education spending, which has long-term benefits for poorer communities, especially girls.

13.4. Supporting key international policy changes that add value and benefit poor and marginalised communities. For example, forest communities in the developing world received a huge boost from the European Parliament in October 2010 when MEPs voted overwhelmingly to ban the import of illegal timber and timber products into the EU. This was a significant step forward on the road to ending the import of illegal timber and timber products16.

14. Given the importance of this Inquiry, we consulted our Central America & Southern Africa offices and partners who gave their contributions towards this briefing. As outlined by one of our partners: “our message for world leaders, big businesses, national and local governments is that you really listen to us and do not ignore us”.

QUESTIONS

15. The coherence of policies which affect development (including aid, security, prosperity and climate);

15.1. DFID works in countries with different levels of security, prosperity and governance fragility. Therefore, its development interventions ought to be context-specific based on the needs of a given country. A way of ensuring that interventions are appropriate and accurate is by conducting an engagement process with civil society organisations (CSOs) in specific countries or regions, which also includes discussions on key issues such as gender and conflict. DFID UK-NGO partners could facilitate these sessions so as to be able to gather evidence and information.

15.2. DFID’s development efforts should address the needs of the most marginalised, vulnerable and discriminated “people” rather than focus on specific regions or be based on their income or security situation. For that reason, DFID ought to continue funding projects that address, for example, gender inequalities and programmes run by women (adult and young) in order to empower women. Where possible, it should work alongside governments, bringing different stakeholders and experts to the table.

15.3. In cases where a specific State is recipient of direct budgetary support from DFID, accountability mechanisms should be automatically adopted in order to increase transparency. For example, well thought through conditionalities and other incentives, which clearly show the genuine intention of the practice, might be attached in order to tackle corruption.

16. The impact of the UK’s non-aid policies on developing countries;

16.1. The development agenda must be inclusive, with beneficiaries playing a greater role in the design of projects. It should focus on areas such as economic growth through employment generation, human resource development (skill share), green energy, environmental protection and supporting responsible and sustainable management of natural resources. Foreign, Trade and Development Government departments should jointly assess and consider the impact of their policies on the poorest and most marginalised. This should particularly benefit communities, more specifically women and girls, who tend to be most affected and marginalised from the public and economic sphere.

16.2. The UK can assist poor countries to generate employment, for example, by allowing low-income countries to export to the UK at reasonable prices. This could be carried out in consultation with southern CSOs and grassroots farmer organisations, especially women, on the impact of market access. This is so the reality of those affected informed UK and EU government policies on trade.

16.3. The UK could also provide fairer environments for trade by facilitating marketing opportunities so that poor countries eventually become self-reliant, thus reducing aid dependency. This is a sustainable approach to assisting low-income countries to develop themselves that will bring the business sector on board as well.
16.4. The UK could also send professionals or support to those organisations already focusing on skills sharing to build capacity and training opportunities for specific groups including women and young people.

17. The underlying government mechanisms needed to support any changes, including (a) The role of DFID in facilitating other UK Government departments and (b) other UK organisations to assist developing countries;

17.1 DFID could play a pivotal role in ensuring policy coherence between UK government departments by whilst playing a facilitator role by bringing together all stakeholders on a thematic or a country-by-country basis. This will allow for a multi-sectorial approach, which will enrich not only the discussions, but also potential solutions. It will also increase DFID’s own investment in development by supporting a multi-funding approach for developing countries.

17.2 Ensuring that capacity building is at the heart of DFID’s contribution will ensure sustainable and long-term development solutions. That is why it is important to have a clear and coherent policy that guides sustainable development and growth with mechanisms for wider consultation of all beneficiaries (including CSOs, governments, NGOs, businesses) so as to prioritise possible interventions and implementation.

17.3 Clear policies and guidelines for partnerships between the UK and recipient countries are needed. These include the establishment of joint development secretariat mechanisms (e.g. donors, recipient’s countries, NGOs and CSOs) for purposes of monitoring development programmes in recipient countries.

17.4 Participatory approaches can build on what works and recognise that women’s progress has advanced mostly through leadership of women’s rights organisations. Alongside and integrated with this is the need to address power imbalances through a systematic masculinities approach.

18. The role of DFID in influencing the policies of other Whitehall departments;

18.1 DFID can work as a development adviser to other Whitehall departments and donors because of its knowledge and expertise on issues in the countries where it has a presence. Most importantly, its Programme Partnership Approach (PPA) adds value by bringing in the expertise and knowledge of UK-NGOs operating on the ground and has an excellent track record of working with national CSOs.

18.2 DFID could also play a coordination role with other donors in order to have a collaborative approach on the ground, which will maximise resources and potentially reach out to more local NGOs.

19. Whether a stand-alone Department for International Development has a long-term future;

19.1 A stand-alone DFID is recommended for the future to assist other government departments to work with development agencies within the UK and outside. It is also
important for the UK to continue its role as a key development player amongst the international donor community.

19.2 DFID should continue strongly positioning its track record and expertise amongst the international donor community supporting innovation and creative solutions. Politically, this role could be maximised if DFID continues to work closely with and through its partner agencies.

20. Managing the delivery of 2013 ODA targets;

20.1 ODA funds would continue to be relevant provided the funds are channelled to relevant organisations and their allocation and use is properly planned for and monitored by DFID.

20.2 That is why clear policy guidelines on accountability and transparency measures as well as participatory mechanisms are necessary so that measures to tackle fraud and misuse of funds become an incentive for recipient governments.

21. Increasing percentage rise of support to low income countries over time;

21.1 Development processes require a long-term investment (6-10 years), which goes beyond the life span of a project (3-5 years). The UK should strive to increase their support to targeted countries for a period not exceeding 10 years, which should be followed by a review that will lead to a decrease and eventually the adoption of an “Exit Strategy” to reduce dependency on UK aid.

21.2 The UK government can finance low-income countries so that these countries move up the income ladder, which can be possible with proper planning, monitoring and evaluation, and other appropriate partnerships.

21.3 It is important to note that, in some middle income countries whose Gini-coefficient is very high, there are more people living in poverty than in low income countries. Thus, targeting inequality, redistributive mechanisms and redressing power relations will help UK aid to maximise its investment. It will also help to reorganise those countries’ governance processes contributing to distributing wealth more equally among its citizens over a specified period of time.

21.4 Countries should be moving towards the production of goods that could lead to prosperity, but to compete and grow economically requires large investment, know-how and training. The UK can contribute to this with experience and expertise to support this area.

22. Over awarding UK Student Financial Aid Scholarships;

22.1 The education systems of many poor countries continue to be under-funded and, in many instances, seriously affected by deficiencies in standards and infrastructure. Many students will find it hard to compete internationally, or to really drive change in their own countries, if they are not exposed to new ideas and innovation that goes beyond their national education systems.
22.2 We recommend that, if developed nations are to continue providing scholarships, these should be offered to students who study in their own countries. This will assist the low-income countries to sustain their own education systems through the scholarship programmes being offered internally.

22.3 In some countries, especially post-conflict countries, there is a total lack of capacity (resource and human), systems and polices to undertake development programs – this is something that DFID needs to be fully aware and appreciative of.

22.4 There is also a need to do a thorough assessment as to why the current development model is not bringing the desired results, anti-poverty goals are not being fulfilled, the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen and social, economic, and political crisis are increasingly getting out of control in many parts of the globe.

22.5 It is absolutely critical that the UK Government, as part of the international community, addresses some of the root causes of these processes. These are closely tied up with imbalances in the international trade system of trade and power relations, which will continue to favour some countries no matter how much aid money is spent.

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