House of Commons
International Development Committee


Seventh Special Report of Session 2014–15

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The International Development Committee

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The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some or all written evidence are available in a printed volume.

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Dr David Harrison (Clerk), Chloe Challender (Senior Committee Specialist), Louise Whitley (Committee Specialist), Zac Mead (Senior Committee Assistant), Paul Hampson (Committee Support Assistant) and Jessica Bridges-Palmer (Media Officer).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the International Development Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 1223; the Committee’s email address is indcom@parliament.uk
Seventh Special Report

On 2 October 2014 the International Development Committee published its Sixth Report of Session 2014–15, Recovery and Development in Sierra Leone and Liberia, HC 247. On 2 December the Committee received a memorandum from the Secretary of State for International Development which contains a response to the Report. The memorandum is published as an appendix to this Report.

Government response

Introduction

The UK Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the International Development Committee’s Report on the UK’s Recovery and Development in Sierra Leone and Liberia. We appreciate the Committee’s support for development programmes in Sierra Leone and Liberia and agree that it is important that the UK continues to provide aid to two of the poorest countries in the world.

As the Committee indicate, Sierra Leone is one of the world’s poorest countries, lying eleventh from the bottom of the UN’s Human Development Index in 2013, with some of the worst social and economic indicators in the world. Before the Ebola crisis, the country’s prospects were rapidly improving as the benefits of lasting peace and steady economic growth were slowly beginning to trickle through. A recent Sierra Leone Household Survey showed a reduction, from 2003-11, in the proportion of Sierra Leoneans living below the national poverty line from 66.4% to 52.9% – a major step forward. The scale of the challenge that remains however is significant, particularly now that the country will need to get back on its feet once the Ebola outbreak has been contained and defeated. As such, Sierra Leone continues to be one of the highest per capita recipients of UK aid worldwide.

DFID’s team in Sierra Leone is also responsible for running a small country programme in Liberia. Like Sierra Leone, Liberia also lies near the bottom (12th from bottom) of the United Nation’s Human Development Index, with some of the worst infant and maternal mortality rates in sub-Saharan Africa, even before the Ebola outbreak. Substantial improvements in reproductive health and life saving services for women of childbearing age and children had been achieved however. Fertility rates had reduced from 5.2 in 2008 to 4.7 in 2013 and reductions in child and infant mortality had suggested that the MDG target for child mortality was within reach.

Since the IDC published its report on Sierra Leone and Liberia, the Ebola crisis in West Africa has reached unprecedented levels. The UK is leading the response in Sierra Leone and to date has committed to more than £230 million to it.
The future of the UK development programmes in Sierra Leone and Liberia will undoubtedly be shaped by the current crisis. So, as part of the UK’s response, DFID has established a “Beyond Ebola” team in Sierra Leone which is looking at the implications of the crisis on the UK’s existing development programmes as well as identifying opportunities for strengthening long term impact, for instance on health systems, food security and job creation. We are already working closely with the Government of Sierra Leone and international partners to plan initiatives which will deliver sustained improvements in the lives of poor people.

The UK Government is grateful to the Committee for shining a spotlight on the UK’s contribution to recovery and development programmes in Sierra Leone and Liberia. We are pleased that the Committee recognises the good work DFID is delivering in these countries, while wishing to be responsive to its recommendations for improvements.

Response to the conclusions and recommendations

DFID Spending

1. We realise that there will be differences between the priorities of the UK and those of the Government of Sierra Leone, for example, as we discuss later on FGM. But since Sierra Leone has agreed to be one of seven pilot countries for the implementation of a “New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States”, we recommend that DFID do more to align its programmes with national priorities set out in Sierra Leone’s Agenda for Prosperity, not least to ensure there is political buy-in from the recipient government. (Paragraph 14)

Partially Agree. DFID Sierra Leone supported the Government of Sierra Leone during the drafting of the Agenda for Prosperity (A4P) and has worked hard to ensure its programmes align with those national priorities. The launch of the plan was quickly followed by an agreement between the government and development partners, led by the UK, to sign up to a Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF), in line with the commitment made by Sierra Leone to be one of seven pilot countries for the implementation of a “New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States”.

The signing of the MAF in February of this year marks the beginning of a new type of relationship for Sierra Leone with the international community; now defined less by security concerns and more by a business-like relationship to reduce poverty and continue development.

The level of challenge in delivering the plan itself remains high, but the MAF creates a valuable focal point for dialogue and mutual accountability. The leading role played by the UK in formulating the agreement reinforces our position as Sierra Leone’s most influential development partner, while at the same time strengthening the alignment of all donors around a common framework.
While the A4P has provided a comprehensive set of issues that need addressing, it did not identify a short list of high priorities for the government and development partners to focus on. In the ‘post-Ebola’ recovery period working with the Government on this sort of prioritisation will be an important aspect of the UK’s engagement.

2. **We recommend that, following the claims by NGOs of the successful use of consortia in WASH and education in Sierra Leone, DFID considers expanding this approach to other sectors such as health and to other countries where it could also work well. (Paragraph 16)**

   **Agree.** DFID is making increased use of consortium approaches in its support for the delivery of basic services, while recognising that the choice of instruments very much depends on the specific context – for example while a consortium approach might work well in, say, South Sudan, it may be less appropriate in a graduating country such as Ghana. We are, for example, utilising WASH consortia elsewhere in our WASH portfolio, most notably through our new centrally managed WASH Results programme which has funded three delivery partners, two being consortia of NGOs and private sector companies selected following competition, to provide access to WASH for 4.7 million people across 13 countries. The programme is at an early stage but appears to be working well and has the potential to offer beneficial competition to other longer established WASH delivery partners.

   Our South Sudan programme is a good example of the expansion of consortium approaches, in that we have helped establish and fund different NGO consortia in delivering alternative education and girls’ education, and in health services delivery. We recognise that care needs to be taken to ensure that such support also includes support to build government capacity to take ownership and responsibility for the delivery of services over time, and to avoid the development of parallel structures. We will continue to look at the potential for using such approaches in other programmes.

3. **We find the DFID Liberia satellite office model a successful and sensible approach for the region. We recommend that DFID consider applying this model to other countries specifically to Burundi. (Paragraph 22)**

   **Partially Agree.** We will certainly bear the Liberia satellite office model in mind for possible application elsewhere. However, as the Government indicated in its response to the IDC’s 9th Special Report, The Closure of DFID’s Bilateral Aid Programme in Burundi, Government Response to the Committee’s Tenth Report of Session 2010-12, HC 1730, we do not plan to reinstate the DFID Burundi bilateral programme. This is not primarily because of the costs of administering a programme but because Burundi is not one of our focus countries for development, and rather than continue our small programme there we considered it best to concentrate our efforts on countries where we could have most impact. The
response explained that DFID would continue to support Burundi’s integration into the East African Community (EAC), which we believe to be the single most important factor in the country’s medium-term growth, through our support to Trade Mark East Africa (TMEA), as well as our continuing support to Burundi through the multilaterals and vertical funds. The response added that DFID Rwanda would keep a close watching brief on the economic and development situation in Burundi, and also monitor TMEA’s work.

4. We note that the UK is already working with other partners in the region, particularly with the USA, but more can be done within the Mano River Union as a whole—the importance of this has been demonstrated by the Ebola outbreak across the area. We recommend that DFID work more closely with its US counterparts in Liberia and French colleagues in Guinea. (Paragraph 28)

**Partially Agree.** As the report indicates, the UK’s International Security Advisory Team (ISAT), based in Sierra Leone and funded through the Conflict Pool/CSSF-resourced Security Sector Reform Programme, has close links with its US and French counterparts (the US Operation Onward Liberty in Monrovia and French Office of Security Cooperation in Conakry). This cooperation includes information and best practice sharing, active collaboration in local security training and capacity-building - for example the UK and US provided joint training to Sierra Leone troops destined for peacekeeping duties in Somalia, and the US has funded Liberian officers to attend the UK-supported Sierra Leone Armed Forces Staff College in Freetown. ISAT also has a strong and growing relationship with the Mano River Union Secretariat, based in Freetown, and has budgeted funds to help build the capacity of this organisation. Further opportunities for such security collaboration will be considered as they arise, subject to the availability of funds and other calls on CSSF and other funding both in Africa and elsewhere. In scoping our re-engagement in economic development after the Ebola crisis, we will assess the importance of broader regional integration issues across the MRU.

5. We note the problems DFID has had in recruiting and retaining staff in Sierra Leone and Liberia. If this is because staff are attracted to those countries in the media spotlight because of better promotion prospects, we recommend that DFID reconsider its promotion criteria. We are concerned about the consequences of the Ebola outbreak for future recruitment; in its response, DFID should state what steps it has taken in response to this emergency to protect DFID staff. (Paragraph 31)

**Partially Agree.** We do not agree that we have faced particular problems recruiting and retaining staff in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Until April 2014, the DFID Sierra Leone and Liberia office had just two Heads of Office over a six year period, both of them completing DFID’s standard three year posting. Experienced Acting Heads of Office have been in place since April ahead of the new Head of Office’s anticipated start in January 2015.
Since the Ebola outbreak, we have increased our staff resources in the Sierra Leone country office and in UK-based teams. A number of staff at all levels have requested/agreed to travel to Sierra Leone, with our HCS staff in DFID Sierra Leone doubling in number since October 14th. We have also actively reviewed our resourcing model and staffing needs in-country. Along with the FCO, we have reviewed and enhanced the measures to keep staff safe, including protocols for managing individuals before, during and after deployment, and further welfare support.

**Concerns with DFID operations**

6. We are appalled that as DFID’s budget rises to 0.7% of GNI, bilateral programmes to Africa’s poorest countries are being cut. We disagree with cutting bilateral programmes in vulnerable countries either to go to regional programmes or humanitarian relief—for which DFID still refuses to set out to us the budgeting allocation or process. The case for returnable funding should not apply to key development programmes in low income countries; it should still retain a poverty reduction focus. We recommend that the Government reinstates the budget for Sierra Leone and Liberia. (Paragraph 35)

**Disagree.** Britain is the largest bilateral donor to Sierra Leone and our support has been consistent over this parliament. In 2010/11 we spent £51 million and in 2013/14 it was £68 million. We expect our bilateral and multilateral health and education spend in Sierra Leone to continue to increase slightly from £33 million in 2013/14 to £34 million in 2014/15.

DFID uses a range of delivery channels based on what delivers the most value of money for delivering our targeted development results.

To ensure resources will be used in the most efficient way, we often test different delivery options including bilateral or multilateral funding. In some cases, particularly when a development problem crosses borders, a global or regional approach can be more effective than a one-country programme. DFID’s centrally managed programmes often benefit from international expertise, reduced administrative costs and provide well targeted support as they operate in a number of countries and are therefore the chosen delivery option.

DFID is also now providing additional funds to lead the international response to the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone committing £230 million to date. UK funding will diagnose and isolate Ebola cases more quickly, deliver 700 treatment beds to help up to 8,800 patients over 6 months, support burial teams and provide cemetery
management, quadruple lab capacity in Sierra Leone, research a vaccine and shore up the country’s stretched public health services to help contain the disease.

7. **Multilaterals do not always provide adequate oversight of the programmes they manage. In particular, we recommend the World Bank should appoint a full time country expert in Liberia to oversee the World Bank managed pooled fund on transportation. (Paragraph 39)**

This recommendation is a matter for the World Bank to consider. However, DFID would not continue to support the pooled fund on transportation if its performance was unsatisfactory. It has and continues to encourage the Bank to devolve more of its technical expertise from Washington to its country offices across Africa to provide closer oversight of its programmes, including those supported through donor supported Trust Funds.

8. **We believe that bilateral country offices should not only be consulted in the operation of the centrally-managed programmes within the country, but also in their design stage as they are the people who know the country and have the necessary internal contacts. The fact that they are not consulted is very concerning. We are aware that DFID is now putting in place a ‘protocol’ for how centrally managed programmes work with country offices, but it is shocking that this has not been in place for some time (Paragraph 42)**

**Agree.** DFID Sierra Leone and Liberia focuses on key development areas and cannot provide support to the Government of Sierra Leone in all sectors. Centrally managed programmes offer an opportunity to tap into international expertise, reduce administrative costs and provide well targeted support.

We are working on ways to improve our collection of management information on the geographical allocation of centrally-managed programmes both in the short term and particularly in our medium term information systems development.

As the IDC acknowledges, a protocol is now in place that will enable country offices to come to a judgement as to the degree to which it is appropriate for them to be involved in centrally managed programme design.

9. **We are also appalled that DFID and the Minister do not know how much DFID spends in total in Sierra Leone. This is a figure which should be widely available and used by officials and ministers in meetings with Sierra Leonean counterparts. By just using the bilateral country figure it seriously underestimates the scale of the UK and DFID’s contribution to the country which is not only bad accounting but also reduces the UK’s negotiating position. (Paragraph 43)**

**Partially Agree.** We agree that it is important to take into account DFID’s total geographical footprint in a given country. This should include not only the financial
resources managed directly by the country office but also bilateral programmes managed from the UK and our core contributions to multilateral organisations.

However, producing accurate and timely data on where centrally managed programmes are spent is challenging. When programmes start, the amounts that will be spent in each country can be subject to decisions made by the governing boards of global funds over the programme cycle. Nevertheless DFID is working to improve this situation. Work has started to map country and sector spend of centrally managed programmes wherever it is feasible and meaningful to do so. This should be complete in the first half on 2015. In the longer term, a new Aid Management Platform is being developed that will provide a prototype for a more permanent systems solution by September 2015.

10. We recommend that in its Annual Report DFID lists figures for centrally-managed programmes in countries where DFID has a bilateral programme. (Paragraph 44)

**Partially Agree.** In most cases, it is not possible to obtain up-to-date, robust and auditable country breakdowns of all centrally managed spend to the same timescale as for country-managed programmes due to reasons such as the limitations of different partners’ management information systems. We will, however, continue look into ways to improve how we can report on the range of delivery channels used by DFID, and will describe how the funding is allocated, including by geography, in the next Annual Report.

11. We recommend that the protocol to link bilateral country offices with centrally-managed programmes be established as a matter of urgency. The protocol should ensure that the country offices are informed of all the DFID centrally-managed programmes in the country and that the DFID country teams are consulted on the programme design stage. In its response to this Report, DFID should inform us of how this protocol will operate in detail. (Paragraph 45)

**Agree.** A protocol is now in place that will enable country offices to come to a judgement as to the degree to which it is appropriate for them to be involved in centrally managed programme design.

The protocol strongly encourages the involvement of country offices in the identification, design and monitoring of centrally managed programmes but recognises that the degree of country office involvement may vary with the size and focus of the programme.

12. We recommend that ICAI review DFID’s centrally-managed programmes to ensure they are being properly monitored and are engaging with country offices. (Paragraph 49)
This recommendation is a matter for ICAI to consider.

13. Given the range of programmes which DFID contracts to outside consultants, we recommend that DFID investigates the potential to set up an arm’s-length wholly or partially-owned consultancy that can either challenge these other providers and help to drive down costs or provide a greater pool of expertise. (Paragraph 50)

**Partially Agree.** DFID has established a commercial capability reform programme, building commercial capability within DFID that is able to utilise innovative and appropriate commercial practices and understand the commercial implications of the choices we make throughout the project lifecycle. This reform programme is driven by DFID’s Procurement and Commercial Department (PCD), which is responsible for supporting DFID’s operational delivery and driving commercial transformation across the organisation and the wider International Development system. We have made significant progress with this commercial transformation to date, and we are committed to continue driving change in this important capability area.

DFID has made a step change in proactively shaping and developing markets to drive competition, engaging with the supply market to both understand current capability and develop future strength and diversity. Our strategy is focused on ensuring fairness and transparency and appropriate levels of engagement across the supplier base with increased consideration being given to SMEs, NGOs and local ‘in-country’ market development. Activities include an annual Supplier Conference which provides opportunities for the department to communicate clear value for money and performance messages and regular supplier updates, and an increased use of early market engagement events to inform business case development and tendering strategy.

**Security and Justice**

14. We recommend the UK encourage the UN’s 2015 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture to consider the cost of UN missions and the consistency of decision-making, including criteria used for deciding when missions should come to an end particularly in reference to Liberia where our impression was that money could be better spent. (Paragraph 54)

**Agree.** The UK will be engaging closely with other UN Member States and the UN Secretary-General’s High Level Panel on the upcoming Peacebuilding Architecture Review. However it is the separate and recently announced UN Review of Peace Operations which will explicitly address UN peacekeeping and political missions, the changing global security landscape, future capabilities and resourcing. We will ensure that the Secretary-General’s Peace Operations Review looks closely at
mandate implementation, progress made towards building peace and stability, mission transitions and drawdowns, all of which are priorities for the UK.

The UK also plays an active role in seeking out budgetary efficiencies in the 5th Committee, which considers all budgetary matters relating to financing UN missions. In addition, we will continue to work directly with other UN Security Council members to discuss and analyse the progress the UN Mission in Liberia has made with regard to its mandate implementation, and support responsible drawdown when the security situation is suitable. The current Ebola outbreak risks posing a further challenge to Liberia’s fragile stability and security.

15. The UK has played an effective role in training the army in Sierra Leone. Much needed work has recently begun with the police, who are widely seen as corrupt; it is clear that this should have started earlier. We recommend that in future post-conflict situations, DFID make police reform a higher priority at an early stage. (Paragraph 60)

**Partially Agree.** Working with the Sierra Leone police has been a critical component of the UK’s work in Sierra Leone since 1999 (not 2012 as implied in the report), with multiple programmes of work and investment led by DFID (including seconding in a British Assistant Chief Constable as Inspector General of Police between 1999 and 2003). The recent work referred to is a new strand of activity being undertaken through the International Security Advisory Team, to complement other DFID efforts. Progress in policing reform has been uneven, in part reflecting the challenges posed in working with a large, public service-oriented institution facing multiple complex issues rather than a relatively smaller and more internally focussed military, and the relative prioritisation of policing within the security and justice sector.

We agree that policing is an important consideration in post-conflict environments, and DFID has been heavily involved in police reform and capacity building efforts in many other post-conflict environments in which it has worked. This is only one component of our security and justice programming. In March 2014, the UK Government published *Policing the Context: Principles and Guidance to Inform International Policing Assistance* based on the collective UK international policing experience over recent years in Afghanistan, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, DRC, Libya and elsewhere. The report highlights both ‘what works’ and the many challenges that must be managed to achieve success. It is part of an ongoing series of operational guidance from the UK Stabilisation Unit to improve security and justice programming and practice in post-conflict situations.

The UK is also working with international partners, including the United Nations, to support better standards and to increase the numbers and quality of police officers available for regional and internationally mandated police missions.

16. We were impressed by DFID’s Access to Justice projects in Sierra Leone where they seem to be making a difference to people’s lives and community cohesion
but we have serious concerns about their sustainability without donor support.
We recommend that DFID consider how the justice work could be funded in future, whether there are other donors who could be involved or whether it is something the Sierra Leone Government could one day consider subsidising in a similar way to Citizens Advice or Legal Aid in the UK. (Paragraph 65)

**Agree.** DFID’s access to security and justice programme is working at a number of different levels. In districts, we are supporting community mediation and provision of para-legal services, through support both to civil society organisations and to chiefs. We are helping to strengthen structures that will make this work more sustainable.

DFID recognises that access to justice in Sierra Leone will not be self-financing in the short-term. We are planning to continue our support to access to justice, with a focus on women and girls, beyond the current project which ends in 2015. We are also discussing with other donors who have supported this sector in the past, such as the Open Society Foundation, joint funding arrangements moving forwards.

Through our Access to Security and Justice Programme, we are also supporting strengthening of central government institutions. DFID has supported different justice sector departments and agencies to improve their budgeting and planning process. This resulted in a marked increase of the government budget central allocation to the justice sector in the 2014 budget. DFID will continue this process in 2014 and 2015. This is helping to reduce the dependency of the justice sector on DFID and other international donors.

**Health**

17. We are alarmed that such a high percentage of nurses and midwives from Sierra Leone are working in the UK. In its response to us the Government should reassure us it is no longer recruiting clinical staff from Sierra Leone. We recommend that DFID facilitate relations between UK healthcare institutions and professionals and those in Sierra Leone and Liberia. This should be a part of the senior health adviser’s job description and not simply left to that adviser’s initiative. We also recommend that the UK Government facilitate contacts between the Sierra Leonean and Liberian diaspora health professionals in the UK. (Paragraph 72)

**Partially Agree.** The Department of Health (DH) and DFID will continue to work together to review the UK approach to the recruitment of health workers from overseas. The UK has signed the World Health Organisation Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel and implements it through the UK Code of Practice for international recruitment. These Codes of Practice apply the principle that international recruitment of healthcare professionals should not prejudice the healthcare systems of developing countries, and the UK Code specifies a list of developing countries that should not be targeted for international recruitment under any circumstances. Sierra Leone is on this list.
Any commercial recruitment agency that wishes to supply the NHS must comply with the UK Code of Practice; and the NHS employers organisation manages the list of recruitment agencies that operate in accordance with this Code. However individual healthcare staff from these countries remain free to apply for jobs in the NHS.

DH also continues to work with DFID, the lead department, to support the Health Partnership Scheme (HPS), which aims to improve health outcomes in low-income countries through the effective transfer of health services skills, in ways that also benefit the UK public health sector. The scheme provides opportunities for British nurses, doctors and health workers to play a crucial role in the UK’s effort to reduce maternal and child deaths in the world’s poorest countries.

In addition, the DH and DFID continue to recognise the value of the Medical Training Initiative (MTI) and its importance in the way that the health sector supports the Government’s international development objectives with doctors returning to their countries and applying the skills and knowledge developed during their time in the UK. Doctors benefitting from MTI training take back with them knowledge of practice, procedure, networks and UK expertise which also deliver significant tangible benefits to the UK economy.

DFID will also continue to look at ways of supporting local medical training in its partner countries in order to promote retention of health workers. We are already active in this area – the HPS, for example, has contributed to health worker training including curriculum development in 26 countries using the skills of UK health professionals. Similarly, the ‘Making it Happen’ Partnership between the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine is training health professionals in Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care to reduce maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity in 11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Decisions about any new funding will depend on future budgets and operational plans.

18. **We recommend that, as a matter of urgency, working with EU officials DFID actively pursue what has happened to the EU sector support to health which has not been passed on by Liberia’s Ministry of Finance and has resulted in the weakening of an already strained health system.** (Paragraph 76)

**Partially Agree.** The EU disputes these figures. When the IDC’s report was published, DFID asked DEVCO for an urgent clarification of any delays to disbursements, although we noted that their targeted results had been achieved. The Commission are confident that this allegation is factually incorrect and that the EU had disbursed accordingly.

19. **We recommend that DFID assess why Liberia has made much faster progress in reducing child mortality than its neighbour Sierra Leone. DFID should also facilitate greater collaboration between the two countries and the sharing of best practices.** (Paragraph 80)
**Partially Agree.** There are multiple factors that contribute to improving health outcomes and for Liberia and Sierra Leone the key differences centre on:

- **Health status of the population:** Sierra Leone is starting from a lower base when compared with Liberia. In 2000, the maternal mortality ratio in Sierra Leone was more than double that of Liberia at 2,300 per 100,000 live births compared to 1,200.

- **Government capacity and leadership of the health sector:** In as much as there has been political support at the highest level of government in both countries through Presidents Koroma and Johnson Sirleaf, leadership of the sector has been consistently strong in Liberia where they have benefited from the continuity of having a single Minister of Health since 2007 compared to 4 Ministers of Health in Sierra Leone for the same period.

- **Strategic Approach:** The approach to improving the health system differed in the two countries with a parallel NGO-led health service delivery model employed in Liberia compared to service delivery through a decentralised public health system in Sierra Leone. While this may have contributed to more rapid progress in Liberia to date, it is too early to say which approach will be able to sustain improved health outcomes in the long run.

- **Early introduction of Free Healthcare services for all Liberians:** The Free Healthcare Initiative was established earlier in Liberia (in 2008 compared to 2010 in Sierra Leone).

**Liberia's performance in the wider determinants of health:** Education status of women, a key indicator for improved family health is higher in Liberia with 67% of females with some schooling compared to 57% in Sierra Leone. Access to improved drinking water in Liberia at 75% is significantly higher than in Sierra Leone at 57%.

DFID agrees that the two countries should share best practice and we will continue to facilitate this where possible, particularly as part of the work we will do on post-Ebola health systems strengthening.

20. The impression we gained on our visit was that there was a much stronger and committed leadership in health in the Liberian health ministry than in the Sierra Leonean. We are concerned that this reflected national priorities. The horrors of the Ebola outbreak show the importance of a well-functioning health system. We trust that the Government of Sierra Leone will now give a higher priority to health. (Paragraph 81)

**Agree.** Strong health systems are essential to improving the health of poor people in a fair and sustainable way. DFID has a long history of support for Health System Strengthening and is viewed as a leader in the field, especially at country level. However, healthcare systems in Liberia and Sierra Leone have been weakened by civil war, and in Guinea by a long history of political instability and military coups. This has contributed to the rapid spread of Ebola.
Total DFID bilateral country programme spend in Sierra Leone in 2013-14 was £68.6m, making us the biggest bilateral donor in the country. Of this just over 20% was spent on health programmes – half of that on maternal and newborn health. But prior to the Ebola outbreak, progress had been made, and health systems in Sierra Leone were on an upward trajectory in terms of performance. For example, thanks to DFID support since 2011, over 50,000 more births are delivered by skilled health personnel and almost 40,000 women are using a modern method of family planning for the first time.

The outbreak has weakened these fragile systems and undermined recent progress. And the deaths in healthcare workers will make it harder to staff Ebola clinics, forcing more patients to stay at home. The UK is continuing to support health systems strengthening in countries in the region, including Ghana and Nigeria. This includes making sure that systems are well managed and financed and that they have the facilities, staff and commodities they need to ensure that good quality services can be provided to all people, when and where they need them.

We are also working through the G20 and in Brisbane pressed international partners to provide more short-term support in staff and resources, as well as encouraged others to facilitate development of vaccines and to support longer-term resilience in the region.

21. The horrific Ebola outbreak has spread for many reasons, but the weakness of health systems has played a part. The outbreak indicates the continuing need for the governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia and for donors to give a high priority to health. Both countries are also going to need support from the international community on the long-term effects of the crisis in rebuilding the health systems and economies. We question whether the World Health Organisation is really on top of the epidemic and whether the international community are providing enough funds to manage the spread of the disease. (Paragraph 89)

Partially Agree. The UK is leading the response to the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone as part of a strategic international response to the region with the US leading in Liberia and France in Guinea. We agree that the international community needs to do more; this is why we are playing a leading role in galvanising international support. The Defeating Ebola conference that the Secretary of State co-hosted on 2 October in London generated over £100 million in assistance and contributions to the UN Trust Fund. The Prime Minister’s call to European leaders secured a commitment to a €1billion funding pledge. We are also working closely with EU and G20 partners. The international community will no doubt wish to review its processes, procedures and organisations once this crisis is over, and we look forward to contributing to that.
As part of the UK’s response to the Ebola crisis, DFID have established a “Beyond Ebola” team in Sierra Leone which is looking at the implications of the crisis on the UK’s existing development programmes as well as identifying opportunities for strengthening long term impact, for instance on health systems. We work closely with the Government of Sierra Leone and international partners to support initiatives which will deliver sustained improvements in the lives of poor people.

Exceptionally, an additional £2.5m contribution is being put into the health pool fund in Liberia this quarter to assist recovery from Ebola.

**Female Genital Mutilation**

22. We are extremely disappointed that DFID has not sought to address Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Sierra Leone. We understand Sierra Leone is a challenging context in which to tackle FGM, but this is no reason not to try. Sierra Leone is one of DFID’s largest bilateral programmes, and the country has one of the highest prevalence of FGM in the world. We recommend that DFID works with the survivors of FGM in Sierra Leone to establish a way to address the practice. In its response to this Report, DFID should state how it intends to combat FGM in Sierra Leone. (Paragraph 97)

**Partially Agree.** The UK is supporting an African-led movement to end FGM but leadership must come from the countries themselves. DFID has taken steps to address FGM in Sierra Leone but as long as the practice remains legal with little political or civil leadership for change, the UK can only take limited steps to help Sierra Leone eradicate the practice. Given the difficult political context, DFID Sierra Leone has taken the following steps towards addressing the issue of FGM/C in Sierra Leone, being aware that the issue must be handled sensitively and must be led by Sierra Leoneans:

- Helped to advocate for a National Strategy on FGM/C reduction – development of which is now under way.
- Worked with survivors of FGM, local NGOs and development partners to formally establish and register the Forum Against Harmful Practices as an advocacy body to tackle FGM.
- Lobbied for protection of women against harmful practices such as FGM/C to be included in the revised Constitution.
- Is developing a programme to address gender inequality including FGM.
- Supporting over 35,000 girls into Junior Secondary School, providing them with a greater chance of delaying FGM.

We continue to learn lessons from our efforts to support the movement to end FGM/C elsewhere, and will continue to consider whether and how to carry these across to Sierra Leone.
Youth unemployment, inclusive growth and the extractive industries

23. Youth unemployment is one of the biggest problems faced by Sierra Leone, Liberia and indeed the rest of the developing and developed world. It was raised by many of the people we met on our visit and is a potential source of unrest and political instability. In view of its importance, we have decided to undertake an inquiry on ‘Jobs and Livelihoods’ this autumn. (Paragraph 102)

Agree. We agree that youth employment is a priority which is reflected in the departments’ increased focus on driving inclusive, sustainable economic growth and jobs. We also agree that in fragile and conflict-affected states a lack of economic opportunities for young people can be a collective grievance leading to further insecurity.

Tackling youth employment (as with other types of exclusion) is more feasible in a context of sustained growth. DFID’s Economic Development Strategy is aimed at promoting high, sustained and inclusive growth. Much DFID programming therefore supports general job creation, reflecting this primary constraint. But many DFID programmes also include a youth-specific focus, with targets for youth beneficiaries – for example in enabling young people to enter the labour market with better skills for the opportunities available to them. We are supporting a range of DFID programmes promoting economic opportunities for young people during or after conflict, as in Afghanistan, Kenya and Somalia, as well as other programmes focusing on youth skills training, as in Nepal, South Sudan and Northern Nigeria.

24. We recommend that DFID assess how it can help Sierra Leone to develop its agriculture and agricultural processing as part of its jobs and livelihoods programme. (Paragraph 109)

Partially Agree. Over two thirds of employment currently is in agriculture, and many of those jobs are taken by women. Tackling unemployment therefore needs to address the constraints and create opportunities in the agricultural sector – as well, of course, as addressing the country’s reduced economic growth prospects due to the Ebola outbreak.

The Government of Sierra Leone, FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), World Bank, African Development Bank and others already have programmes supporting agricultural production, but few are addressing the major failures in agricultural
markets, both for inputs and outputs. DFID is a leader in making markets work for the poor and has chosen to focus on this area. DFID’s support to the Market Development Programme complements activities by GoSL, other donors and NGOs that support agriculture to increase production. Currently farmers lack access to markets and Sierra Leone imports large quantities of basic food which could be produced locally, including rice and vegetables. DFID’s programme works directly with the private sector to make markets more effective, and to provide sustainable access for both poor producers and consumers, as well as helping reduce the loss of almost half of fruit and vegetables through poor handling, storage and transport.

25. There are many opportunities for renewable power generation, especially from hydro-electric power. We recommend that DFID looks to identify viable projects and in doing so it should consider working with EleQtra an institution which it funds. (Paragraph 111)

Disagree. Rather than being a significant source of capital funding for particular energy investments, DFID sees its role as supporting the institutional and legal frameworks that are needed for rational and strategic planning and prioritising electricity development needs. This technical work provides the essential underpinning for effective private sector financing and development, enabling institutions such as PIDG (Private Infrastructure Development Group) InfraCo and EAIF (Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund) with entry points.

26. DFID focuses on primary and junior secondary education in Sierra Leone, leaving vocational education to other donors. We recognise there are obstacles to working in this area, not least the inadequacies of the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, given the importance of vocational education, the fact that it is a high priority for the Government of Sierra Leone and that other donors want DFID to work in this area, we recommend that DFID work with other donors and the private sector on vocational education and training. The centrally managed education programme funding may be better spent if it were diverted to a bilateral vocational training programme. (Paragraph 116)

Partially Agree. DFID’s general budget support to the GoSL can be used by the GoSL to fund skills training. Currently DFID does not directly support skills training programmes in Sierra Leone as it concentrates allocated funding on delivering against the 2015 operation plan targets which are based on the 2015 Millennium Development Goals targets focused on educational outcomes at primary and junior secondary level.
It is also desirable to focus on primary and secondary education to improve equity. It is the poorest and most marginalised who are least likely to access or complete primary and junior secondary education (let alone get to the tertiary level).
DFID has been scoping the possibilities to support skills training programmes in Sierra Leone since 2013 (including through the Higher Education Taskforce) with the aim not just of increasing the number of young people with qualifications but to increase the number of young people in meaningful employment. However many donors involved in tertiary education, eg GIZ and the AfDB, have struggled to scale up their programmes. The sector needs a clearer lead from GoSL on qualifications, accreditation and the establishment of institutions, including teaching staff.

DFID has recently taken a first step into co-financing vocational training in Eastern Africa with other donors and the private sector, through the Skills for Oil and Gas Africa (SOGA) programme which was approved by the Secretary of State in late November 2014 and will commence operations in January 2015. This will seek to build on private sector expertise and to catalyse their finance to build the skills of marginalised people to benefit from the investments in oil and gas across the region. This programme will be implemented by GIZ with seed funding from the UK and Germany. This is an approach which could also be adopted in West Africa, and the experience of SOGA will be shared internally to find ways in which a similar approach could be applied in Sierra Leone.

27. While the extractive industries have been the main source of economic growth in Sierra Leone in recent years, the majority of the population have seen few benefits. We recommend that DFID ensure that its work with the National Revenue Authority links with its work with the National Minerals Agency to ensure that tax waivers and incentives for the mining industry do not mean that the natural resource wealth of Sierra Leoneans is lost to the benefit of international investors. We recommend that a specialist unit be set up within the National Revenue Authority working with the National Minerals Agency to look specifically at optimising revenue collection from mining companies and its transparency. In addition the economy cannot rely on the extractive industries alone which are subject to fluctuations of the commodity markets—Sierra Leone must diversify its economy. (Paragraph 122)

Agree. DFID has been active in supporting improvements in the governance of the extractives sector for some years. Initially working on policy development, the support was expanded and coordinated with a World Bank Trust Fund in order to set up the National Minerals Agency (NMA). The NMA began operations in March 2013 and is a semi-autonomous agency which manages the technical framework for licensing of mining and monitors compliance with mining lease agreements. DFID has provided £2.4m for the Extractive Industries Technical Assistance Programme (EITAP) for 2011-16.

The annual review of EITAP in November 2013 found that the programme was achieving its objectives, and that the NMA was working effectively with the National Revenue Authority (NRA) resulting in greater than forecast government revenues from mining companies. Against this background we will keep in view whether there is need to lobby for a specialist unit within the NRA.
Economic diversification is central to the Agenda for Prosperity and DFID has supported GoSL in identifying opportunities and developing policies on local content – using mining activities to promote the wider economy through creating demand for a broad range of local goods and services produced in Sierra Leone. The work focuses on the agricultural sector where farmers are linked to large consumer groups, for instance company canteens requiring fresh vegetables and rice.

**Governance and Democracy**

28. Unfortunately Sierra Leone suffers from poor governance, lack of capacity and endemic corruption. DFID is helping those in Government and the Civil Service to address the problem, but clearly its influence is limited. We do not, however, believe that DFID should stop trying to address the problems. Rather, it should apply all its influence as the country’s major bilateral donor on the Government to show leadership. As we discuss below, DFID should also work more closely with the Sierra Leone Parliament, encouraging better oversight of the Government. (Paragraph 132)

**Agree.** DFID tackles corruption through a number of programmes both at the government level and at the citizen level. This includes a comprehensive public financial management programme, support to Audit Services Sierra Leone and the Anti-Corruption Commission, and a recently launched Pay No Bribe programme. It is also important to closely monitor spend and payments during a humanitarian crisis and we are doing this in the current Ebola crisis.

29. Parliament is central to good governance and holding Government to account. DFID has spent large sums on supporting elections, but has not followed this up with significant assistance for Parliamentary strengthening following the elections. We welcome the Minister’s agreement to explore how DFID might provide more support. We recommend that DFID adopt the Clerk of the Sierra Leone Parliament’s proposal that it provide funding for the Commonwealth Parliament Association UK programme. We further recommend that DFID provide funding to strengthen Committees which scrutinise areas where DFID spends significant sums such as health. (Paragraph 143)

**Partially Agree.** DFID is one of the key donors to the World Bank Integrated Public Financial Management Reform Programme (IPFMRP) and we will be providing increased support to the parliamentary oversight committees between 2014 and 2018. US$750,000 has been budgeted for support to the Public Accounts Committee, Finance Committee and Transparency and Accountability Committees. This is a nearly four-fold increase on the budget for supporting these oversight committees between 2010 and 2014 (US$200,000). These committees look at public spending across all sectors, including health.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) has focused its work on training, with a focus on strengthening committee clerks. This complements the
work of the oversight committees that DFID is supporting. DFID and the CPA have been in regular communication to ensure information is shared about respective areas of work, and to avoid duplication.

30. **MPs in Sierra Leone have made the reasonable request that NGOs and donors inform them when they have projects in their constituencies.** Again, we welcome the Minister’s support for this proposal. We recommend that DFID insist that NGOs and others receiving funding from DFID inform the constituency MP of the project they are undertaking. (Paragraph 144)

**Partially Agree.** NGOs that DFID supports which are operating at district levels coordinate very closely with local governments – with the executive. In many districts, NGOs and local councils publish and share their respective plans, coordinating closely and some have signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to formalise their accountability to the public and each other. District councils are the key government institution at local level for development planning. National and international NGOs are often called before parliament to report on their activities, a process which we support.

In the latest Afrobarometer survey it was reported that 40% of Sierra Leonean MPs never visited their constituencies. While it may be good practice for UK funded NGOs to inform MPs of their work, the critical relationship must be with executive authorities to whom DFID’s project partners are accountable.