



House of Commons
International Development
Committee

**DFID Annual Report
2007: Government
Response to the
Committee's First Report
of Session 2007-08**

First Special Report of Session 2007–08

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International Development Committee

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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

First Special Report

On 15 November 2007 the International Development Committee published its First Report of Session 2007-08, *Department for International Development Annual Report 2007*, HC 64. On 4 February 2008 we received the Government's response to the Report. It is reproduced as an Appendix to this Special Report. In the Government Response, the Committee's conclusions and recommendations are in bold text. The Government's response is in plain text.

Appendix: Government Response

EFFECTIVENESS

[Paragraph 7] We very much welcome the increase in DFID's budget over the Comprehensive Spending Review period 2008–11 as a significant step towards the target of 0.7% of Gross National Income being allocated to development assistance by 2013. However, we intend to monitor closely the extent to which this increase in Official Development Assistance is accounted for by real terms increases in DFID's budget and how much comes from non-DFID ODA streams, particularly debt relief.

The budget for DFID announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review accounts for around 87% of the UK's forecast official development assistance over the three years 2008/09 to 2010/11, as compared to 76% over the three years 2005/6 to 2007/8. Non-DFID ODA projections for 2008–11 include important contributions to development by other government departments—such as the DEFRA contribution to the Environmental Transformation Fund, and the MoD contribution to the Stabilisation Fund—as well as CDC investments and debt relief. The trajectory of non-DFID ODA has been volatile in recent years as a result of debt relief for Nigeria and Iraq in 2005 and 2006 and CDC disinvestments in 2007. In 2007/08, non-DFID ODA is projected to dip to only £104 million (after figures of £2,120 million and £2,123 million in 2005/06 and 2006/07), so it is potentially misleading to use 2007/08 as a baseline for measuring the trend of non-DFID ODA. DFID recognises the need to track both DFID and non-DFID ODA volumes and will continue to publish details of the underlying components of ODA in its Annual Report to Parliament.

[Paragraph 10] We welcome DFID's increased research budget but are disappointed that the Department has not been able to give us specific examples of its research directly influencing policy decisions. International development is a rapidly changing field where there will always be competing priorities for funding. It is vital for DFID's effectiveness that it bases its funding decisions on evidence rather than simply responding to the latest trend. We hope that the new Research Strategy which is currently being drawn up will focus on providing an empirical base for the whole of DFID's work.

We agree that DFID's policy and programmes should be based on evidence. A range of DFID's past research has directly influenced policy decisions in DFID and international decisions and examples of this are provided for the Committee at Annex A. The new research strategy is informed by evaluations and learning from our past and current research programmes and through public consultations. The new strategy will place more emphasis on getting research into policy and practice. More resources will be available for managing the results of our research and for providing an empirical base for DFID's work.

Evaluating Effectiveness

[Paragraph 11] The merits of establishing a process for sharpening DFID's focus on results are clear. But when we questioned DFID about this issue, the form the process would take remained rather vague. We look forward to seeing the fully worked up Results Action Plan and expect it to represent a real step forward in DFID's ability to assess its own effectiveness.

The Results Action Plan has been finalised and is available on DFID's website. The Plan seeks to create a step change in the way we use information, ensuring we achieve the maximum impact from our development assistance, and that we are able to demonstrate our effectiveness more clearly.

The plan sets out a comprehensive set of actions under three broad themes: within DFID, with partner countries and internationally. These aim to embed results into DFID culture and systems, encourage partner countries to monitor and account for their development policies and programmes, and establish an international system with a clearer focus on the impact of its interventions on the poor.

Ten priority actions have been identified as being catalytic in speeding up progress. These will be included in Divisional Performance Frameworks and their progress will be reported annually to the Management Board.

Independent Advisory Committee on Development Impact

[Paragraph 13] We welcome the establishment of the Independent Advisory Committee on Development Impact. We plan to invite its Chair to give formal evidence at an early stage to enable us to understand more about how it will operate and what the focus of its work will be in its first year.

DFID welcomes the IDC's positive reaction to the creation of the Independent Advisory Committee on Development Impact, which held its first meeting on 6 December 2007. The IACDI Chair is available to appear before the Committee.

Mechanisms to measure effectiveness

[Paragraph 15] It is apparent from the example of funding allocated for children affected by AIDS that DFID cannot always effectively track its expenditure nor provide a guarantee that it has reached its intended recipients. We understand the problems presented when funding is channelled through multilateral agencies but it is unacceptable that DFID cannot demonstrate that dedicated funding targeted at a

particular vulnerable group has benefited those for whom it has been allocated. We expect DFID to report back to us, in response to this report, on how it has changed the mechanisms it uses to track project expenditure to ensure funding reaches the intended beneficiaries.

DFID has systems for tracking that its aid is spent for the purposes intended, including annual performance scoring of projects.

Some DFID activities involve directly targeting resources for a particular defined group of beneficiaries. But the nature of much of DFID's (and other donors') programmes including budget support and other sector wide activity mean that it is not always possible to isolate specific flows to particular groups of beneficiaries. In such cases, it is sometimes possible to make estimates of the proportion of funding which benefits particular groups, but this is an inexact science.

Where DFID has made a spending commitment which will target a specific social group, we need to establish a clear methodology for monitoring spending against the commitment.

DFID is currently reviewing the systems put in place in advance of the period covered by the Taking Action Strategy, in light of the recommendations from the interim evaluation of the strategy. We will inform the Committee of our conclusions about how to improve the tracking of spending against this particular commitment.

More generally DFID is taking steps to improve the quality of all its expenditure tracking systems. The main development is the launch of the new ARIES system which will improve all DFID's financial and performance management. As part of this development DFID has undertaken a review of its input sector code system—the main system used to track thematic expenditure. We aim to manage all future spending commitments with direct reference to centrally coded information on the ARIES system, to avoid proliferation of specific monitoring systems for different spending commitments.

Assessing progress towards the Millennium Development Goals

[Paragraph 21] We welcome the new Delivery Agreement for Public Service Agreement 29 which makes the assessment of DFID's performance more meaningful by seeking to identify more accurately DFID's contribution to progress towards aspects of the Millennium Development Goals. We intend to monitor this over the course of the Comprehensive Spending Review period and to examine how the new Delivery Agreement feeds through into future Annual Reports and Autumn Performance Reports. We also intend to examine the rationale of and performance against the indicators underlying DFID's Departmental Strategic Objectives.

DFID is currently developing a new framework to monitor performance against this Agreement and the underlying Departmental Strategic Objectives. The relevant indicators were published in December. In advance of the Public Service Agreement (PSA) period, DFID is undertaking further work, consulting the other Government departments contributing to this PSA (Foreign & Commonwealth Office, HM Treasury and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), to ensure that the methodology to be used for monitoring progress against these indicators is as robust as possible and helps

to better measure HMG's contribution to international poverty reduction. Once this work is complete, and baselines have been established, DFID will publish further detail on the indicator methodology.

Tackling rural poverty and the role of agriculture in meeting poverty reduction targets

[Paragraph 28] We support DFID's underlying aim of focusing resources on the poorest people. We accept that urbanisation is a factor which DFID needs to consider in allocating resources but 75% of those living in poverty are in rural areas and this figure is higher in the poorest countries. We are concerned that funding agricultural development has "gone out of fashion" and that DFID has moved its focus to other sectors. We believe that improving the economic return on agriculture remains intrinsic to reducing rural poverty levels, which in turn is necessary to meet the Millennium Development Goal of tackling overall poverty levels. DFID needs to recognise this in its funding allocations, in the priorities it sets in its Country Assistance Programmes and in the agreements it reaches with recipients of budget support for priorities in allocating those funds.

We agree with the International Development Committee's view that improving the return on agriculture is key to reducing rural poverty. It is also a direct way of tackling hunger, promoting sustainable growth at the national level, and underpinning peace in post-conflict countries. But we do not agree with the notion that agriculture has gone out of fashion. Despite other pressures in recent years, agriculture remains an important element of DFID's portfolio. Our bilateral engagement in the sector spans more than 20 countries, is supported by nearly 50 professionals, and spends £120 million a year.

DFID reviewed its agricultural engagement in late 2007, and forthcoming country funding plans will take account of its findings. However the level of DFID's bilateral funding should not be the primary issue, especially when multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the EC are intending to increase significantly the level of their own funding for agriculture, as are a number of developing countries in Africa. DFID's comparative advantage lies in our policy reform work, linked to the provision of direct budgetary support. In the light of the review's findings, we will seek to have stronger agricultural policy engagement in a number of key "focus" countries.

Support to agriculture should not be seen in isolation. Good agricultural outcomes can be achieved by investment in related sectors such as infrastructure. The building of rural roads enables farmers to market their crops. Better management of water resources will be of increasing importance in coming years, especially in parts of Africa, as rainfall becomes less predictable.

DFID will be carrying out a full evaluation of its agricultural policy in 2008, and intends consulting stakeholders widely in this process.

[Paragraph 31] We are encouraged to see from DFID’s consultation on its Research Strategy 2008–13 that one of its four priority areas will be sustainable agriculture, especially in Africa. We hope this signals a reprioritising of agricultural research which has the demonstrated potential to bring tangible benefits to poor farmers in developing countries.

The increased allocation to agricultural research is further indication of the priority DFID gives to agriculture. Equally importantly, DFID is working to ensure that the benefits of such research quickly translate into practical benefits for poor farmers and their communities. Our £37.5 million Research Into Use Programme aims to get the best of past DFID research into widespread use in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, assess the impacts, and learn lessons on best practice.

EFFICIENCY

[Paragraph 40] We accept that DFID cannot be exempt from efficiency targets set for the whole of Government. The Department has made good progress in reducing administrative costs, albeit predominantly in the less tangible form of non-cashable rather than cashable savings. We are concerned, however, that the need to reduce headcount and to make administrative efficiencies, and under the Comprehensive Spending Review settlement to meet a significantly higher cash-releasing efficiency target, will act as a constraint on DFID working in the parts of the world where its assistance is most needed: the poorest countries, often fragile states, which have so far failed to benefit from the vast volumes of international aid. DFID therefore needs to make some very difficult choices about withdrawing from some countries, or some sectors, so that it can focus development assistance where it will have the greatest effect on poverty reduction. We look forward to contributing to this decision-making process as part of our future work.

We agree that DFID needs to make difficult choices to ensure maximum impact on poverty reduction. In deciding the allocation of resources over the CSR period, Ministers will draw on analysis on where resources will make most impact, including evidence on the benefits of aid to under-aided countries and fragile states. An Investment Committee is now being established to give greater assurance on the analytical work underpinning our investment choices.

Budget support

[Paragraph 43] We believe that the funding mechanism offered by the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund is an interesting development, particularly as DFID is increasingly likely to be operating in fragile states of this kind. We will be exploring this in more detail in our inquiry into DFID’s programme in Afghanistan.

DFID welcomes the International Development Committee’s interest in the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund as a potential model for funding mechanisms in fragile states, and will provide information as requested by the IDC to assist with their enquiry.

GENDER

[Paragraph 49] We do not doubt DFID's commitment to gender equality but translating this from policy to practical implementation at every level is a complex task. We are not convinced that DFID yet has the measures in place to achieve this but, as the Secretary of State has acknowledged, the Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved without progress on gender equality. We expect DFID to provide us with more information on the practical steps it is taking to "up its game" in promoting gender equality across its programmes in response to this report.

We welcome the Report's discussion of gender equality and women's empowerment, underlining the critical importance of these issues to the MDGs.

We believe that we have set out in the Gender Equality Action Plan a comprehensive programme of institutional change which will result in a significantly increased focus and impact on gender equality and women's rights in our development assistance. The Action Plan covers a three-year period in recognition of the extent of the challenge both in terms of how we engage our developing country partners on what can be sensitive issues, and in bringing about the fundamental and lasting shift in approach within DFID to how we address these issues across our work. We are committed to its effective implementation.

To support this process, we have ensured that gender equality issues are reflected in DFID's corporate performance framework linked to our new PSA Delivery Agreement for 2008–11. We have included an indicator under the objective of promoting good governance, economic growth, trade and basic services which states "*increased access by women and girls to economic opportunities, public services and decision-making*". Divisions across DFID, including each of the Regional Divisions, are setting targets for achieving this indicator for which staff and managers will be held accountable. This will promote a more coherent and institutionalised focus on gender equality as part of our ongoing work programme, and result in greater impact.

We will regularly review the Action Plan and revise it in the light of progress made and new challenges. A report on the first year's implementation of the Plan will be published in April 2008. A copy will be forwarded to the Committee.

Further information on our work and plans under the Gender Equality Action Plan are in the attached Annex B.

Following discussions on gender equality during the separate enquiry on DFID's work in Vietnam, a gender audit of the Vietnam programme has now been completed. A report on this will be forwarded to the IDC separately.

CLIMATE CHANGE

[Paragraph 54] Although DFID has shown welcome leadership in seeking to assist developing countries to deal with climate change, this has not yet resulted in changes at country office level, where the necessary assistance with adaptation and mitigation can be given. The Environmental Transformation Fund is a welcome and useful means of tackling climate change but we are concerned that DFID is relying too heavily on operating through multilateral bodies in implementing its climate change policy, which

risks climate change being obscured by the different priorities of other aid agencies. We believe that DFID should demonstrate its commitment to tackling climate change by seeking to ensure as a matter of priority that its country office staff are properly supported and resourced to implement this crucial area of policy.

DFID country offices play an important part in delivering our objectives on climate change across the globe. For example, we have conducted climate risk assessments in countries such as China, India and Kenya and we are helping to build the capacity of developing country governments to tackle climate change. In Bangladesh, DFID has been working with the government on a number of climate change projects since 2004, including helping communities to prepare for disasters such as flooding and helping the government prepare a comprehensive disaster management plan. But we recognise that more needs to be done to support our country offices to assist partner countries. DFID has built up its central capacity and expertise on climate change at HQ, **doubling our staff numbers in the last 12 months**. This will allow us to support country offices and build up a network of climate change experts across the world to tackle this issue.

But our country offices are only part of the solution—getting the international system working effectively is critical to tackling an issue as complex as climate change. Our enhanced capacity in HQ will also help us shape the multilateral system to ensure that the needs of developing countries are taken into account. This will include helping to mainstream climate change mitigation and adaptation into the services and products of the multilateral development agencies.

Why is DFID spending the Environmental Transformation Fund-International Window (ETF-IW) through multilaterals? It is likely that the majority of the ETF-IW will be spent through the multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank. In order to be truly transformational and deliver on the mandate we have been given by the Prime Minister and Treasury, the ETF-IW funds need to be supplemented and blended with resources from other donors. Channelling the ETF-IW through a multilateral fund is one of the most efficient and cost-effective ways of achieving the greatest impact.

[Paragraph 58] We agree that assistance to developing countries to adopt mitigation and adaptation strategies to deal with climate change needs to be given sooner rather than later. We therefore recommend that research funding allocated to climate change under the new Research Strategy is set at a level which reflects its urgency as a development issue.

Climate change research will be a high priority in DFID's new research strategy (2008–2013). In the current Research Funding Framework (2005–2007), climate change research is prominent and accounts for an estimated 12% of spend in 2007/08. This includes an estimate for climate change research funded through DFID's Strategy for Research on Sustainable Agriculture, for example, which covers research on the development of drought tolerant crops and water management. By 2011 we estimate that climate change research will account for at least 20% of spend, with the likelihood of further increases to 2013.

GOVERNANCE

[Paragraph 62] DFID has clearly demonstrated in the publication of its 2006 White Paper the importance it attaches to effective governance as a means of tackling poverty. We agree that without proper governance and accountability in developing countries little real progress will be made towards the Millennium Development Goals. The Governance and Transparency Fund offers an opportunity to advance effective governance through small-scale projects in a number of developing countries. This requires projects to be selected against clear and specific criteria which reflect DFID's objectives. We request that DFID supplies further information on the allocations made from the Fund after funding decisions begin to be made in December 2007.

As a result of requests from applicants to the Governance and Transparency Fund and from the civil society sector more widely, we took the decision to move the deadline for full proposals back a month. The effect of this is that we do not now expect to make decisions until some time in January. We will post full details of all funded proposals on the DFID website and circulate this listing around the more than 600 organisations and individuals who registered an interest in the Fund over the past 9 months.

[Paragraph 64] We believe that DFID should lead by example in working with national parliaments in recipient countries to strengthen parliamentary scrutiny and to promote accountability and transparency in the way DFID funding is allocated and used. We welcome the steps already taken in this area and recommend that DFID country offices actively seek opportunities to contribute to public scrutiny by offering briefings and specific and detailed information to parliamentarians and others in recipient countries.

We agree with this recommendation. We are helping to promote accountability to parliament by increasing the amount of DFID financial aid reported "on-budget", consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Where we deliver budget support, our aid is allocated through the budget process and subject to parliamentary scrutiny and domestic audit processes. An increasing number of budget support programmes (for example in Mozambique, Tanzania and Ghana) have also been designed to reinforce domestic accountability, including to parliament, civil society and the media.

Parliamentarians are a key group of domestic stakeholders who are consulted in the development of DFID's Country Assistance Plans. Many DFID country programmes also have proactive communication strategies which help to inform a range of domestic stakeholders, including parliamentarians, about the work that we do.

[Paragraph 66] We disagree with DFID's view that the impact of individual programmes of parliamentary strengthening is limited. Effective accountability and scrutiny and proper transparency of course require contributions from a number of different elements of society but parliaments and parliamentarians are uniquely placed to provide leadership in this area and amongst the various stakeholders in developing countries they are most likely to have the mechanisms and resources available to

perform a scrutiny role at the highest levels. We believe that this should be reflected in DFID making an increased level of funding available for parliamentary strengthening.

We strongly agree that parliaments play a critical role in promoting strong domestic accountability and better governance in developing countries. We will continue to support national parliaments through a range of programmes including building their capacity to organise themselves effectively, strengthening linkages with the executive, national audit bodies and civil society, and supporting MPs in performing their legislative, oversight and representation functions and to improve their accountability to their constituents.

The evidence from our recent stocktake of support to parliaments suggests that individual parliamentary strengthening programmes are most effective when part of an integrated package of governance support. For maximum impact, efforts must also be made to ensure that parliamentary development plans are owned by the wider society. This will entail activities to strengthen the demand-side for effective parliaments, working with civil society, the media and—through civic engagement work—the wider public. It will also require better understanding of the informal power relations that influence how politicians actually behave. Without this wider sense of ownership and understanding, parliamentary strengthening efforts may not be sustained.

Consistent with this approach, DFID is supporting a £10 million programme in Malawi to develop a more accountable and responsive governance system which includes support to parliament, the electoral commission, the media and civil society. We are also providing £50 million for a multi-donor programme to strengthen democracy and accountability in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which includes a parliamentary strengthening component. Similar deepening democracy programmes are also planned for Tanzania and Uganda.

We are already involved in a number of activities to strengthen UK and international efforts around parliamentary development. Since the initial evidence was provided, a UK contact group on parliamentary strengthening has been established with participation from a range of relevant stakeholders from government, parliament and the NGO sector. We have also moved forward with a number of case studies looking at the impact of parliamentary strengthening programmes and have commissioned a research programme with the University of Cape Town to develop credible measures of parliamentary effectiveness. In addition, we will be co-funding with the World Bank Institute a Wilton Park conference on support to parliaments later in 2008. Taken together, these activities will contribute to an increased evidence base on parliamentary strengthening activities, helping to ensure better quality programme design in the future.

[Paragraph 69] We have observed in Ethiopia the potential benefits to transparency and civil society capacity-building that DFID can bring by incorporating accountability to local people into its funding arrangements. We recommend that DFID continues to promote good governance by ensuring that, as part of funding agreements it makes with recipient countries, information is provided to local people on how much the government is spending in their area on essential services such as health, education, and water and sanitation.

The promotion of good governance is an important priority for DFID and demand-side accountability is regularly included in government-led programmes which DFID supports. Information on government spending on health, education, water and sanitation is included in annual budgets which are generally published on Ministry of Finance web-sites and in book form and are accessible to the public at large. DFID also encourages the publication of budget allocations at service delivery level where development budgets are used to fund local programmes.

POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

[Paragraph 73] We welcome the new information contained in the Annual Report on policy coherence for development but believe it could be further enhanced. We appreciate that the Annual Report is already a substantial volume and that adding more detail could result in an unwieldy and less helpful document. But we believe that to be meaningful, the information provided on policy coherence needs to have much more emphasis on the effects of policies beyond aid. It also needs to be more country specific and to reflect the proper participation of developing countries in assessing the effects on them of UK policies.

DFID shares the IDC's interest in obtaining more evidence on the effect of UK policies beyond aid and is undertaking research in relation to this. It is, however, widely recognised that attributing the impact of the UK's policies at a country level is challenging.

Specific measures proposed in the 2008 Annual Report to respond to this IDC recommendation include:

- Reformatting of the relevant chapter of the Annual Report to include separate sub-sections on "impact", which will more explicitly spell out the effect (where known) of UK policies.
- The inclusion of country level examples and case studies relating to impact and to developing country participation in assessing UK and international policies.
- The inclusion of a boxed summary update on DFID ongoing research focused on developing a diagnostic tool to assess the impact of global issues and external policies at a developing country level.

Department of International Development

15 February 2008

Annex A: DFID research influencing policy decisions

Influence on DFID and HMG policy and practice

Collaborations with UK Research Councils have leveraged additional funding for development research and brought in new partners to support DFID's efforts in achieving the MDGs.

Migration research is used to support DFID's increasingly active role in cross-Whitehall discussions, promoting policies and practice to maximise the benefits for poor people. "Moving out of poverty—making migration work better for poor people", a DFID policy paper, drew heavily on DFID's migration research.

DFID funded research on the Future State significantly informed DFID's thinking on the Capability, Accountability and Responsiveness (CAR) framework, that formed the base of DFID's White Paper III—Making Governance Work for The Poor (2006).

Influencing international development policy and practice

The OECD Development Assistance Committee's Working Group on Governance (GovNET) singled out a DFID governance research publication, *Signposts*, as an important document in discussion and the tax and accountability and state-building themes directly emanate from this work.

DFID research on chronic poverty provided evidence for the Commission for Africa for contextualising the extent and meaning of poverty, by mapping where the world's poorest people are located.

DFID health research has fed directly into World Health Organisation guidance. For instance, DFID research showed that providing a commonly available antibiotic to all HIV positive children in hospital reduced death from all causes by 43%. Prescribing the antibiotic has now been included in WHO guidance. The results have led to WHO and UNICEF both revising their policy on standards of care.

DFID funded research has influenced the WHO Global Malaria Guidelines. The research is also helping policymakers in India to reconsider their national malaria guidelines control programmes

DFID's research on the range of measures to promote better road safety in developing countries is now being used systematically in programmes by the World Bank and the Global Road Safety Partnership.

DFID research in South East Asia has influenced the content of World Bank road construction programmes in the region. Results of DFID research have informed the core design components of a rural road programme in Vietnam costing more than \$100 million.

Influencing national development policy and practice

DFID has supported research on integrated floodplain management in Bangladesh over a number of years. The concept is incorporated into the Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy for the country, which was approved in 2006.

DFID research on Tuberculosis (TB) control has influenced national TB programmes in Bangladesh, China and India.

DFID research is showing that routine worm treatment of school children in India is not effective. This research is beginning to influence policy decisions in this area.

DFID research on maternal and child mortality in Nepal has influenced national policy on support for maternal health services.

Central Research Department
January 2008

Annex B: Strengthening our focus on gender equality and women's empowerment: additional information

Corporate Processes

i) Departmental objectives

Gender equality is reflected in both the vision statement and delivery strategy of our new PSA Delivery Agreement. Our corporate performance framework includes an indicator under the first strategic objective on promoting good governance, economic growth, trade and basic services which states “*increased access by women and girls to economic opportunities, public services and decision-making*”. Targets for achieving this indicator at Divisional level are now being developed. Inclusion of such indicators and targets will help improve monitoring of, and promote greater accountability by staff and managers for, impact on gender issues. It will also promote a more coherent and institutionalised focus on gender equality as part of our ongoing work programme.

ii) Improved monitoring, evidence and data

We aim to ensure that wider work on measuring impact and results takes proper account of gender equality dimensions including through increased inclusion of sex-disaggregated information. We recognise that better sex disaggregated data is not in itself the solution to gender inequality. But such data helps to identify trends and gaps—where, for example, a particular problem or lack of access to a service disproportionately affects women. Clearer understanding and evidence of such issues informs policy making and strengthens the argument for ensuring that the rights and needs of women and girls are properly addressed. We are working with other donors on ways to improve statistics and developing guidance for our Country Offices on strengthening of developing country partners' capacity on statistical analysis. We are also funding two five-year research programmes on the barriers to women's empowerment and how to overcome them.

iii) Building staff capacity and commitment

Successfully embedding gender equality in DFID and motivating our own staff requires that they have the right skills and understanding of the issues. Work under the Action Plan therefore includes development of training programmes and improved information resources.

New Policy Development

Ensuring that gender equality dimensions are addressed in emerging policy areas is also critical and is on-going. We have begun some initial scoping of the gender aspects of climate change to inform our future work in this area. We are also giving greater emphasis in policy statements on such issues as maternal health and HIV and AIDs, and on women's rights as a key factor in enabling women to realise better access to services.

Working with other donors

We continue to work with the World Bank on implementation of its own Gender Action Plan, and are advocating for the Bank to hold an event on women's economic empowerment in the margins of the Spring Meetings. The Secretary of State wrote to the World Bank President in October to urge him to give more emphasis to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in developing the Bank's future strategy.

We are collaborating with the IFC on a number of country-level Gender and Growth Assessments, and on preparation of the Doing Business report 2009 which will for the first time have a focus on gender issues. We are also working with OECD DAC partners to ensure that discussions at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in September include recommendations, based on DFID commissioned research, for strengthening work on gender issues as an essential element of aid effectiveness

Country Programmes

As the Report highlights, gender inequality is fundamentally a political issue which cannot be resolved purely by technical means. It is an issue that requires concerted action at all levels to address the underlying attitudes that drive gender discrimination. We will therefore strengthen our dialogue on these issues with developing countries at a political level, including in the context of ministerial visits. In many cases, partners have themselves made national, regional or international commitments to greater gender equality and so our approach will be to encourage and support them in meeting these. Our Country Governance Analyses, which are a mandatory part of preparation of Country Assistance Strategies, will also look at issues such as women's political participation.

A number of our country programmes and offices, including all those for Latin America, have undertaken gender audits of their work to inform future planning processes. Recent country assistance plans have shown greater attention to and analysis of gender equality issues.

Support to civil society, including women's organisations

Civil society organisations, including women's organisations, have a vitally important role to play, particularly in tackling some of the underlying social and cultural attitudes that give rise to gender discrimination, in lobbying their governments for reform and in

holding them to account. One of the key objectives of the Gender Equality Action Plan is therefore to support civil society in promoting gender equality. We support a number of women's organisations, alongside support to a broader range of civil society organisations working on gender equality-related issues such as women's political participation and implementation of legislation to remove gender discrimination. We also have an active dialogue with civil society partners on our overall approach to gender equality.