

The Four Corners

The quarterly Alumni Association newsletter



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EDITORIAL

Message from the chairman



Welcome to the latest edition of the Alumni Association's newsletter. I am grateful to our contributors and to Marc for bringing it all together.

I am pleased to note that since the last newsletter, the membership has agreed a new constitution for the Association. This sets out our aims and the framework for how we will operate. Annual meetings will be important in reviewing the work of the committee and electing new committee members. When we send out the formal notice for the next AGM (scheduled for 11 June 2014) we will give details on the process for those wishing to be considered for election.

It is also very good to see the strong growth in membership and the interest in developing regional chapters, the Caribbean one being the latest. I am sure the plans by DFID India to review 50 years of development cooperation with India will interest many members.

Following a good turn-out for the Christmas party, we are now working on a programme of events which we hope will appeal to the different interests of members. You will find here details of the financial seminar and concert on 27 February. We are looking at a possible joint seminar with the World Bank 1818 Association at DFID on 24 March, a possible visit to the Royal Hospital Chelsea in the week of 28 April, the AGM and summer party on 11 June and a tour of historic London including some hostleries in July. More details will follow but to note for your diaries.

It has been a pleasure to see many of you over the last few months and I look forward to this continuing in 2014. We look forward to your feedback and ideas on how to ensure the Association serves your needs.

Simon Ray

NEWS IN BRIEF

Autumn Statement: Chancellor confirmed UK commitment to 0.7%

The Autumn Statement in December provided an update on the government's plans for the economy based on the latest forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility.

At the time of the Spending Review, budget allocations were put in place to ensure the UK spent 0.56% of gross national income (GNI) on international development in 2011 and 2012, and 0.7% from 2013 and thereafter. Richard Calvert said at an all staff meeting that DFID was in a good place to deliver 0.7% in 2013.

The Autumn Statement will not lead to any significant adjustment in DFID's spending plans, although there will be a small re-alignment of the ODA budget across different government departments. DFID and the Treasury will keep the impact of Gross National Income movements under review to ensure the ODA commitment is fully funded in 2014 and beyond.

UK/INDIA DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP AT 50: DFID ALUMNI PERSPECTIVES

DFID India is planning reviews and events in 2015 to mark over 50 years of development co-operation with India. One of these will be a 100-page account of the evolution, achievements and lessons of UK support. Emma Spicer will coordinate it.

DFID India is inviting contributions from DFID Alumni. Some will receive individual requests. Members can also share information and opinions by joining "History of DFID India" on dgroups.org.

Central African Republic: over 250,000 receiving UK support

A DFID team has returned from a monitoring and assessment mission to the Central African Republic (CAR) where they visited a number of UK funded projects helping hundreds of thousands of people.

The team visited a number of communities being supported by UK Aid across the country, including an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) clinic and hospital in Kaga Bandoro and a Solidarités food security project in Kabo.

Sustaining families through a challenging period

UK aid is supporting displaced people and overstretched host communities with cash grants, to enable them to buy food and other commodities as well as to support local markets. The conflict has meant that many people have lost access to their fields - and these cash grants enable families to buy food to sustain their families through a very challenging period.

CAR has hit the headlines as a result of widespread fighting throughout the country in recent weeks. It has been labelled a 'forgotten crisis'. It is one of the poorest countries in the world, with some of the worst health and development indicators. The UN estimates that two million people or 43% of the population are in need of assistance, and more support is needed to help vulnerable groups, especially women and children.

Support to the Central African Republic

Lynn Featherstone MP announced in July that the UK would provide £5 million to help hundreds of thousands of people suffering from the humanitarian crisis in the CAR. In response to a severe escalation in the crisis in November, the Secretary of State announced an additional £10 million support package.

The new support will give:

- £3 million for the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide health services and water distribution for hundreds of thousands of people as well as protection services for the vulnerable, particularly women and children
- Transport for aid workers and relief supplies to remote parts of the country through a £1

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM DFID IN OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2013

October

- Mark Bowman was appointed Director of International Finance at the Treasury
- Moazzam Malik became acting Director General Humanitarian, Security, Conflict and International Finance
- The Secretary of State launched the [Development Tracker](#)
- The Permanent Secretary visited Lebanon and Jordan to discuss the Syrian refugee crisis

November

- The Secretary of State led a business delegation to Tanzania (see her personal message to staff)
- New DFID policy on school access for disabled
- The Secretary of State gave evidence to the International Development Committee's inquiry into Scottish independence
- Humanitarian response to Typhoon Haiyan
- Nick Dyer was appointed Director General for Policy and Global Programmes
- DFID won the Public Accounts Committee Award for most improved public body
- DFID won the Dame Leslie Strathie Award for Operational Excellence

December

- The Autumn Statement confirmed the UK's commitment to 0.7%
- 9 December was International Anti-corruption Day
- Lynne Featherstone launched a campaign to help girls and women access clean energy
- Minister of State Alan Duncan visited Yemen
- Triennial Review by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact published
- OECD development cooperation report published
- New Year's Honours recognised contributions to international development

million contribution to the UN Humanitarian Air Service

- £1 million for the UN's Common Humanitarian Fund to enable a wide range of aid agencies and charities already working on the ground to step up their work
- A new £5 million emergency response fund to provide immediate funding to international aid agencies as required. The funding will be allocated through a competitive bidding process early next year as and when agencies launch appeals. This will ensure agencies can scale up their work as quickly as possible and respond to the most critical needs.

The Secretary of State said:

"It is clear the situation in the Central African Republic is deteriorating rapidly with reports of violence and tension between communities. Hundreds of thousands of people have already fled their homes and are entirely dependent on outside relief."

"This investment will help make sure that we get urgent relief supplies to those in need and to protect vulnerable groups like girls and women."

Economic development

In November, DFID inSight published this message from the Secretary of State to DFID staff

I wanted to write to you about some important recent developments on DFID's economic development agenda.

As all of you know since joining this Department, I have ramped up the focus on driving economic development, as the best way to reduce poverty and bring prosperity, alongside our core work on basic services. I've also been really clear that we need to work hand-in-hand with businesses to do this.

In the past the development industry has tended to see the skills and potential of the private sector as something quite separate to its own efforts, and this was a mistake. We know it is businesses that bring much needed investment, taxes and innovation to a country, as well as jobs and economic opportunities for the communities where they operate.

That is why I want DFID to be open for business and working with companies on the ground to get the right long-term development outcomes for countries. I'm particularly keen to reach out to UK companies to join the development push. This is not about bringing back tied aid, but about British companies having the right corporate standards and the right track record on responsible investment so they can play a role – alongside our ODA spend – in development.

We are now making good progress

Many of you will be aware that I recently made an economic development-focused visit to Tanzania. This trip was ground-breaking for two reasons.

Firstly, in a first but not a last, for a DFID minister, I took with me a high-level business delegation comprised of senior representatives from 18 British and international businesses who were already investing or keen to explore investment opportunities in Tanzania. This is a sign of things to come for DFID's relationship with the private sector. We had great feedback both from the Tanzanian Government and the businesses on the trip.

Secondly, I announced on this visit that DFID will co invest with commercial and not-for-profit partners in four business projects with clear development outcomes for poor Tanzanians. This is a new way of using our development budget because we're using returnable loans and equity, rather than traditional aid grants.

I hope this innovative, self-sustaining, job-creating investment, which generates a return that can itself be reinvested could be a major part of how DFID works in the future. We will be closely monitoring the progress of these projects and measuring their success.

We are in the process of reshaping the British development effort

As our offer to developing countries changes, this Department's focus, skills and the way we work also needs to change. That is why I want DFID to restructure, to bring a more powerful and

coherent focus on economic development, and recruitment is underway for a new DG.

As you'll see in the resource allocation round commissioning note, this is not about dropping other parts of what we do. DFID has done an incredible job over the years, saving millions of lives through our health, education and sanitation programmes. Girls and women are still disproportionately missing out on jobs and economic opportunities.

It's clear that aid cannot eliminate poverty by itself

The lesson of the last thirty years is that economic growth defeats poverty. We are already doing some impressive work here at DFID to drive growth and jobs, the challenge is to take it even further so we can lift the poorest out of poverty and ultimately end aid dependency for good.

Justine Greening MP
Secretary of State

Building on the UK-China international development partnership

unlocking access to some of the most influential thinkers in the Chinese system

DFID's inSight reported that Chris Whitty and Stefan Dercon were joined by UK academics Paul Collier, Sir Gordon Conway and Anne Mills in China in November.

The visit demonstrated the UK's intellectual strength on international development – and unlocked access to some of the most influential thinkers in the Chinese system.

The UK delegation's programme included a visit to China's rural Gansu Province, as well as lectures and seminars at some of China's most prestigious academic institutions.

The visit also included official meetings and opened the door to increased cooperation with key Chinese institutions:

- The Development Research Centre of China's State Council, which designs China's programme of domestic reform
- The Ministry of Commerce, which delivers China's growing aid programme
- China Development Bank, the source of much of China's developing country investment.

Two research programmes into China and the developing world were also launched

The first, a \$4.5 million partnership between DFID and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), will investigate China's impact in sub-Saharan Africa, and how lessons from China's own successful economic transformation could generate new solutions for low-income Africa.

The second, a \$500,000 joint programme between DFID, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce and the China International Development Research Network, will stimulate collaborative international research into how China can improve the impact of its aid programme and participation in global international development processes.

To find out more about these two research initiatives contact the ESRC or China Agricultural University respectively.

The UK closed its aid programme to China in 2011. DFID now works in partnership with China, where we share objectives, to reduce poverty and promote development in low-income countries around the world.

Development Tracker

Helping the public follow how the UK invests in developing countries

As part of Transparency Week in October, the Secretary of State launched the [Development Tracker](#) during the Open Government Partnership Summit in London, where representatives from around 60 countries gathered to show their commitment to radically greater transparency.

The Development Tracker replaces the Projects Database and has been designed to allow the public to follow how the UK invests in developing countries in a simple yet effective way. The data used to is open data published to IATI standards, meaning DFID can incorporate data from DECC, the Home Office, FCO, DWP, civil society and private sector partners - and any of the other 200 plus organisations that also publish to IATI. Ultimately this will enable funds to be traced along the aid delivery chain.

It is fundamental to the delivery of the UK Aid Transparency Challenge which encouraged DFID and its partners to make all aid flows completely traceable, from source to destination. Increasing the traceability helps beneficiaries' feedback on its impact, increases the transparency of governments and reduces waste, fraud and corruption.

The Tracker also includes information on the sub-national location of projects, with Bangladesh and Nepal being the first to publish this information, and a subscription service which allows users to receive an email when a particular country information page is updated.

The information which DFID staff put into Projects on ARIES is visible to the public. They now need to look at the Tracker to see how programmes are presented, and how what they enter into ARIES and Quest is used to tell the public about DFID's work.

The information displayed on the tracker is lifted directly from data input on ARIES, including business cases and other relevant project documents.

As well as members of the public, journalists will be viewing the information and using it to inform stories about how development money is spent, so it is essential that the information on ARIES is accurate and of high quality. DFID staff have to follow the Transparency guidelines and ensure data is meaningful to people outside DFID.

DFID invites feedback on the Tracker

The current version has been built on feedback from the previous alpha and beta versions and DFID is keen to gather feedback from people inside and outside DFID.

To offer feedback, use one of the options at <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/feedback/>

OECD development co-operation report

2013 report on 'ending poverty'

DFID InSight reported that DFID staff were joined by Erik Solheim (the Chair of the DAC), Lucy Scott (from the Chronic Poverty Network), Claire Melamed from ODI and Duncan Green at a seminar to discuss the OECD Development Co-operation Report which was published in December.

The report pulled together a range of authors and topics around how we 'get to zero' on absolute poverty, which requires reaching those in persistent poverty and leaving no one behind.

The report covered poverty measures, the importance of poverty dynamics – enabling people to both get and stay out of poverty – and the policy packages that will get us there, including social protection, economic transformation in sectors that really reach significant numbers of people through jobs and better incomes, and the politics of power and poverty.

Key points from the seminar

- Erik Solheim, presenting the report, stressed the need to bring those working on development and on the environment together under a shared agenda. All policies should seek to achieve more than one aim, he said, citing cash disbursement programmes to mothers of children attending school, which can fight poverty while also empowering women.
- Lucy Scott used figures to illustrate the dynamics of poverty, arguing that it is not enough to look at net reductions in poverty, as families can easily slip back into destitution. Much more attention needs to be paid to factors – such as education or access to land – that can help people keep incomes stable or rising once they escape poverty.

- Duncan Green noted the importance of clear messages in maintaining traction on national politics and whether at some point the new emerging problems of the developing world such as obesity, alcohol, tobacco and road accidents should become part of the debate.
- Andrew Shepherd from the Chronic Poverty Network suggested that framing the discussion in terms of poverty dynamics could achieve the same policy responses as focusing on inequality per se.
- Claire Melamed shared some highlights from the recent ODI publication *Rough Guide to emerging consensus and divergence in post 2015 goals areas*. She noted the strong consensus on the importance of some of the existing goals such as education, health, gender and poverty and a lot of interest, but less consensus on some of the suggestions for new goals around governance and security. Several goals areas such as urbanisation or social inclusion still lack traction at the level of specifics, though some prominent actors frame them as central.

The challenge now: to maintain political momentum to reduce poverty as poverty levels decline in many developing countries and the bottom billion becomes scattered through MICs. Eric urged policy makers to adopt the Nike slogan and “Just do it!”

More information

The report has chapters on China and agriculture, on Brazil and the politics of poverty, on making development cooperation ‘smart’, and the latest DAC development co-operation data (UK on p228 and p229). The report is available to download from the OECD at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/dcr2013.htm>.

Exploring development opportunities with mobile phones

Highlights from summit

While mobile phones are increasing in popularity across the developing world, many still do not have access to energy to keep one charged, demonstrated by the Global Mobile Association’s (GSMA) latest report ‘Sizing the Opportunity of Mobile for Energy and Water Access’.

GSMA's first M4D summit

To further explore these opportunities, the GSMA, which represents the interests of mobile network operators across the globe, held their first Mobile 4 Development (M4D) Summit in Cape Town in November.

The M4D Summit brought together 150 stakeholders over two days to discuss opportunities, and threats, of the acceleration in mobile-related solutions and their application to development challenges.

Sessions covered topics like:

- Data
- Design and Innovation
- Creative Financing
- Internet Players – Disruptors or Enablers?

Smaller breakout groups discussed thematic issues with sessions on the use of mobiles in humanitarian responses, and for education and training. As well as focused sessions on the DFID funded mNutrition, our funded research into mobile entrepreneurship in Kenya, and the Mobile-Enabled Community Services (MECS) programme.

How mobile phones can benefit other projects

In Kigali, Living Water International and Portland State University’s Sustainable Water Energy and Environment Technology Labs (SWEETLabs) are starting their MECS-supported CellPump project.

Living Water International explained how mobile-enabled sensors are informing the maintenance of their water points. The SWEETlabs team will equip 200 of Living Water’s handpumps across the country with sensors that can tell them if the pump is functional and how much water is pumped out. The instant alert will allow Living Water to develop a more targeted and immediate maintenance programme, replacing expensive road trips searching the country for broken water pumps. A training facility will train handpump mechanics stationed around the country, and demonstrate the use of mobile technology in sensors and for field reporting, sharing these approaches and lessons with other water organisations around the continent.

Following the success of this first M4D gathering, the GSMA will be making this an annual event, DFID InSight reports.

BOOK LAUNCH ON 28 NOVEMBER

Britain's International Development Policies

At a successful event at DFID on 28 November, Barrie Ireton launched his history of the DFID since it was first set up by Harold Wilson in 1964, including the colonial period and the post-war transition in international relationships and machinery of government changes that led up to the creation of the Department.

The launch attracted a lot of interest. Members and guests filled the room provided by DFID. Our chairman Simon Ray and DFID's Permanent Secretary Mark Lowcock introduced the session. Barrie signed copies of his book for former colleagues afterwards.



SPOTLIGHT

Negotiating results: PhD research into DFID's project cycle management

Summary:

I am looking to interview former DFID staff who might be interested in providing their insight to a PhD looking at processes of institutional reform within DFID.

I'm hoping to discuss their recollections of DFID's programming and project processes in the 1980s and 1990s, and in particular the development of the logframe. This would contribute to a historically rooted account of recent reforms to DFID's project cycle management.

About me:

I am a PhD candidate at the University of East Anglia, now in the data-collection phase of my research. I have ten years' experience in the development sector.

About my research:

In 2011, DFID launched a series of reforms to its project cycle management processes. I am researching, through interviews and participant observations, how these reforms emerged and how they shape the way that DFID deploys evidence, communicates, shares knowledge, evaluates and learns.

A key premise of the research is the importance of history in the development and functioning of institutions. The 2011 reforms are only the latest interpretation of a long-running focus by DFID on impact and results.

My research will seek to explore how DFID (and ODA before DFID) has refined and adapted its processes over time, and how lessons can be learned from the strengths and weaknesses of past reforms. This will, I hope, contribute to DFID's efforts to build processes which add value to its operations.

Brendan Whitty would like your help with his research on DFID's way of managing the project cycle. Please contact him if you are willing to be interviewed.

Why I think it's important:

DFID's development programming has always involved working with stakeholders within widely divergent organisational, political and cultural realities. Even in DFID itself, perspectives and realities differ and contribute to a rich body of expertise.

Processes of communication and knowledge sharing are vital to bridge these realities. If healthy, they will lead to a complementary synthesis of expertise, to nimble management and to strong learning processes; conversely, diverging interpretations of programme documents result in conflicting aims, breakdowns in management control and risk poor project implementation.

I propose to study in detail these processes of communication and knowledge. The research will provide an external perspective of how the reformed programming processes are interpreted and engaged with by both internal and external stakeholders.

It will draw on the lessons of past reforms to develop a historical analysis of the development of past reforms, their strengths, rationales and weaknesses. These will be used to understand more recent reforms, from the adaptation of key tools like the logframe to the business case.

It will support DFID to respond better to the challenges of communication and learning in complex development environments.

My request:

I am looking for DFID alumni to talk about their experiences of previous reforms, either working with them practically or developing the processes and policies. I'm particularly interested in the logframe. The interview might take about an hour. Please contact me if you are interested, or if you have any questions or comments.

Contact: Brendan Whitty, PhD Candidate,
University of East Anglia, DEV,

Email: b.whitty@uea.ac.uk

Later Life Planning Symposium

St. James's Place in conjunction with the DFID Alumni Association would like to invite you to 'The Later Life Planning Symposium' a highly topical financial presentation. Exclusive to DFID members and their guests, the event will be at the Royal Albert Hall on Thursday 27th February 2014 at 4.30pm.

After the presentation, we would like you to join us in especially reserved seats for a captivating performance of Puccini's La Bohème. With its real characters and powerful emotion, this story of doomed love gave Puccini full rein to unleash his most glorious music.

From the rapturous grand-scale celebrations of café Momus to the tender intimacy of the artists' garret, you will be drawn into the unfolding action where passion and spectacle mix with despair and ultimate tragedy.



After extensive feedback, we have tailored the financial presentation into a thought-provoking talk, exploring various key areas that affect retired people or those considering retirement, in the difficult financial times we find ourselves in today.

These are not run as big corporate events, but rather our informal way of meeting a select group of new people in a relaxed environment, where they can feel at home to listen to the presentation and have answered any queries they may have. Even if you already have an existing financial adviser, you will still find the session enlightening as many areas covered are highly specialised.

This is always a popular event and as the private room can only seat a limited number, we will need to allocate all acceptances on a first come first serve basis. Please register your places, by Emailing DFID Alumni Treasurer John Burton with your details promptly, to avoid any disappointment.

Please reply to johncburton@tiscali.co.uk

Later Life Planning Symposium On Thursday 27th February 2014 at the Royal Albert Hall

The talk will concentrate on:

How to survive low interest rates

We will be taking an in depth look at the problems that we face in the low interest environment and what options investors can take to get better income returns without significantly increasing risk. This will be of particular interest to those people who have money on deposit where the rate of return is below inflation.

Long Term Care

With recent Government announcements on the future of who pays for their care, this is an excellent and timely opportunity to listen to an explanation on Paying for Care, from which allowances you can claim for, to how to potentially avoid paying at all.

Trust and Estate Preservation Planning

Inheritance Tax is now considered a tax that affects most people of even moderate means, and is no longer exclusively for the very wealthy. Our talk will explore tried and tested, yet simple, ways in which IHT can be mitigated. We will also cover Will arrangements in detail and how to implement simple trusts to achieve effective planning, e.g. Grandchildren's education.

Inheritance Tax Service

This will be a detailed look at an innovative scheme that has been especially developed by Octopus in conjunction with St. James's Place which allows clients to remove a lump sum from their estate for Inheritance Tax in only 2 years and without the need for Trusts or loss of access to your capital. It also doesn't involve any stock market investments so is low risk and approved by HMRC.

PEOPLE

In Memory of John Cashin

A good man in Africa..... (and Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific)

Memories of John Cashin, who died on 28 October, collated by Geoff Williams

John worked for ODA/DfID for some 35 years. Born in Dorchester, he went as a 2-year-old to Tanganyika where his father was an engineer in the Public Works Department. He attended primary school in Arusha, then returned to England to attend Prep school in the New Forest and went on to Bryanston.

The Wessex strain in his basso profundo voice never faded, nor did a broad smile if ever there were a reference to Basset-shire. Such was the physical stature and personality of the man it might not be an exaggeration to suggest that if it had been possible for Thomas Hardy to have encountered him, John might well have featured in a Basset-shire novel, perhaps as a blacksmith-opening bowler of fearsome pace.

Having chosen to specialise in development economics at University, and having excelled at the subject, John joined the Manpower Planning Unit (MPU) and much enjoyed informing people that there was 19 feet 5-and-a-half inches of economist talent in MPU, provided by just three people of whom he was the tallest at 6 feet 8.5 inches. As an adult he never weighed less than 18 stone and had strength commensurate with those statistics, whether casually picking up a couple of car wheels or lifting a couple of crates of beer unaided.



An early colleague, Jim Winpenny, recalls John's mother telling him that when John was at school they had great difficulty finding size 16 cricket boots, so she would change the studs on his rugby boots and paint them white for the summer season. Friends would urge him to hang his shoes outside his door at night to deter burglars. Sharing a house with John for a year, Jim learned that this was a man who loved good humour, good books and good company, but that behind the extrovert façade there was an intellectually acute person fully equipped to deal with serious issues.

When his knee went badly for the first time he came to live with us for several weeks. My Mum remembers him very clearly as having the nicest manners of all [your] friends and my own family absolutely loved him, especially the way he treated women" – Dave Fish

John at work

After the MPU John went to East Africa Development Division, Nairobi, followed by secondments to Turks and Caicos Islands and then to Montserrat as a development planner. His next assignment, this time as a Technical Cooperation Officer (tco) was to Lesotho where inter alia he played cricket for the national team, had the necktie to prove it, and wore it for years afterwards. From 1994 until 2006 he was

regularly employed by both Headquarter Departments and DfID overseas offices.

One such assignment was in Bangladesh. Peter Grant writes: "I worked with John during the 1990s in the context of the DFID programme in Bangladesh. He was a very good technical economist, especially when it came to project appraisal and other micro-economic analysis. He was able to see the weaknesses in an argument and approached problems in a very rigorous way. I very much enjoyed working with him and appreciated his generosity of spirit. He was also a vivid raconteur with an eye for detail. His descriptions of how Bangladeshi police use unorthodox techniques to resolve traffic chaos will live with me always."

John much preferred micro-economic work but his talent was not limited to that. He was a member of the macro-planning office in Tonga, and he did short-term jobs in HQ of a quite different nature, for example, devising and negotiating a method to assess the economic/sustainable development impact of controlled exports from the UK to developing countries. This required not just an understanding of the economic issues, but an ability to engage in the Whitehall gavotte with FCO, MOD, DTI, the Cabinet Office, Parliamentary Counsel et al, and finish up still smiling and further along the dance floor than when the DfID delegation entered the room.

"He was a generous and helpful colleague with a fearsome intellect", recalls Mike Green from their brief time together in International Economics Department. Then a very inexperienced assistant economist, Mike had wrestled for days with draft terms of reference for a high-profile and complex piece of work. It wasn't anything to do with John's schedule, but hearing of the problem he volunteered to take a look, and within a couple of hours returned a draft crystal clear in its logic and lucid in its prose.

John White, who was John Cashin's senior in Nairobi remembers a person whose "Well, Squire, it's like this" style could have put off

Presidents, High Commissioners and Heads of DevDiv alike; it didn't, as what followed was usually wise analysis of often difficult issues. Unconventional as he was, John Cashin was also most effective. Long before social development issues were formally part of the accepted mantra, his empathy with people and their problems enabled him to get behind economic issues to see how behaviour patterns were influencing the outcomes. A real bwana mkubwa, his fluent Swahili enable him to engage with a wide circle of people in E Africa.

"He treated everyone from whatever background with interest and respect, passed the Head of Office's spouse test with flying colours and, with Vicky, settled very quickly into the local community" – Jim Drummond, former Head of BDDCA.



John at large

Once posted overseas and required to travel regularly, often in small planes, John found himself subject to special measures, such as mandatory weighing at check-in, with notations such as "this passenger needs two seats".

Needing to fly in and out of Harare he begged Business Class status because, "The rest of the plane just isn't big enough, boss". In an era of greater financial flexibility than now exists, Jim Drummond was able to agree. Another aeroplane anecdote has nothing to do with John's size, but with his mental acuity.

He was on a trip with two or three others to an outlying cay in Turks and Caicos with a view to assessing its potential for tourism development. The pilot found the landing somewhat simpler than anticipated because there was already a flattened strip complete with landing lights for night-time operations. While the others were still debating how this could have happened without official knowledge, John was helping the pilot to turn round for immediate take-off, as he did not wish any of the party to appear on the hit list of whichever cartel was trans-shipping its "confectionery" via the cay.

In his early years John was not the most disciplined of civil servants, but wise enough to take advice from more experienced friends in the office. After a problem with a car in the wee small hours of a Nairobi morning he was forced to abandon the vehicle. Nairobi police spotted the Diplomatic number plates and rang the High Commissioner to ask who might have parked a vehicle deep down a storm drain.

What followed, in John's description, was "a rather nice minute from the HC enquiring after my well-being". He then asked a willing friend if he would cast his eye over John's intended reply before it was sent. David Lawless suggested that it might be better to try something different than, "Sir, you asked about the state of my car. It was smashed and so was I", and in so doing helped prevent John's tour in Kenya coming to an abrupt halt.

But he could also surprise the boss with his foresight, as in a formal minute to John White during his first spell in Nairobi, headed, "Application for Provisional Sick Leave". He explained that he would be participating in a rugby tournament the following weekend in Mombasa and might well not make it back into the office in time on Monday morning. John thanked him for his prudent notice and courtesy, and replied, "Approved provisionally." This may well have been the trip of which Jill Hanna heard. By the time the night train from Nairobi to Mombasa had reached its first stop, deep inroads had been made into the supply of "Tusker" taken

aboard. Remedial action was required and it was a Swahili-speaking second-rower of some physical prominence who leapt off at the first stop to address the situation. At the very next stop supplementary supplies were stacked on the platform.

John was an extremely popular member of staff and of the wider community wherever he went, and if it needs to be said, rather easily identifiable. However, at one gathering in Nairobi several people present became concerned that John was gradually becoming shorter and shorter. Was it the strength of the drinks, or was something wrong with John? It turned out that he had had the misfortune to stand on the floor board on which white ants, a plague in tropical locations, had done their hardest work, and he was slowly sinking into the house's foundations, remaining upright by virtue of the elbow resting on the mantelpiece.

John and Vicky

Something of a legend for rumbustious behaviour in his younger days, John never lost the love of good company et al of which Jim Winpenny has written at the top of this piece. However, all his friends agreed that meeting Vicky in Montserrat in the early 80s was the best possible thing to happen to him. She travelled with him on all his overseas tours, long-term or shorter, giving a grounding and a stability to this immense talent, which might well have been lost to us even earlier.

There is an overused cliché about the "rock" in a character's life, but in this case it can be used without exaggeration. Vicky has a rare talent for composing Christmas circulars that are actually readable and interesting. On their first assignment to Bangladesh their Christmas diversion was elephant-trekking in Nepal, and I still recall her description of the descent of a vertiginous river bank which left the animals and their passengers screaming in competition for the greatest number of decibels. But the most vivid of her recollections has been (wisely) retained by

Matt Maguire. It concerns a gorilla-watching visit to Rwanda while they were on assignment in Nairobi:

“ The guide was very confident in saying we would see the gorillas within 45 minutes of the Ranger’s lodge, but after some 4.5 hrs of trekking up the heavily forested side of a dead volcano with the sun gaining in intensity there was still no sign of the animals. The forest paths of the Virunga mountains can be tight and tricky to negotiate, on too many occasions necessitating crawling through dense bamboo. Paths of this sort were not designed with John in mind.

There were noises aplenty. Were these the gorillas or the groaning of the human group? It was difficult to decide. The group was getting weary and began to debate whether or not to continue. In the midst of the debate, the largest silver back gorilla “on God’s earth” broke through the bamboo, splitting the human group in two, and coming to a halt face-to-face with John.

A special, if terrifying, split second moment ensued: a titan silverback gorilla sized up a towering, silver-haired economist. John obeyed the guide’s instruction to “become small”, crouching with his back in the bamboo, thus returning to the silverback his required sense of being in charge. The gorilla brushed gently past, continuing imperiously past the stunned humans,

perhaps still wondering about the genus of the big one with which he had come face-to-face.”

And well he might! If communication were possible between the species we could tell Mr Mighty Silverback that his encounter was with a rare human being who was all the things that the friends quoted here have said of him. There have been many expressions of shock and disbelief from those who worked and laughed with him.

John and Vicky had settled very happily in Ladybrand, their shared interest in birds, other wildlife, and, in Vicky’s case, horses, well fulfilled. That was where he wanted his ashes to be scattered, close to the fish pond in the garden. At 65 – a “mere 65” in these modern days – we might all have anticipated many more years of happy communication with John. Sadly for all of us, and most of all for Vicky, it was not to be. She has our heartfelt condolences.

There may be a celebration of John in the UK at a later date, but in the meantime we can simply say, “Lala salama, rafiki mkubwa sana” (Sleep peacefully, my very big friend.)

“One expects these elemental characters to go on for ever” – Eamonn Taylor

35 new members joined the DFID Alumni Association in 2013

Jenny Amery, Michael Anderson, Jane Armstrong, P F Berry, Geoff Birch, Simon Bland, Lindsey Block, Martin Bowden, Adam Burke, Jeremy Clarke, Fiona Docherty, Dominic Farrell, Andrew Felton, Ron Fosker, Karen Green, Sarah Hearn, Kathy Higgins, Daniel Jarman, Ann Keeling, Brenda Killen, Catriona Laing, Marcus Manuel, Gavin Macgregor-Skinner, Kate Maguire, Ernestine Meheux, Lyndsay Mountford, Jim O’Donnell, Fred Robarts, Pat Scutt, Juliette Seibold, Rick Taylor, Pietro Toigo, Srimeena Upatikul, John White, and Sushila Zeitlyn

Applications are under way from 20 new members

Helen Appleton, Jim Butler, Larry Cain, Robin Cain, Edward Cundall, David Daniels, John Elliott, Nasir Ghalib, Emily Gray, Jasmine Jahromi, Daniel Kelvin Mensah, Chetan Kumar, Harri Lee, Jonathan Lingham, Jennie Richmond, Stephanie Russin, Edward South, Sunil Suri, Katharine Thoday, and Alan Winters

DFID South East Asia reunion

Ex-DFIDSEA staff got together at Khun Atiporn's country house in Amphawa District, Samut Songkram Province on Sun 5 January 2014.

Our activities in Amphawa



In the photo above, standing left to right: Fai (Wilawan's daughter), Suchitra (Tuk), Srimeena (Nana), Bob Leverington, Khun Atiporn, Anothai (Songsang's sister), Retired Police Lieutenant General Santi Senavong (Khun Atiporn's husband), Wilawan, Monrudee (Mon), Songsang, Pusadee (Lek), Marisa.



Julie Mclvor

Julie Mclvor has been the DFID contact for the DFID Alumni Association since mid 2013.

Sadly for us, she has just moved to the HMRC on promotion. We thank her for all her efforts during the last year, and wish her every success in her new career.

The name of our new DFID contact will be announced on dgroups.org as soon as we know it.

YOUR COMMITTEE

New Treasurer

We welcome John Burton, who has replaced Andrew Ockenden as Treasurer.

New Committee Members

We welcome Janet Grimshaw and Amisha Patel, who joined the Committee in December.

Resignation

We thank Girish Menon, who stepped down from the Committee in December.

Continuing members of the Committee

The continuing members of the Committee are:

Simon Ray (chairman)

Jackie Creighton

Jim Drummond

Kathy Marshall

Marc Taylor (Secretary)

Meetings

The Committee met on 2 October and 17 December.

A well-attended Extraordinary General Meeting on 17 December considered the Association's Constitution.

The draft Constitution recommended by the Committee was adopted following a full discussion.

Some detailed points of interpretation are recorded in the minutes, which will be available in the DFID Alumni library on dgroups.org.

The Committee will next meet in early April. Among other things it will confirm the arrangements for the Annual General Meeting in June, when elections will be held.

Activities in 2014

The Committee has discussed how to arrange for a variety of activities in the coming year, including

- The next financial seminar, with free tickets to La Boheme, on 27 February
- A joint seminar with the 1818 (World Bank) Association on 24 March (to be confirmed)
- A visit to the Chelsea Royal Hospital in the week of 28 April (to be confirmed)
- The annual general meeting on 11 June
- Summer party on the evening of 11 June
- A guided tour of historic London including some old hostelries, in July

We invite you to suggest future activities

The Committee invites members to propose activities that would attract a good attendance. We are particularly keen to hear from members who are willing to take the initiative in organising social events and reunions outside London, with support from the Secretary and Committee members. The Secretary has a long list of suggestions that people have made in the past.

Generally, we expect members to cover the cost of our social events. We rely on knowing that there will be sufficient interest to justify the work that goes into making the arrangements.

A third of our membership is outside the UK, spread across 50 countries. We welcome ideas for support that the Association can give to help members meet up, keep in touch, and organise activities that make sense for them wherever they live and work.

The Committee very much welcomes feedback.



CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN

Celebration of British development cooperation with India

DFID India are asking for help from Alumni who served in India or helped to deliver British development cooperation with India. They are getting ready to celebrate in 2015 the long involvement of the UK in India's development. Sam Sharpe and Emma Spicer of DFID-India have written a letter inviting material for a 100 page book.

The Association will send the letter to a long list of "key contributors" via a new sub-community on dgroups.org. If you would like to be involved in preparing these contributions or in other activities in 2015, please join the sub-community "History of DFID India" on dgroups.org.

We shall look into the possibility of an event in the UK, linked to this anniversary.

CONTACT

This newsletter is produced by DFID's Alumni Secretariat. For any queries, please contact:
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Email: marc-taylor@dfid.gov.uk or alumni@dfid.gov.uk

DFID Rep: to be announced. Julie Mcivor has left DFID

DIARY



- 27 February: Financial Seminar & Opera**
- 24 March: joint seminar with 1818 Association (to be confirmed)**
- 8 April: Committee Meeting**
- Week of 28 April: visit to Royal Hospital, Chelsea**
- 11 June: Annual General Meeting**
- 11 June: London Summer Party**

Please remember to inform the association when your address, e-mail or phone number changes. The best way to do this is to e-mail alumni@dfid.gov.uk.

Follow the association, and share information about international development news and event, on Twitter: [@DFIDAlumni](https://twitter.com/DFIDAlumni)

You can keep in touch with DFID by reading the staff blog at <http://blogs.dfid.gov.uk>



The Four Corners is YOUR newsletter. Please send articles for the next edition to alumni@dfid.gov.uk by Friday 28 March 2014.