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Bangladesh**

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Summary

One of the most densely populated countries in the world, Bangladesh has reduced poverty levels from 57% at the beginning of the 1990s to 40% in 2005. Economic growth rates have remained stable, averaging 5% per annum since 1990 largely due to the success of the export garment industry.

However Bangladesh could be doing better. It remains a low-income country with an average per capita income of \$470, and about 64 million people who live on less than \$1 a day. Of these, approximately 35 million are still extremely poor and 15 million live on the equivalent of 20 pence a day.

Bangladesh's potential is held back by its poor record on governance. Successive governments have been unresponsive to the needs of poor and marginalised communities. Instead, state power is used for personal and partisan ends and the accountability mechanisms of the political system do not function as they should. Corruption levels remain high. DFID has a number of programmes which seek to improve accountability, and to strengthen parliament and the civil service. These are important and must be seen as investments over 10 or more years.

One of the main mechanisms for holding governments to account is the presence of an effective parliament. We would like to see DFID more engaged in supporting the National Assembly—its members and committees—to help it scrutinise the executive more effectively. We have often said that parliamentary scrutiny is not given sufficient priority in DFID's country programmes. Its importance in Bangladesh is clear.

The failure of the government to provide adequate basic services has contributed to the development of a large, thriving and innovative non-governmental sector which has created novel ways of delivering services. Donors have increasingly channelled funding through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), while also trying to build up government capacity. In health and education DFID is funding both NGO and government systems and working to build links between the two. The Bangladeshi NGO BRAC provides an excellent example of the sector's pioneering and effective approach. DFID intends to begin a strategic relationship with BRAC and we support this type of innovation. However, we are concerned that weakness and corruption prevent the government from delivering effectively the services for which it has primary responsibility.

DFID's programme to deliver targeted assistance to the poorest households in the Chars islands of the Jumuna River is both innovative and successful. It has helped nearly 100,000 people by providing assets, training and support to increase the capacity of the poorest to raise themselves out of extreme poverty.

Despite advances in some areas, gender inequality continues to be a significant problem. Women remain largely marginalised in the home and excluded from key decision-making processes. Those in poor households are even worse off. DFID's approach to gender inequality is mainly focused on the social sectors such as education and health. While this has helped ensure the achievement of gender parity in primary education, it has not made sufficient progress in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality. Nor has it challenged the

traditional role of women in Bangladesh. DFID should adopt a more focused and targeted approach which actively promotes women in positions of power. It should also apply gender targets for all its programmes, not just those in the social sectors.

The impact of climate change on Bangladesh is predicted to be significant. Large parts of the country are low-lying and susceptible to more frequent and intense floods and cyclones. While Bangladesh has robust disaster warning systems in place and good disaster management capacity, it will need assistance to cope with even small rises in sea levels and increased salinisation. It is also predicted that climate change could create 30 million migrants. Donors must provide adequate additional funding, earmarked for climate change, and not taken from already committed development assistance budgets. DFID Bangladesh should also begin to look at the regional impacts of climate change, including on shared water resources and migration trends.

Bangladesh hopes to become a middle-income country by 2021. The ability of successive governments to maintain a fairly stable macro-economic framework has allowed the private sector to develop and encouraged inward investments. However the ability of Bangladesh to progress further will remain in question unless it addresses the governance problems and the obstacles to growth which result. It must also ensure a wider distribution of national income to reduce poverty across society.

DFID must do more to engage with the Bangladesh diaspora living in the UK. They have significant capacity and a desire to contribute to the future prosperity of Bangladesh. The drive to reduce poverty in Bangladesh could be enhanced with their cooperation.

1 Introduction

1. Bangladesh has had a long relationship with the UK and is the fourth highest recipient of UK bilateral assistance. DFID's programme there in the current financial year is £125 million and will rise to £150 million in 2010-11, making the UK the largest bilateral donor.¹ There are also approximately 500,000 people of Bangladeshi origin living in the UK.² The community here makes a significant contribution to Bangladesh through its remittances which amount to approximately US\$900 million per year.³

2. We decided to undertake an inquiry into DFID's programme in Bangladesh in July 2009. We had heard about elements of DFID's programme there in the course of other inquiries and wanted to see for ourselves what progress the country was making towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and particularly towards the overall goal of poverty reduction. Bangladesh, with 159 million people, has the seventh largest population in the world.⁴ Although it has made steady progress in reducing poverty levels from around 90% after independence in 1971, about 40% of the population still live on less than \$1 dollar a day.⁵ Of these, approximately 35 million are considered extremely poor and DFID estimates that 15 million people live on the equivalent of 20 pence a day.⁶

DFID's Country Plan

3. DFID launched its new Country Plan for Bangladesh in July 2009. This includes "a sharper focus on improving governance, improving basic social services, supporting private sector growth, and helping climate change adaptation." Improving the status of women and girls will remain a key theme.⁷ DFID Bangladesh says that it has reduced the number of its discrete programmes from about 45 to 25 in order to have a bigger impact in its specific focus areas, whilst also "maintaining some breadth".⁸ DFID also increasingly designs and implements programmes with other donors, through pooled funds and challenge funds managed by third parties. This reflects the increased focus on working with multilateral partners set out in DFID's 2009 White Paper, as well as the strong NGO sector in Bangladesh. (See chapter 3).

4. Bangladesh has been able to maintain relative economic stability and continuous growth rates and to reduce poverty despite persistently weak governance and a poor democratic record. Bangladesh is considered to be a "fragile country" which has only recently emerged

¹ Q 139

² Ev 73

³ High Commission for the People's Republic of Bangladesh, *Remittance inflows to Bangladesh from the UK*, London, www.bhclondon.org.uk

⁴ World Bank, *World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography*, The World Bank, Washington DC

⁵ UNDP, *Human Development Report, 2007-08*

⁶ Q 101, Ev 66. DFID uses the figure of 15 million to refer to the extreme poor. It should be noted that different organisations use different measures of extreme poverty. See, Shiree, *Extreme Poverty Policies of donors in Bangladesh: an overview*, Bangladesh, June 2009

⁷ Ev 70

⁸ Q 147

from a three year period of a military-backed caretaker government.⁹ Society is still highly polarised along political lines and this disadvantages large sections of the population. The widespread incidence of poverty in the country contrasts with the significant gains which have been made in increased access to education and primary health care services as well as continuous growth in particular economic sectors, for example the export garment industry. Such achievements mask the fact that millions of people have failed to benefit from economic growth. DFID faces the challenge of trying to reach these sectors of the population and help to lift them out of poverty.

The inquiry

5. We announced our inquiry into DFID's programme in Bangladesh in July 2009. We received written evidence from 17 individuals and organisations in the UK and in Bangladesh including non-governmental organisations, academics, the private sector, members of the Bangladeshi community in the UK and the UK Government. We held three oral evidence sessions in Parliament between October and December. We are grateful to all those who contributed to our inquiry.

6. There is a large Bangladeshi population in the UK and we felt it was important to ensure they had an opportunity to contribute to our inquiry. We held two public meetings in Birmingham and Poplar to hear their views. We are particularly grateful to those who made the effort to attend our meetings. We value this input and hope to continue to engage with the UK public where appropriate in future inquiries.

Our visit to Bangladesh

7. We visited Bangladesh in early November 2009 to observe DFID's new Country Plan in practice. We spent time in Dhaka and in Sirajganj. The DFID Bangladesh team was able to show us a wide cross section of their work there on extreme poverty reduction, education, private sector development, sanitation and water and disaster risk reduction. We met the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Finance and Foreign Affairs, parliamentarians from the two main political parties, NGO representatives from large and smaller organisations, private sector groups, other donors including the World Bank, UN Development Programme and the Asian Development Bank, and a variety of local people who were benefiting from DFID's programme. The full programme of our visit and the people we met in Dhaka and Sirajganj can be found in the Annex to this report. We would like to thank the staff of DFID Bangladesh for ensuring that we met with such a wide range of stakeholders. We are also grateful to all those individuals and organisations in Bangladesh who took the time to talk with us or show us their projects. We had an interesting and worthwhile visit which has greatly helped to inform our report.

The structure of this report

8. Efforts towards poverty reduction are hindered by poor governance and accountability. Chapter 2 examines this development context and the support measures which DFID and other donors employ to help improve it. Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the progress

⁹ DFID, *Bangladesh: Country Governance Analysis*, 2008

Bangladesh is making towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the contribution which NGOs make to this. Bangladesh has a unique and large non-governmental sector which has been remarkably successful in targeting extreme poverty and helping to deliver basic services to the poor. The potential conflict between supporting these NGOs and building government capacity is also explored in this chapter. Progress towards the gender-related MDGs is mixed. While women form an increasing proportion of the labour market, the target for reducing maternal mortality is off-track and the position of women in Bangladeshi society remains poor. This is the subject of chapter 4. Bangladesh has been the subject of much media attention as a result of its vulnerability to climate change. Chapter 5 looks at how donors can help Bangladesh and its regional neighbours respond to climate change impacts. Chapter 6 focuses on the future prospects and challenges for Bangladesh as it seeks to become a middle-income country. It also looks at the role of the Bangladeshi diaspora in this journey.

2 Governance and development

The state of governance

9. Governance, or the lack of it, presents a challenge to achieving poverty reduction objectives and Bangladesh provides a clear example of this. DFID's 2008 Country Governance Analysis notes that Bangladesh is a fragile state with widespread social and political marginalisation of the poor, which has the potential to feed into political conflict.¹⁰ Government capability is weak and accountability is poor. These factors, coupled with unstable politics "have restricted growth potential and limited those who benefit from growth."¹¹

10. DFID's 2009 White Paper says that: "to reduce poverty effectively, and allow each person to achieve their full potential, we need states that are capable, accountable and responsive and where a flourishing civil society empowers citizens to realise their rights."¹² It notes that this requires DFID to "work more politically" since conflict and fragility are about how power and resources are distributed. This chapter looks at the state of governance in Bangladesh and at how DFID works "more politically" in this context to improve accountability and state responsiveness.

The political context

11. Bangladesh experienced about 15 years of multi-party democracy before 2006 when, because of fears of a rigged election, a military-supported Caretaker Government (CTG) was installed. The CTG stayed in power until the December 2008 elections. During this period, it attempted a series of institutional governance reforms with donor support.¹³ The Awami League won the December 2008 elections. We were told that since then: "the rule of law has deteriorated quite rapidly in the last nine or ten months, and some of the efforts at governance reform do seem to have been stalled or, in some cases, reversed."¹⁴ We were also told that the performance of the Awami League-led government was worse than that of the Caretaker Government. Professor Wood, from the University of Bath, described the party's rule as being based on "kinship, patrimonialism and widespread corruption."¹⁵

12. A study by the Institute of Governance Studies in Bangladesh in 2008 commented that Bangladesh had moved from a minimalist democracy with regular free and contested elections to an illiberal democracy characterised by "the misuse of state power for partisan and personal gain; and institutions brought under partisan political pressure." The study

¹⁰ DFID, *Bangladesh: Country Governance Analysis*, 2008

¹¹ *Ibid*, p 2

¹² DFID, *Eliminating World Poverty: building our common future*, Cm 7656, July 2009

¹³ Q 3

¹⁴ Q 3

¹⁵ Q 77

concluded that the practice of partisan politics had “severely undermined the accountability mechanisms of the political system and rendered it largely dysfunctional.”¹⁶

13. Typically, when in government, each of the two main political parties stifles debate and dialogue and the opposition party refuses to participate in political processes. When we visited Bangladesh the opposition party, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), had not taken up its seats in the National Assembly. It wanted seven frontbench seats instead of the five it had been allocated. As a result the parliament was operating as a one-party system and there had been no effective opposition since the 2008 elections. This situation, which has occurred previously, allows all the major state institutions to be dominated by the ruling party and used to benefit its supporters.

14. This extreme form of party politics is not uncommon in developing countries and means that additional, credible mechanisms for accountability need to be established to check the executive and ensure the public, especially the poor, can participate in political processes. At present ordinary people’s expectations of what formal state institutions will deliver are low and they resort instead to alternative, less formal channels to achieve desired outcomes.¹⁷ **We urge all political parties in Bangladesh to engage meaningfully in the political process. Without an effective opposition, democracy and the reputation of parliament is diminished. Bangladesh should respect its democratic history and it is incumbent on its political parties to find ways to work together for the benefit of all the people of Bangladesh.**

DFID’s support for governance reform

15. DFID says that better government is the key to poverty reduction.¹⁸ Its programme in Bangladesh includes a specific focus on governance and strengthening the institutions of accountability. It spends about £20 million per year on programmes in these areas including: support for media and elections, public financial management, improving tax administration, civil service strengthening, police and justice sector reform and increasing the voice of civil society. The remainder of this chapter will review the effectiveness of these interventions.

Civil service strengthening

16. DFID is spending £2.5 million in 2009-10 on strengthening the Bangladesh civil service. One of the programmes it funds is Management at the Top (MATT) to which it has allocated £15 million over 5 years. The programme aims to create a cadre of committed, like-minded senior civil servants in Bangladesh and focuses on those identified as being likely to move into more senior positions.¹⁹ Professor Wood, from the University of Bath, commented on the importance of such programmes, saying that DFID:

¹⁶ Institute of Governance Studies, *The State of Governance in Bangladesh: 2008*, BRAC University, Bangladesh, p xv

¹⁷ Qs 9-11

¹⁸ Ev 67

¹⁹ Q 80

[...] should not underestimate the significance of this programme for all their other projects in Bangladesh because, in the end, if you are trying to have projects in relation to the Bangladesh government the reality is that you need to have a senior cadre of civil servants on your side sharing the same vocabulary, the same ideas and attempting to see them through.²⁰

DFID says that UK support has helped to train 800 out of 4,100 civil servants in the administration cadre. It aims to train 2,000 in total. The programme also seeks to address the problems of frequent staff rotation and weak performance management.²¹ Dr Greeley from the Institute of Development Studies, commented:

[...] the problem even when you have well-trained high-calibre civil servants is that there is wholesale change at the top within the civil service establishment when there is a change in government and political friends are appointed from within the establishment.²²

17. At our public meeting in Birmingham it was suggested that participants in the MATT programme should have a work placement period in the UK civil service, in addition to their theoretical training at UK universities. However, Professor Wood suggested that undertaking the study period abroad should be forgone in favour of building up Bangladeshi training capacity, for example through the BRAC Institute of Government Studies or the Public Administration Institute at Dhaka University. He thought the training period abroad was “a treat for the civil servants”.²³ At our public meeting in London, local Bangladeshis said there were many well-trained Bangladeshi people in the UK who could be used to provide training in Bangladesh if an appropriate secondment programme was developed.

18. We discussed a number of these issues with DFID. We were told that donors had secured an agreement from the adviser to the Prime Minister that no civil service project managers trained under the DFID programme would be rotated to take up their promotions but would be expected to take up their promotions in their current ministries.²⁴ This would reduce turnover and bring greater benefit to ministries from civil servants who completed the Management at the Top Programme. DFID also said it would consider the proposal, with the Government of Bangladesh, of using well-qualified Bangladeshis living in the UK to help train civil servants in Bangladesh, thus reducing the costs of sending them to the UK or Singapore for training.²⁵

19. DFID's programme to help train civil servants is making good progress and has now achieved nearly half of its target number. We appreciate that this is a long term project and that the benefits may not be immediately felt. It is nevertheless valuable if it can provide a group of well-trained civil servants to advise successive governments.

²⁰ Q 80

²¹ Ev 68

²² Q 80

²³ Q 80

²⁴ Q 172

²⁵ Qs 173 -174

We would urge DFID to take forward the suggestion of using appropriately qualified Bangladeshis living and working in the UK to help train civil servants in Bangladesh as one possible and potentially less costly alternative to sending civil servants abroad for training.

Improving accountability: parliament and parliamentarians

20. As previously noted the absence of the main opposition party from normal parliamentary processes means there is little parliamentary scrutiny of the executive. One of the ways in which DFID is helping to strengthen government accountability is through support to the Election Commission and National Assembly.²⁶ DFID explained to us that it was spending more in these areas as a result of issues flagged up in its country governance assessment.²⁷

21. When we met her in Bangladesh, the Prime Minister HE Sheikh Hasina expressed her strong support for the Westminster system of democracy. She told us about the changes she had made, including increasing the powers of select committees and the introduction of Prime Minister's question time. The Prime Minister supported our suggestion that Bangladesh's poverty reduction strategy could usefully be monitored through a parliamentary poverty reduction committee.

22. DFID will spend approximately £20 million over five years on its programmes for strengthening political participation. Of this, approximately £10 million will be channelled through USAID for institutional strengthening and £7.5 million will go to Transparency International.²⁸ DFID is currently discussing a six year £1.5 million programme with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) for political party and parliamentary support. According to WFD this would provide strategic and technical assistance to the parliament in Bangladesh and would complement existing programmes provided by USAID and UNDP.²⁹

23. WFD told us that it would like a greater level of engagement from DFID:

DFID spends significant funds in supporting the improvement of governance around the world and its support is becoming more focused on providing support to political institutions and processes. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy is a natural partner. A strategic partnership would benefit the development of this work.³⁰

We have long advocated an increased DFID focus on parliamentary strengthening because it is an essential element in proper governance.³¹ We discussed with DFID its future relationship with WFD and stressed the importance of ensuring that political and parliamentary strengthening should be country-specific and locally owned. We were told

²⁶ Ev 67

²⁷ Q 163

²⁸ Qs 179, 181

²⁹ Ev 107

³⁰ Ev 107

³¹ See, for example, Eighth Report of Session 2008-09, *DFID's Programme in Nigeria*, para 91

that discussions were ongoing and that DFID might seek to increase the relationship on a project-by-project basis over time.³²

24. We have on a number of occasions expressed our belief that DFID should allocate more funding to parliamentary strengthening initiatives which are central to improving governance. We believe that, in a country such as Bangladesh where Ministers and parliamentarians are keen to learn from the Westminster system, a more strategic relationship with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) would be beneficial. We recommend that DFID take forward the WFD proposal and explore the possibility of enhancing the relationship in the near future. We request that DFID reports back to us on the outcomes of its discussions with the Foundation in its response to this Report.

Improving accountability: civil society organisations

25. One of the ways in which the accountability of the government as a policy maker can be increased is through the presence of active and engaged civil society organisations (CSOs), composed of individuals and organisations who are not part of local, national, or other levels of government. This includes community-based and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, religious groups, academic institutions and other private and voluntary groups.

26. DFID has allocated £7.5 million to strengthening civil society voice for 2009-10.³³ DFID told us this was used, amongst other things, to support the work of the Bangladesh branch of Transparency International, which works with civil society groups to increase the demand for political change, and also to support the BBC World Trust to hold a “Question Time equivalent programme” with politicians.³⁴ DFID has created a Challenge Fund Programme for Rights and Governance which works with over 100 local NGOs and supports local community groups.³⁵

27. Dr Hossain, from the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, told us that DFID has made important progress in this area:

DFID support to civil society has, with considerable success, supported raising the profile of governance issues within the public debate in Bangladesh. Issues of corruption and public accountability across the public sectors are now widely and routinely scrutinised in the media and public discourse.³⁶

However she went on to question whether DFID had done enough to generate demand for improved governance among the poor or whether its programmes had focused on those aspects of governance which were most important to the poor.³⁷ She pointed out that DFID tended to focus on trying to improve formal institutions of accountability and service

³² Q 182

³³ Ev 67

³⁴ Qs 184-185

³⁵ Qs 148, 186

³⁶ Ev 82

³⁷ Ev 81

delivery without always understanding the extent to which, where such formal institutions were weak, ordinary people used informal mechanisms and arrangements to access services and gain accountability. She also discussed the ways in which poor people already exerted pressure on public service providers and suggested that DFID should seek to understand these better and perhaps even use this knowledge to develop performance accountability measures which could more effectively monitor public service provision.³⁸ She said, “stuff goes on on the ground that we really do not have a good handle on because our gaze is always at this level of the formal accountability mechanisms which are just defunct.”³⁹

28. One World Action argued that DFID should broaden the range of constituents with whom it consults to help change the nature of political dialogue and political processes while remaining politically neutral:

It is difficult to see how DFID will strengthen community-led initiatives and civil society in practice, as more funding is channelled through multilaterals [...] DFID should look beyond larger NGOs and connect with wider civil society in a more tangible manner, for example women's organisations, community organisations of excluded groups and other non-state actors.⁴⁰

This point was also made to us in our meeting with NGOs in Dhaka. We were told that 4,000 organisations had applied for funding from DFID's Challenge Fund but only 150 were awarded a grant. Smaller NGOs had found the application process difficult. While it is not necessarily the case that these smaller NGOs are better placed to help the poorest, it is likely that some can communicate with sectors of the population which larger NGOs and multilaterals do not reach.

29. Improving the ability of civil society, broadly defined, to hold the providers of public services to account is an essential component of better governance and for ensuring the poor can access the services they need. Donor initiatives in this area have made some progress, for example in terms of raising awareness of corruption and the need for public accountability. DFID must build on this success and ensure that its programmes help to raise the demand for accountability among the poorest and for those aspects of governance which are most important to the poor. Working with smaller NGOs may provide one means of doing this and may not require a large amount of funding. We appreciate the economies of scale which DFID gains from working through larger NGOs but believe that it should nevertheless seek to ensure smaller community groups and non-governmental organisations have access to donor funds.

Increasing the tax base

30. Robust public finance management is an essential component of good governance. Governments with a low rate of tax revenue collection also tend to be less responsive to

³⁸ Qs 9-11, Ev 182. See also N Hossain, “Rude Accountability in the unreformed state: Informal pressures on frontline bureaucrats in Bangladesh” IDS Working Paper 319.

³⁹ Q 14

⁴⁰ Ev 94

their electorate.⁴¹ As DFID noted, “the one way in which we in the UK have a real vested interest in holding government to account is because of the taxpayers’ cash that we give to the government.”⁴² According to the IMF, Bangladesh’s tax to GDP ratio is around 8.5% which is 4% lower than comparable regional economies and one of the lowest for developing countries.⁴³ We were also told that the tax collection rate had not increased despite economic growth. This severely constrains the government’s capacity to fund key sectors of the economy as well as its ability to focus on poverty reduction.

31. We were told that the Caretaker Government had made more effort to collect taxes, but now there was less political will to take on vested interests. For example, we were told that parliamentarians were now required to pay taxes but were given a voucher to claim these back. The problem had been compounded by one section of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) being unable to hire people due to a legal dispute. Continuing staff shortages were having an adverse impact on the NBR’s overall operations and service delivery and impeding the Board’s efforts to identify and engage with potential tax payers, and thus widen the tax base. NBR’s ability to detect and penalise tax evasion, and provide effective tax payer services was also limited due to this problem.⁴⁴ DFID assured us this would not directly affect its projects with the Board.

32. DFID is providing technical assistance to help the government increase the number of registered tax payers from three to five million people by 2014. However it pointed out that, although there were three million people registered to pay tax, only 700,000 of these actually paid. DFID said that this was due to tax avoidance and it was also an indication of the extent of poverty in the country with 80 million people living on less than \$2 per day and unable to pay tax.⁴⁵

33. It is not possible to change people’s attitude to paying taxes overnight. Witnesses believed that such efforts should be seen as long-term investments over 10 to 25 years rather than something which could be achieved in three or four years and that donor support should reflect this.⁴⁶ They also took the view that the government should begin to tax its rising middle classes.

34. We broadly support DFID in its efforts to increase the tax base from 3 to 5 million. Once this target has been achieved a new, ambitious, target should be set to ensure the number of people paying taxes steadily increases over time. Changing entrenched attitudes to taxation is a long term process and the tax base in Bangladesh is likely to remain small for a long period. However, the state is not currently able to provide services in a number of key areas and it will not increase its ability to do so unless and until it widens the tax base. This would also help achieve a stronger and more direct relationship between the government and its citizens. We urge the Government of

⁴¹ See Centre for the Future State, www.ids.ac.uk/gdr/cfs/research

⁴² Q 177

⁴³ IMF, *Bangladesh:2009 Article IV consultation, Preliminary conclusions of the IMF mission*, 29 October 2009

⁴⁴ Ev 109

⁴⁵ Q 176

⁴⁶ Q 115

Bangladesh to make progress on widening its tax base, with appropriate support from donors.

Good governance: a long-term objective

35. Improving governance and changing the way political systems operate in Bangladesh will require long-term engagement from donors. Professor Hulme, from Manchester University, told us that in countries such as Bangladesh donors should not be aiming for good governance so much as for good *enough* governance:

Good governance is something which most countries are aspiring to, still, and, in a way, good enough government is what one is trying to get to, at this stage. It is extraordinary in Bangladesh how imperfect the processes of governance are but those processes have been sufficient to allow the private sector to invest, improve its productivity and create jobs, and to allow the voluntary sector to function, and to allow parts of local government and the civil service to function.⁴⁷

36. According to Dr Hossain the litmus test of good governance in Bangladesh should be “how are the poor being affected by governance reforms [and] how governance is affected by poverty.”⁴⁸ Despite weak governance Bangladesh has made some progress in terms of poverty reduction, but this has not been sufficient. Large numbers of people remain desperately poor and unable to take advantage of the opportunities provided by economic growth. The poorest people in Bangladesh do not necessarily have a relationship with their National Assembly representative or their local councillor. The way in which they engage with, or seek accountability from, those whom they see as responsible for providing services, is often informal and unofficial. Importantly, in many cases there is no expectation that the state will protect or provide for them. Change is needed.

37. We were therefore concerned when we were told in relation to our inquiry into DFID's Annual Report that in carrying out its annual review of its programmes, those found to be failing would be cut if they repeatedly performed poorly.⁴⁹ While we understand the principle, we wanted to know more about how DFID would characterise a failing project in the area of governance given that outcomes are difficult to measure and there are many external variables. Both Dr Greeley and Professor Wood agreed that, while donors could have some influence in terms of encouraging the government to focus on important issues such as poverty reduction, it was equally possible for politicians to ignore such donor appeals.⁵⁰

38. Programmes to improve governance are complicated, resource-intensive and rarely produce immediate results. They are nevertheless important in countries such as Bangladesh and should be viewed as long-term projects where the benefits might not be reaped for 10 or more years. When evaluating programmes in this area benchmarks must be realistic so that programmes are not cut prematurely.

⁴⁷ Q 12

⁴⁸ Q 9

⁴⁹ Evidence taken on 24 November 2009 in the Committee's inquiry into the *DFID Annual Report 2009* (HC 48-i), Q 41

⁵⁰ Qs 78-79

39. DFID Bangladesh has developed a significant and broad governance programme. It is to be commended for its initiatives in this area since it is clear to us that the poor quality of governance and the weakness of politics there both act as substantial impediments to the successful implementation of development partnerships. We broadly endorse its efforts, recognising that DFID is operating in a complex and difficult political environment.

3 Reducing poverty and inequality

Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals

40. Bangladesh has made good progress towards the achievement of a number of Millennium Development Goal targets. According to the World Bank, Bangladesh should meet the MDG 1 target of halving the number of poor people from the 1990 level by 2015, if economic growth rates are maintained or bettered. Economic growth has averaged about 5% since 1990 and was approximately 5.9% in 2009.⁵¹ Bangladesh will also need to sustain its progress in reducing the rate of population growth and increasing consumption to meet this target.⁵²

41. Professor Hulme, from the University of Manchester, pointed out that it was important to be realistic about what could be achieved in Bangladesh:

Bangladesh came from a very low base; it had incredibly high levels of poverty—much of that was extreme poverty—and there were extraordinary levels of vulnerability and under-nutrition [...] It is a success, but it started from a low base, and 5% [growth] over 15 years is not enough to eradicate poverty; you need 30 or 40 years at this rate or you need a faster rate of growth, but the achievements have been considerable.⁵³

A report by the World Bank highlighted regional inequality within Bangladesh: the eastern parts of the country “have far outpaced the areas to the West and Southwest.”⁵⁴ Whilst Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet have seen a significant reduction in poverty rates, areas such as Barisal and Khulna have experienced “no poverty reduction.” The World Bank attributes the lack of progress in these areas to them being geographically isolated, largely by rivers, from the centres of growth to the east of the country. Coastal areas, particularly in the Southwest, also have high levels of poverty due to their vulnerability to the effects of rising sea levels and regular flooding.⁵⁵ In Sylhet and Chittagong the rapid growth of international remittances has also been an important factor contributing to poverty reduction.⁵⁶

42. On the education MDGs, Bangladesh has achieved a 91% enrolment rate and gender parity in primary education.⁵⁷ Secondary enrolment has more than doubled since independence.⁵⁸ However we were told that primary school completion rates were only 55% as many children from the poorest families dropped out of school early because of the

⁵¹ Ev 73, 97; Qs 26, 111

⁵² World Bank, *Bangladesh: Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh, Creating opportunities and Bridging the East West Divide*, 21 October 2008.

⁵³ Qs 25-26

⁵⁴ World Bank, *Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh*, p 15

⁵⁵ World Bank, *Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh*, p xv

⁵⁶ World Bank, *Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh*, p 13

⁵⁷ DFID, Bangladesh: Key facts, www.dfid.gov.uk

⁵⁸ N Alam, *Whose Public Action? Analysing Inter-sectoral Collaboration for Service Delivery. Bangladesh country review: History of State-NSP relations*, February 2007.

need for them to earn money. DFID points out that 67 million people are illiterate—42 million of whom are women.⁵⁹

43. On the health MDGs, child mortality was halved in the 1990s and life expectancy has increased from 45 in 1972 to 64 years in 2005. However Bangladesh still has high rates of neonatal mortality and is off-track for achieving the target to reduce maternal mortality. The reasons for this will be discussed in the next chapter. There has been some progress in reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS and malaria, which is no longer endemic. Progress on the environment MDG is mixed, in part because Bangladesh is one of the most natural disaster-prone countries in the world with much of its land mass lying below or at sea level. Climate change presents a huge challenge for Bangladesh and is discussed in chapter 5.

44. DFID's work in Bangladesh focuses specifically on MDG 1 (poverty and hunger); MDG 2 (primary education); and MDG 5 (maternal health).⁶⁰ Within the donor community DFID has been given lead responsibility for building livelihoods among the extreme poor. It has four main strands of work for reducing poverty. These are: providing direct support to the extreme poor; improving the provision of basic education, health, water and sanitation and key skills; providing technical and policy advice to the government; and supporting private sector development. It tackles inequality by providing access to livelihoods, assets and basic services for the poorest and excluded groups.⁶¹ This chapter focuses on the first two of these strands of work—targeting the extreme poor and the provision of basic services, in particular education.

Education

45. Although progress towards the MDG 2 target on universal primary enrolment is on track there has been little progress in this area since 2000.⁶² In addition, high drop out rates mean that the overall MDG goal of universal completion of primary school will not be achieved. In Bangladesh, as in other developing countries, education remains correlated with socio-economic status and gender, with the poorest households performing worst.⁶³ Over three-quarters of all drop-outs are from poorer households. The World Bank reports that access to secondary education in particular is heavily skewed in favour of wealthier families.⁶⁴

46. Education is provided by both the state and the NGO sectors. The new government has openly stated that it needs NGO support and assistance in education.⁶⁵ DFID provides funding for education through both the government and NGOs. It has committed £150 million over an eight year period (2004-2011) towards basic education. This includes support to the government's Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II).⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Ev 67

⁶⁰ Ev 67

⁶¹ Ev 68

⁶² World Bank, *Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh*, p 80

⁶³ World Bank, *Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh*, p 80

⁶⁴ World Bank, *Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh*, p 81

⁶⁵ Ev 77

⁶⁶ Ev 70

Low quality teaching is seen as a barrier to progress and so, in addition to helping provide basic education and the building of classrooms, the programme aims to improve the quality of education by strengthening teacher training and teaching methodology. We visited a government-funded primary school and a BRAC-funded pre-school in Sirajganj. At the government primary school we were told that class sizes of 95 were not uncommon. At the pre-school classes were much smaller. These were designed to give children a head-start on entering primary school and had proven success rates.

47. The UK also supports the country's largest non-formal education programme, which provides basic education to around one million girls and boys each year who would otherwise be out of school due to poverty, child labour, special needs, geographical remoteness or difficulty with the language of instruction. Much non-formal education is provided through NGOs which target the education programme to the specific needs of the student, for example to fit around their need to also work to help support their families. We visited an impressive vocational training school for slum children outside Dhaka. Many of the pupils had never been to school before. The school provided the equivalent of eight years of formal education over a four year period followed by six to eighteen months of vocational training, for example in electronics, sewing or car maintenance. Classes were offered either in the morning or afternoon to allow the children to work in the other half of the day. We were told that 95% of its graduates found jobs afterwards. The school was funded jointly by DFID and other donors. It received no government or private sector funding.

48. Bangladesh has made progress on gender parity in primary school enrolment which is unusual in South Asia. However one factor which contributes towards this is that boys in poorer households are often sent out to work at a younger age.⁶⁷ Ms Kabir, from BRAC UK discussed the progress which had been made in terms of educating girls:

More and more girls are going into primary school and completing primary school, but it is still not as good as we would like it to be. It is improving. It is the style of education also. Africa has a similar problem. For instance, do the schools have toilets that the girls can use? If you do not have toilets girls are not going to go to school, things like that. It is changing, and we have to continue to keep our eye on the ball with regard to girls' education, not just primary but also higher education, and that could involve vocational training, not necessarily only sitting in the classroom but vocational training which would then lead to employment.⁶⁸

Gender equity is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

49. A well-educated population is essential for Bangladesh to make further progress in poverty reduction and for it to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country by 2021. Bangladesh is on track to meet the MDG target for enrolment in primary school. It now needs to be more ambitious and seek to meet the target for primary school completion along with improved quality. Further progress on enrolment and completion of secondary education, especially for the poorest, is also a priority.

⁶⁷ World Bank, *Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh*, p 81

⁶⁸ Q 63

Targeting extreme poverty

50. While Bangladesh has made some progress in reducing overall levels of poverty it still has many poor people. According to the World Bank: “Bangladesh represents a success story among developing countries [...] The average annual rate of poverty reduction during 2000-2005 was the second highest among South Asian countries for a comparable period.”⁶⁹ In contrast a briefing paper from the ODI makes the following assessment:

Recent economic growth in Bangladesh has not led to a major fall in poverty, least of all in rural areas. Around 40% of people live in poverty, with 25% of those classified by the government as extreme poor and rarely able to take advantage of the productive opportunities emerging from economic growth.⁷⁰

These two seemingly contradictory analyses are both correct. Much will need to be done for Bangladesh to meet the MDG target of halving the number of people living in poverty,⁷¹ (see paragraph 40) even though the poverty rate has been falling by about 1% a year since 1990.⁷² According to Professor Hulme, nearly 30 million people are still categorised as extremely poor and unable to benefit from economic growth or employment opportunities and as requiring specific interventions.⁷³ They are referred to variously as the extreme poor, the hard-core poor, ultra poor or most marginalised.⁷⁴ A report from DFID's Economic Empowerment of the Poorest challenge fund explains the concept:

[...] the rationale behind defining and identifying the extreme poor is that they are the people who have either failed to benefit from past development assistance or have been disadvantaged by it. The extreme poor are not merely poorer than poor people: they face a fundamentally different set of situations. In other words, different approaches are required to reduce extreme poverty.⁷⁵

51. In 2002 BRAC was one of the first organisations to set up a programme specifically targeting the extreme poor. This followed a realisation that, while its microfinance programmes had been successful in helping many poor people, there was still a significant group of people who were too poor to qualify for microfinance and some who, despite receiving help, for example through the provision of long-term food aid, were still not in a position to take advantage of microfinance programmes.⁷⁶

52. BRAC set up its Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR) programme to assist this group of people. The programme has two strands, one of which is called

⁶⁹ World Bank, *Poverty assessment for Bangladesh*, p vi

⁷⁰ R Holmes et al, “Extreme poverty in Bangladesh: protecting and promoting rural livelihoods”, *Project Briefing*, no 15, September 2008

⁷¹ UNDP, *A Situation Analysis Report on Poverty and Hunger (MDG1) in Bangladesh*, 2009, www.undp.org.bd

⁷² N. Alam, *Whose public action? Analysing inter-sectoral collaboration for service delivery, Bangladesh country review: History of State-NSP relations*, University of Birmingham, February 2007.

⁷³ Hulme and Moore, “Assisting the poorest in Bangladesh: learning from BRAC's Targeting the Ultra Poor programme” in Hulme and Barrientos (eds) *Social Protection for the Poor and Poorest*, 2008.

⁷⁴ Shiree, *Extreme Poverty Policies of donors in Bangladesh: an overview*, Bangladesh, June 2009

⁷⁵ Shiree, *Extreme Poverty Policies of donors in Bangladesh: an overview*, Bangladesh, June 2009

⁷⁶ Hulme et al, “Reaching the people who microfinance cannot reach: learning from BRAC's targeting the ultra poor programme”, (unpublished draft) 2008

Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP). This is a grant-based programme which uses a set of carefully sequenced interventions to transfer assets directly to the poor—mainly women—with the aim of income generation, and provide two years of hands-on training for participants, including in life-skills and social and human rights. The programme also includes a community social development element, which aims to mobilise village elites to form committees which take the decisions on which families should be eligible for BRAC assistance.

53. We met some beneficiaries of the TUP programmes in Sirajganj and heard their stories. One female beneficiary's husband had died from TB six years ago leaving her with three children. She initially received 5 goats and 10 chickens to help her generate income; training in animal husbandry; construction of a latrine for her family; and visits from a health worker. The income from selling her livestock enabled her to raise her house on a plinth to prevent flooding and put a proper roof on her house. Before the BRAC assistance, she said there were many occasions when she could not feed her children but now she was able to give them two or three meals a day, including eggs and milk from the animals. She had graduated from the ultra-poor programme and had since been eligible for microfinance loans.

54. Professor Hulme explained how successful the programme had been in terms of both providing a model for other programmes and its impact of people's lives:

In a way, it has challenged things conceptually because it has put together social protection with enterprise promotion and with this idea of an asset transfer. People need to have social protection to stabilise their lives; you have to give them a resource because they are asset-less to such a high degree, and then they need, in a way, support to develop a micro-enterprise. So conceptually it has done that and then, practically, it has managed to do that.⁷⁷

The BRAC programme is funded by the UK, Australia and Canada. By 2011 it will have helped 800,000 people directly, largely in the north of the country. With an average household size of five, BRAC estimates it will have helped four million people.⁷⁸ While the programme is complex to deliver, and requires a high level of analytical and management input, it has been proven to work in terms of enabling some of the poorest people to improve their lives and opportunities. Such programmes cannot however reach older people or the chronically ill because they rely on income generation activities and should not be seen as an alternative to conventional forms of social protection.⁷⁹

55. We were impressed by the way in which BRAC's Targeting the Ultra Poor programme is able to provide the most needy families with multi-pronged assistance to help them raise themselves out of poverty. It provides direct and practical help in the form of assets such as livestock and also empowers beneficiaries to make informed decisions about their lives, including integrating health and family legal advice. We

⁷⁷ Q 39

⁷⁸ BRAC, *BRAC Ultra Poor Programme*, Bangladesh

⁷⁹ Q 101

fully support DFID's contribution to this pioneering programme and look forward to seeing it extended to more people.

Chars Livelihoods Programme

56. One of DFID's flagship programmes in Bangladesh targets extreme poverty on remote islands or Chars on the Jumuna River. These are subject to regular flooding which destroys houses and livelihoods. Those who live on them do not receive many government services or significant donor assistance because of their remoteness and difficulty of access. Regular periods of hunger, or *monga*, occur during flood periods and in the periods between rice planting and harvesting when agricultural work is scarce. We were told that DFID was quite innovative in working on the Chars since few other donors did so.⁸⁰

57. The Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP) is loosely based on BRAC's successful Targeting the Ultra Poor programme. Eligible beneficiaries are those with no land, assets or employment, typically living on about 20 pence per day. The programme transfers assets, such as cows or vegetable seeds, and cash stipends directly to these families. Assistance is provided for 18 months at which point assets have generally doubled in value and household income has increased. The programme also has a social development element which we saw in practice. We attended a women's beneficiary group meeting which was discussing social issues such as forced marriage, dowry and domestic violence. The CLP also provides assistance to families to raise their houses on sand plinths to protect them during the floods. It thus has an important disaster risk reduction element. DFID described its programme to us:

The extreme poor cannot work their way out of poverty without an initial investment. We provide assets such as a cow, goat, chickens or seeds, with which they can begin to build their livelihood. Such assets are shown often to double in value within a year. We also facilitate access to basic services and engagement in community dialogue on key development issues. Government support is not yet reaching many of the poorest, so a key element of our approach is advocacy for greater service provision, and the provision at scale of social safety net programmes based on our successful models.⁸¹

58. The Programme seeks to improve the lives of a million ultra poor people over the period to 2016. So far it has helped about 700,000. The cost of the programme is £50 million for the period 2006-2010 and an estimated £70 million for the second phase from 2010-2016. We had been told that the Chars programme was an expensive one as it employs an international consultancy company, Maxwell Stamp, to manage it. However we were also told that, in Bangladesh where corruption levels are high, this arrangement provides important guarantees for the UK taxpayer.⁸²

59. An issue which concerned us was the apparent lack of services on the island we visited. Christian Aid raised this with us:

⁸⁰ Q 32

⁸¹ Ev 68

⁸² Qs 104, 106

We are concerned that only limited attention appears to have been given to advocacy vis-à-vis the local government to address important questions such as land rights, employment and public services on the Chars. The causes of poverty on the Chars must be addressed more directly: for much of the year, there is no work available on the Chars; there are very few health clinics; most of the children living there do not go to school (education services are either non-existent or of a low quality); and very few households own land. Approximately 60% of the island Chars are stable, so it is feasible to make these investments.⁸³

We observed this for ourselves when we visited a Chars village where there was no school. There were approximately 200 children who would have to walk five kilometres to the next village if they wanted to attend school. As a result many did not go at all, or did not attend regularly. The local government spokesperson told us there were currently no plans to build a school. The CLP had however recently supported a satellite clinic for the village and the government did provide some health care services including an immunisation programme.

60. We were told that DFID's work on the Chars had created some new business opportunities and networks. For example there was now an operation set up to purchase milk from those families which had cows and sell it on their behalf. Newspaper coverage of the Chars had also created more interest and potentially more economic opportunities.⁸⁴

61. The Chars Livelihoods Programme provides an excellent example of innovative poverty reduction programming by DFID in an area of Bangladesh which receives little or no assistance and where some of the poorest and most vulnerable households are located. We commend DFID for its efforts to assist these hard-to-reach groups in the remote Chars. We saw for ourselves the difference this assistance was making in the lives of some of the recipients. However we are concerned about the lack of services on these islands. We appreciate that there is a legitimate question around how much to invest on temporary islands which are regularly flooded. But given the investment which DFID is making in this programme we consider it short-sighted not to ensure that the Chars dwellers can have access to the same basic services which other people have. DFID should actively encourage local government to invest in the Chars islands communities by providing more schools and better health care facilities and to tackle issues such as land rights. Without these basic services the populations there are likely to remain recipients of aid programmes. Both the Chars programme and the BRAC TUP programme have climate change resilience elements which we discuss further in chapter 5.

Targeting the urban poor

62. While 80% of the population live in rural areas, rapid urbanisation, coupled with an increasing population will make Dhaka into a mega-city of 30 million (about 20% of the current national population) by 2015.⁸⁵ Urbanisation has already led to overcrowded

⁸³ Ev 64

⁸⁴ Q 34

⁸⁵ Ev 69

slums, placing even greater pressure on “already over burdened local services.”⁸⁶ DFID pointed out that climate change was likely to increase migration towards cities such as Dhaka presenting an even greater challenge.⁸⁷

63. DFID currently spends the majority of its funds for extreme poverty in Bangladesh on rural rather than urban poverty reduction. It has allocated £29.5 million to rural poverty reduction in 2009-10 increasing to £38 million in 2010-11. It will spend £4 million on urban poverty reduction in 2009-10 increasing to £7 million in 2010-11. After this, funding for urban poverty reduction will double to nearly £15 million per year as part of a £60 million urban poverty reduction programme implemented by UNDP over seven years.⁸⁸ DFID hopes that the programme will improve the lives of 3 million people living in urban areas. We have already discussed the impressive vocational training school for children from slums in Dhaka which DFID funds. DFID's work on urban issues in Bangladesh also includes supporting Community Development Committees to engage with municipal authorities, as well as grants to help keep children in schools.

64. Rapid urbanisation presents Bangladesh with challenges and opportunities. For example, while urbanisation can lead to increased numbers of slum dwellers, crowded communities offer opportunities for economies in the delivery of services. For urbanisation to be beneficial to development it needs to be properly planned and resourced. Our recent report on *Urbanisation and Poverty* found that, even though the pace of urbanisation had increased, DFID staff capacity to work on urban issues had decreased. It suggested that DFID re-establish a specific focus on urban poverty and make a modest but highly targeted increase of financial resources for it. The report also noted that the presence of urban expertise within country programmes, rather than in London, would better enable DFID to support community-led solutions to urban development challenges.⁸⁹ In DFID Bangladesh there is no specific urban expertise and the largest urban programme is implemented by UNDP. The Government's response to our report said it had no immediate plans to re-establish a dedicated urban team since it did not view rural and urban development as separate agendas.⁹⁰

65. We were pleased to learn that DFID's programme in Bangladesh will have an increased focus on urban poverty. Dhaka is predicted to become one of the world's largest cities in the near future. This presents both challenges and opportunities. We reiterate the recommendation in our report on urbanisation, that DFID should re-establish a specific focus on urban poverty, with appropriate expertise in its country office in Bangladesh.

⁸⁶ Ev 69

⁸⁷ Q 152

⁸⁸ Q 152

⁸⁹ International Development Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2008-09, *Urbanisation and Poverty*, Summary

⁹⁰ International Development Committee, First Special Report of Session 2009-10, *Urbanisation and Poverty: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2008-09*, page 2

Service delivery: the role of NGOs

66. Bangladesh has one of the largest, most innovative and best known NGO communities in the world. This includes the Grameen Bank, whose founder Mohamed Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his contribution to helping the poor through the provision of microfinance. Bangladesh is also home to BRAC which is now the largest NGO in the world with operations in nine developing countries.⁹¹ While BRAC currently dominates many areas of development assistance in Bangladesh there are also other large and significant NGOs such as PROSHIKA, which have also played an important role in providing services.⁹²

67. As we have noted, NGOs have programmes which both target the extreme poor and deliver basic services. In part this is because the government has not historically displayed the capacity to meet these needs. It is also worth noting that the government can and does sub-contract NGOs to deliver its services.⁹³ NGOs have also grown out of community-led poverty reduction initiatives which have responded to demands for better health, education, agriculture or access to capital—often amongst difficult to reach communities—as well as raising awareness of rights among the villagers.⁹⁴ NGOs have also developed commercial ventures in order to link poor producers with markets for their products as well as to generate revenue for the organisation.⁹⁵

68. These NGO-led programmes usually involve significant participation by local communities in the design and delivery of services and have a greater level of accountability than state-delivered ones.⁹⁶ This high-level community participation is thus credited with not only improving the delivery of services but also with strengthening accountability for service delivery and enhancing transparency. There is also evidence to suggest that community-based service provision can be more responsive to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries and is comparatively cost-effective.⁹⁷

69. The rapid growth in the NGO sector and its increased role in the provision of basic services led us to question the extent to which NGOs were displacing the state by carrying out those activities normally associated with the state, or interrupting the traditional relationship between state and citizen and thus contributing to further deterioration in democratic accountability. Professor Wood discussed the potential conflict of interests which donors might face in trying to build up state capacity while also supporting NGOs in the delivery of services:

⁹¹ I Smillie, *Freedom from Want*, Bangladesh, 2009

⁹² Q 100

⁹³ World Bank, "Economics and Governance of NGOs in Bangladesh", *Bangladesh Development Series* paper 11, The World Bank Office, Dhaka, April 2006, p iv

⁹⁴ N Alam, *Whose Public Action? Analysing Inter-sectoral Collaboration for Service Delivery. Bangladesh country review: History of State-NSP relations*, February 2007

⁹⁵ World Bank, "Economics and Governance of NGOs in Bangladesh", *Bangladesh Development Series* paper 11, The World Bank Office, Dhaka, April 2006

⁹⁶ S Ahmed, *Transforming Bangladesh into a Middle Income Economy*, 2005

⁹⁷ S. Commins, *Community Participation in Service Delivery and Accountability*, January 2007

[...] what you have is NGOs effectively taking on the functions of the state but in a non-statutory framework in which they have no statutory obligation to their clients; [...] ultimately there is a danger in over-privileging NGOs as a target of aid and strategic partnerships for DFID [...] because it seems to me that then you have a self-fulfilling prophecy in that you are undermining the capacity of the state and you are getting in between the relationship between citizen and state.⁹⁸

In contrast Professor Hulme said:

I used to worry about them [NGOs] displacing the Bangladeshi state but I do not really do that now because there is so much need. They are an incredible resource; they do create new organisational technologies and new products, like microfinance, like low cost education. The government is not taking that on now but it could take it on in the future.⁹⁹

70. NGOs provide distinct services in specific sectors. For example, along with the private sector, they are the largest providers of microfinance to the poor. NGOs also frequently deliver services in a different way to the state. In health care, for example, NGOs typically use village-based community health workers to provide door-to-door services, mainly in preventative and primary health care. They have been extremely successful in the promotion of behavioural change in sanitation and hygiene and have had a significant impact in communities on malnutrition and neonatal mortality rates.¹⁰⁰ In education NGOs mainly provide non-formal services. As Dr Hossain commented:

NGOs appear to me to be supplying services in areas where government is not supplying services, and supplying services that government is not supplying; chiefly non-formal education in areas that government cannot or will not reach—the groups that government cannot or will not reach—and certain sorts of health services that government cannot.¹⁰¹

In this context it appears to make sense for donors such as DFID to allocate a portion of their funding to NGOs where these can contribute to the achievement of DFID's poverty reduction objectives. As Dr Greeley from the Institute of Development Studies noted, "it is not reasonable that we should put achievement of the MDGs and the removal of extreme poverty on hold until the political process in Dhaka has sorted itself out, which may take a very long time."¹⁰²

71. In both education and health DFID supports services provided both by government and NGOs and seeks to build links between government and NGO systems.¹⁰³ In the health sector DFID has provided £12 million to government health systems and £1.5 million to NGO direct provision of health services in 2009-10. It has contributed £3 million to

⁹⁸ Q 85

⁹⁹ Q 16

¹⁰⁰ World Bank, "Economics and Governance of NGOs in Bangladesh", *Bangladesh Development Series* paper 11, The World Bank Office, Dhaka, April 2006, p iv

¹⁰¹ Q 15

¹⁰² Q 90

¹⁰³ Ev 69-70; Q 190

government education systems and £15 million to NGO support for basic education in 2009-10. It also provided £14 million for skills development through the NGO and voluntary sector in this period.¹⁰⁴

72. In Bangladesh there are many small and regional NGOs operating alongside larger and national NGOs. In the previous chapter we suggested that DFID should ensure that a portion of its funding goes towards smaller NGOs which operate at the local or district level and are in direct contact with local communities. These smaller organisations typically receive less funding, proportionally, than national ones and there is some tension in the relationship between them.¹⁰⁵ Dr Greeley stressed the need to focus on effective NGOs since there were so many in Bangladesh, some of which were less scrupulous than others:

If we talk about some of the bigger NGOs that have been there since shortly after independence, such as BRAC and some of the smaller partners which are supported and nurtured by international NGOs, then we are looking at organisations that can deliver quality services. I am a strong supporter of DFID and others providing them with resources to do that.¹⁰⁶

73. We have not heard any evidence to suggest that NGOs are displacing the state by providing services which the government is in a better position to provide. In Bangladesh NGOs often provide a different type of service, for example non-formal schooling for disadvantaged children or community-delivered health care, while core funding for the health and education sectors remains in the hands of the state. While we accept that it would be better if the government was more capable of delivering these services, and we expect DFID to continue to work towards this end, we believe that the provision of services to the poor should not be delayed while waiting for a more effective state to emerge.

DFID's relationship with BRAC

74. The question of the relationship between the state and NGOs in Bangladesh took on renewed importance when we learned that DFID intended to move towards a special relationship with one NGO, BRAC, by providing it with core funding over a number of years. This would be in the region of £75-100 million over a five year period. DFID currently funds a number of different BRAC programmes and the proposal would simplify and centralise the administration of these different funding streams. DFID told us it would sign a Partnership Programme Arrangement with BRAC in March 2010.¹⁰⁷

75. Witnesses commented that the new relationship had wider implications—it was not simply a question of the funding arrangement between DFID and BRAC. It should be looked at in terms of the signals it would send to the Government of Bangladesh about DFID's views of the relative capacity of government and of NGOs such as BRAC, as well as

¹⁰⁴ Ev 69-70

¹⁰⁵ N Alam, *Whose Public Action? Analysing inter-sectoral collaboration for service delivery, Bangladesh country review: history of State-NSP relations*, University of Birmingham, 2007

¹⁰⁶ Q 90

¹⁰⁷ Q 191

how it would affect DFID's relationship with other NGOs in Bangladesh.¹⁰⁸ DFID told us that the new relationship would reflect the special nature of BRAC as an organisation and as a delivery mechanism and was not intended to replace DFID's relationships with other NGOs.¹⁰⁹

76. DFID sees BRAC as the equivalent of a multilateral organisation.¹¹⁰ This is because BRAC now operates not only in Bangladesh but also in eight other countries—Afghanistan, Liberia, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Southern Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. BRAC also has offices in the UK and the USA for fundraising and communications work. It has also been invited by the Dutch Government to start a microfinance programme for immigrants. BRAC is taking lessons learned in Bangladesh to other developing countries and seeking to meet needs, especially in relation to service delivery. BRAC is now the largest NGO in Afghanistan.¹¹¹

77. We have some sympathy with the concerns expressed to us about DFID's new Partnership Programme Arrangement (PPA) with BRAC. It risks having unintended and unforeseen implications for DFID's relationship with other NGOs in Bangladesh which should be acknowledged and discussed with them to prevent any risk of souring of their relationship with DFID. However, the new relationship may also be seen as a new model for working with southern NGOs. We are supportive of such innovations. DFID is proposing a five year programme with BRAC. We recommend that DFID provide us with an assessment of how the programme is working one year after the PPA commences.

¹⁰⁸ Q 98

¹⁰⁹ Q 192

¹¹⁰ Q 151

¹¹¹ N Hossian & A.Sengupta, *Thinking Big, going global: the challenge of BRAC's global expansion*, IDS Working Paper 339, December 2009. The history of BRAC is also recounted in I Smillie, *Freedom from Want*, 2009

4 Tackling gender inequality

78. Despite progress in improving some indicators of gender equality, for example in school enrolments and reductions in maternal mortality, Bangladesh ranks low on the UNDP's Gender Empowerment Measure—108th out of 109 ranked countries.¹¹² This index measures the extent to which women and men are able actively to participate in economic and political life and to take part in decision-making.¹¹³

79. The way women are treated in society is also an indicator of gender equality. According to DFID, 60% of women in Bangladesh suffer from domestic violence at some point.¹¹⁴ Dr Hossain told us: “domestic violence is probably the single greatest human insecurity threat that people in Bangladesh face [...] women-based violence from their partners is among the highest rates in the world.”¹¹⁵ The fear of crime and insecurity has curtailed women's mobility with implications for their ability to go out to work.

80. Women typically earn only 65% of the amount men do for the same jobs.¹¹⁶ The World Bank reports that, while the gender gap in terms of equal pay narrowed between 2000 and 2005, this mainly benefited better-off salaried workers in the middle and higher end of income distribution.¹¹⁷ The Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies (BIDS) points out that women in the poorest households are worse off because of the social dynamics: “women in poor households are marginalized due to the societal and intra-household inequality and a lack of empowerment in making choices.”¹¹⁸

DFID's approach

81. DFID's Country Plan says that it will promote gender equality and improvements in the status of women. DFID is tackling gender inequality in three ways: (i) policy dialogue with Government, other donors and civil society; (ii) targeting through specific programmes, with sex-disaggregated data to track progress; and (iii) helping to ensure that different budget lines are gender sensitive.¹¹⁹ DFID seeks to ensure that women have access or are prioritised in its education, health and extreme poverty programmes. It has helped the government to set up a budgeting system which can track expenditure with a gender focus and it is contributing to a media campaign to raise awareness of gender inequality.¹²⁰

¹¹² UNDP, *Human Development Report*, Table K: Gender Empowerment Measure and its components, UNDP, 2009

¹¹³ UNDP, *Measuring Inequality: Gender-related Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure*, www.hdr.undp.org

¹¹⁴ Q 214

¹¹⁵ Q 18

¹¹⁶ Q 214

¹¹⁷ World Bank, *Poverty assessment for Bangladesh*, p x

¹¹⁸ Ev 54

¹¹⁹ Ev 68

¹²⁰ Ev 71

Maternal and neonatal mortality

82. As with the provision of other basic services in Bangladesh, maternal care is provided through government programmes, NGOs and the private sector.¹²¹ Women and Children First report a reduction in maternal mortality from 574 per 100,000 live births in 1991 to 290 in 2006.¹²² The target is to reduce this to 147 per 100,000 live births by 2015.¹²³ However 80% of births still take place at home without trained assistance resulting in an estimated 12,000 maternal deaths per year.¹²⁴ Neonatal mortality rates are also high. This is related to maternal care since it is difficult to anticipate birthing difficulties or babies being born in need of medical care when women have had no antenatal care. Professor Costello from University College London expressed some scepticism about whether the fall in maternal mortality rates could be credited to improvements in maternal care. He thought community mobilisation was a more significant contributor, along with nutritional change and access to antibiotics.¹²⁵ BRAC told us that much more investment was needed in community organisations and women's groups which focus on maternal mortality to encourage improvements in care provision at the local level.¹²⁶

83. DFID pools its funding with others donors towards a health, nutrition and population sector programme managed by the World Bank. This aims to create improvements in health, nutrition and family welfare especially for the most vulnerable, including women. It says that this has increased access to antenatal care from 48% in 2004 to 52% in 2007 and access to skilled birth attendants (SBAs) from 13.5% to 18% over the same period. DFID believes its programme has:

[...] reached 9.4 million poor people in urban areas through a maternal health programme implemented by UN agencies. This has renovated obstetric facilities and improved access by ensuring that skilled birth attendants are there around the clock. We have improved home based maternal and child care by training community birth attendants on when and how to get women to hospital if a life-threatening situation develops. In pilot areas, this is a crucial link directly to the government voucher scheme.¹²⁷

84. While this is commendable, we were told that only one-third of the required number of skilled birth attendants were in post and that many women did not use a birth attendant even when one was available. This was due to the relatively low status of women in Bangladesh society where many families did not consider it worth their time or money to send mothers-to-be to health care facilities. In households where women had outside employment, their status increased and they were more likely to be encouraged to use skilled birth attendants.¹²⁸ This corresponds with the World Bank's findings that poor

¹²¹ Q 52

¹²² Ev 103. The 2007-08 UNDP Human Development Report gives a reported figure of 320 deaths per 100,000 live births and a figure adjusted for misreporting of 570 per 100,000 live births for 2005.

¹²³ Ev 103

¹²⁴ Ev 78

¹²⁵ Q 47

¹²⁶ Q 51

¹²⁷ Ev 69

¹²⁸ Qs 53-54

pregnant women have significantly less contact with health services in comparison to better-off women. The Bank also notes that this did not change significantly over the period from 1996-2004.¹²⁹

85. Professor Costello also expressed concern about the regulation of care for mothers and newborn babies, particularly at the local level:

By and large, the district hospitals, which often cater for four to six million, were not too bad, and the NGO facilities were not too bad, they did reasonably well. Once you got below that, to union level, and remember a union still covers 25,000 people, the services were of extremely low quality, and even worse was the private sector at that level. A lot of very bad things were being done. There is an issue around regulation here.¹³⁰

He suggested there was a general need to link DFID's research programmes more closely to its country programmes so that lessons learned from research studies could be disseminated and applied at country level.¹³¹ This would also facilitate better monitoring and evaluation of the impact of maternal health programmes and allow the most effective interventions to be replicated in different country programmes.

86. Bangladesh has made some improvements in access to antenatal care, and maternal mortality is declining. However it is off track to meet the MDG for reducing maternal mortality. The shortage of skilled birth attendants and the low usage where they exist is a key factor behind continued high rates of maternal mortality, especially for the poor. More needs to be done to improve and expand maternal and neonatal care. In addition there is limited statistical data about how and why changes are taking place in maternal mortality rates. Government and donor-funded programmes have made some progress but there is a weak relationship between research programmes and country programmes. We recommend that DFID increase and expand its funding for maternal care, including increased evaluation and monitoring of programmes to establish which are most effective. It should also increase its focus on promoting the benefits of assisted deliveries, specifically targeted towards the poorest families

Empowering women

87. Christian Aid pointed out that, despite evidence of women's advancement in some specific areas, "women remain largely marginal to key decision making processes and are poorly represented in political structures at national and local levels."¹³² Sandra Kabir said that having a female prime minister had not had any impact on the status of women in the country.¹³³ Christian Aid also noted that, while DFID had a "women and girls first approach", its main focus was in the social sectors such as girls' education and maternal health with less attention given to economic opportunities and decision-making. Christian

¹²⁹ World Bank, *Poverty assessment for Bangladesh*, p 75

¹³⁰ Q 55

¹³¹ Q 55

¹³² Ev 61

¹³³ Q 59

Aid believed DFID should do more to promote women's involvement in decision-making processes for example by sponsoring women in management roles in NGOs, the private sector and in government. One World Action made a similar suggestion and believed that this should become a key component of DFID's wider work on governance and aid effectiveness.¹³⁴ Christian Aid pointed out that poor development indicators for women were a reflection of their lack of economic and political power: "women lack control over income and expenditure decision at the household level and are also limited in their participation in decision making, both at family level and in society".¹³⁵

88. The Government of Bangladesh is aware that gender disparities need to be addressed. This is included in its poverty reduction strategy papers.¹³⁶ Some steps have been taken. A number of seats in the National Assembly are reserved for women. However, two-thirds of these are not contested, creating a division between those elected in contested seats and those chosen by their peers. Christian Aid noted that "even when the quota system is introduced it still leads to a form of segregation and a marginalising of women within these decision making structures."¹³⁷

89. Traidcraft pointed out that:

[...] while there are constitutional affirmations of gender equality, state legislation and institutions frequently overlook the rights of women. There will therefore need to be a deep level of commitment on the part of the Bangladeshi government in order to make significant change.¹³⁸

BRAC agreed that there were many good laws which were gender-sensitive, but the laws were not always implemented. DFID assured us it was seeking to redress this and that some progress had been made:

We supported a campaign with Sweden, Denmark and Norway to raise awareness about these issues over the past year and our support through the rights and governance challenge fund led to a Bill against domestic violence. It is a thread that runs right through the country programme.¹³⁹

DFID Bangladesh has a Gender Action Plan which it is in the process of revising.

90. Many of the problems which women face in Bangladesh are linked to their status in society. We encourage donors to address this more robustly. One way in which this can be done is by promoting women's involvement in decision-making processes. While Bangladesh already has some women in the highest echelons of power, a programme to promote wider participation and leadership of women committed to challenging the traditional role of women in NGOs and businesses could make a difference to the perception of women's contribution. We recommend that DFID take this forward as

¹³⁴ Ev 92

¹³⁵ Q 58

¹³⁶ Ev 80

¹³⁷ Q 58

¹³⁸ Ev 96

¹³⁹ Q 215

part of its wider work on governance. We also recommend that DFID include these objectives in its revised Gender Action Plan.

Monitoring progress

91. It is also important to have effective measures of gender equity. The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) suggested that DFID should adjust its approach so as to include specific targets for women and girls in all its programmes. Christian Aid proposed that DFID increase the use of sex-disaggregated data so that at least 50% of indicators across the DFID portfolio in Bangladesh were either disaggregated by sex or were “gender-sensitive”. It also suggested that DFID make gender and social exclusion a routine part of its dialogue with the Government of Bangladesh. Women and Children First supported these suggestions.¹⁴⁰

92. DFID told us that all of its programmes were monitored and the data was disaggregated by gender:

[...] all of the programmes that we have actually monitor their impact, disaggregated by sex so that we can see what we are doing on the ground and that it is delivering. Our programmes generally in DFID are gender mainstreamed. That is how they are developed to begin with. Then, having the disaggregation of our monitoring can be a check on whether we are doing what we set out to do with our programmes.¹⁴¹

However, monitoring the impact of a programme on women is not the same as setting targets for what that programme should achieve in terms of its impact on women. Ms Kabir highlighted how little impact gender was actually having on policy formation or implementation, largely because there was inadequate monitoring and evaluation:

Policy formulation is not gender sensitive. The same goes for the implementation of policy. At the programme level you have the same issue; the programmes are not designed or implemented in a way that is particularly gender sensitive [...] if you look at monitoring and evaluation, you do not have disaggregated figures available to tell us about the impact of the health and family welfare government programme.¹⁴²

93. DFID’s strategy for promoting gender equality has not significantly changed the gender dynamics in Bangladesh. We believe DFID should increase its focus on gender and begin to consider new ways in which it can ensure that its social programmes do more than target women as beneficiaries and that its monitoring does more than note progress. We recommend that DFID create specific targets for each programme in terms of the number of women who will benefit and that it actively monitor these targets so that, if they fall short, the causes can be identified and addressed. Setting measurable targets is distinct from simply monitoring outcomes. These targets should be included in the Gender Action Plan for Bangladesh.

¹⁴⁰ Q 64

¹⁴¹ Q 214

¹⁴² Q 59

5 Responding to climate change and natural disasters

94. Bangladesh is one of the most natural disaster-prone countries in the world and this presents a major and ongoing impediment to development. Over the past 20 years Bangladesh has been hit by six major disasters—four floods and two cyclones—affecting millions. In 1991 a cyclone killed 138,000 people and in 2007 a combined flood and cyclone affected 15 million people. About 53% of the total world deaths due to tropical cyclones have occurred in Bangladesh.¹⁴³ Bangladesh is however increasing its capacity to deal with floods and cyclones and the death rate per natural disaster has decreased over time.¹⁴⁴

95. Climate change is likely to alter and in some cases exacerbate existing hazards, and create new ones such as rising sea levels.¹⁴⁵ Scenarios for the future predict greater monsoon rainfall with increased risk of flooding and decreased dry season rainfall leading to drought and inland water salinity.¹⁴⁶ A report by the Scientific Community on Antarctic Research said that a predicted sea level rise of 1.4 metres would result in the loss of large parts of Bangladesh and the Indian Ocean coast.¹⁴⁷ The socio-economic impact of these changes is potentially significant: responding to natural disasters consumes resources which could otherwise be used to support poverty reduction and development.

DFID's support for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

96. DFID supports disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation initiatives in Bangladesh through the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP). This is the main joint donor vehicle in this sector.¹⁴⁸ According to Christian Aid the CDMP emphasises local planning by involving local government authorities and communities in developing community risk assessment guidelines. However it notes that local authorities often lack the resources, skills and capacity to implement local action plans effectively. Christian Aid recommends that any new CDMP should include a greater focus on increasing government capacity at local and district level and ensure that it involves relevant civil society organisations.¹⁴⁹

97. DFID helped to prepare the Government of Bangladesh's Disaster Management Act and Action Plan and its 10-year Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. It has also supported the development of a Climate Change Cell within the government which seeks to build capacity across government and civil society. DFID reports that all its programmes

¹⁴³ Tanner et al, *ORCHID: Piloting Climate Risk Screening in Bangladesh*, Summary Report, p 16

¹⁴⁴ Qs 72, 126

¹⁴⁵ Tanner et al, *ORCHID: Piloting Climate Risk Screening in DFID Bangladesh*, Summary Report p 4

¹⁴⁶ Tanner et al, *ORCHID: Piloting Climate Risk Screening in Bangladesh*, Summary Report p 3

¹⁴⁷ "Nations will vanish and millions lose their homes to rising seas", *The Times*, 1 December 2009

¹⁴⁸ Ev 64

¹⁴⁹ Ev 64

have been assessed for climate vulnerability and that it is rolling out a programme of “climate-proofing” its programmes.¹⁵⁰

Integrating climate change into development policy and practice

98. Screening of donor programmes for climate risk has become the main method by which climate change adaptation is integrated into development cooperation. Climate risk screening uses a framework which examines the exposure of development programmes to current and future climate risks. It is based on the assumption that adapting to the future climate is best done by improving the country's ability to cope with existing climate variations.

99. In Bangladesh DFID uses the ORCHID (opportunities and risks of climate change and disasters) methodology to assess a number of its programmes for climate risk. Dr Tanner, from the Institute of Development Studies, led the 2007 ORCHID assessment of nine of DFID's programmes in Bangladesh. The assessment's general recommendations included that DFID:

- continue to support climate change from a risk management approach in terms of adapting to existing climate vulnerabilities;
- support the Government of Bangladesh's programme for adaptation;
- target those geographical areas most prone to disaster such as the coastal zones;
- incorporate climate indicators within its programmes to monitor climate impacts on poverty;
- continue to support adaptation as a process by supporting dialogue on disaster management and by linking scientific climate information with existing risk management practices;
- increase its emphasis on urban poverty reduction given likely climate motivated rural-urban migration; and
- develop a multi-donor dialogue on mass-migration and trans-boundary water issues.¹⁵¹

100. We were told that as a result of the assessment DFID's new country programme has a much stronger emphasis on how different aspects of development can help with climate change adaptation, for example how improved governance can improve resilience to climate shocks.¹⁵² Dr Tanner pointed out there was still some way to go, and in particular that the regional aspect of climate change, flagged up in the ORCHID assessment, had not received much attention from DFID. This is discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁵⁰ Ev 71

¹⁵¹ Tanner et al, *ORCHID*, p 6

¹⁵² Qs 131-133

101. We were told that donors would increasingly need to consider climate and environmental impacts in all their programmes.¹⁵³ However, while much of DFID's programme is screened to assess its climate risk, government programmes in Bangladesh were not. Moreover, this was still a remote prospect due to current lack of capacity in the relevant ministries.¹⁵⁴ Dr Tanner suggested that there was a need to make climate screening programmes, such as ORCHID, more widely available: "work to internationalise standards and norms on climate risk management is urgently needed to be able to inform that process of change where a country like Bangladesh can integrate those in a more systematised way".¹⁵⁵

102. Bangladesh is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change impacts. Climate variability and change risk compromising the effectiveness of development assistance through increased hazards to specific programmes. The frequency of natural disasters is already thwarting progress on poverty reduction since resources used to respond to natural disasters cannot also be used to expand development programmes. The significance of this challenge is likely to increase if predicted sea-level rises occur.

103. DFID has undertaken effective climate screening of its programmes through the ORCHID assessment. This has resulted in improved design of programmes. DFID Bangladesh must ensure that all its programmes are "climate proofed" against future risks. Climate risk management strategies also need to be more widely available for developing country governments. We understand there are factors which limit current government capacity in Bangladesh. We nevertheless recommend that DFID work to create international standards and norms on climate risk management and ensure that countries as vulnerable as Bangladesh can and do utilise these systematically.

Increasing the resilience of the poor

104. Increasing the resilience of the poor is the key to ensuring that they can respond to climate change impacts and natural disasters. Dr Tanner explained that the poor are often hardest hit by climate shocks and have the least ability to respond:

Bangladesh is vulnerable in part because of its geography and natural hazards, but it is as strongly informed by its human development, the human component of vulnerability. It has very large numbers of poor people, who are poorly equipped capacity wise and living in very marginal areas.¹⁵⁶

We saw this vulnerability for ourselves on the fragile island Chars where most families were too poor to move elsewhere.

105. In its Country Plan DFID says its programme will help 15 million people to be better prepared to adapt to and deal with the impacts of climate change. It will also improve physical infrastructure such as cyclone shelters and flood defences. Christian Aid expressed some concern that there might be too much attention on the latter at the expense of the

¹⁵³ Q 129

¹⁵⁴ Q 134

¹⁵⁵ Q 134

¹⁵⁶ Q 125

former and that while cyclone shelters were important, they needed to be owned by communities and adapted to their needs.¹⁵⁷ It also commented that existing infrastructure needed to be maintained before new construction took place and pointed out that a sea wall in Chittagong district which had been breached in 2007 had still not been repaired.¹⁵⁸

106. In Bangladesh we visited two programmes which sought to contribute to the resilience of poor households by increasing their assets and providing them with the means to cope with short term income loss, the BRAC Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP) programme and DFID's Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP), both discussed in the previous chapter.

107. DFID's evidence described the CLP as both a livelihoods and a climate change programme.¹⁵⁹ The Secretary of State has also emphasised that "the challenges of poverty reduction and dealing with dangerous climate change are now intertwined and indeed indivisible" He said that the Chars programme was "an exemplar" of this and demonstrated how difficult it was to define a project as "exclusively poverty reduction" or "exclusively climate adaptation".¹⁶⁰

108. Poverty on the Chars is related to their remoteness and environmental instability. The islands are highly prone to flooding during the monsoon season and susceptible to erosion. It is estimated that the islands have a limited lifespan of 10 to 30 years before they are washed away and the sand is deposited elsewhere. As discussed in chapter 3, this makes the government reluctant to invest in the provision of services there. However 6.5 million people live in the Chars Livelihoods Programme area, many of whom are extremely poor. Their ability to cope with floods and to maintain their livelihoods is limited. The success of this programme, and the BRAC ones, lies in their ability to tackle poverty directly by increasing assets and raising homesteads on plinths to reduce the flood risk. In this way resilience to cope with climate change is increased, whether it be in the form of predictable flooding or less predictable natural disasters. As Dr Greeley pointed out, given the unpredictability of climate change impacts the highest priority is to improve the resilience of the poor.¹⁶¹

109. We welcome DFID-funded initiatives to improve the resilience of the poorest, including the BRAC Targeting the Ultra Poor and the Chars Livelihoods Programme. These demonstrate the inter-related nature of tackling poverty and adapting to climate change. The challenge presented by current and future climate change impacts on Bangladesh is immense. We believe that the poorest sectors of the population, who have the least ability to cope, should be the primary beneficiaries of any new UK-funded programmes helping Bangladesh to adapt to climate change.

¹⁵⁷ Q 72

¹⁵⁸ Q 75

¹⁵⁹ Ev 79

¹⁶⁰ Evidence taken in the inquiry into DFID's Annual Report and White Paper 2009 on 25 November 2010, Q 128

¹⁶¹ Q 109

Funding for climate change adaptation

110. While Bangladesh has robust disaster warning systems in place and good disaster management capacity, it will need financial assistance to cope with rising sea levels and increased salinisation. Christian Aid believed that:

Developing countries such as Bangladesh urgently require financial assistance to tackle the consequences of climate change. It is very difficult to calculate the total sum needed due to uncertainty about the scale of future impacts, a lack of solid information at the country level and differing opinions on what constitutes adaptation. However, initial estimates are suggesting tens of billions of pounds per annum.¹⁶²

111. There is as yet no climate change funding stream in DFID's programme in Bangladesh. DFID's assistance is largely incorporated into its spending on rural poverty reduction and livelihoods programmes. Initiatives in this area have also been taken forward in its Economic Empowerment of the Poorest Challenge Fund for NGOs which includes the objective of reducing vulnerability to climate change. However, DFID has pledged £75 million over five years from its development budget to support Bangladesh's climate change strategy. DFID explained to us how the funds would be distributed:

Of the £75 million, £60 million has been committed to a new multi-donor trust fund that will be administered by the World Bank under government of Bangladesh direction [...] Of the other £15 million, £12 million is for the second phase of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme with the Ministry for Environment, implemented by UNDP. We are continuing to channel our funds through UNDP for that part of it. The final £3 million is to support specific research activities which Bangladesh asks us to fund.¹⁶³

112. Comments were made to us by NGOs in Bangladesh about the management of the Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) for climate change by the World Bank. The MDTF was established after cyclone Sidr to help Bangladesh to adapt to climate change. The Fund is one of several available to the Government of Bangladesh to help implement its climate change adaptation programmes. The Government of Bangladesh has also established its own climate change Trust Fund. Bretton Woods Project has raised concerns that the Bank's management of the MDTF is costly, donor-driven and inappropriate, given the World Bank's past record of investment in ecologically unsound projects in Bangladesh. Bretton Woods believes that one such project caused the destruction of the oldest mangrove forest in the sub-continent.¹⁶⁴ Dr Tanner believed that the claims about the high cost of the World Bank management of the Fund were not well-founded. He said that it was important to ensure that the Government of Bangladesh's own recently established Trust Fund was performing well before donors committed significant funds to it.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Ev 62

¹⁶³ Q 94

¹⁶⁴ Bretton Woods Project, *Unjustifiable Bank domination over climate funds in Bangladesh*, 20 November 2009

¹⁶⁵ Qs 137-138

113. We have expressed concerns about funding for climate change being taken from funding already allocated to development assistance. We made this point strongly in our recent report on *Sustainable Development in a Changing Climate* where we stated:

Adaptation represents an additional cost for developing countries which have made negligible contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. [...] developed countries [...] should [...] provide new, additional and predictable financial flows to assist poor countries to tackle its impact. DFID must take the lead on making clear its commitment to the principle that climate change funding will be additional to existing pledges on official development assistance.¹⁶⁶

In making its announcements about funding for climate change DFID has often been less than explicit about whether the funds are new or additional. For example on 19 October 2009 DFID announced that it was providing £75 million to support Bangladesh's national climate change strategy but did not explain if this was new or already announced funding.¹⁶⁷ At our public meeting in London members of the audience said they were not sure how much money DFID was providing for climate change or whether this was new money. During the course of our inquiry, the UK Government announced a contribution of £1.5 billion funding for a new global climate change fund to help developing countries adapt to climate change. It was not clear in that announcement whether the funding was new. In fact the Minister himself was unsure of this when we asked him about it but subsequently clarified that it was from official development assistance (ODA) funds.¹⁶⁸

114. DFID made a commitment in its 2009 White Paper that a ceiling of 10% would be put on the amount of ODA which could be used for climate change funding. It expected new, additional funding for climate change to be available from 2013, arising from the Copenhagen climate change conference in December 2009:

In terms of our ODA, what we have said is that 10% of our ODA can be used for climate change adaptation and mitigation. In terms of new forms of finance that come out of Copenhagen and how they will be allocated to developing countries, that is an issue that is literally being discussed while we sit here.¹⁶⁹

The £75 million which DFID is providing in Bangladesh over a five-year period is approximately 10% of DFID's ODA to Bangladesh. In respect of the Bangladesh country programme DFID has thus kept within the 10% limit.

115. Funding for climate change adaptation and mitigation in developing countries must be additional to existing and pledged official development assistance. We recognise that development projects can, and sometimes do, deliver outcomes which increase resilience and constitute effective adaptation to climate change. The implications of climate change for the outcomes of all DFID's development programmes should therefore be carefully assessed. However, this does not mean that

¹⁶⁶ International Development Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2008-09, *Sustainable Development in a Changing Climate*, HC 177-I, para 61

¹⁶⁷ DFID Bangladesh, *Poverty and Climate change*, 19 October 2009

¹⁶⁸ Q 200, Ev 108

¹⁶⁹ Q 197

development programmes in health or education should be cut to pay for necessary climate change adaptation. Equally, any new climate change programmes in Bangladesh must have a development benefit.

116. DFID should make clear when announcing climate change funding whether or not it represents new funding or will draw on already pledged official development assistance (ODA). We expect DFID to keep to its commitment to limit to 10% the amount of ODA which can be used for climate change adaptation in Bangladesh and throughout its bilateral programmes. We recommend that DFID provide us with an update on the amount of new climate change funding which will be available for Bangladesh after 2013 in the light of the outcomes of the Copenhagen climate change conference.

Future scenarios: the regional dimension

117. The ORCHID assessment recommends that DFID initiate a multi-donor approach “to stimulate international dialogue around crucial but complex and politically charged issues of mass-migration and trans-boundary water issues.”¹⁷⁰ Dr Tanner told us that lessons from the ORCHID assessment about the regional dimension of climate change had not been addressed in country plans and that this was at odds with DFID’s South Asia division work plan: “regional country plans are very country specific and I do not see that being matched by South Asia division’s plan for work that includes India, Bangladesh, Nepal”.¹⁷¹

South Asia Water Initiative

118. 90% of South Asia’s water, including the “water tower” of the Himalayas, flows through Bangladesh into the Bay of Bengal. In 2007, 28 million people were affected by floods in Nepal, India and Bangladesh.¹⁷² Changes to river management policies upstream therefore need to take account of their potential impact on all countries through which the rivers flow, including Bangladesh. In Nepal we were told about DFID’s work on the South Asia Water Initiative (SAWI). The Initiative, which was launched in 2008, includes the seven countries that share the waters that drain from the Greater Himalayas—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal and Pakistan—and is facilitated by the World Bank. Its primary aim is to encourage cooperative management of shared waters, which it is hoped will promote poverty reduction, low carbon growth and regional stability. DFID has provided £2.6 million over 3 years to support SAWI through a multi-donor trust fund managed by the World Bank.¹⁷³

119. DFID Bangladesh’s work on water and sanitation is largely about improved domestic supplies and good hygiene practices and only a “low proportion of the DFID Bangladesh portfolio is directly engaged in climate-sensitive water and agricultural sectors”.¹⁷⁴ DFID

¹⁷⁰ Tanner et al, *ORCHID*, p 6

¹⁷¹ Q 133

¹⁷² “Thousands affected by Nepal flood” 20 August 2008, www.bbc.co.uk

¹⁷³ DFID, *Meeting our promises: fifth update on DFID’s work in water and sanitation since the 2004 Water Action Plan*, 2009

¹⁷⁴ Tanner et al, *ORCHID*, p 5

said it was committed to looking at regional water management but did not provide any evidence of this.¹⁷⁵ **Since a large part of Bangladesh is below or at sea-level and many of its natural disasters are related to sea-level rises and rivers flooding, we would expect the management of water resources, including those in neighbouring countries, to be an integral part of DFID's disaster risk reduction work in Bangladesh. We recommend that DFID provide us with a detailed report on how the South Asia Water Initiative is progressing and how this is impacting on DFID's programme in Bangladesh in its response to this Report.**

Regional climate change-triggered migration

120. Migration is inevitable if habited land becomes submerged. The estimates for Bangladesh are that 30 million people would be made homeless if sea levels rose by more than one metre.¹⁷⁶ DFID has reported that by 2050, 70 million people in Bangladesh could be affected by annual floods and 8 million by drought with increasingly intense cyclones hitting the coast.¹⁷⁷ The European Action Group on climate change in Bangladesh believed that: "rises in sea levels are already having a dramatic impact on Bangladesh. The government needs to begin now with creating jobs and opportunities for people who live in dangerous coastal areas and have no other options".¹⁷⁸ Bangladesh's Finance Minister is reported to have asked developed countries to accept climate change migrants. He said, "We are asking our development partners to honour the natural right of persons to migrate. We can't accommodate all these people".¹⁷⁹

121. When we asked DFID what it was doing to prepare for increased numbers of people being forced to move as a result of flooding we were told that its strategy was not directly to try to stop people from moving but to give them the skills and opportunities to improve their livelihoods in Bangladesh or abroad including providing English language training.¹⁸⁰

122. **Millions of people are regularly affected by floods in Bangladesh. If predicted sea-level rises occur 30 million people will be made homeless and this will, of necessity, trigger migration. We accept that this is still a future scenario and that predictions are sometime inaccurate. Nevertheless we believe that DFID should re-examine its approach to potential climate change-triggered migration and begin to assess how it can help the Government of Bangladesh to manage such events. DFID has responded to most of the recommendations in the ORCHID assessment but does not appear to have responded to the recommendation that it develop a multi-donor approach to stimulate dialogue on mass migration and trans-boundary water management. We endorse the ORCHID conclusion and recommend that DFID Bangladesh initiate this discussion in the next 12 months and report its progress to us.**

¹⁷⁵ Q 107

¹⁷⁶ "On the climate change front-line", *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 December 2009

¹⁷⁷ DFID, *Bangladesh – poverty and climate change*, Press release, 19 October 2009

¹⁷⁸ Ev 85

¹⁷⁹ "When the sea forces millions from their land", *The Guardian*, 5 December 2009

¹⁸⁰ Q 209

6 Becoming a middle-income country

123. Bangladesh aims to become a middle-income country by 2021. Despite poor governance, witnesses have expressed confidence that this is an achievable goal. For example, Professor Hulme commented:

If one makes the assumption that growth will continue in China and will continue in India and that the financial system will somehow be repaired, then I see Bangladesh as steadily growing over the coming years, as long as there is not some sort of governance crisis; as long as it manages to have this “good-enough” governance that allows the private sector and just human agency at the grass roots to operate.¹⁸¹

Pierre Landell-Mills, a former World Bank Country Director in Bangladesh, was also optimistic about Bangladesh's economy. He thought that it exhibited the capacity to respond to challenges. It had already made progress in reducing poverty levels and had maintained steady and reasonable growth rates over a long period. He thought that, if the economic growth rate could be raised to 6-7% per year, it would be feasible for Bangladesh to become a middle-income country.¹⁸² DFID thought the goal was achievable in 20 rather than 10 years.¹⁸³

124. Potential obstacles to increased growth rates include Bangladesh's capacity to move from traditional exports such as garments, towards more high-tech products; whether growth continues to be fairly egalitarian so that it has a positive impact on poverty reduction; the impact of climate change on Bangladesh; and energy and infrastructure problems.¹⁸⁴ The IMF has also pointed out that the global economic recession is beginning to impact on the economy, threatening Bangladeshi exports and remittances from abroad.¹⁸⁵ The World Bank has warned that the long-term impact of the financial crisis could mean five years of lower economic growth for developing countries as they struggle to obtain foreign investment.¹⁸⁶ The combined effect of these factors means that the achievement of the goal will be challenging. Moreover, without the necessary governance reforms discussed in chapter 2, the state will not be able to direct the economy in the desired direction, or mitigate the impact of external forces such as climate change or the global economic downturn.

Private sector development

125. While the state has an important role to play, the private sector has been the driver of Bangladesh's continuous economic growth rates. Despite political turmoil, prudent macro-economic management has allowed the private sector to flourish and power the

¹⁸¹ Q 30

¹⁸² Q 111

¹⁸³ Ev 72

¹⁸⁴ Q 30; See also World Bank, *Poverty assessment for Bangladesh*, 2008; IMF, *Bangladesh- 2009 Article IV Consultation, Preliminary Conclusions of the IMF Mission*, 2009

¹⁸⁵ IMF, *Bangladesh: Semi-annual economic update*, April 2009

¹⁸⁶ “Five years of weak growth for poor nations”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 January 2010

economy.¹⁸⁷ In particular the industrial and service sectors have grown as a share of the economy relative to the agricultural sector. The service sector now accounts for 50% of GDP and the industrial sector 26%. The ready-made garment sector has been the main source of manufacturing growth.¹⁸⁸

126. Private sector-led growth is a focus of DFID's new Country Plan.¹⁸⁹ DFID support is focused on helping to create jobs for the poorest, a more enabling business environment, better access by small enterprises to finance and improvements to the banking system for remittances.¹⁹⁰ Some progress has been made. For example, DFID reported that the Bangladesh Investment Climate Fund has simplified licensing procedures for export-oriented companies, resulting in a net saving of over £1,000 every year for each firm.¹⁹¹ DFID is spending £15.5 million on Growth and Private Sector Development in 2009-10 and this will nearly double to £30.2 million in 2010-11. The increase is primarily to fund its work on creating an enabling business environment.¹⁹²

127. Mr Landell-Mills thought that businessmen should be playing a larger role in creating a better business environment for the private sector to flourish but said that they were often part of entrenched political networks and viewed reforming these as a long and difficult process. He suggested that donors should be thinking about building the institutions of civil society in a more strategic manner:

One of the ways—and this is a surprising neglect of all the donors—is to build institutions in civil society—and I do not mean that of NGOs, because NGOs are just one part of civil society—to build up a chamber of commerce and industry, to build up professional associations, to build up the media, to help the accountancy profession to perform correctly. There are odd examples of that being tackled, but generally there is no strategy for dealing with strengthening the institutions of civil society.¹⁹³

When we asked DFID about this we were told that donor coordination was improving in terms of exchanging information but that operations were fragmented with different donors operating separate and unconnected programmes.¹⁹⁴

128. On the outskirts of Dhaka we visited a furniture factory, part of a larger furniture association, which was trying to improve the quality and design of furniture made in Bangladesh in order to export to the international market. It was receiving help from a production consultancy company and the government's Export Promotion Board to encourage it to build links with the furniture sector. DFID was also supporting the association. We were impressed with the quality of the furniture being produced in the

¹⁸⁷ Ev 72, Q 12. See also World Bank, *Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh*, p 18

¹⁸⁸ World Bank, *Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh*, p 5

¹⁸⁹ Ev 67

¹⁹⁰ Ev 68

¹⁹¹ Ev 72

¹⁹² Ev 72

¹⁹³ Q 114

¹⁹⁴ Q 188

factory and hope that the efforts of the association to tap into new international markets meet with success.

129. Creating effective producer associations is an important way of linking smaller producers and creating a larger constituency to lobby for help with marketing or general improvements in the investment climate. This type of assistance is also a very practical example of aid for trade. We support DFID's efforts to assist such associations as they seek to create a more dynamic private sector in which small businesses can flourish and contribute to poverty reduction. However we have seen little evidence to suggest that donors have a coordinated plan for strengthening such commercial associations. We accept that demand for change must come from Bangladeshi society but consider that donors can and should work to encourage the creation of more producer and professional associations in a more strategic and coordinated manner.

Reducing corruption

130. Bangladesh could do better economically if the investment climate was made more attractive by reducing corruption. Bangladesh ranks 139th out of 180 countries on the 2009 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index.¹⁹⁵ This is a significant improvement on its 2008 ranking during the period of the Caretaker Government. Nevertheless its score remains below the acceptable threshold indicating a pervasive level of corruption across all levels of society. Mr Landell-Mills told us "almost every transaction somehow has a corrupt element to it."¹⁹⁶ Corrupt practices reduced efficiencies:

At the moment there is so much interference in the transactions that you have a very high level of inefficiency. One must try to get those who are corrupt to see that certain actions are so damaging to their own interests that that corruption can then be tackled, although they will always be searching for other ways of being corrupt, that is for sure. For example, at Chittagong Port, it takes 18 days to turn a ship around, while in Singapore they can do it in 36 hours.¹⁹⁷

He estimated that 15% to 30% of every contract was lost to bribery. In the construction of the Jumuna Bridge, for example, efforts were made to ensure there was no corruption. Nevertheless all the contractors took account of expected bribes in their tenders so that, while the formal system would look as though there was no corruption, in fact it had been built into the project.¹⁹⁸ The extent to which corruption permeated society was also made clear to us in Dhaka during our discussion on strengthening public administration.

131. Tackling corruption involves a long term commitment to building better and more accountable institutions. We discussed the importance of this in chapter 2. Transparency International said that the improvement in Bangladesh's score was related to the change in government in December 2008, with the new government pledging to stop corruption as

¹⁹⁵ Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index 2009*, www.ti-Bangladesh.org

¹⁹⁶ Q 116

¹⁹⁷ Q 124

¹⁹⁸ Q 118

part of its election manifesto. The Executive Director of Transparency International Bangladesh noted:

Whether or not the improvement achieved by Bangladesh will be sustainable and whether further progress will be achieved will depend on the new government's will and capacity to deliver, especially in ensuring integrity, independence, impartiality and effectiveness of key institutions like the Parliament, Anti-corruption Commission, Election Commission, Information Commission, Judiciary, law enforcement agencies, the public service and the Human Rights Commission.¹⁹⁹

132. We are pleased to learn that Bangladesh has improved its ranking on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index since 2008. This is a positive development but the score indicates that there is still room for significant improvement. Tackling corruption robustly is important. Current corruption levels are creating inefficiencies in the economy which will thwart Bangladesh's desire to become a middle-income country. In its dialogues with the Government of Bangladesh and the private sector DFID should emphasise the importance for Bangladesh of challenging corrupt practices and the need to put in place more effective measures to deter it.

Working with Bangladeshi communities

133. There are approximately 500,000 British Bangladeshis in the UK.²⁰⁰ In our public meetings in Birmingham and London we asked about their views on DFID's programme in Bangladesh and ways in which the Bangladeshi diaspora here might make a contribution to the poverty reduction effort in Bangladesh. The most frequent comment made to us was that Bangladeshi people in the UK did not know about DFID's programme in Bangladesh. In addition it was felt that DFID had not harnessed the desire of the diaspora to contribute to development projects in Bangladesh.

134. Written evidence from Christian Aid said:

We are concerned by how little information about DFID's projects in Bangladesh is publicly available. In view of the size of the UK's aid programme, we believe that DFID should be much more proactive in communicating details of its programme to the UK public.²⁰¹

Subsequent to our meeting in London the International Forum for Secular Bangladesh wrote to us saying:

Many second generation British Bengalis feel passionate about Bangladesh. They want to get involved and contribute to the development of Bangladesh but lack the necessary information and contacts. Connecting the second generation British Bengalis with their parents' country of origin could be beneficial to the UK and Bangladesh.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index 2009*, www.ti-Bangladesh.org

²⁰⁰ Ev 73

²⁰¹ Ev 61

²⁰² Ev 91

When we asked the Minister about this, he assured us that the Department did engage with the Bangladeshi population here and that it did make an effort to send out information about its programme and to meet with representatives of the Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK.²⁰³

135. It is clear to us that, despite its efforts, DFID is not reaching the Bangladeshi public in the UK effectively. We believe that the Bangladeshi population in the UK can make a useful contribution to DFID's work in Bangladesh. More importantly the Bangladeshi population in the UK wants to maintain links with Bangladesh and to help improve the situation there. We recommend that DFID support this by reassessing its communications strategy for its Bangladesh programme and that it make or strengthen links with local councillors and community leaders here.

136. As well as a lack of awareness of DFID's programme in Bangladesh among the UK Bangladesh community, witnesses have expressed the view that it is difficult to meet with DFID Bangladesh staff and that they seem overstretched and unable to get out and see what is going on outside their project areas. Naomi Hossain told us that:

DFID staff in Dhaka appear increasingly pressed for time, partly because larger programmes are being managed by fewer professional staff [...] Even committed professional staff lacked adequate time to engage with the evidence, travel beyond the capital city, or to develop the relationships that would be necessary for a rounded and fully-informed perspective on the issues on which they work."²⁰⁴

She also thought that DFID's reputation in Bangladesh had suffered as a result of its decreasing visibility.²⁰⁵ Professor Hulme commented on the high turnover of DFID staff and said:

Staff reductions and budget increases mean that the average "spend per adviser" has increased. This means that advisers cannot allocate time to the innovative low spend/high impact initiatives that "improving governance" programmes often need.

At the public meeting in Birmingham a contributor said he had tried unsuccessfully to meet with DFID Bangladesh over a four week period to discuss a proposal for training village doctors. Others commented that there was no evidence of DFID working in Sylhet, the region from which most UK Bangladeshis originated and where they still had family connections. Sylhet is also one of the areas which has been experiencing the benefits of economic growth.

137. The DFID Bangladesh team comprises 80 Bangladeshi and UK staff based in Dhaka.²⁰⁶ It is managing a steadily rising budget and the UK is now the largest bilateral donor.²⁰⁷ We had been told that DFID staff were working to full capacity and that staff reductions coupled with budget increases placed pressure on the management of time-intensive

²⁰³ Q 153

²⁰⁴ Ev 83

²⁰⁵ Q 8

²⁰⁶ DFID, *Bangladesh Country Plan*, 2009

²⁰⁷ Qs 139-141

programmes.²⁰⁸ This issue has been raised with us on a number of occasions and we remain concerned about the impact of staff reductions on a Department with a rising budget.

138. DFID argues that “a joint British High Commission and DFID Bangladesh Communications Team offers novel opportunities for strong cross-HMG working and presentation of UK’s partnership with Bangladesh”²⁰⁹ It told us that visits were important for all its staff, even at administrative level and that 200 days of visits outside of Dhaka had taken place in 2009. In an office of 80 this only means about two and a half days of visits per person. DFID did point out that most of its work was in Dhaka since it had relationships with the different line ministries.²¹⁰ It also told us that Bangladesh was one of the trial countries for the new DFID logo—UKaid—and that this should help to improve the visibility of DFID in Bangladesh.

139. DFID needs to have a greater visible presence in Bangladesh, in towns and villages outside of Dhaka, and perhaps especially in Sylhet, from where the majority of Bangladeshis in the UK originate. The new “UKaid” logo may improve matters but it is also important that key DFID staff get out of Dhaka regularly to visit programmes and talk to those who benefit as well as those who do not.

²⁰⁸ Evs 83, 65

²⁰⁹ Ev 67

²¹⁰ Q 191

7 Conclusion

140. DFID's programme in Bangladesh is broad-ranging but also increasingly focused on its target areas of reducing poverty, especially among the poorest; increasing access to and quality of basic health, education and water; improving governance; and supporting private sector development and growth. We have reviewed each of these areas in this Report. Our assessment is that Bangladesh is making reasonable progress in most of these areas, but its general progress towards the MDGs has slowed down in the past couple of years. For example, progress on poverty reduction between 2000 and 2005 was the second highest among south Asian countries but remains much lower than faster growing countries such as Vietnam or Thailand.²¹¹

141. Until and unless governance improves, the benefits of any further economic growth may bypass those who need it most—the poorest, women and other marginalised groups. While DFID can help, the impetus for change must come from within the country. We recognise that this type of change will take many years. We hope that the people of Bangladesh, living there or in other countries, will nevertheless persevere in their quest for a more accountable polity and a better future.

142. We remain uncertain whether DFID's programme has sufficient ambition for Bangladesh. It is not enough that primary school enrolment rates are on target; completion is the goal. It is not enough that women are represented in parliament; they need to be in managerial and leadership roles in different sectors of the economy. It is not enough that maternal mortality rates have fallen; they must fall much faster for the poorest women. Climate change presents a clear and urgent risk to the country: donors must be fully engaged in supporting the government to address this across the board rather than just through discrete projects, however effective.

143. We would like to see the UK's position as the biggest bilateral donor driving a more ambitious development programme which confronts these difficult issues. It will then be able to make a more effective contribution to helping Bangladesh meet the Millennium Development Goals and move steadily towards middle-income status.

²¹¹ World Bank, *Poverty Assessment for Bangladesh*, p vi

List of recommendations

The political context

1. We urge all political parties in Bangladesh to engage meaningfully in the political process. Without an effective opposition, democracy and the reputation of parliament is diminished. Bangladesh should respect its democratic history and it is incumbent on its political parties to find ways to work together for the benefit of all the people of Bangladesh. (Paragraph 14)

Civil service strengthening

2. DFID's programme to help train civil servants is making good progress and has now achieved nearly half of its target number. We appreciate that this is a long term project and that the benefits may not be immediately felt. It is nevertheless valuable if it can provide a group of well-trained civil servants to advise successive governments. We would urge DFID to take forward the suggestion of using appropriately qualified Bangladeshis living and working in the UK to help train civil servants in Bangladesh as one possible and potentially less costly alternative to sending civil servants abroad for training. (Paragraph 19)

Improving accountability: parliament and parliamentarians

3. We have on a number of occasions expressed our belief that DFID should allocate more funding to parliamentary strengthening initiatives which are central to improving governance. We believe that, in a country such as Bangladesh where Ministers and parliamentarians are keen to learn from the Westminster system, a more strategic relationship with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) would be beneficial. We recommend that DFID take forward the WFD proposal and explore the possibility of enhancing the relationship in the near future. We request that DFID reports back to us on the outcomes of its discussions with the Foundation in its response to this Report. (Paragraph 24)

Improving accountability: civil service organisations

4. Improving the ability of civil society, broadly defined, to hold the providers of public services to account is an essential component of better governance and for ensuring the poor can access the services they need. Donor initiatives in this area have made some progress, for example in terms of raising awareness of corruption and the need for public accountability. DFID must build on this success and ensure that its programmes help to raise the demand for accountability among the poorest and for those aspects of governance which are most important to the poor. Working with smaller NGOs may provide one means of doing this and may not require a large amount of funding. We appreciate the economies of scale which DFID gains from working through larger NGOs but believe that it should nevertheless seek to ensure smaller community groups and non-governmental organisations have access to donor funds. (Paragraph 29)

Increasing the tax base

5. We broadly support DFID in its efforts to increase the tax base from 3 to 5 million. Once this target has been achieved a new, ambitious, target should be set to ensure the number of people paying taxes steadily increases over time. Changing entrenched attitudes to taxation is a long term process and the tax base in Bangladesh is likely to remain small for a long period. However, the state is not currently able to provide services in a number of key areas and it will not increase its ability to do so unless and until it widens the tax base. This would also help achieve a stronger and more direct relationship between the government and its citizens. We urge the Government of Bangladesh to make progress on widening its tax base, with appropriate support from donors. (Paragraph 34)

Good governance: a long-term objective

6. Programmes to improve governance are complicated, resource-intensive and rarely produce immediate results. They are nevertheless important in countries such as Bangladesh and should be viewed as long-term projects where the benefits might not be reaped for 10 or more years. When evaluating programmes in this area benchmarks must be realistic so that programmes are not cut prematurely. (Paragraph 38)
7. DFID Bangladesh has developed a significant and broad governance programme. It is to be commended for its initiatives in this area since it is clear to us that the poor quality of governance and the weakness of politics there both act as substantial impediments to the successful implementation of development partnerships. We broadly endorse its efforts, recognising that DFID is operating in a complex and difficult political environment. (Paragraph 39)

Education

8. A well-educated population is essential for Bangladesh to make further progress in poverty reduction and for it to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country by 2021. Bangladesh is on track to meet the MDG target for enrolment in primary school. It now needs to be more ambitious and seek to meet the target for primary school completion along with improved quality. Further progress on enrolment and completion of secondary education, especially for the poorest, is also a priority. (Paragraph 49)

Targeting extreme poverty

9. We were impressed by the way in which BRAC's Targeting the Ultra Poor programme is able to provide the most needy families with multi-pronged assistance to help them raise themselves out of poverty. It provides direct and practical help in the form of assets such as livestock and also empowers beneficiaries to make informed decisions about their lives, including integrating health and family legal advice. We fully support DFID's contribution to this pioneering programme and look forward to seeing it extended to more people. (Paragraph 55)

The Chars Livelihoods Programme

10. The Chars Livelihoods Programme provides an excellent example of innovative poverty reduction programming by DFID in an area of Bangladesh which receives little or no assistance and where some of the poorest and most vulnerable households are located. We commend DFID for its efforts to assist these hard-to-reach groups in the remote Chars. We saw for ourselves the difference this assistance was making in the lives of some of the recipients. However we are concerned about the lack of services on these islands. We appreciate that there is a legitimate question around how much to invest on temporary islands which are regularly flooded. But given the investment which DFID is making in this programme we consider it short-sighted not to ensure that the Chars dwellers can have access to the same basic services which other people have. DFID should actively encourage local government to invest in the Chars islands communities by providing more schools and better health care facilities and to tackle issues such as land rights. Without these basic services the populations there are likely to remain recipients of aid programmes. (Paragraph 61)

Targeting the urban poor

11. We were pleased to learn that DFID's programme in Bangladesh will have an increased focus on urban poverty. Dhaka is predicted to become one of the world's largest cities in the near future. This presents both challenges and opportunities. We reiterate the recommendation in our report on urbanisation, that DFID should re-establish a specific focus on urban poverty, with appropriate expertise in its country office in Bangladesh. (Paragraph 65)

Service delivery: the role of NGOs

12. We have not heard any evidence to suggest that NGOs are displacing the state by providing services which the government is in a better position to provide. In Bangladesh NGOs often provide a different type of service, for example non-formal schooling for disadvantaged children or community-delivered health care, while core funding for the health and education sectors remains in the hands of the state. While we accept that it would be better if the government was more capable of delivering these services, and we expect DFID to continue to work towards this end, we believe that the provision of services to the poor should not be delayed while waiting for a more effective state to emerge. (Paragraph 73)

DFID's relationship with BRAC

13. We have some sympathy with the concerns expressed to us about DFID's new Partnership Programme Arrangement (PPA) with BRAC. It risks having unintended and unforeseen implications for DFID's relationship with other NGOs in Bangladesh which should be acknowledged and discussed with them to prevent any risk of souring of their relationship with DFID. However, the new relationship may also be seen as a new model for working with southern NGOs. We are supportive of such innovations. DFID is proposing a five year programme with BRAC. We recommend

that DFID provide us with an assessment of how the programme is working one year after the PPA commences. (Paragraph 77)

Tackling gender inequality

14. Bangladesh has made some improvements in access to antenatal care, and maternal mortality is declining. However it is off track to meet the MDG for reducing maternal mortality. The shortage of skilled birth attendants and the low usage where they exist is a key factor behind continued high rates of maternal mortality, especially for the poor. More needs to be done to improve and expand maternal and neonatal care. In addition there is limited statistical data about how and why changes are taking place in maternal mortality rates. Government and donor-funded programmes have made some progress but there is a weak relationship between research programmes and country programmes. We recommend that DFID increase and expand its funding for maternal care, including increased evaluation and monitoring of programmes to establish which are most effective. It should also increase its focus on promoting the benefits of assisted deliveries, specifically targeted towards the poorest families (Paragraph 86)
15. Many of the problems which women face in Bangladesh are linked to their status in society. We encourage donors to address this more robustly. One way in which this can be done is by promoting women's involvement in decision-making processes. While Bangladesh already has some women in the highest echelons of power, a programme to promote wider participation and leadership of women committed to challenging the traditional role of women in NGOs and businesses could make a difference to the perception of women's contribution. We recommend that DFID take this forward as part of its wider work on governance. We also recommend that DFID include these objectives in its revised Gender Action Plan. (Paragraph 90)
16. DFID's strategy for promoting gender equality has not significantly changed the gender dynamics in Bangladesh. We believe DFID should increase its focus on gender and begin to consider new ways in which it can ensure that its social programmes do more than target women as beneficiaries and that its monitoring does more than note progress. We recommend that DFID create specific targets for each programme in terms of the number of women who will benefit and that it actively monitor these targets so that, if they fall short, the causes can be identified and addressed. Setting measurable targets is distinct from simply monitoring outcomes. These targets should be included in the Gender Action Plan for Bangladesh. (Paragraph 93)

Responding to climate change and natural disasters

17. Bangladesh is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change impacts. Climate variability and change risk compromising the effectiveness of development assistance through increased hazards to specific programmes. The frequency of natural disasters is already thwarting progress on poverty reduction since resources used to respond to natural disasters cannot also be used to expand development programmes. The significance of this challenge is likely to increase if predicted sea-level rises occur. (Paragraph 102)

18. DFID has undertaken effective climate screening of its programmes through the ORCHID assessment. This has resulted in improved design of programmes. DFID Bangladesh must ensure that all its programmes are “climate proofed” against future risks. Climate risk management strategies also need to be more widely available for developing country governments. We understand there are factors which limit current government capacity in Bangladesh. We nevertheless recommend that DFID work to create international standards and norms on climate risk management and ensure that countries as vulnerable as Bangladesh can and do utilise these systematically. (Paragraph 103)
19. We welcome DFID-funded initiatives to improve the resilience of the poorest, including the BRAC Targeting the Ultra Poor and the Chars Livelihoods Programme. These demonstrate the inter-related nature of tackling poverty and adapting to climate change. The challenge presented by current and future climate change impacts on Bangladesh is immense. We believe that the poorest sectors of the population, who have the least ability to cope, should be the primary beneficiaries of any new UK-funded programmes helping Bangladesh to adapt to climate change. (Paragraph 109)
20. Funding for climate change adaptation and mitigation in developing countries must be additional to existing and pledged official development assistance. We recognise that development projects can, and sometimes do, deliver outcomes which increase resilience and constitute effective adaptation to climate change. The implications of climate change for the outcomes of all DFID's development programmes should therefore be carefully assessed. However, this does not mean that development programmes in health or education should be cut to pay for necessary climate change adaptation. Equally, any new climate change programmes in Bangladesh must have a development benefit. (Paragraph 115)
21. DFID should make clear when announcing climate change funding whether or not it represents new funding or will draw on already pledged official development assistance (ODA). We expect DFID to keep to its commitment to limit to 10% the amount of ODA which can be used for climate change adaptation in Bangladesh and throughout its bilateral programmes. We recommend that DFID provide us with an update on the amount of new climate change funding which will be available for Bangladesh after 2013 in the light of the outcomes of the Copenhagen climate change conference. (Paragraph 116)
22. Since a large part of Bangladesh is below or at sea-level and many of its natural disasters are related to sea-level rises and rivers flooding we would expect the management of water resources, including those in neighbouring countries, to be an integral part of DFID's disaster risk reduction work in Bangladesh. We recommend that DFID provide us with a detailed report on how the South Asia Water Initiative is progressing and how this is impacting on DFID's programme in Bangladesh in its response to this Report. (Paragraph 119)
23. Millions of people are regularly affected by floods in Bangladesh. If predicted sea-level rises occur 30 million people will be made homeless and this will, of necessity, trigger migration. We accept that this is still a future scenario and that predictions

are sometime inaccurate. Nevertheless we believe that DFID should re-examine its approach to potential climate change-triggered migration and begin to assess how it can help the Government of Bangladesh to manage such events. DFID has responded to most of the recommendations in the ORCHID assessment but does not appear to have responded to the recommendation that it develop a multi-donor approach to stimulate dialogue on mass migration and trans-boundary water management. We endorse the ORCHID conclusion and recommend that DFID Bangladesh initiate this discussion in the next 12 months and report its progress to us. (Paragraph 122)

Private sector development

24. Creating effective producer associations is an important way of linking smaller producers and creating a larger constituency to lobby for help with marketing or general improvements in the investment climate. This type of assistance is also a very practical example of aid for trade. We support DFID's efforts to assist such associations as they seek to create a more dynamic private sector in which small businesses can flourish and contribute to poverty reduction. However we have seen little evidence to suggest that donors have a coordinated plan for strengthening such commercial associations. We accept that demand for change must come from Bangladeshi society but consider that donors can and should work to encourage the creation of more producer and professional associations in a more strategic and coordinated manner. (Paragraph 129)

Reducing corruption

25. We are pleased to learn that Bangladesh has improved its ranking on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index since 2008. This is a positive development but the score indicates that there is still room for significant improvement. Tackling corruption robustly is important. Current corruption levels are creating inefficiencies in the economy which will thwart Bangladesh's desire to become a middle-income country. In its dialogues with the Government of Bangladesh and the private sector DFID should emphasise the importance for Bangladesh of challenging corrupt practices and the need to put in place more effective measures to deter it. (Paragraph 132)

Working with Bangladeshi communities

26. It is clear to us that, despite its efforts, DFID is not reaching the Bangladeshi public in the UK effectively. We believe that the Bangladeshi population in the UK can make a useful contribution to DFID's work in Bangladesh. More importantly the Bangladeshi population in the UK wants to maintain links with Bangladesh and to help improve the situation there. We recommend that DFID support this by reassessing its communications strategy for its Bangladesh programme and that it make or strengthen links with local councillors and community leaders here. (Paragraph 135)

27. DFID needs to have a greater visible presence in Bangladesh, in towns and villages outside of Dhaka, and perhaps especially in Sylhet, from where the majority of Bangladeshis in the UK originate. The new “UKaid” logo may improve matters but it is also important that key DFID staff get out of Dhaka regularly to visit programmes and talk to those who benefit as well as those who do not. (Paragraph 139)

Annex: Committee's Visit Programme in Bangladesh

The Committee visited Bangladesh from 1 to 5 November 2009 .

Members participating: Malcolm Bruce (Chairman), John Battle, Hugh Bayley, Mr Nigel Evans, Mr Mark Hendrick, Mr Mark Lancaster, Mr Virendra Sharma, Mr Marsha Singh, Andrew Stunell

Accompanied by: Carol Oxborough (Clerk); Anna Dickson (Committee Specialist)

The Committee divided into two groups for parts of the visit.

Dhaka

Sunday 1 November

Field visit to Skills and Opportunities for Employment vocational training school in Mirpur

Group 1

Roundtable discussion on justice with:

- Justice Md Abdur Rashid, Chairman, Law Commission Bangladesh
- Rokon Uddin Mahmood, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
- Sadrul Hasan Majumder, Programme Manager, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association
- Won Young Hong, Assistant Country Director, UNDP
- N B K Tripura, Additional Inspector General of Police

Group 2

Roundtable discussion on strengthening public administration with:

- Junghun Cho, World Bank
- Charles Underhand, World Bank
- Nanditta Dutta, UNDP
- Dr Muhamed Sadique, Ministry of Establishment
- Ranjit Chakraborty, Ministry of Finance

Visit to urban HIV/AIDS project in Ketu

Field visit to Katalyst, private sector programme

Sirajganj

Monday 2 November

Group 1

Field visit to BRAC pre-school and Government primary school

Field visit to Sirajganj District Hospital and Urban Primary Health Care Programme

Field visit to BRAC Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction Programme

Group 2

Field visit to Chars Livelihoods Programme

Field visit to UNICEF Water and Sanitation Project

Dhaka

Tuesday 3 November

Meeting with Awami League representatives

- Mr Shariar Alam
- Brigadier General Abu Baker
- Mr Junaed Ahmed Polok

Meeting with the Prime Minister, HE Sheikh Hasina

Lunch with Foreign Secretary (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Mr Mohamed Mijarul Quayes and Chairman and members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs

Meeting with donor partners:

- Mr Paul Heytens, Asian Development Bank
- Renata Lok Dessallien, UN Resident Coordinator
- Robert Beadle, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- Denise Rollins, USAID
- Milko Van Gool, European Commission
- Tahseen Sayed, World Bank

Wednesday 4 November

Meeting with the Finance Minister, Mr Abul Maal Abul Muhith

Meeting with Bangladesh National Party (BNP) representatives:

- Mujibur Rahman Salwar
- Mr Z A Faruk
- Barrister Zamir Uddin
- Salahuddin Quader Chowdory

Meeting with the Foreign Minister, Dr Dipu Moni

Roundtable discussion with think tanks and NGOs:

- Mr Ahmed Moshtagod, Islamic Aid
- Ms Khushi Kabir, Nijera Kori
- Mr Jermone Sayre, Asia Foundation
- Mr Fadullah Wilmott, Muslim Aid Bangladesh
- Ms Shaheen Anam, Manusher Jonno Foundation
- Iftekhar Zaman, Transparency International
- Farooq Sobhan, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute

Meeting with the Director of BRAC, Fazle Abed

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 23 February 2010

Members present:

Malcolm Bruce, in the Chair

John Battle

Mr Nigel Evans

Hugh Bayley

Mr Mark Lancaster

Richard Burden

Andrew Stunell

Draft Report [*DFID's Programme in Bangladesh*], proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 143 read and agreed to.

Annex and Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Third Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report, together with written evidence reported and ordered to be published on 14 October and 16 December 2009.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for placing in the Library and Parliamentary Archives.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 24 February at 9.15 am.]

Witnesses

Tuesday 20 October 2009

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Dr Naomi Hossain, Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies, and **Professor David Hulme**, Professor of Development Studies, University of Manchester Ev 1

Professor Anthony Costello, Director of University College London Centre for International Health and Development, **Ms Sandra Kabir**, Executive Director, BRAC, representing Women and Children First and the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh, and **Mr Ben Hobbs**, Asia and Middle East Policy Officer, Christian Aid Ev 11

Tuesday 1 December 2009

Professor Geof Wood, Professor of International Development, University of Bath; and **Dr Martin Greeley**, Institute of Development Studies Ev 19

Mr Pierre Landell-Mills, The Policy Practice and Partnership for Transparency Fund, and **Dr Thomas Tanner**, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex Ev 27

Wednesday 16 December 2009

Mr Mike Foster MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and **Mr Chris Austin**, Head of DFID Bangladesh, Department for International Development Ev 35

List of written evidence

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Ev 54
BBC World Service Trust in Bangladesh	Ev 55
Christian Aid	Ev 60
Professor David Hulme	Ev 65
Department for International Development	Ev 65; 72; 108
Dr Gerard Gill	Ev 80
Dr Naomi Hossain	Ev 81
European Action Group on Climate Change in Bangladesh	Ev 84
Global Coal Management	Ev 85
Muhammad Taher	Ev 87
Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)	Ev 90
International Forum for Secular Bangladesh, UK Branch—Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, Juktorajyo Shakha	Ev 91
One World Action	Ev 92
Traidcraft	Ev 95
VSO Bangladesh	Ev 97

Women and Children First (WCF), The Diabetic Association of Bangladesh (BADAS) and the Centre for International Health and Development (CIHD) at UCL's Institute of Child Health	Ev 100
Westminster Foundation for Democracy	Ev 107

List of unprinted evidence

The following written evidence has been reported to the House, but to save printing costs it has not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Parliamentary Archives, and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to The Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW (tel. 020 7219 3074). Opening hours are from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays.

E-mail from Councillor Abdul Aziz Sardar concerning climate change and development in Bangladesh [dated 16 December 2009]

E-mail from Councillor A M Ohid Ahmed [dated 16 December 2009]

E mail from Abu Bakkar [dated 9 December 2009]

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2009-10

First Report	Progress on the Implementation of DFID's HIV/AIDS Strategy	HC 49 (HC 342)
Second Report	Work of the Committee in Session 2008-09	HC 167

Session 2008-09

First Report	Work of the Committee in Session 2007-08	HC 138
Second Report	DFID Annual Report 2008	HC 220 (HC 440)
Third Report	DFID and China	HC 180 (HC 535)
Fourth Report	Aid Under Pressure: Support for Development Assistance in Global Economic Downturn	HC 179 (HC 1009)
Fifth Report	Sustainable Development in a Changing Climate	HC 177 (1008)
Sixth Report	Scrutiny of Arms Export Controls (2009): UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2007, Quarterly Reports for 2008, licensing policy and review of export control legislation	HC 178
Seventh Report	Urbanisation and Poverty	HC 511 (HC 251)
Eighth Report	DFID's Programme in Nigeria	HC 840 (HC 250)

Session 2007-08

First Report	DFID Departmental Report 2007	HC 64-I&II (HC 329)
Second Report	Development and Trade: Cross-departmental Working	HC 68 (HC 330)
Third Report	Work of the Committee 2007	HC 255
Fourth Report	Reconstructing Afghanistan	HC 65-I&II (HC 509)
Fifth Report	Maternal Health	HC 66-I&II (HC 592)
Sixth Report	DFID and the World Bank	HC 67-I&II (HC 548)
Seventh Report	DFID and the African Development Bank	HC 441-I&II (HC 988)
Eighth Report	Scrutiny of Arms Export Controls (2008): UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2006, Quarterly Reports for 2007, licensing policy and review of export control legislation	HC 254 (Cm 7485)

Ninth Report	Working Together to Make Aid More Effective	HC 520-I&II (HC 1065)
Tenth Report	The World Food Programme and Global Food Security	HC 493-I&II (HC 1066)
Eleventh Report	The Humanitarian and Development Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories	HC 522-I&II (HC 1067)
Twelfth Report	HIV/AIDS: DIFID's New Strategy	HC 1068-1&II (HC 235)

Session 2006–07

First Report	DFID Departmental Report 2006	HC 71 (HC 328)
Second Report	HIV/AIDS: Marginalised groups and emerging epidemics	HC 46-I&II (HC 329)
Third Report	Work of the Committee in 2005–06	HC 228
Fourth Report	Development Assistance and the Occupied Palestinian Territories	HC 114-I&II (HC 430)
Fifth Report	EU Development and Trade Policies: An update	HC 271 (HC 622)
Sixth Report	Sanitation and Water	HC 126-I&II (HC 854)
Seventh report	Fair Trade and Development	HC 356-I&II (HC 1047)
Eighth report	DFID's Programme in Vietnam	HC 732 (HC 1062)
Ninth report	Prospects for sustainable peace in Uganda	HC 853 (HC 1063)
Tenth report	DFID Assistance to Burmese Internally Displaced People and Refugees on the Thai-Burma Border	HC 645-I&II (HC 1070)

Session 2005–06

First Report	Delivering the Goods: HIV/AIDS and the Provision of Anti-Retrovirals	HC 708-I&II (HC 922)
Second Report	Darfur: The killing continues	HC 657 (HC 1017)
Third Report	The WTO Hong Kong Ministerial and the Doha Development Agenda	HC 730-I&II (HC 1425)
Fourth Report	Private Sector Development	HC 921-I&II (HC 1629)
Fifth Report	Strategic Export Controls: Annual Report for 2004, Quarterly Reports for 2005, Licensing Policy and Parliamentary Scrutiny	HC 873 (Cm 6954)
Sixth Report	Conflict and Development: Peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction	HC 923 (HC 172)
Seventh Report	Humanitarian response to natural disasters	HC 1188 (HC 229)