1. Introduction

1.1 The UK Government’s recent achievement in reaching the 0.7% GNI target for international aid has been rightly praised. This money changes the lives of millions; it will give 8.9 million children access to education¹, and protect 140 million people from neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)², alongside many other achievements. In addition, the recent announcement from DFID in response to the IDC’s inquiry on Disability and Development means that these efforts will now reach more of the 800 million people with disabilities who live in developing countries.

1.2 However, as the call for evidence to this inquiry points out, disbursing aid money is only one factor affecting development. Many other UK policies and actions have a significant impact on developing countries, such as trade and foreign direct investment, immigration, environmental policy, security and technology. The UK can also shape the context for development through its involvement in multilateral organisations and global debates, such as the current process to decide what should replace the Millennium Development Goals after 2015; and by sharing its own knowledge and skills with developing countries - for instance, through programmes such as the Health Partnership Scheme. This is funded by UK AID with the aim of building partnerships between UK and developing country health institutions, to link up health workers in the NHS with their counterparts in developing countries to strengthen health systems, through health service skills transfer and capacity development³.

1.3 In this submission we will argue that in order for the UK to play an effective role in encouraging development progress and tackling poverty and inequality worldwide, the Department for International Development should remain as an independent department, with a remit and authority that goes beyond simply administering the 0.7% of GNI aid budget. We then go on to look at two areas in more detail – namely, health and disability – to examine the ways in which DFID can influence development that go beyond aid.

2. DFID as a department

2.1 There are many challenges in the world today that affect development but which will require more than aid to address – such as instability in global food markets caused by the global financial crisis, changes in climate and increased natural disasters, state fragility and others besides. In addition, growing inequality between and within countries means that a coherent approach to promoting pro-poor economic growth, either through

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¹ ONE, Small Change Big Difference report http://www.one.org/international/policy/small-change-big-difference/
³ The Health Partnership Scheme is administered by the Tropical Health Education Trust (THET). Further details on the scheme can be found at: http://www.thet.org/health-partnership-scheme
overseas development assistance (ODA) or the actions of companies based in the UK, is more important than ever. These are all issues that DFID is well placed to assist with, both in terms of technical assistance to developing countries, and in coordinating a cross-Government response to matters which stretch across the remit of many departments, and which also affect people living in the UK.

2.2 Since its establishment in 1997 the Department for International Development (DFID) has achieved notable successes⁴. Some of these have come through the disbursement of aid finance; however, DFID was established as a separate department in order to bring leadership and coherence to the UK Government's wider efforts to promote international development (as set out in the 2006 International Development Act⁵). Evidence of this in action can be seen in the UK’s global leadership in stimulating an international response to issues like women and girls’ rights, nutrition and HIV/AIDS; and in representing international development and humanitarian issues in the National Security Committee.

2.3 Promoting policy coherence for development (PCD) provides a concrete opportunity for DFID to demonstrate leadership within the UK Government - for example, by working with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to ensure UK foreign direct investment does not have negative impacts on development, and with the Home Office to ensure that UK immigration policy positively impacts upon international development⁶. The development of a strategic organisational plan on PCD would enable DFID to demonstrate the role it can play in this area.

2.4 One of the core principles underpinning the post-2015 sustainable development goal framework negotiations has been the universality of the framework – i.e., that it should apply to the UK Government as to any developing country government. DFID has an important role to play in unpacking what this means, and in leading cross-departmental negotiations about how to realise the post-2015 framework in UK Government policy. DFID needs greater powers, and a more central role within the UK Government if it is to effectively promote PCD in this way.

2.5 Therefore, Sightsavers recommends:

- DFID remains as a Cabinet level department.
- The remit of the International Development Select Committee is extended to include the scrutiny of policy coherence for development across Whitehall, and the of impact of other Whitehall Department policies on the UK Government’s international development objectives.

⁴ ONE Small Change Big Difference good source for stats http://www.one.org/international/blog/small-change-big-difference/

⁵ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/31/introduction

• DFID develops a mechanism to assess the impact of UK trade, immigration, defence and other policy on the lives of those it works with in developing countries.

• Political will is demonstrated by an annual joint Ministerial Statement by the Secretaries of State for DFID, DoH, DEFRA, DECC, BIS, FCO and the Cabinet Office, setting out the impact of any upcoming legislation on international development.

• Parliament considers the introduction of a check on all Acts of Parliament to ensure they are compatible with international development objectives, modelled on that imposed by the Human Rights Act with regards to human rights7.

• DFID should in future be represented on the existing Cabinet Committees on Public Health, Economic Affairs, and Public Expenditure, and the creation of an additional Cabinet Committee with a remit of assessing the impact of all UK Government policy on international development should be seriously considered.

• DFID Ministers should provide greater leadership in coordinating discussion between UK Government departments on the implementation of the post-2015 sustainable development goal framework.

3. Health

3.1 Health is an important area where DFID can develop its role as a leader, both within the UK Government and internationally. DFID has historically been the catalyst of significant global progress. Amongst other examples, DFID was instrumental in the setting up of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the GAVI Alliance and the International Health Partnership and Related Initiatives (IHP+), all of which have had important influences on improving the impact and quality of health aid.

3.2 The post-2015 discussions present another opportunity for DFID to take a leading role in improving global health. The principles of the NHS are aligned with those of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) which is a key feature of post-2015 discussions on health. Whilst DFID supports the principle of UHC, it could do much more to support other countries to achieve UHC and to identify where greater PCD within the UK Government is required in order for UHC to be successful.

3.3 Whilst DFID is well recognised as a global leader in the field of international development and global health in particular, the department does not consistently demonstrate this leadership with the UK Government itself. One example is this is the role that DFID played in the development of the UK Government’s ‘Health is Global’ strategy (2008-2013) and outcomes framework (2011-2015). The strategy set out ambitious aims to “protect the health of the population, harness the benefits of globalisation and make the most of its contribution to health and development across the world” by taking a “cross-Government strategic approach to global health”. However, a

2010 review of the Health is Global strategy highlighted that DFID’s strategies do not refer to the global health strategy, that government departments are focused on their own priorities and objectives, and that the links and inter-dependency between commercial, political, knowledge and developmental objectives are not always recognized\(^8\).

3.4 The 2011-2015 outcome framework aimed to address some of these challenges, and includes international development as one of three key areas for action. Given this, and recognising that a significant majority of the UK’s spend on global health is delivered through DFID, it is critical for DFID to play much a stronger leadership role, alongside the Department of Health, in ensuring the effective implementation of the ‘Health is Global’ outcomes framework.

3.5 DFID played a key role in establishing the International Health Partnership and Related Initiatives (IHP+), the aim of which is to improve the effectiveness of health aid. The IHP+ is therefore a critical mechanism for improving coordination of aid from all actors in the health sector, including the private sector, multilateral agencies and bilateral agencies. DFID should continue to play a leading role within this mechanism and should also consider how global health spending from other UK Government departments can be included within the remit of the IHP+.

3.6 Recommendations:

- DFID should take a greater role in ensuring the success of the ‘Health is Global’ strategy and outcomes framework.
- DFID should coordinate with other departments in the UK Government to provide more technical support countries in order to help them to achieve UHC.

4. Disability

The UN CRPD

4.1 The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities\(^9\) (CRPD) has been ratified by 147 countries\(^10\), including the UK. Article 32 of the Convention commits the UK to ensuring its international cooperation supports national efforts to implement the convention, and that international development programmes are inclusive of people with disabilities.

4.2 DFID therefore has an important role to play in working with other Whitehall departments, in particular the FCO, BIS and the Department of Health, to ensure that UK interest and investment in low and middle-income countries does not negatively impact on people with disabilities, and instead contributes wherever possible to promoting their equity and inclusion. The current work to develop a new DFID framework

\(^8\) Mott MacDonald (2010). Annual independent review of the UK Government’s Global Health Strategy. Working with Brazil, Russia, India, China & South Africa

\(^9\) http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150

\(^10\) http://www.un.org/disabilities/countries.asp?navid=12&pid=166
on disability presents the Department with a clear opportunity to achieve this objective, and to take a lead on strengthening policy coherence to ensure DFID goals on poverty eradication and reducing inequalities can be met.

4.3 DFID’s recent commitment to strengthening its work on disability also presents a clear rationale for maintaining its status as a stand-alone department within Whitehall. Maintaining DFID as a distinct government department will help the Department to ensure that disability is adequately addressed within efforts to reduce global inequalities and make greater progress towards poverty eradication. DFID has a particular role to play in highlighting the importance of the inclusion of marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities, in the ongoing negotiations on sustainable development and the successor framework to the MDGs. Having already demonstrated considerable leadership and support for the need to ensure that ‘no-one is left behind’ in the final agreed post-2015 international development framework, DFID will have a critical role to play in ensuring that the implementation of the post-2015 development framework delivers positive impact and change for the most vulnerable and marginalised populations.

Working with the private sector

4.4 This is likely to require DFID to monitor its own activities to ensure they are reaching those who are in greatest need, and also to play a greater role in ensuring that other forms of development assistance, such as public-private partnerships and private sector investment, do not undermine efforts to reduce inequalities and eradicate poverty. Given the increasing importance of the private sector in low and middle-income countries, DFID should work closely with other departments and private sector organisations to ensure that the opportunities presented by increased private investment contribute to eradicating poverty in the poorest and most marginalised populations and communities, and to mitigate the risk of this investment further embedding existing inequalities.

DFID and the FCO

4.5 There is great potential for DFID to work more closely with the FCO to promote the human rights of people with disabilities and ensure rights, as set out in the UNCRPD, are upheld. Travelling FCO Ministers routinely report on discussions of various human rights issues with partner governments whilst on visits; the implementation of the CRPD should be given a higher priority in these discussions, as recommended by the IDC in their recent report on ‘Disability and Development’:

“Many DFID partner countries have been slow to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We agree with the Minister that it might be counter-productive to make aid conditional on implementing the Convention. However, we recommend the UK take other steps to press for disabled people’s rights—for example, by supporting civil service capacity building, and by sending key messages with Foreign Office travelling ministers. DFID should also consider supporting the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. If it decides not to support the Partnership, it should use

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11 http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmintdev/947/94712.htm
4.6 The FCO’s most recent ‘Human Rights and Democracy’ report for the year 2013\textsuperscript{12} contains a section on ‘Disability Rights’ giving details of the efforts by the FCO to promote disability rights overseas. These include several initiatives regarding disability sport linked to the 2012 London Paralympics, as well as active engagement with the Commission on Social Development in New York, and support for DFID Minister Lynne Featherstone’s participation in the 2012 High Level Meeting on Disability and Development. The increased focus on disability sport at the FCO inspired by the Paralympics is welcome; however, DFID and the FCO should work together to build on this progress by ensuring that the UK’s international efforts to ensure disability rights also address the many barriers faced by people with disabilities in accessing education, livelihoods, healthcare, sanitation and other services, as well as tackling stigma and discrimination.

4.7 Recommendations:

• That UK Government consider ways of giving greater support to the Committee on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities\textsuperscript{13}.

• FCO ministers include progress towards ratifying and implementing UN CRPD in discussions with other governments.

• The FCO build on work inspired by the Paralympics on disability sport with a more holistic approach to ensuring human rights for people with disabilities in all areas of life.

• The role of the soon-to-be-announced DFID Disability champion should include a responsibility to work across Whitehall to ensure that other government departments’ policies are coherent with DFID’s objectives on disability inclusion.

• The UK Government should continue to champion the inclusion of disability disaggregated data in the post-2015 framework, with DFID supplying technical expertise and advice on its implementation.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Department for International Development has made a remarkable contribution to overcoming global poverty since its foundation. The world has changed and continues to do so at a rapid rate; but while the nature of the challenges we face may be different, there is no doubt that there are still many people in the world who will continue to need the UK’s help.

5.2 While the maintenance of the UK Aid budget at 0.7% of GNI is one important way of tackling these challenges, the UK’s development assistance is most effective when it


\textsuperscript{13} http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/crpd/pages/crpdindex.aspx
uses aid as one of a number of methods of addressing global poverty and injustice. The UK has huge influence over other countries, including those where many poor people live, through its diplomacy, its defence, its trade and investment, and many other areas of policy; and it will be most effective in achieving its aims both internationally and at home if these policies are designed and implemented in a coherent way.

5.3 This submission has set out ways in which DFID could play a greater role in achieving this with relation to health and disability – two areas in which the UK has an important global role to play, and which affect hundreds of millions of people around the world, as well as within the UK. While the recommendations given cover a wide area the common theme is the need for DFID to assume greater influence over and responsibility for UK Government policy as a whole.