



The Four Corners

The DFID Alumni Association newsletter

Issue 52:

October 2020

[EDITORIAL](#) | [NEWS IN BRIEF](#) | [DIARY](#) | [SPOTLIGHT](#) | [PEOPLE](#)

EDITORIAL

Merger issues inevitably dominate this edition of Four Corners, including another general update from Jim Drummond and links to relevant external articles over the last few months. Now that DFID and the FCO have formally morphed into FCDO, many of you are understandably keen to know what this means for the future of our Association. At our recent committee meeting we discussed various options and agreed next steps. We identified four options:

a) **Disband the Association.**

We quickly rejected this option! DFID may no longer exist but the Alumni network, with over 900 members, is very much alive and kicking. Plus, all the opposition parties want DFID back.

b) **Business as usual.**

Whilst this option would ensure the maintenance of our network, it may not be sustainable in the longer term. Many ex-DFID staff in FCDO will inevitably develop new organisational loyalties over time and so joining the Association may have less appeal. Former FCO staff in FCDO who are interested in development work will be unable to join under our existing membership criteria and are unlikely to be attracted by the DFID label. It's also unlikely that the new FCDO management will want to engage with the Association in the same way as DFID did previously - and may no longer want to fund it, although we don't know this for sure yet. If this proved to be the case then the Association would need to find alternative funding sources like an annual membership subscription or expanding our sponsorship. Would members be up for this?

c) **Merge with the FCO Association (FCOA).**

This option would probably be welcomed by FCDO senior management and it offers the potential for continued funding plus other support. However, there are some important differences. The FCOA is mainly funded by membership subscriptions (£25 pa), with ex-FCO providing office space and IT support, and FCDO might want the same

arrangements for the merged organisation in future. The FCOA allows former LE staff to join but the numbers are much more limited than the Staff Appointed in Country contingent in our Alumni. The FCOA is for past and serving FCO staff, whereas we are an Alumni Association which is only open to ex-DFID staff. If we were to merge with the FCOA, we would want to ensure there was no risk of a takeover scenario. We could also explore whether DFID alumni could retain some sort of separate identity within the new organisation, primarily to ensure development issues do not get overlooked.

d) **Rebrand and relaunch.**

Under this option the Alumni membership criteria would be expanded to include any former HMG staff who have worked on the development agenda. This option reflects the reality that many staff across the UK government are now engaged in development work, including overseas. A rebrand (and a new name) would help prevent the Association growing stale or withering through lack of new members. However, it is unclear whether FCDO would be willing to continue financial and other support and we need to test this. The 'DFID family' bonds would be partly lost but probably only slowly.

None of these options is ideal and you may be able to think of others. All require further exploration and so the committee will set up a small task team to take this work forward, including consulting with the membership.

Do look out for regular updates on the Alumni website and join in the online discussions. We need to know how you feel about the future of the organisation, what you value most from being a member, and get your ideas as well. Please do get involved – it's what this network is all about.

Last but not least, Jan Ketelaar has decided to stand down from the committee for personal reasons. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank Jan for his work, especially his huge efforts to help sort out the Association's database issues. We are in a much better place now.

Pauline Hayes



On 2 September DFID was formally merged with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and renamed the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) with a new logo. Sir Philip Barton is FCDO's first Permanent Under-Secretary. He has had an extensive career with the FCO, plus Cabinet Office postings, and he is familiar with development work. The FCO PUS Sir Simon McDonald has retired. DFID's Acting Permanent Secretary Nick Dyer has taken on a new role as a special envoy (see below). The ministerial team in the new department is largely unchanged with the exception of Anne-Marie Trevelyan who was appointed Secretary of State for International Development in February. She has left the government.

The Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, has overall responsibility for foreign policy including the UK aid programme. His team will continue to have geographical responsibilities combining foreign policy and development, and some have thematic responsibilities as well. James Cleverley is Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa. Lord Goldsmith is Minister of State for Pacific (and environment). Nigel Adams is Minister of State for Asia. Lord Ahmad is Minister of State for South Asia and Commonwealth (plus UN and other multilateral relations). James Duddridge is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Africa (plus economic development and the International Financial Institutions). Wendy Morton MP is PUS for Europe and the Americas (plus international health). Baroness Sugg is PUS for the Overseas Territories (and sustainable development).

COMMENT: FCDO: Episode 2

Jim Drummond

Some things we know...

The new FCDO began life on 2 September. Its Permanent Secretary and Accounting Officer is Sir Philip Barton, known and respected by many of us for his work on Pakistan and Afghanistan. There are seven Director Generals (DGs) including two from DFID: Moazzam Malik, who is now DG for Africa and Juliet Chua, the DG for Finance and Corporate Performance similar to her role in DFID. The other five are from FCO and some have worked in other departments. BOND and others have criticised this imbalance. For example, the CEO of BOND, reacting to the DG appointments, said:

"We are disappointed to see a complete lack of balance between development and foreign policy experience in the newly announced FCDO interim leadership team and are concerned this could be a sign of development increasingly taking a back seat to diplomatic and commercial interests.

.....it is critical that the final senior team and non-executive roles have an equal balance of development and diplomatic experience."

Rachel Glennerster, DFID's Chief Economist, keeps the role in the new Department and Stefan Dercon comes back from Oxford to advise the Foreign Secretary on international development policy issues. Nick Dyer is the UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs. He is one of nine [special envoys and representatives](#). Ministerial responsibilities are much the same. They are geographic and thematic, none with obvious responsibilities for international development.

Meanwhile the aid budget has been cut for 2021/2 by £2.9bn. The government says this is in line with expectations of lower GNI following the COVID crisis, and that it will still meet the 0.7 target. The impact is already being felt by many NGOs and no doubt poorer countries. The legal framework of the International Development Act remains in place, as does the opposition parties' commitment to restore DFID if they gain power.

A lot remains unclear...

Within FCDO a few structural changes have been made to regional responsibilities, but Director level appointments are not due until October or November. Heads of DFID country offices have been retitled Development Directors reporting to heads of mission (as happens in the US system) but most London reporting lines remain so far unchanged. 140 EU or Commonwealth nationals working for DFID on fixed term contracts, who have no FCO counterparts, have an uncertain future until the new department's staff security policies are agreed.

Clear development policy statements beyond 'we want to spend aid to support the UK's national security and commercial interests' are hard to find. The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy was paused by the COVID crisis, then pre-empted by the merger, and has now resumed. Leadership of the review is unclear following Mark Sedwill's departure. The Comprehensive Spending Review seems to have been postponed and logically with it some of the bigger decisions around the direction of the aid programme. Or maybe not.

Independent scrutiny was always important for DFID. For the moment the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) continues but its role is to be reviewed. The Prime Minister has said it is up to Parliament whether to continue to have an International Development Committee. COVID and BREXIT obviously cast long shadows over everything, so uncertainties are not surprising, but announcing a major change and then working through how to do it is bound to cause major uncertainty for DFID's partners and staff. I'm sure we all feel for them. Readers can decide whether this feels like a merger or a hostile takeover. It is certainly a fuller integration than in previous versions.

Government confirms role for ICAI ahead of DFID-FCO merger

29 Aug 2020

The government confirmed the continued role of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) ahead of the merger of the Department for International Development with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said that ICAI will continue to scrutinise UK aid across all aid-spending departments when the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office launches in September. He also confirmed that a review of ICAI's remit, focus and methods would begin this autumn, with the findings expected to be published at the end of the year.

ICAI Chief Commissioner Dr Tamsyn Barton said:

“Robust, independent scrutiny helps to ensure that aid reaches those who need it most, and that UK taxpayers – who contribute a substantial amount towards the aid budget each year – get maximum value for their money.

“We are committed to the rigorous use of evidence in our reviews, and our recommendations have directly led to improvements in the way government spends aid. This strong track record means we are well-placed to drive forward further improvements in the aid programme, and to enable continued accountability as the landscape changes.”

ICAI was established in 2011 to carry out reviews of different aspects of UK aid spending, whichever department it is spent by. Typically, the review process involves interviews with government officials and sector stakeholders, field research, citizen consultation, literature reviews and fact checking, before recommendations are made to government. A standard review takes about one year. ICAI's findings, and the government response to them, are also scrutinised by Parliament.

As part of the accountability process, ICAI carries out an annual follow-up exercise, assessing the government's progress against its recommendations from previous reviews. Internal research for the most recent follow-up review found that government had positively acted upon 80% of ICAI's recommendations, with ICAI's work having led to improvements including:

- more accurate measurement of success in the government's maternal health work, and more emphasis on good quality care for women and their babies;
- improved levels of competition and transparency – open-book accounting – with suppliers;
- stronger governance and assurance for the BEIS Global Challenges Research Fund.

Although reviews typically identify areas for improvement, ICAI has also highlighted many areas of strength, such as the cases where government uses evidence of “what works” to inform programming decisions, its international leadership in innovative partnerships to reduce the cost of life-saving vaccinations, and best practice in humanitarian aid delivery.

Over the next year, ICAI's planned work includes a rapid review of how the government manages the 0.7% aid spending target, a full review of the UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme, a report looking at the adequacy of measures to protect the aid programme from fraud, and a review of UK aid's work on tackling deforestation and promoting biodiversity to address climate change.

Further planned reviews will be added to ICAI's future workplan in due course.

This item is ICAI's report of the Government's decision, at <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/news-government-confirms-role-for-icai-ahead-of-merger/>

New ICAI reviews

ICAI announced three reviews in August to September 2020:

- [Management of the UK's 0.7% ODA Spending Target – new approach summary paper](#)
- [Assessing DFID's results in nutrition](#)
- [Sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeepers](#)

DIARY

DFID Alumni Committee meeting

The committee met by Zoom video conference on 30th September.

We noted with regret that Jan Ketelaar has decided to stand down from the committee. This leaves a vacancy and if anyone wishes to stand for election, Pauline Hayes and Pam Jenkins would be happy to discuss the role and the requirements.

We were pleased to note that around 40 existing members have in the past 3 months signed up to the members area of the DFID Alumni website. There have been some interesting job vacancies and discussion topics on the website too.

We spent some time discussing the implications of the DFID/FCO merger and possible future scenarios. This has been covered in more detail elsewhere in this issue.

The committee plan to meet again in mid-December.

Christmas event and the 100 club

Because of COVID19 restrictions, we can no longer hold our Christmas party planned for 9th December. However, we hope to be able to hold a summer event in June 2021 at the same venue, Admiralty House, in Whitehall, London.

The 100 club draw has always been a popular event linked to our Christmas party and we plan to hold a draw in December this year. As in previous years, members will be able to purchase one or more tickets priced at £20.

Half of the funds raised will help to support the DFID Alumni financially, (especially important in current times) and half will go into a raffle with cash prizes for members whose names are drawn out of a hat.

Pam Jenkins will write to members separately with more information.

Development articles

Here are some more articles that may be of interest.

This article is by Sir Simon Fraser, ex FCO PUS, now at Chatham House. It touches on a number of issues - merger, Brexit, foreign policy etc.

<https://www.globalgovernmentforum.com/former-uk-diplomatic-chief-warns-of-declining-influence-overseas/>

This article by Robert Barrington of the University of Sussex proposes how the merger could provide an opportunity to strengthen the UK government's approach to the anti-corruption agenda.

<https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/how-the-new-fcdo-could-advance-the-fight-against-corruption/>

This interview with Sir Suma Chakrabarti includes interesting views on the merger plus civil service reform and international issues generally.

<https://www.globalgovernmentforum.com/crisis-response-an-interview-with-sir-suma-chakrabarti/>

DFID was one of government's most data savvy departments. Preserving these skills will be a test of Whitehall reform

This article by Prof Ian Plewis first appeared in Civil Service World

DFID used data and analysis in a way that few other departments manage – and in a way that the government is keen to expand. How this is nurtured in the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will be a key lesson

If you had to summarise the government's Whitehall reform plans in a single word, 'data' would not be a bad choice. The dominant theme of Michael Gove's Ditchley lecture on the public service was the need for a more numerate, statistically aware government. This autumn, the government will have an important opportunity to show it is serious about this commitment, as the Department for International Development is merged into the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

To the layperson, DFID's defining characteristic was its deep-pocketed largesse – as the guardian of the UK's commitment to give 0.7% of gross national income as overseas aid, no other department spent so much to such altruistic ends, ends which also benefitted the UK in terms of global security, disease prevention etc. But from a Whitehall point of view, the most interesting part of DFID's departmental anatomy was not its big heart, but its sharp, quantitative brain.

Behind the scenes, DFID was exceptional for its commitment to statistical rigour, to evidence-based policy, and to robust impact evaluation. It was well connected to those within the international development field who stood up for the use of data and evidence, often in the face of significant opposition. It is no coincidence that DFID's last chief economist had previously run Harvard University's renowned Jameel Poverty Action Lab, a sort of Mecca for evidence geeks, which pioneered the use of randomised controlled trials in development (and controversially exposed a number of common aid practices as being ineffective in the process). DFID's commitment to data and evidence also led it to make invaluable investments in open economic and development statistics around the world, such as its substantial contribution to the International Monetary Fund's programme on data dissemination.

Unusually for a government agency, DFID's work attracted praise from the most demanding enthusiasts for evidence in the world of philanthropy and development, including institutions like the Gates Foundation, but also members of the so-called Effective Altruism movement, a loose grouping of what Number 10 might admiringly call 'freaks and

weirdos', who have developed their own quantitatively driven philosophy for how to do good in the world. DFID's commitment to experiment led to high-risk, high-return successes, such as the DfID-Vodafone M-Pesa banking project in Kenya. Just as importantly, it meant that when projects do not work they can be terminated quickly and lessons learnt.

The principles behind DFID's statistical work – using evidence rigorously, collecting data methodically, publishing it openly, and using it to drive decision making – chime perfectly with Michael Gove's call for a more data-savvy civil service. The challenge now is how to preserve these characteristics in what most people assume is a merger of unequals, with the ancient and prestigious Foreign Office.

The Foreign Office has no shortage of clever and effective officials. But even its staunchest supporters would agree that its skills lie more in diplomacy, guile and grand strategy than in the geeky worlds of statistics, randomisation or data science.

The essential challenge for the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will be ensuring DFID's strong culture of evidence, data and experimentation are preserved, and that the new department learns and builds on the enviable statistical legacy that DFID has built. This will require careful management, and a certain amount of experiment – to understand the value of quantitative methods and what they can offer to the Foreign Office's traditional mission, as well as to the world of overseas aid.

This will also be a wider test-case for the Whitehall reform programme. Building a more data-savvy civil service will no doubt require investing in some entirely new capacity – such as the new Downing Street 'skunkworks', 10ds. But the task will be a futile one if it cannot harness and build on the significant data skills that already exist across the civil service, in departments, in agencies, and in professions, especially the Government Statistical Service. Sometimes these capabilities need to be better connected to policy staff, more plugged into ministerial decision-making, and more integrated with other departmental functions – but neglecting or ignoring them will be a big mistake.

DFID's data capacity is an important, if under-recognised, asset – and one that has won impressive international respect. If government can keep these skills alive, invest in them, and make them central to the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, it will offer an important lesson for the future of the Whitehall reform programme. It is vital that we rise to the challenge.

Prof Ian Plewis is chair of the Royal Statistical Society International Development Section

We thank Civil Service World for permission to reprint this article.

How I survived the lock down –

Dick Jones, Former Senior Energy and ICT Adviser

During the lockdown I finally got around to sorting out boxes of papers including those covering the period from joining ODA in Stag Place in July 1984 to my final retirement in June 2006. This brought back many memories: privatising the electricity supply of Grand Turk; huge coal fired power stations in India and China; meeting Benazir Bhutto to discuss the Pasni power station; leading a power sector review in Malaysia associated with the Pergau Dam project; visit to China in 1986; meeting John Major in Bosnia in 1994, etc.

I traced the change from large, commercially driven projects to the focus on energy for the poor and from simple technical and economic appraisal to the inclusion of institutional, social and environmental issues.

After retiring I worked with my Daughter to develop projects for carbon finance which had a poverty reduction focus, such as a large rural biogas project in India. After that, I did various bits of work including a couple of assignments for DFID and other aid agencies and was a trustee of the household energy development network HEDON.

Sadly I had to give all of that up when my partner, who had been diagnosed with a combination of Alzheimer's and Vascular Dementia, had a period in hospital and could only be discharged if there was someone at home to look after her. I volunteered to stay with her for a "couple of days" but it became obvious that she was unable to manage on her own and my voluntary "couple of days" became nearly 5 years of 24/7 caring until I was persuaded by her family that she should go into a home on 4 July 2019, my "independence day".

We were always keen walkers and I signed up for a Memory Walk organised by the Alzheimer's Society from Putney to Hampton along the Thames but I cancelled this due to Covid-19. Instead, I arranged to walk the 20 mile Harrogate Ringway with my Daughter, her Husband and my two Grandchildren. We did this over two days, 19th and 20th August, taking maximum advantage of pubs along the way.



On Day 1 we did 10 miles anti-clockwise from The Squinting Cat [unfortunately before opening time] in SW Harrogate, near my Daughter's home, to The World's End, Knaresborough stopping at Mother Shipton's pub just before the end. We had a beer and a ploughman's at The Travellers' Rest at half way.

On Day 2 we started from the same place and walked clockwise but were frustrated to find the halfway pub, The Knox, closed. We had a plan B - stopping for lunch at a friend's house nearby where the beer was just as welcome. The last quarter of the walk was through the spectacular Nidd Gorge, ending up in the beer garden of The World's End in Knaresborough after 11.5 miles on the Ringway.

With the short stretches from the house to the start adding another mile each day my total walked was 23.5 miles.

You can see more on the link www.justgiving.com/fundraising/dick-jones2.

I set myself a target of £2,020 - 20 miles completed on 20th August for the Memory 2020 appeal. At the time of writing, I have reached 86% of my target. If you would like to donate, use the link above - don't forget the Gift Aid. Many thanks in advance.



The SDGs: Any hope?

Mike Green

If you want to start a fight among a group of development professionals, a good way is to ask, 'Did we achieve the Millennium Development Goals?' Of course the headline income poverty target was achieved but, but, but...we all know the arguments. Just imagine how much more rancour and uncertainty we are going to get debating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)!

The problem starts with the fact there are seventeen of them. (Only the UN would try to inspire the world with a list of goals that is a prime number greater than ten and a set of targets that is the square of 13.) But the challenge of figuring out how we are doing against the SDGs is so much harder than that. First, the goals themselves are conceptually fuzzy, a product of diplomatic drafting rather than clear thinking. Second, the indicators for the goals are a lowest common denominator, with sensitive issues like rights largely brushed over to satisfy authoritarian countries. Third, even for the indicators defined, much of the data is missing, particularly for poorer countries.

Yet the SDGs remain a huge opportunity. By establishing a consensus that we want to build inclusive and sustainable societies, we have a rallying point for all actors involved in development. That is why, to help this process along, I am leading an effort to apply the Social Progress Index as a tool to track progress against the SDGs.

My team at the Social Progress Imperative began developing the Social Progress Index a decade ago, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. You can think of it as a project to refresh the Human Development Index (HDI) for the 21st century. We have done this by addressing some well-known (including to Mahbub ul-Haq, the creator of HDI, thirty years ago) flaws with HDI. First, we have excluded GDP and other economic indicators, so that we are measuring lived experience directly not through economic proxies. Second, we have widened the scope of measurement to include critical issues like safety, the environment and rights.

The Social Progress Index does not look like the SDGs but it is essentially measuring the same concepts, as the Figure below illustrates. Moreover, as an NGO we can be more flexible than the UN in picking the right indicators to measure these concepts. We have tested hundreds and chosen 50 outcome indicators, selected and weighted using statistical analysis. (The methodological report is [here](#) and all the data is online.) As a result we are able to measure 163 countries, covering 95%+ of the global population, on aggregate progress towards the complete package of SDGs.

Using the Social Progress Index lets us to see how we are doing and, since we have time series since 2011, make projections on progress to the SDGs. The good news is that



the world overall is making progress. The bad news is that progress is nowhere near fast enough. On current trends we won't hit the 2030 SDG targets until 2082.

So what can we do to turn this around?

Social Progress Index shows that there are particular issues where we are in real trouble. The environment is obviously critical, and is an area where we see the world has made basically no progress since 2011. Yet, the most worrying trends are in rights and inclusiveness, which are integral to SDGs 5 (gender), 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace and justice), where the world is actually going backwards. This is not that surprising, given the rise of populist authoritarians around the world, but is too little discussed in development circles as a threat to the SDGs.

Some countries are also letting the side down. A small club of three countries, the United States, Brazil and Hungary, have gone backwards since 2011 (yes, largely because of big setbacks on rights and inclusiveness). Others, like the UK, have effectively stalled. Others are making rapid progress, including The Gambia, Ethiopia, Nepal, and Sierra Leone. Indeed, as you would expect, developing countries that are catching up are improving fastest. On an optimistic note, we do see that the world is becoming less unequal in terms of social progress, albeit not as fast as we would like. If big developing countries like Nigeria and India could accelerate their so far steady progress on the SDGs, then the overall picture would be a lot more positive.

The impacts of Covid are not yet visible in the data. We estimate that the direct effects on health, education and so on and the indirect effects on livelihoods and public expenditure could set back the SDG agenda by another decade. Yet we also see in the data that, after controlling for GDP and region, countries with higher social progress seem to be more resilient to Covid. And the most important factor in that resilience is rights and inclusiveness. More open and tolerant societies seem better able to deal with this shock. Which makes a great argument, even for the self-interested, to get the SDGs back on track.

Mike Green (DFID 1996-2009) is CEO of the Social Progress Imperative. He loves feedback and can be reached at mgreen@socialprogress.org

Life after DFID and some reflections on working in the UN system

Roy Trivedy, August 2020

I left DFID in October 2013, to work as the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and UNDP Resident Representative (RR) in Papua New Guinea (PNG). I moved to the same role in Timor L'Este in 2018 .

I am proud of many things we did in these countries including my role in leading the development of new multi-year country cooperation frameworks in PNG (2018-22) and Timor-Leste (2021-2025); the UN's work to support the Bougainville Peace Agreement in PNG, work to support national and local election processes as well as Parliaments; supporting public engagement on the SDGs (see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CY30e-mnY0c> and <https://socialcops.com/case-studies/undp-png-tracking-business-contribution-sdgs/>); and most recently on COVID-19 prevention and response, see: <https://un.org/tl/en/>).

Timor-Leste is a young nation: it regained independence from Indonesia after a UN led referendum in 2000 and 64 per cent of the population is under 25 years. It has limited oil and gas reserves and is seeking to diversify its economy. Most of its population depends on subsistence agriculture or public sector employment. It is seeking to improve the quality of services (education, health, water and sanitation) and generate more employment for youth. Like many small island economies, Timor-Leste is prone to natural disasters and faces major challenges from climate change. But it's a country where people are keen to learn and improve. And the UN's work can make a real difference to peoples' lives.

It was a long road into the UN. In 2011, I applied through a competitive process for UK civil servants interested to serve as UN Resident Coordinators. My nomination was supported by DFID and the FCO. In 2012 I was invited to a two-day assessment centre with candidates from the UN system and elsewhere. By November 2012, I was given a 'ticket' to take on a RC/RR post. Then came selection for a specific post by the UN system. Finally, the nomination by the UN had to be accepted by the government of the proposed country.

In October 2013, DFID agreed to treat my RC/RR posting as



'Exceptional Leave without pay with a right to return to the UK Civil Service' for a period of four years (which I gave up at the end of 2017). Despite my preparations, my start in the UN system in Papua New Guinea was a bit of a shock.

Firstly, having got used to DFID systems, procedures and rules (finance, human resources, IT, management etc..), it was hard to adjust to much less reliable ones. In DFID, we



had dedicated IT including video-conferencing and we could connect easily with teams virtually anywhere in the world. At the UN in PNG, we relied on Skype and had much less reliable IT.

Secondly, while the UN has many exceptional and experienced staff, the overall level of professionalism, capacity and commitment of staff is more variable than in the UK Civil Service. A large proportion of UN staff (national and international) are on 1 or 2-year contracts , come from many different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and different UN agencies have different systems and procedures. This means that managers need to be more flexible and adaptable – to work harder to get to know your team(s). This can at times be a struggle. See: <https://www.daghammarskjold.se/publication/on-leadership-the-art-of-creating-public-value-in-the-united-nations/>)

A third learning point for me is that senior UN staff's knowledge and experience of promoting human rights; gender equality and inclusion, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals, are generally higher and more consistent than in most bilateral development agencies. This has been further enhanced after the implementation of the Secretary General's UN Reforms in 2018 (See: <https://reform.un.org/>.)

Finally, on the relationship with Government representatives. My experience in PNG and in Timor-Leste is that while governments know the UN is rarely able to provide large amounts of funding to support national programmes (unlike many bilaterals and the World Bank), the UN is often a more 'trusted partner' seen as willing to support national aspirations and priorities. Much depends on the individuals leading the work at country level – but Ministers and senior officials are often willing to share their thoughts more candidly with the UN than with bilateral partners.

I am aware that much of what I have achieved with the UN over the past 7 years is attributable to experience gained at DFID. I am grateful to have worked at DFID and as part of the UK Civil Service.

DFID people

Suma Chakrabarti has become chair of the Board of Governors of the Overseas Development Institute.

Nemat (Minouche) Shafik has been appointed a life peer in the House of Lords and will sit as an independent member.

Lindy Cameron is the new CEO of the National Cyber Security Centre.

And one departure:

Douglas Alexander has resigned as the Chair of UNICEF UK.

Committee members

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Pauline Hayes | Chair |
| Pam Jenkins | Secretary |
| John Burton | Treasurer |
| Jim Drummond | |
| Janet Grimshaw | |
| Mike Hammond | |
| Jan Ketelaar | Resigned in September |
| Kathy Marshall | |
| Carol Norman | |
| John Stuppel | |
| Marc Taylor | |
| Sasha Zayarna | |

CONTACT

This newsletter is produced by DFID's Alumni Secretariat. For any queries, please contact the Editorial Group:

Pauline Hayes, Pam Jenkins, Jim Drummond

To submit articles, items or feedback please contact the Secretary Pam Jenkins

Email: pamjjenkins@outlook.com

alumni@dfid.gov.uk **is no longer in use.**

Welcome and Farewell

We are very pleased to have welcomed six new members to the Association over the last 3 months:

Katharina Hathina

Ali Osman Dizman

John Moncrieff

Katja Silling

Carlton Evans

Pabrita Subba

Tom Corwards

Adrena Craig

Sadly, we have been informed that the following ex or current DFID staff passed away:

Steve Nally

Maryelaine Robertson

Beryl Castles

Also:

Peter Mackenzie Smith

Peter was Director of the British Council's Projects Division in the 1990s, involving close contacts with ODA, so some colleagues may have known him.

Richard Morris

Richard was former Ambassador to Nepal and he helped create the FCO-DFID coronavirus task force.

Our condolences to their families and friends. Members have shared fond memories of them by email and on the DFID Alumni website.

Editions of The Four Corners from December 2013 are available for anyone - member or not - to download from the Association's web site at www.dfid-alumni.org

The Four Corners has appeared quarterly since 2007. Members of the DFID Alumni Association can download any of the previous editions – and other documents - from the DFID Alumni Library on dgroups at <https://dgroups.org> .