

The Four Corners

The DFID Alumni Association newsletter

Issue 55:

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Pauline Hayes



Greetings again and I hope that wherever you are life is getting easier despite the continuing Covid restrictions.

It was great to see so many members at the AGM last month, including quite a few from overseas, plus a really good spread of people across the UK. Virtual meetings definitely have some advantages. Thanks to the leaps in technology, facilities and usage over the last year, whilst we will revert to a physical meeting for future AGMs we will also continue with a video link up to help maximise participation. We'll also try to make the time of the meeting more civilised for some parts of the world, although I fear it will never be possible to please everyone.

Pam has already sent out the AGM record to members, plus the minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting where members agreed the MoU with our counterpart FCDO Association, as well as some minor edits to our constitution. We were delighted that Scott Gemmell, HR Deputy Director and our first point of contact on Alumni matters, was able to join for a while. He provided some fascinating insights on merger practicalities. The first meeting of the new Joint Committee will take place in September and my counterpart, Edward Glover and I hope to secure a meeting with Philip Barton, FCDO's Permanent Under Secretary, around the same time.

In this edition of The Four Corners a few familiar names and faces are back with their reflections and we are grateful for their contributions. Suma Chakrabarti, now Chair of the Overseas Development Institute Board of Trustees, has provided a summary of the organisation's new strategy, while Baroness Valerie Amos highlights vaccination challenges in Africa, and Marcus Manuel provides some thoughts on Sierra Leone's progress over the last 16 years.

Meanwhile, Jim Drummond has produced another FCDO update, this time focusing on the implications of the UK aid cuts, including transparency and scrutiny issues. This agenda has been hotting up politically lately but there are still many known unknowns.

Last but not least, John Stuppel looks back on his six years as Alumni Secretary and committee member. Like John, I shall not miss the discussions about the Association's old IT system!

Best wishes,

Pauline

NEWS IN BRIEF

The future of UK aid

On 1 July, MPs on the House of Commons International Development Committee (chair, Sarah Champion MP), published a short report *The future of UK aid— What we've heard so far during our inquiry into changes to the UK aid budget*.

The report is available [here](#).



The challenges of vaccinating the African continent

Baroness Valerie Amos

As coronavirus infection spread rapidly across Europe and parts of Asia last year, many thought, given the low infection rates on the African continent, that countries would be spared the worst impact. The climate and young population were just two of the reasons cited for the difference.

Others thought it was just a matter of time and worried about the fragile health systems on the continent, limited testing capacity, the high levels of poverty and poor living conditions as well as the overall lack of resources available to governments.

Today there are five and a half million cases in a third wave of rapidly rising infection which has been described as 'potentially the worst wave', with others talking about an even more dangerous fourth wave in South Africa. Africa is now in the grip of the pandemic.

As the virus took hold the African Union (AU), the Africa CDC and governments acted. But they felt as if they were acting without the support of the richest countries. Strive Masiyiwa, the AU's Covid 19 envoy, has been extremely critical of the support promised to African nations but not forthcoming. 'It's not a question of if this was a moral failure, it was deliberate' he said, referencing the fact that the COVAX scheme had failed to keep its promise to secure production of 700 million doses of vaccines in time for delivery to African countries by December 2021.

I am a great believer in the multilateral system, despite its myriad faults and the criticisms we can all make of it. A pandemic of the scale and impact we are facing needs strong leadership and coordinated sustained global action to be managed successfully. And that has become clearer and clearer the longer the pandemic has gone on.

In his opening remarks to the WHO Executive Board in January the Director General, Tedros Ghebreyesus, said 'We now face the real danger that even as vaccines bring hope to some, they become another

brick in the wall of inequality between the world's haves and have notsright now we must work together as one global family to prioritise those most at risk of severe diseases and death, in all countries'.

The vaccine nationalism we have seen has been painful to watch. Of course countries want to put the security and health of their own citizens first - but that cannot excuse 16% of the world's population having 60% of the global supply of vaccines. It is indefensible that governments are hanging on to more supply than they need. Where is the equity in that?

The economic consequences for the continent are dire with the African Development Bank referring to a \$190bn hit to African economies. As new variants spread, the roll out of a global vaccination programme becomes more urgent as does the building of manufacturing and other capacity on the continent.

The World Bank Group has stepped up its support, the G7 recently promised 870m vaccine doses over the next two years, and as a Board member of the Mastercard Foundation I am particularly proud of the \$1.3 bn three year partnership with the Africa CDC to acquire and deliver vaccines, as well as build capacity across the continent.

But a lot more is needed to deliver the equity needed to facilitate Africa's long term development. We need strong, concerted global leadership, we need strengthened multilateral institutions, and we need decisive action aimed at narrowing the gap between the developed and developing world. The people on the African continent deserve it. Our task is to keep pressing to deliver it.

Valerie Amos

Baroness Amos is Master of University College, Oxford

Parliamentary debates on ODA continue

For five hours on 30 June the House of Commons debated 'Official Development Assistance and the British Council'. Sarah Champion MP, chair of the International Development Committee, introduced this debate on the FCDO estimates: [here](#) on theyworkforyou.com.

According to [The Sunday Times](#), the Government is considering a Parliamentary vote in July on the aid cuts.



FCDO: A Year On

Jim Drummond

It is a year since the government announced that DFID and the FCO would merge. It looks like fuller integration than has happened in the last 60 years. There are no separate ministerial responsibilities for international development, budget lines have been compressed so aid spend is less visible, and redundancies are said to be coming.

The G7 meeting in Cornwall in June produced welcome warm words and some commitments on sharing Covid vaccines, climate change and girls' education; but against the backdrop of an aid budget cut by £4bn in a single year. The Foreign and Development Secretary's [letter to the chair of the International Development Committee](#) gives some explanation - but [not enough to satisfy the IDC](#). Detail of the cuts has dribbled out and been caught [here](#).

We must assume that legal commitments have been kept though some NGOs may disagree. Bilateral programme allocations have not been published, just the list of which countries have one – see linked letter above. There are more programmes in Latin America, but no mention of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. More detail on allocations is promised after the event in the annual departmental report.

In the meantime, the fight to reinstate the 0.7 budget has continued, led by former DFID Secretary of State Andrew Mitchell and supported by five former Prime Ministers. They had hoped to force a legally binding vote in Parliament and were optimistic of winning. But it didn't happen because the Speaker refused to accept their motion.

Under the UK's unwritten constitution, the government controls the agenda for legislation (apart from some private members bills that rarely get through); the opposition gets to call debates which can end in votes but these are not binding on the government. So engineering a vote binding on government is not straight forward: the options are to keep trying in Parliament or to ask the courts to rule.

The Government so far has believed that cuts to the aid programme are popular and with [polling evidence](#) to support their case. But there is [recent evidence](#) that this may be starting to change.

As ever transparency and scrutiny remain vital. ICAI continues but with its budget reported to be cut. Its report *Management of the 0.7% spending target in 2020* is [here](#).



ODI and the Global Reset – A New Strategic Approach

Sir Suma Chakrabarti, Chair of ODI Board of Trustees

The world is in the midst of deep socio-political uncertainty. To build a better world beyond the pandemic, we must interrogate global challenges and take practical steps towards creating a more resilient, equal society.

For six decades, the Overseas Development Institute has built a reputation for cutting edge research and convening to become Europe's largest international development think-tank. Yet it is clear that global challenges cannot be addressed through a narrow focus on development and humanitarian action. The challenges the world faces – including climate change, violent extremism, authoritarianism, financial instability, inequalities, pandemics, a backlash against human rights, and racial injustice – require creative and comprehensive approaches that acknowledge their deeply political nature, linked to vested interests resistant to change.

Organisations like ODI must move beyond the current development aid paradigm toward an interdisciplinary approach that addresses the challenges facing rich and poor countries alike. In its new strategy, ODI commits to evolve from a think tank focused on international development and humanitarian affairs to one with a greater emphasis on how policies including economic, foreign, social and climate impact on these critical global challenges.

The Climate Emergency

The growing urgency of the climate crisis has engaged many concerned citizens and created mass social movements demanding change. Globally, significant new commitments, including pledges to end international finance for coal-fired power plants and introduce mandatory climate-related financial disclosure, are being made. These reforms should steer countries away from high-carbon or climate-risky options towards cleaner, climate-resilient investments.

ODI will engage in this arena by helping navigate competing visions of a green future to achieve equitable, risk-informed and environmentally sustainable development, carrying out research that identifies climate policy shortcomings and develops pathways to a greener future.

A new impetus to tackle inequality

Deep inequality still plagues societies. Government's support packages to help citizens and economies weather the pandemic will need to be sustained. New ideas such as universal basic income should be tested, and social welfare reforms and progressive taxation considered.

Globally, the vaccination programme has highlighted existing inequalities. Following accusations of vaccine nationalism by wealthy nations, the G7 announced recently that they will donate 1 billion vaccine doses. Yet this falls seriously short of the number needed to sufficiently protect the world. Economic recovery is also likely to be tied to vaccination programmes, and a serious risk is that in certain countries the Covid crisis bleeds into a long-term debt crisis and prolonged economic stagnation.

There is now renewed attention to tackling the structural determinants of inequality while harnessing the opportunities presented by the future of work, finance, social policy and trade reform. Ideas for a just globalisation must be central to this. ODI can promote and facilitate interdisciplinary engagement and evidence-based debates to advance discussions on what constitutes a more equitable economic system that works for people and the planet.

Advancing human rights and peace

Many fear that the extraordinary measures and emergency legislation governments have introduced to shut borders, enforce quarantine and track infected people may be the prelude to more autocratic and illiberal regimes.

Pre-pandemic, fundamental human rights were already under strain, with concerns over a universal surge in authoritarian nationalism and a retreat from international legal obligations. The backlash against women's rights is particularly concerning, from rising femicide and politically motivated gender-based violence to the erosion of sexual and reproductive rights.

These protections can only be advanced within the context of a new international system that replaces the current multilateral system in crisis. ODI will work towards bringing political economy perspectives to our understanding of conflict and fragility, supporting policies to advance human rights and humanitarian action.

The quest for a new social model

There is hope that multilateral innovation and improved global cooperation will emerge from the Covid-19 crisis. Global civil society may already be showing us what a different social model might look like as individuals and communities come together to help the most vulnerable in society and unite into social movements that will generate the push for change.

It will be incumbent on actors such as think tanks and NGOs to attune themselves to emerging dynamics and work with governments and businesses to help shape a more sustainable and equal 'normal' for all. It is ODI's hope to help shape this movement through its research, global networks and convening power.

Alumni Association member Sir Suma Chakrabarti, was Permanent Secretary of DFID in 2002-2007, and until 2020 President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

John Stuppel:

From Registry Clerk to Retiree

Little did I know in October 1977, when I first walked through the doors as a fresh faced 18 year old of the Ministry of Overseas Development (ODM) - based in Eland House, London (and the annex across the road), a brutalist 1960's building situated in the wind trap that was Stag Place -, that nearly 37 years later I would be the Secretary to the DFID Alumni Association (AA).

When I retired early in January 2014, I joined the AA expecting to join in activities and keep in touch with colleagues from the past. But a week or so later the Secretary, Marc Taylor, stepped down and the post was advertised. Given I had only just left DFID, I thought it would be a great opportunity to continue to maintain links with colleagues still working there and contribute to the running of the AA.

So I applied, and after an 'intimidating' interview with committee members Simon Ray (then Chair), Marc, Jim Drummond and Janet Gunn I was appointed. The start was a little bumpy as DFID HR queried whether a newly retired ex-employee could take up the post as I would once again be technically employed by them (at the time DFID paid a small honorarium direct to the Secretary of the AA). The problem was solved by funds for the post being paid directly to the AA instead.

So, in Spring 2014 I took over the reins from Marc. Having an official HMG laptop and a temporary security pass made it feel like I had never left DFID. And because I popped into the London office about twice a week many colleagues thought I still worked there too. As with all new jobs, I started with lots of enthusiasm and ideas. With the support of the then Permanent Secretary, Mark Lowcock, plus active interest from past and current ministers, the ties between the AA and DFID remained strong.

I also developed links with counterpart associations at the British Council and the World Bank, and to a lesser degree the FCO and UN. This led to a variety of interesting seminars on, for example, corruption, relations with multilaterals, disability support, DFID and Eastern Europe relations, plus visits to places of interest in and around London. Plus of course the eagerly awaited summer and Christmas parties, which I never tired of organising. Well, who would not enjoy meetings at various venues, including the House of Lords, and selecting food and wines for the event, whilst being offered free gin and tonics and nibbles during the planning meetings!



But as with all jobs there were some downsides. After the first few Committee Meetings, having been corrected on my grammar and spelling in the minutes, reminded me of my days as a civil servant drafting briefs or submissions! Was this what I wanted in my retirement? Then the endless discussions on the pros and cons of the AA's IT system for contacting members and storing information – finally resolved just as I moved on. The apparent lack of interest from members in AGMs, or when inviting suggestions for activities and seminars was also frustrating at times. Likewise, one of my biggest regrets was not being able to fully engage the AA with former DFID colleagues who had been based in Abercrombie House, or with the wider membership overseas, despite the committee's best efforts to do so.

But these frustrations were small compared with the highs of the role. I still treasure many an email from members thanking me for my efforts, the fun we had at various parties, the camaraderie of the Committee (even when there were differences of opinion), the strong links we had with DFID, and the adoption of my dog Honey as a kind of mascot for the AA - seen at many a Christmas Party.

And, on a personal note, after the loss of my partner Tony, the support not only of the Committee, but many members, with the highlight being a hug from Clare Short for my loss at the 2016 Christmas Party (I am easily pleased). Equally I would love to thank all who also welcomed with open arms, my partner Dimi, who entered my life about a year after Tony passed away. It meant a lot that members made the effort to say hello to him at parties, despite having known Tony for many years.

I know that I have handed the role over into the capable hands of Pam Jenkins, who right from the start faced even bigger challenges thanks to the arrival of COVID-19, the impact of the merger and the aid budget cuts. But the AA survives, and appears as strong as ever. So, I am very pleased to have been a part of it for over six years both as Secretary and as a committee member. See you all at the next party if lockdown rules allow!

Sierra Leone – the interesting news is that it is not in the headlines

Marcus Manuel

My first visit to Sierra Leone was in 2005. As I suspect was the case for all new DFID arrivals, my abiding memory is the beach. It was as beautiful as my boss Dave Fish and predecessor Brian Thomson had said. And it was easy to see why TV advertisements used to be shot here. A fleet of minibuses had quickly collected the passengers from the airport, had taken us to the beach, piled up our luggage on the sand and then disappeared. While it was a delightfully quiet place to watch the sun go down, I was puzzled as to what would happen next.

I knew the capital and our hotel was many miles away across the bay. But I was fortunately travelling with Jim Maund, who was an old hand and had already made it to the only structure on the beach – a wooden bar. As we enjoyed our beers, the still of the evening was suddenly broken by a growing whirring fan noise and out of the water sped an enormous hovercraft across the beach. It towered over us before sinking back onto the sand. Our transport had arrived. It still had “Isle of Wight” blazoned on its side which just added to the surreal sense of my first evening.

My latest visit in 2019, in my new capacity as a World Vision UK trustee, immediately illustrated how far Sierra Leone had jumped forward. The terminal was no longer a single storey run-down building where fans made feeble attempts to cool the sweltering heat. Instead the new air-conditioned edifice and shopping complex reminded me more of Gatwick Airport. And the onward transport was no longer a difficult choice between the safe but agonisingly slow ferry, the romantic but sadly unreliable hovercraft, or the speedy but profoundly scary ex Ukraine military helicopter (which tragically crashed the week after we banned UK staff from using it). Instead there were a pair of large powerful motor launches that would not have looked out of place ferrying passengers across the lagoon to Venice.

There are, of course, many other indicators of how Sierra Leone has changed. The country is no longer at the bottom of the UN development league table. Another indicator is Sierra Leone’s absence from the headlines (apart from the external tragedy of Ebola). But maybe the most profound indicator is that Sierra Leone has managed two peaceful, democratic changes of government. Given its history, renewed conflict was the more likely outcome back in the early 2000s. And as our news headlines show, there is no shortage of countries still caught up in conflict.



One of my final DFID memories of Sierra Leone was meeting the UK soldier whose political skills and courage had successfully defused what could have been the first of many bloody riots in the run up to the election that would result in a change of government. He talked calmly of how he drew on his Northern Ireland experience to secure the release of the leader of the then opposition and led him back through the mob to his supporters.

As I was fortunate to move to ODI after leaving DFID in 2010, I have had the occasional chance to reflect on Sierra Leone and to apply the lessons the UK learnt to other fragile contexts. The definitive book on this has yet to be written but I continue to be struck by the unusual degree of UK focus of effort and the UK’s willingness to take risks. Fragile contexts do need to be “over-aided” in the immediate recovery phase. They do benefit from an integrated approach that encompasses politics, security and governance and where diplomats, soldiers and development experts work together for the common good of the country. And long-term institutional development requires political risk-taking in the early stages, most obviously in the form of the budget support, whether the simpler Sierra Leone version or the Afghanistan/Liberia/Somalia add-on versions.

I was also struck that justice was, unusually, a key element of UK support right from the start. So it is oddly fitting that my work this year has been researching the twenty-year story behind the creation of Sierra Leone’s remarkably successful Legal Aid Board, which is rated excellent by half the population. While UK support played a key role in the story, the majority of the Board’s funding now comes from the government (and none from the UK).



Of course, Sierra Leone still has no shortage of challenges. Some of the UK’s best efforts did not work. And some UK efforts were mistaken and misguided. But the longer I look back the more confident I am about the overall long-term impact of the UK effort - and the more grateful I am for having a modest walk-on part in that story for a few years. I look forward to many more years of not reading about Sierra Leone in the headlines.

Professor Myles Antony Wickstead CBE, awarded KCMG in the birthday honours

Myles Wickstead, Chair of the Joffe Charitable Trust, was recognised for an exceptional and sustained contribution to international development. After a distinguished 30-year civil service career, he has dedicated the last 15 years to helping the world's poorest through continued service in this field, much of which has been voluntary. This has resulted in significant impact, not only through improving lives, but also through enhancing a strong, positive international profile for the UK in the process.

Other awards in the birthday honours

OBE

- Bob Kitchen, Vice President, Emergencies and Humanitarian Action, International Rescue Committee. For services to humanitarian assistance.
- Dr Stacey Mearns, Senior Technical Adviser, International Rescue Committee. For services to humanitarian assistance.
- Patricia Parker MBE, Chair and Chief Executive Officer, Kids for Kids. For services to Children in Darfur and the UK
- Professor John Ryle, Co-Founder, Rift Valley Institute. For services to research and education in Sudan, South Sudan and The Horn of Africa

MBE

- Rachel Fletcher, Field Hospital Operations Lead, Emergency Health Unit, Save the Children. For services to humanitarian assistance.

Job Vacancies

We have four jobs currently on our website on behalf of Oxford HR. These are:

- Global Safeguarding and Inclusion Adviser for SNV, an NGO based in The Hague. Closing date 19th July.
- Sector Director for Building Future Generations/ Porticus. Various flexible locations and closing date is 24th July.
- Communications Director for Spark Micro Grants. Location for this role can be in Kigali, Nairobi or New York. Closing date: 2nd August
- Policy Analyst for the Environmental Defence Fund in Belgium. No closing date given.

In addition, Andrew Felton, Alumni member now with the ADB, kindly shared with us the monthly ADB vacancies bulletin, which includes specialist, generalist and operational roles in Manila, Hanoi, Colombo, Beijing and Thimphu (Bhutan). These can be found on our website www.dfid-alumni.org.uk

DIARY

As Pauline said in her introduction to this edition, we held the AGM on 15th June by Zoom, with good attendance from across the UK and further afield. Minutes have already been circulated to Alumni members. If anyone did not receive these, or could not open the link, please let us know by emailing pamjjenkins@outlook.com.

The fate of our long awaited next social gathering on 21st September still hangs in the balance, pending the Government's decision on the next stage of lockdown. But we are pressing ahead with plans for our Christmas party on 13th December – more information on these and other events soon.

Welcome and Farewell

Welcome

We are very pleased to have welcomed the following new members to the Association:

Maria Collins,

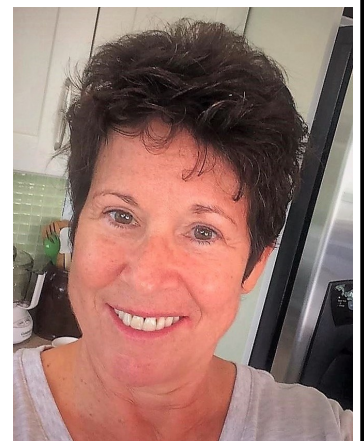
Jack Jones,

Bella Bird,

Gavin McGillivray and

our newest member, Barb Hendrie, who said this in (re) introducing herself:

"I left DFID to take up a political appointment in the Obama Administration, in USAID (I am a dual UK-US citizen). It was fascinating to be in a development department in a different government. When Trump arrived in early 2016, I moved over to the UN and have been Director for North America for the UN Environment Programme



since early 2016, based in Washington DC. I bought a lovely house here with fellow DFID alum Lucia Hanmer and am part of a small DFID conclave, including Caroline Sargeant and Sandra Pepera".

Farewell

We bid a very sad farewell to our esteemed colleague Michael Schultz who died suddenly in April at the young age of 64.



Committee members

Pauline Hayes

Chair



Pam Jenkins

Secretary

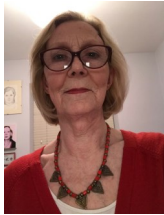


John Burton

Treasurer



Jim Drummond



Janet Grimshaw



Mike Hammond



Kathy Marshall



Carol Norman



Marc Taylor



Sasha Zayarna

Michael Schultz



We bid a very sad farewell to our esteemed colleague Michael Schultz who died suddenly in April at the age of 64. During his 22 year career in ODA/DFID, Michael held a number of roles in the social development field and ultimately became policy director. He took early retirement in 2010 but continued working in the development field as a consultant. There are many memories shared on the Facebook memorial page, including one from Melanie Hipwood, which we share here:

What can I say - I remember meeting Michael way back in the 90's when I joined the then ODA. I had heard about him through my mother Sheila who worked with the social development advisers and would often have phone calls from work colleagues. Michael was an exception even in a forward thinking department such as DFID he accepted me from day one and always made me feel welcome and despite him being a lot more senior to me he would always stop and ask how I was getting on. I have fond memories of when he visited my mother when she came out of hospital and her always running around after him. He was a funny generous man and so knowledgeable. He never forgot anyone and was in contact just recently to see how I was fairing with the merger of DFID and FCO and life in general. He was one of the best.

CONTACT

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

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

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

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