

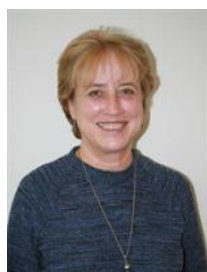
The Four Corners

The DFID Alumni Association newsletter

Issue 53:

January 2021

[MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR](#) | [SPOTLIGHT](#) | [NEWS IN BRIEF](#) | [PEOPLE](#) | [DIARY](#)



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Pauline Hayes

First and foremost – a Happy New Year to everyone, wherever you are. In the words of an old song, things can only get better, although the first week of 2021 has already been action packed largely thanks to the extraordinary events in Washington DC. It has been a powerful reminder of how fragile all democracies are and to take nothing for granted.

As I type, the UK is locked down once more (though not yet as severe as the Spring 2020 version) as the virus has gone rampant again. We face a tough winter but the arrival of various vaccines has brought real hope that six months from now life will be easier. Ensuring that all citizens in all countries can receive the vaccine is going to be a massive international challenge – but only a truly global effort can beat this virus. The pandemic presents a major opportunity for the FCDO to step up and lead the way, politically and developmentally, despite the recent cuts to the UK aid budget.

Since the last edition of The Four Corners the committee has been weighing up options for the future of the Association. Thank you to everyone who responded to our call for views and ideas on the various options - this was much appreciated.

There is a clear consensus emerging that the way forward is to have an umbrella arrangement (details to be determined) with the FCO Association, whereby we coordinate closely but retain our individual identities and interests by operating as two separate branches – development and diplomacy. Our FCO counterparts favour this option as well.

I will be writing to members again shortly with all the details and we will also seek a formal vote on the proposal, with a view to putting the new arrangements in place by summer 2021. Some constitutional changes will be needed but hopefully these will be straightforward. Funding issues and membership criteria also need to be resolved.

Despite the vaccine roll-out in the UK, we have decided it would be prudent to plan for a virtual AGM in June this year – using Zoom or a similar digital platform— so that as many members as possible can join in. One or two committee members are planning to stand down later this year and so we need replacements.

Whether you are a new member or someone more longstanding, based in the UK or living elsewhere, then do get in touch with Pam or myself if you are interested in joining the committee and would like to know more. The role isn't onerous - and can even be enjoyable! – so do give it some thought.

I hope you enjoy this edition of The Four Corners. We're very grateful to the wide range of contributors for their time and support. Meanwhile, keep safe wherever you are.

Development articles

Here are some articles that may be of interest.

This one on ICAI's review of procurement is topical:

<https://icai.independent.gov.uk/report/uk-aid-spending-during-covid-19-management-of-procurement-through-suppliers/>

FCDO has completed its review of ICAI and has given it the thumbs up to continue subject to various measures to strengthen its effectiveness.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-commonwealth-development-offices-review-of-the-independent-commission-for-aid-impact?s=03>

ICAI's response is here:

<https://icai.independent.gov.uk/joint-commissioner-statement-on-the-government-review-of-icai/>

Here, Devex tells how the International Development Committee survived:

<https://www.devex.com/news/uk-parliament-s-international-development-committee-saved-98743>

Hilary Benn

Let's face it. It's not been a good year.

Coronavirus has claimed over one and a half million lives worldwide, we are now living through the worst economic recession for 300 years and, as I write, the final chapter of the Brexit story – or nightmare depending on how you voted – is still being written. I have always thought that there would be a deal for the very simple reason that the alternative does not bear contemplation.

And for those of us who have had the privilege of working for DFID, it has also been a bad year. First was the decision to abolish DFID as an independent government department and move it back inside the Foreign Office - the third time that a Conservative Government has done this in fifty years - and then came the announcement that the UK's aid budget is to be cut by a third. Why on earth, of all the promises that the UK has made to the world, was a decision taken to abandon this particular promise to the world's poorest?

Our aid in cash terms was already going to decline because of the fall in GNI, but this will have serious consequences for the work that DFID does around the world as ministers decide what to cut.

I was lucky enough to have played a part inside government in achieving the commitment to reach the 0.7% target by 2013 and I watched our aid budget increase year on year as a result. I also admired the Coalition Government's determination to put that pledge in law by passing the 2015 International Development Act. There were plenty of voices in Parliament, in wider society and in certain newspapers calling for aid to be cut, but until this year governments of all colours had stood firm.

It is ironic, to say the least, that at a time when we are told that Global Britain is 'striding across the world stage' we are both reducing our commitment to the very poorest people and walking away from one of our most important international relationships. Those of us who voted to remain in the EU have to accept that we lost. We're out. But one of the reasons I was against this happening was that Brexit will reduce our influence in the world.

Looking back on my time at DFID, I see just how much influence the Department had. Not just because of the amount of money it spent, but also because of the extraordinary staff I had the privilege to work with, the ferment of ideas, the willingness to try things out and to learn, and the sheer determination never ever to give up on the task that we had set ourselves.

So why has this happened? I think that behind both these decisions lies the conflict between the two great political forces of our age.

On the one hand is the desire for greater control, self-determination, independence - call it what you will - which is in part a reaction to the pace of change and the fact that globalisation has not distributed its benefits equally. If you talk to someone who remembers the days of the mines, the steelworks and the shipyards but now sees them all gone and replaced by zero hours contracts and warehouse jobs paying much less, they will tell you how what they have experienced isn't progress.

On the other hand, is the recognition of the absolute necessity for international co-operation to deal with the great challenges that we face as a world, whether some want to embrace that cooperation or not.

Fighting coronavirus; the reason we have several vaccines is because of an extraordinary collaboration between scientists across the globe. Tackling threats to peace and security; so much of what DFID does is dealing with the consequences of people being forced to flee the land of their birth because of conflict. And, perhaps the greatest challenge of all, dangerous climate change. If we fail to act, and the climate changes in the way in which the scientists predict, then those affected are not going to stay where they are born to drown or die of thirst. They will move in search of a better life.

So, we have to find a way of reconciling these two forces. And like many things in life, it's all about balance.

Anyway, I am certain we can look forward to a better New Year than the one that is just ending. Apart from anything else, we have a new American President.

I am of course referring to the man who actually won the election rather than the other one who didn't. Now that's the kind of rebalancing I'm in favour of!



Jim Drummond

The biggest development since the last Four Corners is Dominic Raab's announcement that the UK development budget will be cut from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%. This is likely to mean a £10bn budget in 2021 down from £15bn in 2019, given that the economy is substantially smaller due to COVID, with post Brexit gloom from the mainstream forecasters. One junior FCDO minister, Baroness Sugg, resigned in protest.

The Government conceded that this decision requires a change to the International Development Act, but amendments have not yet been introduced in Parliament. There are Tory rebels led by former DFID Secretary of State Andrew Mitchell who say the government will be defeated. All the main opposition parties can be expected to oppose but the government's majority is 80. My few political contacts suggest that MPs' inboxes are not full of demands to keep 0.7% - COVID and BREXIT take up the bandwidth.

Meanwhile back in the machine, budgets are being reviewed for the start of 2021/2 with an obvious expectation of substantial cuts. This will give us a picture of government priorities: what the announcement that the UK's future aid strategy will focus only on countries in which its 'development, security and economic interests coincide' really means. And begin to end the uncertainty that many poorer countries, staff involved in programmes and the wider development community face.

There is better news on scrutiny. Following a review, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, led by DFID alumna Tamsyn Barton, will continue as will Parliament's International Development Committee. Both had been in doubt. And it is reported that FCDO will control allocation of 93.5% of the aid budget including that spent by most other government departments, where previously DFID spent only around 75%. In theory this could mean some improvement in quality. Non DFID spend generally scored poorly when independently assessed.

Within FCDO there remain no ministers with a specific international development remit. Most Director appointments have been announced. They show a good gender balance, vastly changed from 20 years ago and former DFID staff in some of the influential positions. Clearly the full merging of FCO and DFID divisions is likely to mean fewer jobs.

As ever it is too early to judge how well this full merger will work. Some wise words and challenges in Owen Barder's article on page 5.

Let us know what you hear and we will keep you posted.

Graham Stegmann



15 years after the Gleneagles G8 Summit in July 2005 are there any lessons for the UK as the 2021 host of G7 and the COP?

Although overshadowed by the London bombings on the first day, Gleneagles was successful: generating substantial new resources and advancing the dialogue on development, albeit falling short of the demands from civil society activists. Headline commitments reversed the decline in aid, promising an increase of \$50billion a year, of which \$25bn to Africa; doubling aid to Africa by 2010; 100% debt relief from the IFIs for poorer countries, most in Africa.

These were set within a "beyond aid" approach arguing for integrated action spanning peace-building, governance, health, education, infrastructure, trade and investment, anti-corruption and the return of stolen assets. It was underpinned by painfully negotiated principles on development effectiveness, country led development, partnership, joint responsibility and mutual accountability. It elicited cross-Party support; the UK led implementation and, under the following Conservative Government, cemented our commitment to aid at 0.7% of GNI. The Commission for Africa (CFA) Report remained for some years a point of reference in Africa.

Some pointers for 2021:

- *Prioritise*

The PM signalled two years in advance that the 2005 agenda would focus substantively on only two items: Africa and climate. That was maintained despite the demands for Heads to discuss other pressing global issues.

- *Persist*

Both the G7/8 and the COP work by consensus (G8 became G7 after suspension of Russia post Crimea). That imposes constraints, but as the pen holder sustained pressure and diplomacy by the host can make a difference. Usually the lengthy G7 communiqués are settled in advance; in 2005 final agreement on financial commitments were squeezed out only on the first day.

- *Lead from the top*

There was a strong political drive from the top. Tony Blair chaired the Commission for Africa, Gordon Brown and Hilary Benn were members. Whilst officials argued departmental positions, these were resolved in successive texts put to Sherpas. Parallel advocacy advanced in EU and G7 Finance Ministers meetings. The crucial texts on debt owed a great deal to the force of Gordon Brown and the Treasury team. Hilary Benn pushed hard through key G8 and CFA meetings. Michael Jay as Sherpa seamlessly took the chair when the PM left the Summit to return to London.

- *Prepare strong analysis and evidence*

A high level CFA was assembled a year before the Summit, with majority African membership. Supported by a Secretariat (led by Myles Wickstead) its purpose was to generate new ideas, to support African aspirations and help deliver change. The final report was delivered in March 2005. A summary argument and call to action was published for wider consumption. The second weighty tome (led by Nick Stern) detailed the analysis and evidence and proved invaluable when wrangling over the communiqué. The G8 finally signed up to some 50 of the CFA recommendations.

- *Mobilise stakeholders and build coalitions*

Gleneagles leveraged unprecedented pressure in all G8 countries from the Make Poverty History campaign. Live aid concerts across the world organised by Bob Geldof (also a member of the CFA) and Bono reached billions; Mandela addressed crowds in London, and 225,000 people marched in Edinburgh. The CFA had an extensive outreach programme; the African members presented the report widely in Africa.

- *Aim for monitorable commitments*

All communiqués contain aspirational language susceptible to varied interpretation. Achieving consensus on more specific targets against which progress can be measured is difficult, but not impossible, and easily side-tracked into technicalities. Our efforts to establish a top level review were rebuffed. A number of working level mechanisms were established but gradually withered as political interest waned.

- *Signpost implementation and review*

Multiple multilateral approaches are critical. The G7 and the COP are not implementing institutions, they rely on others, national and international. On climate, green growth and recovery and climate change are already high on IFI agendas but there are many other actors. Agreeing where responsibilities lie, how progress is to be measured, and points of review will be needed. However independent review of national performance is not widely welcomed and hard to sustain in practice

2021

International discourse has moved on and the balance of power shifted: aid is dwarfed by other financial flows; the G7 has been overtaken by the G20; global issues predominate. China has to be engaged. Nonetheless the approach and principles articulated in 2005 (including partnership, joint responsibility and mutual accountability) are no less important.

An integrated FCO/DFID has an opportunity to show what it can do.

UK and the World Health Organization

In his [speech to the UN General Assembly](#) in September, the Prime Minister said the UK would use its G7 presidency to create a new global approach to health security based on a five point plan to protect humanity against another pandemic. Expressing support for the World Health Organization, he said the UK would work with others to

1. harness scientific expertise and cooperate to the fullest extent with global partners
2. develop manufacturing capacity for treatments and vaccines
3. design a global pandemic early warning system
4. have protocols ready for an emergency response
5. lift export controls and cancel tariffs on COVID-critical products.

Resolutions adopted in 2015 following the Ebola epidemic defined the WHO's responsibility for coordinating the [response to public health emergencies of international concern](#) and for related scientific cooperation (for example through its [Global Health Observatory](#) and [International Clinical Trial Registry Platform](#).)

In 2020 President Trump notified the WHO that the USA would withdraw from it in April 2021, and suspended funding. The UK became the WHO's leading funder. President-elect Biden intends to reverse that decision.

How to judge FCDO and when

Owen Barder



Mergers between foreign ministries and aid agencies have a chequered history. Some have gone well - for example, in Norway and Denmark; others have gone badly, notably in Australia and Canada.

The success or otherwise of these mergers has, in practice, depended not on the formal arrangements but on the intent of the governments driving them. The Scandinavian countries wanted to achieve a more joined up approach to international affairs, combining their diplomatic and development capacity to project their values and interests. They have largely succeeded; and that has been good for development.

The Commonwealth countries, by contrast, used their mergers to demote the interests of developing countries and to use their (already stingy) aid budgets more brazenly in their own interest. In these goals, they too have largely succeeded, at the expense of international development. Britain is the only country that was, at the beginning of 2020, a member of both the Commonwealth and the 0.7% club. How will we know if Britain's experience has, like the Scandinavians, created a joined up and principled approach to global issues, enhancing our impact on development; or if we have instead succeeded in following our Commonwealth friends by downgrading development?

In November 2020, FCDO was [set three objectives in the Spending Review](#). They gave FCDO three tasks, namely to: (a) ensure that the UK is a force for good in the world; (b) make the UK safer; and (c) extend the UK's influence. These objectives do not contradict each other, but they can be in tension - at least to the extent that they compete for scarce resources. From a development point of view, the success of the merger will be defined by how these three objectives are approached, and how much political capital is devoted to each of them.

The merger has put aid policies more directly at the service of British interests and it has also set a new, global objective for Britain's diplomatic network and resources: the question is, which of these changes will prove more significant?

The merger will have been a success if all UK international policies are effectively deployed for all three of these objectives. If we start to see policies such as international tax cooperation, arms sales, sanctions, climate change, and research and development used not only to promote Britain's interests, but also to be a force for good in the world, we will have moved from development being a niche interest of the aid ministry into a central goal of Britain's foreign policy. If Britain used not only our aid budget, but all the policy levers at our disposal, we could multiply the extent to which we are a force for good in the world.

The merger will have failed if serving Britain's interests is always put ahead of being a force for good in the world. If our aid money and the expertise of our development specialists are put mainly at the service of the UK's security and commercial interests, then we will continue to lose good and committed staff, the effectiveness of our aid will go down, and in the long run, public support for the aid budget will be eroded.

The merger will have made no difference if our aid budget continues to focus on the goal of making the world a better place, and our diplomacy and broader international policies continue to focus mainly on UK interests. This is broadly the status quo. This is perhaps the most likely outcome, not least because the merger was instituted with no identified strategic intent, other than to please the right wing of the Conservative party.

How and when will we know which of these three possible outcomes we are heading towards? The lazy answer is to look at aid allocation. If Britain's interests are being put ahead of being a force for good, we would expect to see more aid going to middle income countries rather than low income countries (where we have fewer trading and investment interests, but where aid can do more good). Local ownership will be replaced by British priorities; and long-term partnerships will be replaced by conditionality and efforts to use aid to apply political pressure. Worse still, we might return to the bad old days of aid being used to support British business to win contracts abroad - a practice that came to an end with [the Pergau Dam scandal](#). If we see aid being changed in these ways, that should set alarm bells ringing. The [Foreign Secretary's recent letter to Sarah Champion](#), which trumpeted bilateral over multilateral aid, and the government's plan to cut aid below 0.7% of GDP, do not bode well. But aid allocation is not the litmus test. If necessary, I could live with distortions in Britain's aid budget if that is the price we have to pay for real progress on more joined-up global policies.

The UK is chairing the G7 in the summer of 2021 and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in the autumn. These will be defining moments for whether the UK is willing to use its diplomacy and influence, as well as aid, to be a force for good.

For example, the UK could use the G7 meeting to push for [financial transparency](#) - to extend and improve the automatic exchange of financial information and public registers of beneficial ownership, and to require country-by-country reporting by multinational companies. And the UK could lead by requiring all the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to implement these measures, including providing financial support to enable them to shift their economic model from offshore financial havens.

Helping to build a global financial system that reduces scope for corruption and tax avoidance is just one way that Britain could be a force for good in the world.

We could end arms sales to undemocratic countries. [We could even stop buying oil and gas from them](#). We could use our new independent sanctions law to take a tougher approach to strong men and kleptocrats, who [continue to use the global economic system to shield their wealth](#), and we could stop them from using our courts to enforce their contracts (or to have their debts enforced against their democratic successors).

We could use COP26 to push for a fair agreement on loss and damage to developing countries from climate change caused by emissions from rich countries. We could push for carbon border adjustment mechanisms to ensure a level playing field for countries that are strict about reducing emissions.

This year was probably the first time you had heard of the Fisheries Protection Squadron (and [not for a good reason](#)). You may have learned that it is the oldest squadron in the Royal Navy. The squadron in which Admiral Nelson once served is charged with protecting UK fishing zones - while [we turn a blind eye](#) to European and Japanese trawlers which have depleted fishing stocks along the West Coast of Africa. If Britain wants to be a force for good, we could use our naval capabilities to protect the fisheries of other countries, including developing countries [whose fish stocks have been plundered](#).

Is this realistic? From 1808 to 1867, the West Africa Squadron of the Royal Navy was tasked with suppressing the Atlantic slave trade by patrolling the west coast of Africa. This was not entirely altruistic - this noble effort coincided with prolonged violent

British colonialism, the effects of which still remain. Britain was motivated in small part by values, and in large part by concern to prevent British trade from being undercut by plantations using slave labour. Britain used its naval might in muscular enforcement of what we would today call a "level playing field".

At its peak, this effort to disrupt the slave trade accounted for half the spending of the Royal Navy and 2% of government spending. That is what Global Britain being a force for good around the world looks like. Today we are far richer, but our great maritime nation cannot even summon the resources to protect Africa's waters from rogue fishing.

So we will know whether the FCDO merger has succeeded by the end of the G7 summit in the summer of 2021. If Britain chooses to be a force for good in the world by reallocating dwindling aid budgets to politically-salient, short-term headlines, then the merger has failed. But if Britain uses the G7 to push on all fronts - diplomacy, defence and development - to tackle shared global problems, using all the instruments at our disposal, then the merger will indeed have raised our game.

If by the end of the year, Britain is still operating a chain of financial secrecy havens, and selling arms to Saudi Arabia while buying their oil, it is hard to see how we can claim to be a force for good in the world. It is an improbably high bar, but that is how I will judge the success of the newly merged department.

NEWS IN BRIEF

France to review its development budget

In December 2020, the French government announced a review of development cooperation in response to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in the least developed countries.

France aims to spend 0.55% of GNP on aid by 2022. 50% of French aid is concentrated in 19 African countries. It prioritises four areas:

- the fight against climate change and the preservation of the environment;
- human development and gender equality;
- economic development for social progress;
- strengthening human rights, stability and peace.

Gordon Bridger

1928-2020

Jim Winpenny



At my first meeting of the Economic Planning Staff in April 1967 at the Ministry of Overseas Development I took an empty seat around the large table in Room 901 of Eland House. I introduced myself to the person next to me, who helpfully drew a table plan with the names of all the other people present. This person was Gordon Bridger, and he was to become my guide to much else in my future work, as colleague and later my senior officer.

Gordon was one of the Founding Fathers of the Economic Planning Staff, a group of economists in the early days of the ODM which evolved into the Economic Service. When he joined, in 1966, he already had substantial overseas experience, initially in Southern Africa, and then with the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America in Chile. In the latter organisation his native Spanish came in useful.

He became Head of the Geographical Division in the Economic Service. Always affable, informal and approachable, he drew heavily on his field experience and had an intuitive grasp of relevant issues, which complemented the more formal and academic approaches of some of his colleagues.

His time in the ODM/ODA is memorably captured in his personal memoir, "How I failed to save the world". Although light-hearted and self-deprecating in tone - and hilarious in places - the book contains many serious insights and observations and typifies his manner as a colleague and friend - spontaneous, entertaining, and apt to be outrageous in a deadpan style.

We went on to collaborate in writing a book "Planning Development Projects" which distilled our joint experiences and was widely read by development practitioners.

As Gordon reminded us at his recent 90th Birthday event, he arrived in Britain in 1948 as a Deck Boy, having almost steered his ship aground in the Cape Verde Islands. He was proud of his Argentinian background, though no less proud of his British citizenship, and wrote two books on the historical links between his two countries. My wife Lyndsay and I attended and performed at several of his Latin American-themed parties in Guildford.

In his retirement he devoted himself to local politics and was thrilled to be elected Mayor of Guildford. He grew increasingly critical of the British development aid programme and campaigned against the 0.7% aid target, which led in his view to wasteful and perverse outcomes.

Eighteen months ago, Gordon organised a lunch in London for a dozen of his ex-colleagues at which we recalled highlights of our times in the EPS. His last campaign, interrupted by his death, was to try and rebalance perceptions of the old British Empire which he felt was being unfairly demonised.

A kind, generous spirit, good to his family and friends, Gordon may not have Saved the World, but he tried harder than most to do so. He was a legend and is sorely missed.

Beth Ash

1959-2020

Beth worked in DFID and its predecessors for 40 years in various teams both in the UK and overseas, including the Overseas Pensions Department, the Aid Management office in Kiribati, the Joint Assistance Unit, Performance and Effectiveness Department, International Trade Department, and finally as Business Manager and Deputy Head of the Operational Excellence team in Africa Regional Department.

She was a good listener, mentor, friend and always provided sound advice to those around her. She made the department a brighter and friendlier place to work and always had a welcoming smile, a good sense of humour and a listening ear. She was passionate about the important differences to individuals development can make. Beth was much loved by her colleagues both in the UK and overseas and will be very sadly missed. Her love for her family shone through and our thoughts and deepest sympathies are with her family at this very sad time.



Life after DFID: Sue Wardell

When I was asked to do a piece about life after DFID I was uncertain. It seemed to me somewhat frivolous to talk about our life here in West Dorset, particularly in the current climate with the global challenges of Covid and Climate Change and the merger of DFID into FCDO. I could not see the relevance of what I might have to say.

This sense of irrelevance was only heightened when I read a number of other contributions to this theme. I was humbled by the way so many have built on their DFID experience and continue to make such significant contributions to the world.

And then I caught myself, "am I doing it again", as I have spent most of my life thinking that I am not worthy to be in the positions I find myself in and one day they will all see "the Empress has no clothes". I guess for me this was both a gender and class issue. Coming from a strong working class background, with parents who strived so hard to encourage me to move beyond my roots that made me question what was wrong with where I had come from? This left a mark of imposter on me as I began to move into realms that no one else in my family had ever aspired to. Add to that the potent cocktail of sex discrimination of the late 60s early 70s which permeated all levels of society and served to reinforce the sense that really I wasn't good enough and shouldn't be here.

I recall for me this was especially the case when dealing with the rest of Whitehall, particularly the FCO - who seemed so self-assured and confident in their abilities and right to be there. I watched with admiration as many of my DFID colleagues seemed to sail through these encounters whilst I hid my sense of inadequacy behind a brave smile. I can honestly say this feeling never left me despite my experience both in and out of DFID. And as colleagues in what was DFID move into the new world of FCDO they too may feel some of these misgivings and sense of alienation in a different culture.

What I would say to them is be strong and resilient. DFID has so much to bring to the FCO. When I did the Capability Review of the FCO for the Cabinet office it was clear to me that whilst the FCO has a strong culture of leadership development and world class diplomatic skills, they lacked the entrepreneurial spirit of DFID and its breadth and depth of world class professional expertise in a huge range of sectors. They also can learn from DFID's engagement and facilitation skills, our ability to talk to Senators and Prime Ministers one day and remote rural communities the next. And DFID's compassion and ability to put ourselves in the shoes of the other party and to see the world from more than one perspective. This is as well as being the leading global development agency and world class project management and delivery organisation. So I would encourage everyone to be bold, brave and hold your heads up. You are more than good enough, you are world class.

So where have I been since I left DFID in 2012? I went to the African Development Bank as Vice President. For me this felt like the perfect epilogue to the story of my career journey which started when at 7 years old I was inspired by a presentation to my primary school by aid workers of their work in Africa. To be back in Africa working for one of the independence African institutions was a privilege that I greatly enjoyed. It was challenging and as many others have said we can take a lot of what is good about DFID for granted until we move elsewhere. But it was also incredibly educational, particularly coming to understand the unique role that these regional MDBs play and their special relationships with their regional shareholders.

After my contract finished I was ready finally to retire, strongly encouraged by my partner, Mark, who had retired 10 years earlier and was eager for me to do so. So after a few months in the UK touching base with family and friends and house hunting, we headed to the Caribbean for 6 months living on Mark's 42ft Ketch. This was in incredibly good decompression time from a great but exhausting career.



Living on a boat at anchor when you can go for days without setting foot on land makes you change your pace as your internal rhythm aligns to the sun and the moon and gentle ever present rocking of the waves. Life is much more simple when you cast the line over board to catch the fish for the evening supper and you live off what you can pack into one sailing bag. We made good friends and enjoyed great times walking in the hills, snorkelling and of course taking in the odd cricket match when the opportunity presented itself.

Returning to the UK we settled into our new home in West Dorset, a 17th century thatched cottage. We had taken the decision that as I was no longer working we did not need to continue to live in London. How prescient and fortunate that was to prove. Our approach to settling into West Dorset was a bit like moving to another overseas post! Discovering what makes the place tick, finding new pastimes and new friends. To this day we miss the vibrancy and diversity of London but for us the benefits of our new rural life outweigh the downsides.



And then came the big project. Having decided that we would settle in West Dorset for good we started looking for our forever home - we knew where we wanted to be but could not find the right house. Then a coalition of circumstances led us to the decision to build our own!! This was a 2 year project from purchase through securing planning permission, undertaking a bat survey and developing a mitigation plan, through demolition and construction with one of the wettest winters on record and then Covid arriving for the spring. But we got there and in October 2020 moved into our new home Ubuntu.

It has been a steep learning curve again as we wanted to make our forever home both future proofed as we get older and as carbon neutral as possible. So we have insulated, insulated, insulated to just below Passive House standards. Installed Solar PV and Batteries, an Air Source Heat Pump and Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery system. We are at the early stages of reading though all the manuals and down-loading all the apps on how to make these systems talk to each other (echoes of FCDO again...!!) but already we are appreciating the incredible light and healthy space we now live in. You can read more about our project on my blog at www.suewardell.com

Moving forward we will turn our attention to the garden which looks like the trenches following the construction - we want this to be as wild life friendly as possible so are experimenting with micro clover lawns and the traditional skill of laying our hedges, as well as creating wildlife sanctuaries throughout the area. We will also be looking at a micro hydro project next year if we can do it in a wildlife friendly way.

Like others I too have taken on some trustee and advisory positions for both local and international charities and find it very rewarding to keep connected with my life's passion. I also do pro bono coaching for friends and acquaintances which helps me to share some of the lessons I have learnt over the years. I do sometimes miss the adrenaline rush of working on major emergencies, creating new policy, leading missions, appearing before select committees etc., but overall my life has settled into a different, slower but equally rewarding rhythm and I continue to grow and learn.

New Year's Honours: international development

CB

Mark BOWMAN, DFID Director General 2011-2013, now Director General, International and EU, in HM Treasury.

CMG

Dr Rachel GLENNERSTER, Chief Economist, FCDO.

JOANNA GABRIELLE da SILVA became a DBE

In 2007 she founded a not for profit subsidiary of Arup, Arup International Development, to enable Arup's world-renowned technical excellence and creativity to be applied directly to improving human development outcomes, shifting the approach of a major engineering company to prioritise social outcomes for vulnerable communities in developing countries. She is one of the most successful women structural engineers globally.

OBE

Daniel GRAYMORE, Head of Global Funds Department, FCDO .

Nicholas Mark GUTTMANN, lately Head of Humanitarian, Christian Aid.

Alicia Jacinta HERBERT, Head of Children, Youth and Education, FCDO

Dr. Christopher Richard LEWIS, Deputy Director, COVID-19 Science, Head of Profession for Health, FCDO.

Professor Michael Peter MOORE, Chief Executive Officer, International Centre for Tax and Development.

Lois Abigail PERRY, Senior Nutrition Adviser, FCDO.

Cathryn Nerys Rhiannon TURTON, Head of Development Office Zimbabwe and South Africa, British Embassy, Harare.

Saul Sebastian WALKER, Deputy Director, COVID-19 Vaccines, Therapeutics and Diagnostics, FCDO

MBE

Sheikh Mansoor AHMAD, Senior Private Sector Development Adviser, FCDO

Stephen David BOLEY, Voluntary Service Overseas volunteer.

Sophie Madeleine BRACKEN, Policy Adviser, Global Funds Department, FCDO

Daniel KIBBLE, Policy Manager, Global Funds Department, FCDO

Alan Philip MILLS, Volunteer, MapAction.

Happy looking back and happy going forward

Tom Crowards

I left the British Government on 31 December 2020, having been recruited directly into DFID in 2003. I entered into the maelstrom of a Policy Division reorganisation. Which I would learn is a recurring process, something about the only constant being change...

I was given the new Macroeconomics Team to establish and run. Looking back, I think I was too overwhelmed with everything being new and uncertain, to fully appreciate the opportunity it provided to run a little team with a lot of autonomy.

After a couple of years I was off to Bangladesh. DFID gave me the privilege of having a house provided, kids in a good international school, official vehicles on call, a diplomatic 'club' to retreat to.... And really challenging work, with way too much to do but scope to get real things done with the potential to improve people's lives. Very motivating. DFID was growing, our project pipeline was expanding, what we were doing felt like real development work, and I relished it.

After Bangladesh I moved to Ghana for 5 years. General budget support was starting to lose its lustre when I arrived in 2009, but we were still approving projects for hundreds of millions, coordinating vigorously with our likeminded donor partners, and questioning whether we really could (or should) influence government policy.

But there were also separate projects to be designed and monitored around the country – always surprisingly complicated, but a growing realisation that that is what people are, and that people need to be the focus, although they will inevitably not respond in the logical ways that us economists can see would be oh-so-optimal.

I then took a less common DFID job, in Washington DC as UK Director at the Inter-American Development Bank. A real backwater within DFID. And a whole new world of learning, about international financial institutions, and their intense politics. Including the deadening impact of the Trump administration on a development institution focussed on those to the south of his "magnificent wall".

Finally, my DFID career took me to the capital of the other global power, China. A fascinating place to be,



during the Covid outbreak and deterioration of relations with the US. But more politics than development. Perhaps an insight into what a merger with the FCO might be like?

I was very happy to be leaving at a time that the merger was ongoing. But it's not why I left. Essentially, I felt that 18 years in the civil service was enough, and my wife and I decided it was time to move on, to a new life in Canada. I have no regrets whatsoever about my career with DFID. It was everything I hoped for and more. So many great colleagues, many now good friends. But nor do I regret leaving. The new FCDO seems unlikely to provide the same opportunities in international development that a growing DFID afforded me. I'm happy looking back, and happy to be out going forward!

Like everyone else who was in DFID, I can wax lyrical for way too long about my experiences. I look forward to being part of the alumni and to maintaining contacts with the exceptional group of people who have been part of DFID's history and – I'd like to think – its successes.

Join the ODA reunion

Friday 18th to Sunday 20th June 2021
Royal Albert Dock Liverpool

A few ex DFID colleagues who joined ODM/ODA in the late 1970's/early 1980's have booked the Holiday Inn Express on the dock for a get-together in June. Others are welcome to come along, either staying at the same hotel or another nearby (most offer free cancellation given current uncertainties over Covid 19 restrictions).

Details 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.

Small Islands, Big Challenges

Stefan Kossoff, FCDO Development Director, Caribbean

Greetings DFID Alumni! Out here in this small corner of the Caribbean (Barbados), in common with pretty much everywhere else on the planet, 2020 has been a year to survive rather than thrive and endure rather than enjoy. While the Caribbean has, by and large, been spared the worst health impacts of Covid-19, we still experienced several months of lockdown, complete with the “joys” of remote working and (for those with kids) home schooling. In some ways UK based staff were fortunate not to be drawn down to the UK like many colleagues in Africa and Asia. But it is difficult to fully convey the sense of isolation from the wider world that comes from living on a small island during a global pandemic and the shutdown of all international flights.

From a professional perspective too, these were undoubtedly amongst the most challenging times. My focus has been on keeping our development programme on track, while mobilising our emergency response to the crisis, and ensuring that staff health and well-being were properly prioritised. I am really proud of what we achieved together: working through the international system to get critical health supplies to partner countries; providing social protection support to those most affected by the crisis; and helping to stand up the “COVAX facility”, which should ensure that all countries of the region get fair and equitable access to vaccines once they are rolled out. But despite these efforts, the Caribbean—with its largescale reliance on tourism—looks set to be hit harder than any other region in the world from the economic fall-out of the pandemic. As a result, we are now planning for a very different and bleaker future than anticipated at the start of 2020.

The UK development programme in the Caribbean covers eight ODA-eligible countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Given this geographical spread, the rhythm of professional life prior to the pandemic was one marked by frequent travel between countries. But when everything came to a grinding halt in March it was amazing how quickly we adapted to the new conditions and how everyone, including avowed technophobes like myself, moved rapidly up the digital learning curve! IT systems that often seemed to fail during normal times suddenly kicked into action, while communications through Microsoft Teams and Zoom became the norm overnight. Somewhat counter-intuitively, the shift to virtual working has brought us closer to some of our partners as it has enabled more regular interaction than was previously possible with one-off monitoring visits.

This rapid digital transformation has also contributed to significant reductions in our carbon footprint, heralding the possibility of cleaner, greener and more efficient ways of working in the future. This matters in the Caribbean which is at the sharp end of the struggle against climate change and the threat from increasingly frequent natural disasters. Aside from the pandemic, 2020 was also a record-breaking Atlantic hurricane season - and although the region avoided a major impact on this occasion, the destructive consequences were laid bare in both 2017 and 2019 when several countries suffered devastating strikes and are still recovering.

Fortunately, there is now a growing recognition both within HMG and internationally of the unique vulnerabilities and existential threats faced by Caribbean countries and other Small Island Developing States (or SIDS). These vulnerabilities have been further exposed by the pandemic, creating a renewed sense of urgency to address the critical needs of SIDS, including on adaptation to climate change.



The UK is contributing in important ways to this, not least through our £330m UK Caribbean Infrastructure Fund which is supporting 14 major climate-resilient infrastructure projects around the region. Much of our collective energy over the next year will also be devoted towards raising the profile of SIDS issues in the run-up to the CoP26 conference in Glasgow in November.

Working in this part of the world, it's important to appreciate how history and particularly "our" history permeates much of the daily landscape. On the one hand, there is a genuine affinity for the UK, not least because of our shared history, legal systems, and constitutional arrangements; and also because of the direct links that exist as a result of the million-strong Caribbean Diaspora in the UK. But, on the other, the painful consequences of slavery cannot be avoided, and nor can the reverberations from more recent traumatic events such as the Windrush scandal and the Black Lives Matter movement.

2020 was also the year in which Barbados declared its intention to become a Republic and elect its own head of government. The Caribbean is changing and new players like China are coming onto the field. To be effective we need to understand what is driving these changes and adapt our offer accordingly.

Closer to home, the big news of 2020 was of course the DFID-FCO merger and the creation of the FCDO. Whilst there was inevitably sadness when the merger was announced, the impact on our working life has not been as dramatic as you might imagine. In the Caribbean we already had a good, joined-up approach with FCO colleagues - underpinned by an integrated HMG strategy for the region; positive relationships on the ground; and shared equities in agendas around climate change, organised crime, trade and inclusive growth, to name but a few. That said, there is clearly much to be done in developing new systems and structures, as well as bringing together two quite different organisational cultures.

2021 promises to be another challenging year, particularly as we grapple with the long-term implications of Covid-19 and the recently announced development budget reductions. But I remain hopeful that with the tenacity and ingenuity of FCDO colleagues (both old and new) we can support the region on the road to recovery and towards a better, more resilient, future.

DFID Alumni Committee meeting

The committee met by Zoom video conference on 8 January 2021. It discussed your views on the future of the DFID Alumni Association and Pauline will write to members soon with more information. We also debated when to hold our next event and concluded that we should plan on a late summer party in September. We hope to hold it at Admiralty House in Whitehall and Pam will let you know more details as soon as she can. We will hold our AGM in June and expect to do so by video conference. More details on these and other events to follow.

Christmas event and the 100 club

The 100 club draw has always been a popular event linked to our Christmas party and we held a draw on 14th December. As in previous years, members could purchase one or more tickets priced at £20. Half of the funds raised help to support the DFID Alumni financially, (especially important in current times) and half went into a raffle with cash prizes for members whose names were drawn out of a hat.

Thank you to all those who bought tickets and we were also very grateful to members who used this opportunity to make a generous donation to the DFID Alumni Association.



The results of the draw are as follows:

1st prize of £200 –

Michael Pattison

2nd prize of £100 –

Alexandra Zayarna

3rd prize of £50 –

Geoff Williams



Committee members

Pauline Hayes

Chair



Pam Jenkins

Secretary



John Burton

Treasurer



Jim Drummond

Janet Grimshaw



Mike Hammond

Kathy Marshall



Carol Norman

John Stuppel



Marc Taylor

Sasha Zayarna



Welcome and Farewell

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

Des Collins

Alison Jillot

Phil Mason

Raisa Tabrizi-Desmond

Sadly, we have been informed that three ex DFID colleagues passed away:

Beth Ash

Gordon Bridger

see page 7

Bob Grose



*An [obituary by Roy Head](#) is in *The Guardian*.*

Our condolences to their families and friends.

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

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](https://dgroups.org) at <https://dgroups.org> .