



## Principles and hallmarks of the FCDO: 6 months on

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) opened on the 2 September 2020, bringing together the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID). Upon announcing the merger, the Prime Minister stated that it “will unite our aid with our diplomacy and bring them together in our international effort”. In July 2020, Bond published 15 principles for the new department to make the most of the opportunities the merger presented, while mitigating risks to the impact of the UK’s work overseas and protecting its reputation. We also set 15 tests, or hallmarks, to track how the FCDO is delivering on these principles.

Experience from other countries shows that merging foreign and development departments takes time. While it is still early days, critical decisions have already been made about the strategic direction and budget of the FCDO. The government set out its new strategic framework for Official Development Assistance (ODA) in November 2020. Prior to this, the government announced its intention to cut ODA from 0.7% to 0.5% of GNI. However, there are also areas where it is still too soon to assess progress, and much will depend on the publication of the forthcoming Integrated Review.

This review assesses the progress the FCDO has made towards the principles and hallmarks during its first six months. It also suggests priorities for the next six months, during which the UK will host the G7 in Cornwall and lay the groundwork for the COP 26 Summit in Glasgow. The focus is on setting out concrete actions which will realise the Prime Minister’s goal of uniting development and diplomacy in support of international efforts and ensure the merger delivers for people living in poverty around the world.

This review has been developed with feedback from Bond members and Bond Working Group chairs. Assessments are based on decisions made, commitments set out in public statements and official letters, and information shared through interactions with senior FCDO officials. It has been shared with the FCDO.

## Overall assessment

Merging foreign and development departments is a significant undertaking and there is a considerable amount still to be done. That said, the new department is taking shape and there is much to be commended, including the focus on issues such as climate change and open societies, and intention to shift to bilateral programming as a default in recognition of its effectiveness, local ownership and strategic impact. The government’s decision to retain both the International Development Committee (IDC) and the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) are welcome and will contribute to both the accountability and quality of the FCDO’s work.

The UK continues to play an active role on the world stage. It has returned to the UN Human Rights Council as a voting member, using its position to condemn human rights abuses in Myanmar, China, Belarus and Russia. On Covid-19, the UK persuaded the UN Security Council to adopt a unanimous resolution calling for vaccine ceasefires and encouraged G7 leaders to strengthen global cooperation to tackle the virus and increase their contributions to the COVAX vaccine sharing initiative.

However, much of the progress to date has been overshadowed by plans to cut UK ODA to 0.5%, a decision which would harm the world’s poorest and undermine the UK’s international reputation. This

decision, taken with a lack of transparency and consultation, will see a £ 5 billion reduction in the UK ODA from 2019 levels. This is equivalent to the bilateral aid sent to the top twenty recipients in 2019.<sup>1</sup>

Also concerning is the decision not to reference poverty-reduction and gender equality in the new strategic framework and to focus only on countries where the UK has security and economic as well as development interests. The new department risks placing development second to diplomacy, rather than uniting them in support of international effort as the Prime Minister intended.

Beyond this:

- **Strategy:** The strategic direction for the new department is emerging, and progress is being made on some areas prioritised in the new strategic framework for ODA, particularly climate and open societies where positive commitments have been made. We welcome the attention given to these issues and hope that this will be backed up by urgent, principled and effective action in the coming months. The announcement that a new development strategy will follow from the Integrated Review is welcome and must be focused on poverty-reduction and the delivery of the SDGs.
- **Poverty-reduction and gender equality:** We are very concerned that poverty-reduction is not referenced as a primary objective of ODA in the new strategic framework and that ODA will only be spent on countries where the UK's development, security and economic interests align. The absence of an explicit strategic commitment to gender equality, beyond the commitment to girls' education, is a notable gap. However, we welcome the creation of the new Education, Gender and Equalities Directorate and hope that the Gender team will be fully resourced and able to champion gender equality across the department.
- **Accountability and transparency:** Retaining ICAI and the IDC is positive and will support greater accountability and transparency as well as improving the effectiveness and impact of UK ODA. However, we are extremely concerned about the lack of transparency over aid cuts in 2020 and planned for 2021 and a seeming disregard for the expertise the international development community could bring to the table when making these decisions. We urge ministers to make information about the cuts public with immediate effect.
- **Representation and expertise:** The decision not to appoint a Minister for Development with cabinet responsibility is disappointing, and the FCDO Senior Leadership Team is not evenly balanced between those with development and foreign backgrounds, with only two out of eight Director Generals coming from DFID. We are also concerned that the merger has resulted in a loss of development expertise.
- **Civil society engagement:** A lack of engagement and consultation with civil society, particularly ahead of strategic decisions, such as the new ODA framework, and policy making processes, has further limited the department's access to development expertise, as well as diverse insights and real-time information from hard-to-reach places and communities.

## Progress towards the Principles and hallmarks rated

To facilitate comparison, we have rated progress towards each principle and hallmark to date. It is still early days, so these scores are **indicative of the overall direction of travel**. More details on the

principles and hallmarks and the reasons why they have been rated as follows can be found in the Annex below. Here we have ranked them according to progress made, with those scoring highest at the top, and those scoring lowest at the bottom.

## Ratings

- Good progress
- Some progress
- Poor or very limited progress

Principle	Rating
Outlining a strong strategic direction	Some
Delivering the Sustainable Development Goals in the UK and abroad	Some
Working to ensure that we Leave No One Behind	Some
Upholding and promoting Humanitarian Principles and Response	Some
Enhancing policy coherence across UK government interventions	Some
Protecting and promoting democracy, human rights and civic space	Good
Promoting greater transparency and openness	Poor
Demonstrating continued leadership on safeguarding	Good
Being consultative and inclusive through supporting meaningful engagement	Poor
Retaining expertise and ensuring development is represented at the highest levels	Poor
Ensuring all aid spending is transparent and accountable to the UK taxpayer	Poor
Ensuring UK ODA is sufficient and focused on poverty reduction	Poor
Prioritising people living in Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS)	Some
Supporting action on climate and nature	Some
Providing opportunities and direct support for civil society in the Global South	Some

## Recommended priorities for the next 6 months

To ensure that the merger delivers for people living in poverty around the world and realises the Prime Minister's goal of uniting development and diplomacy, we urge Ministers and civil servants to:

1. **Urgently reverse the decision to reduce ODA from 0.7% to 0.5% of GNI**, and whilst conversations and process around 0.7% are ongoing, continue to plan for a 0.7% spend in line with their legal requirement. Decisions around programming and prioritisation must be guided by the core principle of poverty-alleviation and in line with OECD DAC rules.
2. **Produce a comprehensive and fully resourced international development strategy** focused on poverty-reduction and achieving the SDGs, which follows from the Integrated Review and strategic framework for ODA and includes humanitarian preparedness and response and conflict sensitivity. This must be developed through meaningful engagement with stakeholders in the UK and internationally, especially civil society.
3. **Take urgent, bold and principled action on issues** prioritised in the strategic framework for ODA, including climate, conflict prevention and open societies and human rights. Engage with civil society and external stakeholders to produce comprehensive cross-government strategies, each with a vision, goals and objectives, which guide and deliver this work in an effective and inclusive manner.

4. **With civil society, deliver a transformative G7** which supports countries to build back better after the Coronavirus pandemic, tackling the systemic issues that have left countries ill-equipped to withstand a global health emergency and prevented progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and laying the groundwork for a successful COP 26.
5. **Act now to preserve DFID's legacy** through adopting and potentially improving existing strategies on gender equality, disability inclusion and transparency, all of which have delivered effective action on important cross-cutting issues and enjoy widespread support. The retention of development expertise in making staffing decisions should be prioritised.
6. **Improve engagement with civil society at a strategic and policy level**, establishing regular dialogues on priority issues, including civil society in policy and decision-making processes, promoting civil society participation, all enshrined in a strategy to promote meaningful, inclusive and effective engagement with civil society in the UK and internationally.
7. **Bring in development expertise through establishing a Development Advisory Group**, an expert panel comprised of academics and civil society representatives, to ensure that ministers and civil servants have access to the latest thinking and evidence base.
8. **Work with civil society to explore and develop innovative funding mechanisms**, which provide direct flexible funding to organisations, networks and movements in priority countries and at the global and regional level, potentially through the creation of intermediary funds which then sub-grant to local organisations and actors.
9. **Further improve transparency and accountability**, working closely with the IDC to ensure that aid spending is accountable and robustly scrutinised, publicly communicating details of the 2020 cuts to ODA and where cuts are still to be made, communicate this in advance to allow all development partners to adjust plans.

## Annex: Summary of progress towards the principles and hallmarks

(Ratings: Good progress, Some progress, Poor progress)

Principle	Hallmark	Progress over past 6 months	Priorities for next 6 months
<p><b>Strong strategic direction</b></p> <p><b>In order to realise gains from having unified objectives, the new department needs a clear and comprehensive strategy that builds on the strengths of the staff from both departments. The strategy should reflect the existing commitments – particularly the SDGs and the focus on people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. It should also be forward looking so the new department is designed afresh to meet the global challenges we face and underpinned by a diverse staff and inclusive culture.</b></p>	<p>A published strategy that brings together the department goals into five or six clear priorities, that is the result of meaningful consultation with stakeholders in the UK and internationally. The strategy should, as a minimum, deliver the manifesto commitments on ODA and the SDGs.</p>	<p>In November 2020, the Government published a new <a href="#">strategic framework for ODA</a>, which sets out seven global challenges that all spending will be focused on: Climate and biodiversity; Covid-19 and global health; Girls education; Science, technology and research; Open societies and conflict resolution; Trade and economic development; and Humanitarian preparedness and response. The UK will prioritise countries where it's development, diplomacy and economic align, although these are not listed.</p> <p>While this framework does indicate some directions, it is not a strategy and without more detail it is difficult to see how it guides decisions. Disappointingly, the framework does not make any reference to poverty-reduction or gender equality and was developed without any engagement or consultation with civil society or other stakeholders in the UK or overseas. Never has a strategy been more important, as severe aid cuts mean that there will be significantly less money available. A more definitive strategy is needed that supports manifesto</p>	<p>Produce a comprehensive and fully resourced development strategy focused on poverty-reduction and the SDGs, which follows from the Integrated Review and strategic framework for ODA. This must be developed through meaningful engagement with stakeholders in the UK and internationally, especially civil society.</p>

		<p>commitments on ODA and SDGs and guides decisions for the long term.</p> <p>More recently, the Foreign Secretary has <a href="#">announced that he would lead a second cross departmental review</a> on a new development strategy “to ensure close alignment of UK aid with the objectives to be set out in the integrated review”. The prospect of a comprehensive development strategy is positive, but it must be focused on poverty-reduction and be developed in consultation with civil society.</p> <p><b>Progress rating: Some</b></p>	
<p><b>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b></p> <p><b>The SDGs are a universal blueprint to deliver peace and prosperity for people and planet – a shared objective of the new department. The government must re-commit to delivering the SDGs both in the UK and abroad, with clear lines of responsibility, accountability and a plan for delivery. Decisions to allocate ODA must be backed by evidence of how it will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and be reflected in ODA reporting mechanisms.</b></p>	<p>A dedicated sustainable development team is created and maintained within FCDO with the mandate and resources to support mainstreaming of the SDGs across the department.</p>	<p>There has been a promising shift in UK government’s acknowledgement of the SDGs as a result of the <a href="#">Foreign Secretary’s speech</a> at the UN General Assembly in September 2020. However, there has been little detail as to how this will be meaningfully implemented, especially in light of the new ODA framework and spending cuts and the SDGs are not being actively used to shape strategy and set goals.</p> <p>The Sustainable Development and Financing team has been maintained, and there has been some progress on resources and the process of mainstreaming in the new department. A permanent replacement for Baroness Sugg, the minister responsible for</p>	<p>Publicly clarify the priorities of the FCDO teams on SDG implementation and agree resources for integrating the SDGs within the FCDO.</p> <p>Set out how the strategic framework and any new development strategy will meaningfully implement achieving the SDGs across UK ODA-funded work, and how it will align with the seven focus areas outlined in the new framework. Provide clarity on how the</p>

		<p>leadership on the SDGs within the FCDO, is yet to be confirmed.</p> <p><b>Progress rating: Some</b></p>	<p>ODA framework and any new development strategy will put commitments to LNOB into practice.</p>
<p><b>Leave No One Behind</b>  <b>The UK has committed itself to the principle of Leave No One Behind through its 2016 LNOB Promise. This requires a focus within the FCDO on supporting the poorest, most marginalised and excluded people. Existing good practice from DFID on gender equality, disability and inclusion should be retained and strengthened across the FCDO. There are also opportunities to do more on other inclusion areas, particularly mental health, age, faith, ethnicity, LGBT+ and child rights, by building existing strategies, policies and approaches.</b></p>	<p>FCDO adopts and strengthens existing DFID inclusion strategies, especially the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality, Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development and full implementation of the Data Disaggregation Action Plan, and creates dedicated teams on inclusive development, disability and gender equality with the mandate, expertise and resources to implement these strategies across the department.</p>	<p>The Foreign Secretary made a clear commitment to Leave No One Behind in a <a href="#">speech at the UN General Assembly</a> in September. However, there is much less clarity on its place within the FCDO and the department is yet to publicly adopt existing inclusion strategies. Teams on gender and disability inclusion will form part of the newly created Education, Gender and Equalities Directorate. It is not yet clear if the inclusive development team will remain as the new departmental structure emerges.</p> <p>There has been some progress especially in data disaggregated by sex, age and disabilities but there is still more to be done to embed the Leave No One Behind Promise in all of FCDO's work. The cut in ODA will also have a disproportionate impact on left behind people.</p> <p><b>Progress rating: Some</b></p>	<p>Urgently and publicly recommit to all previous DFID inclusion strategies. Where strategies are being refreshed, ensure they build on existing gains and are developed through meaningful, deliberative and inclusive consultation with civil society.</p> <p>Maintain dedicated teams for inclusive development, disability and gender equality, and clarify their remits and resource levels to ensure marginalised groups remain a focus and expertise is retained.</p> <p>Sign onto the Inclusive Data Charter and reach out to different stakeholders to see how data disaggregation can be fully implemented using the Inclusive Data Charter and sharing best practice</p>

			through participatory dialogue.
<p><b>Humanitarian principles and response</b></p> <p><b>The UK government must demonstrate an unqualified commitment to International Humanitarian Law, humanitarian principles and the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship, and prioritise timely delivery of aid to frontline, life-saving efforts.</b></p>	<p>FCDO matches DFID’s ranking in global humanitarian indexes such as the ODI Principled Aid Index, accelerates progress towards the UK’s Grand Bargain commitments and increases the percentage of funding directly available to frontline responders, including NGOs.</p>	<p>It is too early to fully assess the FCDO on the indicators for this measure, however we have indications of the direction of travel. The government has confirmed that humanitarian preparedness and response is a strategic priority and reiterated its commitment to humanitarian system reform. The appointment of the UK’s first Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs is welcome. More bilateral programmes include a specific reference to local ownership which is positive. However, there needs to be a similar commitment to international and national civil society if we are to have principled humanitarian aid that builds longer term peace and resilience.</p> <p>The UK did not meet its annual contribution to the CERF in 2020. The drastically reduced aid budget is particularly challenging for the UK’s humanitarian funding as little is likely to be left for crises once commitments are met. There are concerns that the focus on national interests will have a negative impact on humanitarian principles and contribute to the further politicisation of aid.</p> <p><b>Progress rating: Some</b></p>	<p>Ensure any new development strategy addresses humanitarian response and preparedness, commits to working on the drivers of conflict and fragility and re-commits the UK to the Grand Bargain and principles of good humanitarian donorship. The new strategy should make clear the Government’s commitment to humanitarian principles.</p> <p>Ensure the 2021 ODA budget makes sufficient provision to contribute to emerging or worsening humanitarian crises.</p>



**Policy coherence across government**  
**All UK policies, especially trade and investment initiatives, must be aligned with SDGs and international standards and principles supporting sustainable economic development. Any future trade deals must be subject to parliamentary scrutiny, and trade and investment should not undermine human rights or efforts to tackle the climate crisis, poverty reduction and achievement of SDGs.**

UK Government carries out impact assessments of all its policies ensuring that its international development efforts are not undermined. All trade deals are scrutinised by parliament and all UK trade and investment initiatives meet international labour standards and require compliance with UN guiding principles of business and human rights, UK Modern Slavery Act, SDGs and Paris Agreement Commitments.

The strategic framework identified trade and economic development as a priority, and there will be a focus on countries where diplomatic and development efforts are aligned. Strengthening the global trade system is also a priority for the 2021 G7. Yet, it is unclear how this work will address coherence with sustainable development, human rights and labour rights, and current coordination efforts look unlikely to lead to greater coherence.

There is also no indication on how the FCDO is engaging with DIT, CDC and investment bodies to promote greater coherence or whether DFID’s Economic Development Strategy will be reviewed, updated and consulted on. There has been some engagement by DIT with civil society but much more progress is needed to ensure this is meaningful and inclusive.

An amendment to the Trade Bill to ensure parliamentary scrutiny on future trade deals was recently defeated in the Commons. This was a missed opportunity to improve scrutiny and help build policy coherence.

**Progress rating: Some**

A much clearer approach setting out how FCDO intends to engage with wider UK government’s efforts on trade and investment, and how it will ensure greater policy coherence for sustainable development across government through coordination, scrutiny and safeguards. Collaborate with DIT on meaningful CSO engagement.

Confirmation of the status of DFID’s EDS within FCDO and a process for updating this, in meaningful consultation with other stakeholders working on trade, investment and development.

**Democracy, human rights and civic space**

**The FCDO must maintain the FCO's and DFID's commitment to democracy and human rights. The UK must uphold and contribute to the protection and promotion civil society space and associated rights and freedoms, particularly the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, and the right to freedom of expression. Our diplomatic efforts, both bilateral and multilateral, must complement this crucial task.**

A single departmental strategy on civic space and the protection and promotion of associated rights and freedoms (freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly) in relation to other foreign policy issues is developed and its implementation led by a senior official tasked with overseeing civic space issues.

While the government is yet to commit to the development of a strategy on open societies and human rights, it has made a clear commitment to prioritise and advance work on this issue. It is identified as a priority in the new strategic framework with a focus on democratic institutions, human rights, free media, and effective governance. A new Open Societies and Human Rights Directorate has been created, headed up by a Director. Democratic societies will be a key theme at the G7. While we are pleased to see this area prioritised, we are yet to see concrete actions and the focus could, in practice, be quite narrow and centred on existing priorities such as media freedom and those issues that appeal personally to the Foreign Secretary like the Magnitsky sanctions.

**Progress rating: Good**

Publicly commit to and begin work on a cross-government strategy that sets out how the UK will promote and protect open societies and human rights. This strategy must be developed through meaningful engagement with civil society in the UK and internationally.

Establish regular dialogue with civil society including organisations that work on open societies and human rights.

**Transparency and openness**  
**The UK must continue to exercise global leadership in transparency and the FCDO should adopt DFID's Transparency Agenda, which includes commitments across open societies, open government, freedom of the press, extractives and natural resource transparency and open budgeting**

FCDO adopts the DFID transparency agenda and retains its membership of and continues to support the International Aid Transparency Initiative, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), Open Government Partnership (OGP), Humanitarian Grand Bargain, Open Contracting, and

Ministers confirmed in writing that they are committed to improving transparency of aid and that the FCDO will champion transparency in all forms. At the OGP 2020 Summit, Lord Ahmad made a statement in support of transparency, referencing the importance of EITI, OGP and Open Contracting Partnership. The Government also endorsed OGP's campaign promoting an open response and open recovery to Covid-19. While this is encouraging, the Government said very little about other transparency initiatives and has not publicly

Explicitly confirm that the FCDO will adopt the 'Open Aid, Open Societies' Transparency Agenda, provide an update (as in 2019) that outlines progress made on implementing commitments.

	Construction Sector Transparency Initiative.	commitment to adopt the 2018 Transparency Agenda, 'Open Aid, Open Societies'. The UK could also do more to lead by example on transparency, and publicly communicate details of the 2020 cuts to ODA.	
		<b>Progress rating: Poor</b>	
<b>Safeguarding</b> <b>The government must demonstrate its continued leadership on safeguarding and the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the aid sector and deliver on the commitments made at the October 2018 Safeguarding Summit. Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment are fundamentally about power imbalances and inequalities, and long-term commitment and culture change is needed to ensure recent progress is sustained leads to lasting systemic change.</b>	FCDO retains a dedicated Safeguarding Unit focused on the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment; flagship initiatives, such as the Resource and Support Hub and the Interpol Project Soteria continue; and current safeguarding standards and funding levels are retained.	Progress on safeguarding has slowed during the merger, particularly on initiatives relating to survivor support and transparent reporting. However, we are optimistic that it will progress more quickly now the internal reorganisation of the department is complete. An IDC report called for further work in three areas: (i) showing zero tolerance and taking action against perpetrators; (ii) empowering aid beneficiaries; and (iii) supporting survivors. The FCDO is due to respond to this report in March 2021. The Resource and Support Hub has successfully launched, and a national hub in Ethiopia is in pilot phase. The decision to retain the Safeguarding Unit as an independent unit within FCDO is also very positive.	Pick up and move forward with the various initiatives already underway. This includes a new program focussed on support to survivors; the Transparent Reporting working group; a review of Project Soteria (which is to conclude in May); pilot of Aid Worker Registration Scheme; and the creation of a professional standard for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH) investigators and training scheme.
		<b>Progress rating: Good</b>	
<b>Consultation and engagement</b> <b>Government programmes and policies are most powerful when they are shaped by a diverse range of voices both in the UK and the countries in</b>	Regular and structured engagement with international, national and local civil society takes place across all FCDO	Although it is early days, initial indications are that civil society will not have the same level engagement with the FCDO as it did with DFID, especially at a political and senior level and potentially at a policy level. Existing	Develop an engagement strategy which establishes processes for meaningful engagement, and urgently re-establish dialogues at a

**which they operate. For any foreign policy or development strategy or project, engagement with civil society is essential and stakeholders should be engaged in a meaningful, inclusive and deliberative manner, bringing in a diversity of voices and ideas.**

teams at a UK and country level. Meaningful, inclusive and timely consultation processes are established to enable external stakeholders to contribute to strategic policy and decision-making processes and high-level events, in line with the principles of the Compact agreed between successive governments and UK civil society.

policy and strategic dialogues have stalled as a result of the merger and aid cuts. While some dialogue meetings took place in early months of the merger, no policy level dialogue meetings have taken place since November 2020. The FCDO is yet to publicly respond to the engagement strategy submitted by Bond in September 2020.

The Government did not consult civil society in the UK and internationally prior to key decisions such as the Strategic Framework or aid cuts. On a more positive note, there has been some proactive engagement ahead of the 2021 G7, through and beyond official G7 engagement groups such as the “Civil Society 7”, which we welcome.

**Progress rating: Poor**

strategic and at a policy level.

Continue to engage meaningfully with civil society ahead of G7 and COP - this will be a litmus test for how the department will approach civil society participation.

**Expertise and representation**  
**The expertise built up by DFID as a world leader in its field must be maintained, with a specific cadre of development and humanitarian experts and continued operation of DFID country offices supported by long term, evidence-based, country-specific strategies accountable to the communities they seek to serve. To ensure this expertise is utilised at the highest levels, there should**

A Chief Secretary for International Development who attends Cabinet and sits on the National Security Council, in addition to the Foreign Secretary. A central department that supports the delivery of long-term development priorities, alongside the existence of in-country strategies. An equal balance of FCO and DFID staff in the new

Despite calls from the development sector, the government will not appoint a minister focused specifically on development and the Foreign Secretary has confirmed that he will represent development issues on the National Security Council. Ambassadors are now in charge of official development assistance. NGOs are concerned that diplomacy, rather than need, will determine how ODA is spent in-country.

Although Director level posts are still being confirmed, it is clear the senior leadership team is not evenly balanced between those

Reconsider decision not to appoint a Minister for Development, with Cabinet responsibility.

Prioritise development expertise when confirming posts at all levels of the department.

Create an expert advisory panel on development for the new department, and potentially in key

<p><b>be Cabinet level representation of international development and representation at the National Security Council—bringing an important perspective to a whole government approach.</b></p>	<p>department leadership team.</p>	<p>with development and foreign backgrounds. The Permanent Under Secretary is from the FCO and only two out of the eight Director Generals have a development background. Only six of the 17 individuals who comprise the FCDO Senior Leadership Board previously held roles at DFID. There are early signs that many former DFID staff are leaving the FCDO, resulting in a loss of development expertise.</p> <p><b>Progress rating: Poor</b></p>	<p>embassies, to ensure that the department has access to the latest thinking and evidence base.</p>
<p><b>Aid: Accountability and transparency</b>  <b>The FCDO and all UK ODA must be accountable to the British taxpayer, and to those it seeks to assist. Effective parliamentary scrutiny must be maintained and strengthened, with a new cross-government parliamentary committee able to examine all aid spend across Whitehall. The critical role of ICAI must be protected and strengthened to ensure value for money. Aid transparency is key to this. All UK ODA must be fully transparent and all departments that provide ODA must meet the UK’s commitments on aid transparency, promote the</b></p>	<p>Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) retained and a new cross-government parliamentary committee formed with a remit to examine all aid spend across Whitehall, and all UK aid spending departments, including the FCDO, achieve a standard of “good” or “very good” in the Aid Transparency Index by 2022.</p>	<p>The confirmation from the Leader of House of Commons that the International Development Committee (IDC) will continue to scrutinise the work of the government is welcome, as is the decision to retain ICAI with a similar mandate and degree of independence. The FCDO has recommended appointing an SRO who would meet quarterly with ICAI. Care must be taken to ensure this does not risk compromising the independence of ICAI reviews.</p> <p>The FCDO has not yet been rated by the Aid Transparency Index, however we note that the FCDO has stopped DFID’s practice of uploading planned budgets to IATI alongside existing spend which is disappointing. Decisions regarding ODA cuts have been extremely opaque despite repeated requests for transparency around the decision-making process, and civil society has largely been shut out of conversations. Where decisions</p>	<p>FCDO need to work closely with the IDC to ensure that their aid spending is accountable and robustly scrutinised. The Foreign Secretary must not delay his appearance at the IDC as previously happened.</p> <p>FCDO needs to publicly communicate details of the 2020 cuts to ODA and clarify the process where cuts are still to be made and communicate this in advance to allow all development partners to adjust plans.</p>

<p><b>use of International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) open data with country government partners and civil society and continue to support partners and suppliers to match their own transparency by publishing open data using the IATI data standard.</b></p>		<p>have been taken, these have not always been communicated publicly. Bond’s recent FOI request was denied and the justification indicates a concerning absence of commitment to transparency and freedom of information related to the UK’s aid budget.</p> <p><b>Progress rating: Poor</b></p>	
<p><b>Aid: sufficient and focused on poverty</b></p> <p><b>The UK Government can be proud of its commitment to 0.7% of GNI and this must be upheld. With this comes substantial responsibility to ensure that the ODA budget is spent in line with its intended purpose in law, to promote poverty reduction and sustainable development. All UK ODA must have poverty reduction and sustainable development as its primary focus, adhering to the OECD Development Assistance Committee rules and complying with both the existing provisions under the International Development Acts and the Gender Equality Act.</b></p>	<p>The UK continues to provide at least 0.7% of GNI as Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) under the internationally-agreed definition and at least half of all ODA goes to Least Developed Countries.</p>	<p>The government has announced its intention to reduce UK ODA from 0.7% to 0.5% of GNI, stating it will return to 0.7% only “when the fiscal situation allows”. The reduction to 0.5% will be a significant blow for the world’s poorest. The speed of the cuts will make it difficult to ensure they are being taken in the most effective manner. The process also reduces cost effectiveness. Many development projects have developed over a number of years and an abrupt halt will undermine or reverse progress made.</p> <p>Poverty-reduction is not referenced as a primary objective of ODA in the new strategic framework, and the Foreign Secretary also stated that ODA will only be spent on countries where the UK’s development, security and economic interests align. This is incompatible with an approach that prioritises the poorest countries, and means it is unlikely half of ODA will go to LDCs. The</p>	<p>Urgently reverse the decision to reduce ODA from 0.7% to 0.5% of GNI.</p> <p>Whilst conversations and process around 0.7% are ongoing, the UK should continue to plan for a 0.7% spend in line with their legal requirement.</p> <p>Decisions around programming and prioritisation must be guided by the core principle of poverty-alleviation.</p>

		<p>absence of a strategic commitment to gender equality is cause for concern.</p> <p><b>Progress rating: Poor</b></p>	
<p><b>Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS)</b></p> <p><b>To meet the UK’s promise to Leave No One Behind will require programming in fragile and conflict affected states across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus. These countries must remain a priority for UK ODA with 50% of the budget committed to those countries. The UK should seek to improve conflict sensitivity of aid in these contexts and efforts to support conflict prevention and address the root causes of conflict.</b></p>	<p>At least half of all ODA is spent in fragile and conflict affected states with an increase in the level of funding targeted at interventions that break cycles of conflict and violence through prevention and addressing root causes.</p>	<p>The government has identified conflict as one of the priority themes for the FCDO, with work on conflict and peacebuilding to be driven by a new Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation Directorate, headed up by a Director. We are optimistic that a conflict prevention or resolution strategy may follow the Integrated Review. An indication that there will be a greater focus on mediation is also a positive development.</p> <p>On the other hand, there has been limited progress on conflict sensitivity. The pandemic provided a moment to build greater links within the triple nexus and improve conflict sensitivity. There is no evidence this was done, while there is evidence that some conflict sensitivity projects were paused due to aid cuts.</p> <p>As yet, there has been no public commitment to transfer DFID’s commitment to spend 50% of its budget in fragile or conflict affected states to the ODA or even FCDO ODA budget. The 2020 and 2021 ODA cuts included a £350million cut to the CSSF’s ODA budget versus its 2019 budget, undermining the UK’s commitment to support the important aid</p>	<p>Publicly commit to and commence a cross government conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategy.</p> <p>Re-commit and match DFID’s commitment to spend 50% of the department’s budget in FCAS and report against this target.</p> <p>Substantially improve how aid budget spend in fragile and conflict affected states contributes to conflict sensitivity, utilising the triple nexus.</p> <p>Increase real and proportional ODA spend on the OECD DAC marker ‘Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution’.</p>

		<p>strategy objectives on peace and security, resilience and crisis response, and extreme poverty.</p> <p><b>Progress rating: Some</b></p>	
<p><b>Climate and nature</b>  <b>Combining the diplomatic strengths of the FCO with DFID’s expertise in assisting those most vulnerable to its impacts, gives an opportunity to break the cycle of climate change and environmental degradation exacerbating poverty, and vice versa. This requires a re-prioritisation of sustainable development in UK ODA, placing social and environmental factors on a par with economic interests. No UK ODA should harm the environment or climate system as the lives and livelihoods, especially of the poorest and most vulnerable, depend upon them.</b></p>	<p>All UK ODA is aligned with the Paris Agreement and efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C, and assessed against a sustainable development framework, with environmental impact assessments conducted for all spending</p>	<p>Climate change is one of the government’s seven priorities for UK ODA, and it will also be a priority for the G7. There has been no communication yet of how increased requirements for climate finance under the UNFCCC will be fulfilled without compromising other non-climate ODA priorities.</p> <p>While we welcome the announcement in December that the UK will end all taxpayer support for fossil fuels overseas as soon as possible, this currently does not include CDC investments, and that must be changed. We are not aware of any other progress on framing UK ODA more fully around sustainable development objectives and ensuring that all UK ODA does no harm to the climate system or environment, such as through systemic use of environmental impact assessments.</p> <p>Multiple government statements on climate change and environment prioritisation are welcome, but a move towards systematic integration of these issues across all FCDO priorities rather than standalone projects and announcements is still a way off.</p>	<p>Extend commitment to stopping UK taxpayer funding of fossil fuels overseas to include CDC investments.</p> <p>Share information on how increasing climate finance commitments will be fulfilled without compromising other non-climate ODA priorities.</p> <p>Develop a process to ensure that all ODA spend at least does no harm to the environment and ideally contributes to the objectives of the Convention of Biological Diversity and the Paris Agreement.</p>



		<b>Progress rating: Some</b>	
<p><b>Support for civil society in the Global South</b>  <b>To get to long term sustainable outcomes and deliver value for money, the new department should further the process of shifting power and resources to civil society activists, organisations and movements in the global south who are rooted within local communities and networks. Ensuring that ODA-funded development programmes recognise, respect and build on local resources and assets, rather than overlooking, undermining or displacing them is essential and will build strong relationships for the UK, based on mutual respect.</b></p>	<p>At least 25% of humanitarian funding goes as directly as possible to local and national civil society organisations in line with our Grand Bargain Commitments and an increase in percentage of direct funding to civil society activists, organisations and movements in the Global South</p>	<p>Through conversations with officials, we understand FCDO are keen to make progress in this area.</p> <p>A letter to suppliers sent in January 2021, set out the intention to make bilateral programmes the default because of “their advantages of effectiveness, local ownership and strategic impact”.</p> <p>While we welcome this intention, there has been minimal movement on this principal because of the decision to reduce ODA to 0.5% of GNI, with business plans and country plans currently being updated to reflect this. There are also considerable hurdles within the department to achieving this, including issues with procurement, due diligence and risk. The commitment to increase direct humanitarian funding to local and national civil society actors in line with the Grand Bargain, also sits uneasily with existing multilateral commitments.</p> <p><b>Progress rating: Some</b></p>	<p>The FCDO should review their approach to funding civil society, and in doing so, design funding mechanisms, based on evidence, which favour long term flexible funding relationships with local civil society and social actors. This could involve funding through national level NGOs or funds which then sub-grant to local organisations and actors. Revise procurement policies and due diligence processes alongside this and increase staffing levels within the FCDO to help manage this change of approach.</p> <p>Produce a roadmap to achieving the 25% of humanitarian aid to local actors that includes a commitment to national civil society actors.</p>

<sup>i</sup> See Table 6 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-international-development-final-uk-aid-spend-2019>