



The Four Corners

The DFID Alumni Association newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Pauline Hayes

For many of us in UK it has been a particularly long and wearing winter, mainly thanks to the national lockdown which is just beginning to ease up. Spring has never felt more welcome and uplifting. Vaccines are now the big issue globally and whilst great progress is being made with the UK vaccination programme, in many other countries the situation is very different. Carole Presern's article in this edition is particularly timely, underscoring the scale of the challenge to vaccinate the world and how the international community – notably the G7 - should respond.

Jim Drummond has produced another update on developments in FCDO where decisions on cuts to the UK aid programme should become public shortly. I can well imagine how tough things must be for former colleagues right now as they face some difficult choices. Next, they will have to deal with the aftermath, including breaking bad news to partners and dealing with the practicalities of closing down projects and programmes, all in rapid time which is rarely wise. That said, Chris Austin, now FCDO's Development Director in South Africa, has provided a thoughtful piece for this edition which brings together well previous development thinking on integrated approaches and highlights some of the potential benefits of the merger over time.

Since my last message the Alumni committee has continued to make good progress with setting up new working arrangements with our FCO Association counterparts. Both organisations will formally consult members on the proposed arrangements shortly, ahead of our respective AGMs in June. For Alumni members life should not feel very different. We would retain our name and identity, while the constitution would essentially remain the same as well. The FCO

Association would change its name to the FCDO Association. To promote closer cooperation between the two organisations we propose setting up a small coordinating committee which would meet twice yearly, mainly to share information. When the time is right, we might be able to enjoy some joint events, seminars or social outings with FCOA members.

As mentioned previously, we need at least one new member for the committee as John Stuppel is standing down at the AGM for a well-earned rest. Being a committee member does not require a lot of work, and wherever you are based in the world we can easily hook you into meetings via Zoom or similar. So do give it some thought and feel free to contact any committee member for an informal chat.

As ever, we're very grateful to the wide range of contributors to The Four Corners for their time and support. The feedback we get from members suggests that we are on the right lines with the content mix and I hope you enjoy this latest edition.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Climate change: Ministerial meeting

On 31 March the Foreign Secretary opened a Ministerial meeting to prepare for the UN Climate Change Conference COP26 which the UK will host in November 2021. The event was co-chaired by the COP26 President, Alok Sharma. The UK's International Champion on Adaptation and Resilience for COP26, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, took part alongside representatives from youth groups, indigenous peoples and financial institutions.

The UK aims to build consensus across four key areas: responding to climate impacts; fiscal space and debt relief; access to finance; and better finance. Ahead of the event, the UK Government announced £500,000 of funding for the new Initiative for Voluntary Carbon Market Integrity.

BACK TO THE FUTURE: INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

*Chris Austin
FCDO Development Director,
South Africa*



Integration is the order of the day: the UK has recently published its Integrated Review of foreign policy and national security interests, comprising diplomacy, development and defence; we have completed a good deal of the internal integration within FCDO, bringing together development and diplomacy, policy and operations; and the Covid 19 pandemic has demonstrated starkly that we exist in an integrated world.

This is exciting, challenging, frustrating and worrying all at the same time. Each person's perception and experience will differ. Covid 19 has knocked our ways of working and living massively out of shape; and that provides an extraordinary additional challenge for managing the latest change in our bit of government. This is not to gloss over the severe impacts – too many have died or been seriously ill; and we're not yet "living with Covid 19", but the vaccines, stronger health systems and understanding of this kind of pandemic mean we will get there, soon.

So what does integration look and feel like for those of us now called Development Directors? First, a bit of history – as I recall it (I have not done any fact-checking and am confident readers of this article will put me right as needs be!).

My first overseas posting (excluding a six-month sojourn in Brussels) was to Malawi, working mostly on Zambia and Zimbabwe. Our stock in trade was projects. "Integrated rural development" was a novel approach at the time involving support for agriculture, health, education and



local government. The theory of change, as it were, was that discrete projects, however brilliant, could not on their own deliver lasting benefits for communities. Integration was the way to go.

Working on Afghanistan immediately after 09/11 showed me the value of collaboration across government departments. We prepared a single UK Plan covering political, defence and development interests; this evolved into a National Security Strategy. In Kabul, we found separate premises for the DFID team but sought to have an integrated Embassy from the start, container pods and all. Over time, we moved to one compound and to a genuinely integrated HMG platform. There was some resistance from DFID folk initially (including me, a bit, though I tried not to show it).

But the One HMG initiative around 2015 when I was back working in Kabul brought tangible improvements to accommodation and a more integrated way of working: I shared a house with the Political Counsellor, Defence Adviser and Commercial Counsellor.

The UK's overseas aid policy has evolved massively over the past four decades. So has the nomenclature: the shift to "international development" was hugely significant in 1997. And last year we merged FCO (created 1968) and DFID (created 1997) into FCDO. I thought that was A Good Thing, and still do, but I recognise that others feel differently.

In the Integrated Review, development issues are front and centre: resilient and inclusive economies; open societies (democracy, accountability, transparency); climate change and clean energy; human development and demography. There are still some who equate "development" with "humanitarian aid", which is both too narrow and wrong – humanitarian aid has its own global governance and definitions.

UK policy now involves deploying all of HMG's expertise and resource to be a Force for Good, supporting the Sustainable Development Goals, tackling inequality, improving life chances for everyone. That is a far cry from the White Paper in place when I joined the civil service, and even from the White Papers in the late 90s and early 00s. And the political direction to "do" development (and diplomacy) better takes forward the BAR, MAR and HERR of 2010-11.

My current role in South Africa, with a regional remit to support Posts in neighbouring countries, is different to the one Mike Hammond did until 2017. Formally, the UK had stopped its bilateral aid programme in 2015, and the DFID team was focused on "partnership working" with the South Africa system, for example tackling gender based violence (GBV), with an annual budget of £2-4m.

1. Bilateral Aid Review, Multilateral Aid Review, Humanitarian & Emergency Response Review

But in another part of the HMG firmament, we were deploying some £20-25m of ODA each year focused on prosperity – digital skills for jobs, strengthening local health systems, working with major metropolitan centres. Significant amounts of ODA were also being invested in science and research and in climate change, all managed from the UK. The *Integration Agenda* brings these elements together. By the time this article is published, Ministers will have approved Country Plans (and budgets), managed by High Commissions or Embassies; and Business Plans, managed by HQ departments.

In South Africa, we have redesigned our internal teams around the Country Plan goals, fully integrating ex-FCO and ex-DFID staff under each goal, bringing together programme, policy, and expert advisers for maximum impact. We have set up a new programme management unit, reporting to me, to ensure the overall coherence and integrity of our ODA spend. My thematic areas are Human Development (health, Covid-19 response, vaccines, tackling GBV and promoting SRHR ²), and Science and Research.

These are linked, but diverse. In the space of a week, I visited the Square Kilometre Array radio telescope base in the Northern Cape (linked to Jodrell Bank and masses of antennae in Western Australia); and North West Province to see a Covid-19 related voucher scheme for poorer farmers in action. Both were educational and inspiring, as field visits nearly always are. I also hold the senior relationships with the multilateral development banks and the UN.

So this integration feels both familiar and new. We have evolved from project-centric aid to what may be termed “development diplomacy”. There’s plenty to do to make it work and craft a distinct FCDO culture. It’s great to be involved. And I will keep drawing on history, experience and all the stuff many DFID Alumni have taught me: your legacy lives on and prospers – thank you!

2. Gender-Based Violence; Sexual and Reproductive and Health Rights

STOP PRESS: ODA reunion in Liverpool ***The reunion is postponed to later in the year.***

In the last edition we advertised a reunion in Liverpool in June for ex DFID colleagues who joined ODM/ODA in the 1970s/80s. Unfortunately the reunion has had to be postponed due to the continuing COVID-19 restrictions.

Details of future plans can be found on Facebook under the group ODA Reunion. For those not on Facebook, please contact

Andrea Vasey on andreav67@hotmail.co.uk or

Wendy Franklin on wendy-82@live.co.uk.

Jim Drummond

Since the last edition of *The Four Corners*, the UK Government has published the delayed ‘Global Britain in a Competitive Age: Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy’. It uses a nationalist lens to list the UK’s strengths (and is silent on its weaknesses) against a comprehensive assessment of the issues facing the world over the next 10 years. It makes laudable commitments on climate change, global health, girls’ education and conflict resolution amongst others, some of which may benefit from the closer working that a joint FCDO can bring. It’s worth reading if you haven’t already:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-integrated-review-2021>

But it rather assumes poverty will sort itself out except in Africa. Not surprisingly it has few words for the EU and hardly a mention of DFID. Like many such documents it suffers from an excess of aspiration and offers little clarity about real world choices. It commits to the humanitarian cause, while huge cuts are being made to humanitarian budgets for Syria and Yemen. Here’s what Mark Lowcock had to say about Yemen

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/07/uk-balancing-books-on-backs-of-yemens-starving-people-says-un-diplomat>

While President Biden is meeting Owen Barder’s challenge in the last edition of *Four Corners* on selling arms to Saudi Arabia, there is no sign that our government is following his lead. The review praises UK science and the Covid response has shown us this is justified, but important aid funded research is taking a big hit.

The five living former Prime Ministers have spoken out against cuts to the aid programme and most of them oppose merging DFID and the FCO. Each came to realise the contribution that the UK’s international development effort made to the country’s standing in the world. Earned by its quality, the generosity of its contribution, but also because it came with few national interest strings attached.

The debate about 0.7% continues: is it affordable; is it legal to cut? The government says the reduction to 0.5% is temporary until the fiscal situation improves. The difference is tiny compared to the amounts the

government has borrowed to cope with Covid. Lawyers disagree on the meaning of the Act. Is it sufficient to come to Parliament and say we haven't met the target with the comfort that an 80 seat majority means there will be no retribution? Or does the law have to be changed, which the government seems reluctant to do, perhaps because it fears the size of the rebellion amongst its own supporters led by Andrew Mitchell? Legal uncertainty places officials, who must not break the law, in an awkward position. So will there be one year below 0.7, a legal challenge or a Parliamentary vote - who knows?

In the meantime, real decisions have to be made about cutting programmes. These decisions have been kept under wraps for as long as possible. But the policy choices around national interest will soon become apparent. While the merged structures are largely in place in FCDO, the consequences for many staff and the wider international development system are still to play out.

A new international development policy is promised in 2022. A £10bn budget is still a lot of money. ICAI and the International Development Committee still exist. They and all of us have a very important role in scrutinising what is done.

In March 2021, the Prime Minister joined more than 20 world leaders in calling for a new global settlement to help the world prepare for future pandemics. In a [newspaper article](#) published in each of their countries, the leaders, including the German chancellor and French president, said Covid posed the biggest challenge since World War Two.

Charles Michel, the President of the European Council, called at the Paris Peace Forum in November 2020 for an [international treaty on pandemic prevention and preparedness](#). That proposal was supported in February by a [statement from the leaders of the G7](#), followed by the newspaper articles.

The present regime for coordinating responses to global health emergencies is set out in the legally binding International Health Regulations adopted at the WHO in 1969, and last revised in 2005. The IHR define "A Public Health Emergency of International Concern" as, "an extraordinary event which is determined to constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease and to potentially require a coordinated international response".

Since 2007, the WHO Director-General has declared public health emergencies of international concern in response to: (2009) the H1N1 swine flu pandemic; (2014) setbacks in global polio eradication efforts; (2013–2016) Western African Ebola virus epidemic; (2016) Zika virus outbreak; (2018–19) Kivu Ebola epidemic; and the 2019–20 COVID-19 pandemic.

Can we vaccinate our way out of this?

Carole Presern



Together with most of the planet, my life has been somewhat 'COVID-obsessed' since, well, we all know when. But more recently fascinated by a veritable crop of new terminology, and what lies behind it for the future of development. Vaccine diplomacy, vaccine nationalism, the immunity divide and much else.

While the G7 lumbers along, with the UK immersed in its Presidency, this sentence from a previous G7 statement from 2015 caught my eye '... the Ebola crisis has shown that the world needs to improve its capacity to prevent, protect against, detect, report and respond to public health emergencies...we will coordinate to fight future epidemics'. There are any number of UN and other similar statements between 2015 and 2019. It is sobering and tragic to see the failures of all this international cooperation rhetoric laid bare.

As we all hunkered down with much fear of the unknown, some countries chose to learn from past experience - some looked to WHO to guide, and followed that advice. In the UK, a Deputy CMO when asked why the government was not following the 'Test, Test, Test' advice of WHO - instead of being transparent and saying there was probably not enough testing capacity - said that WHO's advice was only for low income countries. A finer example of neo-colonial arrogance would be hard to find. The same Deputy in April 2020 said the UK was an 'exemplar of preparedness'. Anxious health workers, struggling on the front line, told a very different story – and many of them died before they could tell it. It is the duty of every employer to provide a safe workplace, but somehow governments the world over have forgotten this 'inconvenient truth'¹. Of course it is easy, with the benefit of hindsight to blame experts who were playing rapid catch up, while politicians consistently and selectively hid 'behind the science' to make some poor decisions. But, both the experts and the politicians would have instilled so much more trust if they had the courage to share the inconvenient truths with the public.

1. <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/01/29/up-the-line-to-death-covid-19-has-revealed-a-mortal-betrayal-of-the-worlds-healthcare-workers/>

No need to dwell further on this litany of failure – notably in the UK and the US – only to hope that there will indeed be a reckoning one day, and that the rosy glow of vaccine ‘success’ in some parts of the world does not allow politicians off the hook. It is morally wrong for countries that have responded so poorly to this crisis, to buy their way out of it at the expense of countries that do not have the purchasing power.

As I write in February, 130 countries have received no vaccines at all, and 75% of all vaccines administered have been given in 10 countries ². Vaccine nationalism reared its ugly head early on – and despite the rhetoric bandied about by politicians that ‘no one is safe until everyone is safe’, the evidence is just not matching. Canada ordered enough to immunise its population 5 times over, the UK has been a generous donor to Covax but still ordered 400 million doses, promising to ‘give up its surplus’. At an unspecified time. Decisions are to be taken ‘later in the year’.

It is a hard political sell – of course it is – but without vaccines available to all, it will be many years before we return to ‘normal’ or rather the ‘next normal’. There are estimates that not vaccinating priority populations worldwide, will result in a further major hit to the world economy - costing up to \$1.2 trillion a year ³. So, the relatively minor cost of vaccine distribution starts to look like excellent economics, especially as the equity and moral arguments don’t seem to be working.

As I write, 14% of the world has already bought up 53% of all vaccine supply. India, Russia and China are now in a vaccine diplomacy race – which is good news for the countries receiving or set to receive their vaccines. But, there is always a cost, and pay back later. And there are increasing sickening stories about fake vaccines being given to desperate people.

But Covax, due to deliver over two billion doses just in 2021 - ensuring that 92 poorer countries will receive access at the same time as the rest of the world - is off to a painfully slow start. This is the only way out for the global community, but only a few countries have received vaccines, and nothing like at the scale or speed needed. There are production problems - but they will probably be resolved soon - and new vaccines are coming on line. Covax is a brilliant idea but it is already exposing the divide between well-meaning intentions and political action. If we carry on at this rate it could take up to five years to reach global herd immunity.

2. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/18/wildly-unfair-un-says-130-countries-have-not-received-a-single-covid-vaccine-dose>

3. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA769-1.html

COVAX is the [vaccines pillar](#) of the World Health Organization’s Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator.

Initially a joint initiative of France, the EU and the WHO, it is now co-led by the vaccines alliance Gavi, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the WHO. Its aim is to accelerate the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines, and to guarantee fair and equitable access for every country in the world.

As at 11 March 2021, the largest financial [pledges to Gavi for COVAX](#) were from the USA, Germany, the United Kingdom, the European Commission, Japan, Canada, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Saudi Arabia, Norway, France and Italy.

What could and should the international community, and particularly FCDO be doing? International discourse has moved on, but lots of energy will still be invested in a G7 health push, a G20 health and climate focus, even the D10 might chip in. As the PM has said, we cannot have 193 different solutions to the same problem. But, it seems we can happily tolerate competing political and diplomatic forums to solve the same problem. The South Africa statement at WTO is sobering (on a TRIPS waiver).

If rich countries continue with our protectionist, ‘me first’ action – we will find a further fracturing of the international community. My heart bleeds for colleagues at FCDO who are having to implement cuts they don’t believe in. But I can only hope passionately, that they can still use their voice to lobby internally for this most global of global public health goods, and for the investments in delivery systems, and other public health functions that will allow us to protect each other into the future.

If the G7 wanted to do something really useful in the middle of this pandemic, it could consider disbanding and accepting geo-political realities and the new reality of moves to decolonise development, redress the balance of power and locus of decision making. And, maybe understand now more than ever that, imperfect though they are, the UN and WTO are probably the forums where action can have global impact – whether it’s revised International Health Regulations – toughened up and with real teeth - or a complete overhaul of the TRIPS agreement at WTO that would allow countries to be on a more even footing for collaboration in research and development, manufacturing and much else.

Now, that would be a real contribution. Because there will be other pandemics. It’s not an if, but a when – like this one was. Wholly predictable.

PEOPLE

Ken Windsor OBE

1926—2021



Former colleagues will be sad to learn that Ken Windsor, aged 95, passed away on 16th February.

Ken was renowned for his tireless work on the aid programme, notably as First Secretary (Aid) in Botswana and then in Malawi. Following his retirement, Ken and his wife Maureen moved to Bruton in Ken's home county of Somerset. He took the post of Town Clerk, which firmly embedded them in the local community. Thanks to Derek Smith for informing us of Ken's passing.

Alumni member Geoff Williams said:

I never crossed work paths with Ken Windsor, but at a time when beards were a rarity he was known by his hirsute chin as well as for his experience and wisdom by those who knew him well.

There were quite a few Kens, all of them of an age - Critchley, Clark, joined by Mundy when he came to ODA, three of them working for Central and Southern Africa Dept (CSAD) and they often sat at the same lunch table. I thought of it as the Beyond Our Ken's table, one of several occupied by regulars and engendering good relationships in the working day. All gone now, sadly. I guess Ken Windsor would be the last of his group, but an impressive innings.

Ken Clark told me that there were so many Kens born in the 1920's because it was a 'Royal' name. Never been able to establish the truth of that even in these days of Google, Wiki etc. Any ideas?

Marc Taylor added:

Ken headed the branch I joined on transferring to the then ODA from the FCO in 1980.

I remember a patient, careful man, his beard already white, who kept a straight face as I briefed him on UNIDO's Plan for the Regularization of the Tractorization Situation.



Welcome and Farewell

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

Andrea Vasey,

Jerry Ash,

Simon Bishop,

Charlotte Howman,

Graeme Legge,

Dominic O'Neill,

Lizzie Smith,

Jane Edmundson.

Sadly, two ex-colleagues passed away: Ken Windsor and Sylvia Lacey. Our condolences to their families and friends.

Sylvia Lacey

1952-2021



We are grateful to Lynne Nazer, Sylvia's friend and fellow Alumni member, for letting us know about her death. Lynne said: *"It is with genuine sadness that I am letting you know, on behalf of her family, that my friend Sylvia Lacey passed away this week following an 18 month (not COVID related) illness. Sylvia was very private but many of you who knew and worked with her will remember her as a genuinely lovely person. Since both retiring 5 years ago we have kept in close contact and I have felt honoured to have been there for her the last 18 months and experiencing her positive, quiet humour as she faced up to her illness."*

Sylvia worked as a PA in a few different departments during her time in DFID. A lot of the time this was working with different people in the Rural Livelihoods related departments. She also worked in Overseas Territories Department where she had the opportunity to make the long haul to St Helena, and also undertook a short posting in Pakistan. Sylvia was not one for flying so both of these journeys took her out of her comfort zone! Her last few years before retirement were spent in the Climate Change Department where, as well being PA to the Head of Department, she was a strong team player, embracing change and supporting a number of different roles.



The Civil Service
Retirement Fellowship



PUTTING FRIENDSHIP FIRST

Since his retirement in 2019, DFID Alumni committee member Mike Hammond has been working as the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship's National Treasurer .

The Civil Service Retirement Fellowship (CSRF) is a national charity dedicated to helping former civil servants and their dependants make the most of their retirement. The organisation was founded in 1965 and is a Cabinet Office Trusted Partner and Civil Service Welfare Body.

Through three national services (local community groups, befriending schemes and signposting & advice) it provides friendship and support to ensure a better quality of life for those in later life.

Despite having to close all its groups the Fellowship managed to remain active throughout the last 12 months and faced the challenges of COVID by adapting its services. With all the challenges people have faced due to COVID the need for connections, friendship and support has remained as important as ever. In the last year, it maintained contact with its beneficiaries using both digital and printed resources. Regular e-newsletters, that encompass a referral to each of our services and a weekly round-up of all the fun activities and events that they can take part in online from all over the world, proved extremely popular.

Despite being stuck at home, our beneficiaries have been able to still feel a part of a community and have access to that sense of togetherness that the younger generation has easier access to on social media.

The Fellowship's work is supported entirely by subscriptions and donations and any former civil servant (or individual who supports our ethos, aims and objectives) can sign up for the initial annual fee of just £16.50 (a 50% intro rate). More than ever an essential line of friendship can make all the difference in these times of self-isolation and social distancing – so take the step and join us!

For more information or to sign up or donate online visit www.csrf.org.uk or ring Fellowship Office on 020 8691 7411

“Oh no! Will I have to turn French?”

Marc Taylor

That's what my eldest grand-daughter said when I showed her my new French passport. Like Boris Johnson's father Stanley, I had to break it to her that she and her sister already are French.

Although my younger brothers are all just British, I was born French and British. That's because my French-born mother had to wait two years after she married before adopting my father's British nationality. Under French law, anyone with a French parent is born French. If they don't renounce their nationality on turning eighteen or on marriage, they're French. That means I and my sons were born with dual nationality and so, to her surprise, was my grand-daughter.

What I didn't tell her is, it took three years to show the French authorities I am entitled to my passport. It's all because of the Treaty of Versailles. My mother was born in the far North of Alsace in 1919. Her father's ancestors were loyal subjects of the Duke of Nassau, until France annexed the counties of the Sarre in 1794. Then they were loyal German-speaking Frenchmen, until Germany annexed Alsace in the war of 1870.

So what's the Treaty of Versailles got to do with it? Well, at the end of the First World War, the 1919 peace treaty returned Alsace to France *as if Alsace had never stopped being French*. That meant people with German birth certificates issued in Alsace after 1870 could be regarded as *French by right* if either of their parents had been born French before 1870 (Keep up!).

But the treaty also gave them a choice. My mother's birth, marriage and death certificates and those of all her ancestors since 1800 were not enough to prove that my family hadn't elected to be German in 1920.

Fortunately, one of my French cousins has a big box of family archives. He came across a faded copy of my grandfather's entry in the register of *personnes réintégrées de plein droit dans la qualité de Français en exercice du Traité de Paix du 28 juin 1919* .

The nationality tribunal in Paris checked the register, gave its ruling, and a few months later I went to the French Consulate in London to receive my passport.

Has Stanley Johnson got the documents to prove that he and Boris have always been French?

DFID Gets Under Your Skin!

Reflections from Neil Alldred



Back in 1972, with a degree in Politics and Sociology and not quite sure what employment options to consider, I volunteered to work overseas and was accepted by International Voluntary Service (IVS).

1972-1975: IVS. I had two magnificent years as a teacher of English as a foreign language in the famous Jesuit-run College Libermann in Douala, Cameroon. I discovered that the then Overseas Development Administration funded around 50% of IVS' work. After two years, I moved to Kumba, in the anglophone region, and was a volunteer teacher of rural sociology at the Community Development Training Centre.

1972-1977: Whilst walking in the regional capital of Buea, I met an Englishman, G. Brian Stapleton, who asked if I was the volunteer in Kumba, and he instantly offered me a job at the Pan-African Institute for Development (PAID!), lecturing in social and community development. I accepted and found myself on the DFID payroll as a TCO (Technical Co-operation Officer).

1978-1980: After a year back in Manchester to secure a Master's degree, I accepted a post at the University of Malawi as a Lecturer in English and Liberal Studies. I had a local contract but was a beneficiary of the BESS - British Expatriate Supplementation Scheme – administered by whatever development administration was in operation in London in those days.

1980-1982: I joined Oxfam as their Field Director for Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Oxfam's programme was entirely **funded by the ODA**. Since the UK Government considered Zaire too difficult a country in which to do any development work themselves, they instead used NGOs to effect a smattering of development projects.

1983-1987: I was appointed Programme Director of ActionAid in Burundi and Rwanda – based in Bujumbura, Burundi – and once again discovered that the **ODA in London** was giving strong programme support to the Burundi operations, on the rationale that Burundi was a country where the Hutu majority was run by a minority Tutsi government and therefore needed development support.

1987-1988: I was appointed by the then *Sir M MacDonald & Partners* to undertake a review of the failing water pump programme **funded by British aid** in Liberia. I was tasked with discovering why foot- or hand-operated water pumps frequently fell into disrepair, in spite of thorough training in assembly and repairs being offered to Village Water Committees. It wasn't rocket science to discover that

training was given to men, because technology was “men's business”, whereas the use of water – for cooking and washing of clothes and children was “women's business”. So, whenever there was civil unrest, the men would quickly flee the place without dismantling and hiding the pumps, as they didn't give tuppence whether the women had access to water or not. I recommended training the women, which is now a world standard, and water pumps have gone from having an operational life of 1-2 years to 12-17 years.

1988-1990: I worked with consulting engineers *W S Atkins* on a number of DFID-funded projects, one of which was to examine a British-funded dam in Botswana. I had to assess a locally hired expatriate's work in preparing local communities for the possible disruptions to village life once the dam was to become operational.

1996-1999: After 6 years as the Executive Director of *ALERT (the All-Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre)* in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, I was appointed Director of the *Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN)* in Dakar, Senegal, where I managed a small budget of which **about 35% was provided by DFID** as grant support. ALIN sought to help Community Development Workers to access information that would help them animate and support communities across the drylands of the Sahara and Sahel belts, from Mauritania to Somalia.

In 1999, I settled in Ireland where I married and looked for opportunities where my African experience would be useful. I launched and ran the *Environmental Information Centre for Northern Ireland (EIC)* for five years before joining the *Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)* as their Global Solidarity Officer for three years, helping trade unions to learn about international co-operation, development and equality. I secured **small grants from DFID** for various training and publication initiatives, as part of their development education support.

2008-2013: I was appointed Director of the International Development Programme at Ulster University, **wholly funded by DFID**. In that role, I helped to expand training and research work on development issues across the university. I hosted the Development Studies Association conference in the Coleraine campus, which contributed significantly to the success of the Irish African Partnership in Research Capacity-Building, an Irish Aid funded project linking all 9 universities in Ireland to three universities in East Africa – Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo, Mozambique; the University of Malawi; and Makerere University in Uganda.

I have also taught courses on development for the Open University and am currently teaching an Access class for Queen's University Belfast. I also work voluntarily with a small number of development NGOs that have all secured funding from **DFID**.

Truly, DFID and its institutional antecedents have been with me at almost every twist and turn in a fairly lengthy and always fascinating career!



The Natural Resources Conference at Cambridge, 1980

The Natural Resources Advisory Group

George Gwyer, ODM/ODA (1977-1984) and current member of DFID alumni

From the heydays of the 1970s

The UK had a formidable presence of natural resources expertise at the time I joined the Overseas Development Ministry (ODM) in 1977, both within the Ministry, and among its scientific units: the Tropical Products Institute, the Land Resources Development Centre, and the Centre for Overseas Pest Research. This meant that the ODM was well placed to pursue the goals set out in Judith Hart's (the then Minister) policy of More Help for the Poorest, which had taken on board the rural development strategy enunciated by Robert McNamara in Nairobi in 1973.

The natural resources advisers were a mature group of (almost exclusively) men, many of them with several years of African experience, garnered in part from colonial times. There were senior advisers for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, animal health and agricultural economics as well as for the environment and cooperatives. The only woman adviser at the time was Dr Terry Spens, a rural sociologist from Cambridge.

Bob Cunningham (Chief NR Adviser) and Ken Anthony were strong advocates of agricultural research, and played key roles in the allocation of finance among the international research centres. UK bilateral aid provided support to rural projects such as Khardep in Nepal, BTAM in Bolivia, rice research in Sierra Leone, grassland trials in Falklands, inland fisheries in Bangladesh, smallholder rubber in Liberia, bananas in the Windwards, irrigation in Baluchistan, to name but a few.

Many readers of The Four Corners will retain positive memories of the likes of Mike Watson, Tony Peers, Peter Weare, Ken Anthony, John Davie, Ron Kemp, Hugh Bunting, and Bert Youngjohns, in whose good company I travelled to India in pursuit of poverty-focussed initiatives in agricultural research and extension, social forestry, and rural credit.

In the heydays of the ODM, the NRAG was riding high, buoyed by the emphasis on rural development, as country desks sought advice as to how to put into practice the goals enunciated by More Help for the Poorest. In January 1978 the Government announced that the aid programme would rise steadily in real terms by 6 per cent per year, moving towards the aid target of 0.7 per cent of GNI, against a 1977 performance of 0.4 per cent.

To challenging times in the 1980s

With the change of Government in May 1979, overseas development was incorporated as a separate administration within the FCO. ODM became ODA. An aid policy review completed in February 1980 concluded that: *It is right at the present time to give greater weight in the allocation of our aid to political, industrial, and commercial considerations alongside our basic development objectives....the aid programme would fall by around 14 per cent.* Sounds a tad familiar?

Francis Pym acknowledged in 1982 that "*ODA and its staff (had) passed through a very difficult period in recent years*". Staff cuts ensued, and the remaining NR advisers vacated their offices in the Annex and moved to Eland House. The Rayner review of the scientific units and other centres of NR research in the UK engaged NRAG staff who were charged



"to identify those parts of the research work that were below par", not a task that was undertaken with any relish.

While the CDC-inspired tea out-grower schemes continued to thrive in Kenya and elsewhere, Bob Cunningham and his senior agricultural adviser David Evans, on returning from an African tour, cast doubt on the sustainability of some of ODA's rural sector initiatives.

Meanwhile, within ODA, another group of advisers was challenging the NRAG. Social development advisers pointed out that the rural economy was not just about agriculture. Reaching the poor required proper understanding of how rural societies function. The rural livelihoods agenda had arrived.

Thus the erosion of NR expertise continued and led to the gradual diminution of scientific staff in the privatised Natural Resources Institute at Greenwich. Within ODA, the NRAG was transformed into the Rural Livelihoods Department and the post of Chief NR Adviser was eventually abolished, leaving little in-house advice by the turn of the century to inform Ministers on agricultural issues and their impact on the MDGs/SDGs.

Looking ahead to the COP 26 in Glasgow

The SDG 2 of securing sufficient food supplies for all by 2030 is under threat from climate change and population growth. Extending the land area, by clearing forests or cultivating hillsides, exacerbates CO2 emissions. Increasing temperatures will *inter alia* lead to sea level rise, flooding of low lying land, and diminished fish stocks.

Most seriously, there is a threat to irrigated agriculture in the sub-continent, and beyond, from accelerated glacier melt in the Himalayas. Thus the UK needs not just climatologists to give substance to COP 26 pledges at Glasgow for controlling CO2 emissions, but also NR scientists to speak out in favour of agricultural research that will enable farmers to adapt to harsher rainfall and temperature regimes, while still increasing food production.

Conclusion

In summary, the story of the NRAG over the last 50 years has been one of fluctuating fortunes, but the need for this expertise will continue if UK aid is to make a meaningful contribution to the new global challenges.

Development articles

Here are some articles that may be of interest.

Bond (@bondngo) tweeted on Mar 19, 2021: *Following the release of the long awaited #IntegratedReview, we look at the positives and negatives of the report, and highlight what it means for international development. Find out more: <https://t.co/JrRGVvEjxH>*

This article by Sarah Champion highlights how a cut in the aid budget will make a negligible impact on UK debt levels.

https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/there-are-no-winners-of-the-uk-governments-cuts-to-international-aid/?utm_source

Here, Devex assesses the impact of the FCDO merger after six months:

<https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-the-uk-is-undoing-its-good-work-on-international-development-99385?s=03>

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). He now chairs the ODI's Board.

He has recently written an article for the ODI:

- [A British Investment Bank: Look Down the Road;](#)

and another with Hannah Brown for the Center for Global Development:

- [Empathy and Client Relationships in Development Finance.](#)

Job Vacancies

For those of you in the jobs market (or if you know someone who is) there are currently some interesting roles on our members' page of the DFID Alumni website, including in Pakistan, Ethiopia, Senegal, Tunis, Singapore and UK/Europe.



Committee members

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Carol Norman



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Marc Taylor



Sasha Zayarna

DIARY

DFID Alumni Committee meeting

The committee met by video conference on 23rd March.

We confirmed that the **AGM** would be held this year **by video conference on 15th June at 10:30.**

As well as the usual AGM business, this will be an opportunity for us to discuss latest developments and direction of travel with our collaboration with the FCO Association.

We have two Committee members standing for re-election this year, Kathy Marshall and Pam Jenkins and we hope we might also be electing one or two new members at our AGM.

We hope to hold

- a **summer gathering** on **21st September at 5pm** and possibly
- a **Christmas event** on **13th December**, so pencil these dates in your diaries and we will confirm what's happening nearer the time.

CONTACT

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

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