



House of Commons  
International Development  
Committee

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**DFID's work on  
education: Leaving  
no one behind?:  
Government Response  
to the Committee's  
First Report**

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**Third Special Report of  
Session 2017–19**

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 20 March 2018*

## The International Development Committee

The International Development Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for International Development and its associated public bodies.

### Current membership

[Stephen Twigg MP](#) (*Labour (Co-op), Liverpool, West Derby*) (Chair)

[Richard Burden MP](#) (*Labour, Birmingham, Northfield*)

[James Duddridge MP](#) (*Conservative, Rochford and Southend East*)

[Mr Nigel Evans MP](#) (*Conservative, Ribble Valley*)

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[Chris Law MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Dundee West*)

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[Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP](#) (*Labour (Co-op), Brighton, Kemptown*)

[Paul Scully MP](#) (*Conservative, Sutton and Cheam*)

[Mr Virendra Sharma MP](#) (*Labour, Ealing Southall*)

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### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publication

Committee reports are published on the [Committee's website](#) and in print by Order of the House. Evidence relating to this Report is published on the relevant [inquiry page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Fergus Reid (Clerk), Rob Page (Second Clerk), Jake Barker, Emma Makey and Louise Whitley (Committee Specialists), Alison Pickard (Senior Committee Assistant) Zainab Balogun, Paul Hampson and Rowena Macdonald (Committee Assistants), and Estelle Currie (Media Officer).

### Contacts

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## Third Special Report

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On 21 November 2017 the International Development Committee published its First Report of Session 2017–19, [DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind](#). The Response from the Government was received on 14 March 2018. The detailed response is appended below.

## Appendix: Government Response

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### Financing global education

1. The Committee recognises that in some circumstances it is right and necessary to allocate education-focused aid to middle-income countries, for example the considerable financial commitments made to Jordan and Lebanon to support the education of Syrian refugees. However, generally it is low and lower middle-income countries that require the most support for education. As the UK's spending on support for global education is transferred to other Government departments with a different geographical focus and other priorities, the Government should ensure that resources are still being focused on those children and young people who most need it.

DFID response: Agree

- The UK Aid Strategy sets out the need for a whole of government approach to our international development effort in order to respond to new global challenges. Whilst DFID remains the UK's primary channel for aid, to respond to the changing world, more aid is now administered by other government departments drawing on their complementary skills.
- The UK Government takes seriously its obligations to the world's poorest and most marginalised. Spending in upper middle income countries has increased recently, mainly due to the Syria crisis. However in 2016 the UK still spent nearly 50% of its country-specific education ODA in low income countries, and a further 28% in lower middle income countries.<sup>1</sup> Our support for education in middle-income ODA-eligible countries will drive prosperity globally, whilst contributing to eliminating extreme poverty which still exists within these countries. It will also deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

2. The Committee recognises DFID's continuing commitment to education, and the fact that it has in the past prioritised aid to education in a way other donors have not. However, if SDG4 is to be achieved, all donors should considerably increase the amount of aid allocated to global education, which has lagged behind other sectors for many years. For this reason, the Committee would like to see the amount of UK ODA allocated to education increase over the course of the next spending review period. The Department is commendable in striving to improve the value for money of the amount it spends on education. However, in order to achieve the ambitions of SDG4, the total amount should be increased.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on DAC-CRS database

Taken with:

3. Between 2012–2015, the UK spent an annual average of £966 million on education. We expect to see a significant increase in this figure over the next spending review period. The specific amount should be determined by the new approach to DFID's Value for Money framework that we recommend below.

DFID response: Partially agree

- We agree that greater global investment in education will be needed to improve quality and equity in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, and we will continue to work with partners to increase the amount of aid allocated to education in developing countries. Equally, it is clear that global investment must be accompanied by domestic investment and reform to make all spending on education more efficient and effective, maximising value for money (see further detail under 6. below).
- Education will remain a key priority for DFID over the next spending review period. Since the inception of the GPE the UK has been its largest contributor. We have recently committed £225 million to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), a pledge which makes us the leading bilateral donor to the partnership and represents an increase of almost 50% in our annual contribution. The precise level of spending on education through country programmes will be determined by country offices as they consider development needs and opportunities locally.

4. DFID has not demonstrated a clear understanding of the inter-relationship of education spending with other sectors. If it is serious about achieving value for money on everything spent, it should work towards a better understanding of this are.

DFID response: Disagree

- We actively consider the inter-relationship between education spending and other sectors and continue to update our understanding as the evidence base evolves. For example, DFID's chief economist regularly reviews global evidence on the relationship between education and a wide range of development outcomes – including macroeconomics, returns to the individual and wider societal benefits. DFID was also involved in examining the inter-relationship between education spending and health as part of our technical engagement in the recent Education Commission.
- At a country level, DFID calculates the range of costs and benefits of its programme spending in every education business case. The review of DFID's Country Poverty Reduction Diagnostic / Inclusive Growth Diagnostic later this year, will be an opportunity to strengthen understanding of the inter-relationships between education and other sectors.

5. The Department should develop a clear and transparent methodology for determining and justifying the allocation of education funding in terms of its potential 'added value'. This is likely to enable better informed decisions over the programmes it funds and the mechanism to which resources are committed.

DFID response: Partially agree

- We follow DFID-wide guidance on value for money (VFM) assessments in programming decisions and have developed additional education sector specific VFM guidance outlining considerations to be made at the design, mobilisation, delivery, and closure stage of the programme cycle. The added value of education programmes is considered and, where possible and useful, quantified in the appraisal section of our business cases.

6. The UK Government should, wherever possible, use its influence with partner countries to encourage greater domestic spending on education. It should also support countries in their efforts to target domestic spending towards the most marginalised and disadvantaged children.

DFID response: Agree

- The Secretary of State for International Development has been clear that developing countries themselves need to step up to support quality education. Our new [education policy](#) indicates that we will support countries to increase investment, cut waste and use public resources more effectively to ensure children – including those who are poor and marginalised – learn the basics. We highlight that improvements in public financial management, transparency and taxation will be vital to ensuring adequate domestic resources for education, setting education systems on a sustainable footing.
- In addition to DFID's country engagement, the UK is the largest bilateral donor to GPE, which has strong levers to promote domestic spending. In order to receive a GPE implementation grant, countries are expected to spend at least 20% of their budget on education, or commit to moving towards this goal. GPE's support to education sector planning encourages governments to consider how their plans will promote equity and support the disadvantaged. The recent GPE replenishment also saw more than 50 developing countries commit to increase public expenditure for education for the period 2018 to 2020, to a total of US\$110 billion. The UK will continue to use our position on the world stage to ensure GPE spends its resources more effectively, influence other donors to increase their contributions and also work with partner governments to increase domestic resources for education and make this spend more efficient.

7. As recognised in the Multilateral Development Review 2016, GPE's focus on fragile and conflict-affected states is well aligned with DFID priorities and we recognise DFID's influence in ensuring and maintaining this.

Taken with:

8. Given that the Global Partnership for Education has improved its performance and has a unique approach to improving the education systems in developing countries, DFID should agree to the full financial contribution requested by GPE at the next replenishment. The UK should also announce its intentions early, to encourage other donors to step forward.

Taken with:

9. We expect DFID to link its contributions to performance conditions, which we believe is right. However, DFID should take all necessary steps to ensure that any cap on contributions, as a percentage of total commitments, is an effective tool to encourage other donors (rather than a barrier to GPE receiving the full financial amount promised). To act as an incentive to other donors, the UK's commitment, and the percentage cap, should be announced as soon as possible

DFID response: Partially agree

- The UK has been by far the biggest investor in the GPE since it was initiated. Our recent pledge of £225m over three years compares to the £210m we spent over the previous four year period. This represents an almost 50% increase in our annual contribution (from £52.5m/year to £75m/year). This significant increase reflects the results that GPE has achieved to date and our continued strong commitment to this mechanism.
- Our support for GPE goes beyond funding; we will continue to play an active role on the GPE board and we are committed to further increasing our engagement to help drive improvements in delivery. The Secretary of State for International Development used her first major international intervention to attend the GPE financing conference. We are keen to tell a positive story about our commitment to education and to use this to urge others to step up. It will be important that GPE continues to improve the way it works in order to tackle global learning challenges. For this reason, 30% of our pledge is conditional on reforms which will drive greater impact.

10. DFID should support the new International Financing Facility for Education (IFFEd), as an additional mechanism for leveraging funding into the provision of global education.

DFID response: Partially agree

- We are working closely with the Education Commission and other donors on the IFFEd proposal. We are considering its feasibility and the technical detail. We are participating in the technical working group established by the Education Commission, but are not yet in a position to support the proposal.

## Improving access to education

11. In light of SDG5 and the recognised multiplier effect of, specifically, girls' education in developing countries, we believe that DFID should continue to fund the Girls' Education Challenge into its second phase, demonstrating how it has used learning from the first phase to inform new ways of working. DFID should also continue to use these innovative programmes to learn more about 'what works' to ensure that the most marginalised girls have access to quality education, using this learning across the organisation and sharing it with other donors and development practitioners, looking into opportunities for scaling successful models.

Taken with:

12. DFID should seek to fund some programmes in the second stage of the Girls' Education Challenge that focus on reducing the incidence of 'drop out' at transition points in girls' development and education. The Department should also consider how it can best integrate the tackling of school related gender-based violence in programmes that it funds

DFID response: Agree

- Our new education policy makes our ambition on hard-to-reach girls clear – in partnership with FCO, we will promote 12 years of quality education and learning and improve the prospects of the large numbers who do not go on to secondary school.
- DFID extended its flagship Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) programme in July 2016 by £100 million. The second phase will support girls from the first phase to make the transition from primary to secondary school, complete their education or go into further training. These transition points are where we see the highest rates of dropouts amongst girls. We will focus on ensuring these girls receive a quality education to the highest standards.
- The DFID Education Policy Team both run and contribute to a wide range of DFID lesson learning and policy fora. Much of this lesson learning draws on evidence emerging from GEC, looking at a range of technical, policy and management issues. We also work closely with multilateral partners and other donors, to share this learning and ensure that more countries are implementing an inclusive approach to education. DFID is looking to deepen this internal and international engagement over the next year, including through the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and Global Disability Summit.
- Our new education policy recognises the scale of school violence and its impact on drop-out and learning. It signals our intention to further address this issue through DFID's education portfolio. This is also an issue on which DFID will seek to dive progress internationally in 2018 as part of the Global Year of Learning announced at this year's UK-France Summit.

13. DFID has shown leadership on education for girls and young women in recent years. The Department should now use its influence in the same way to shine a light on the needs of disabled children. It has made great progress with the Disability Framework, but needs to now ensure this is being implemented across all DFID programmes.

Taken with:

14. DFID should use its policy refresh to launch a reinvigorated strategy to support access to quality education for disabled children. We believe that this is a vital area of work for DFID, and hope to undertake a separate inquiry into DFID's work on disability in our future programme of work

DFID response: Agree

- DFID is stepping up its focus on addressing the challenges faced by children and adults with disabilities. A high level Global Disability Summit will be held in

July 2018 to step up action across the board, raising global attention and focus on a neglected area. DFID's Disability Framework will also be revised in 2018 to strengthen our response.

- Our new education policy makes it clear that we will use our influence to promote inclusive reform and help more children with disabilities transition into mainstream education. The new policy sets out the building blocks of inclusive reform, including better data and more teachers and support staff with the skills to help children with disabilities learn. To help transition into mainstream education we will support comprehensive and cost-effective interventions which include screening, assistive devices, teacher support, adaptive textbooks and parental and wider community engagement.

15. Humanitarian finance suffers from being short-term and unpredictable. However, as we have seen in recent years, crises—such as the war in Syria—are becoming increasingly protracted. This creates situations and environments that are likely to persist and define how many people will live for many years. The 'temporary' solutions established at the outset should therefore be designed with this in mind. If education provision is ignored then the futures of the children caught up in them are at risk and the chances of long term recovery, and the avoidance of repetition, will be reduced.

Taken with:

16. As part of its policy refresh, DFID needs to establish a long-term, integrated strategy for supporting education in emergencies, especially in long-term crises, through bilateral and multilateral channels. The aim should be to make establishing effective foundations for getting the affected children back into structured learning environments a priority alongside clean water, food, sanitation and shelter.

DFID response: Agree

- DFID's push for radical reform of the international humanitarian system champions the new approach to protracted crises and forced displacement set out at the World Humanitarian Summit.
- This is reflected in our new education policy, which clearly sets out our commitment to, and approach to supporting, children affected by conflict, protracted crises and natural disasters.
- We will ensure that the education interventions we support are informed by a good understanding of the drivers of conflict and contribute to broader peacebuilding objectives. To deliver for children whose education is disrupted by conflict, protracted crises and natural disasters we will fund multi-year investments in quality education, strengthen links between humanitarian and development funding. We will adjust programming as situations evolve, and support schools as safe places that promote children's well-being.
- DFID is already putting these commitments into practice, investing in education for displaced children and youth and those hosting them. We are bringing together humanitarian and development funding and supporting longer-term plans in protracted crises. For example, in Uganda DFID is reorienting its



education programme to deliver education for refugees and host communities in the North, complementing our support through our protracted crisis funding. DFID staff have also played a critical role in developing the approach taken to activities funded by Education Cannot Wait in Uganda, including longer-term planning for education support for refugees.

17. The benefits of pre-primary education for later learning are proven and there is a real drive from stakeholders for DFID to invest and do more in this area. Although other donors and organisations, such as USAID and the World Bank, are active in supporting early years education, aid funding for pre-primary remains low. It seems clear that there is the space, and desire, for DFID to contribute to work in this area.

Taken with:

18. DFID should find more effective methods of monitoring its sub-sectoral spend, particularly in early years education where it claims its support is under-represented by the figures available. This will enable the Department to assess what work it is currently carrying out in this area, and where it can add most value or leverage in other resources.

Taken with:

19. DFID should invest more in pre-primary education, bilaterally and multilaterally. It should work alongside donors and organisations already active in this area, such as the World Bank and USAID, to determine where the UK could make the most effective contribution.

DFID response: Partially agree

- DFID agrees that good quality early years education (from birth to age 8) provides the best foundation for a child to learn in school. We have been investing in research on how to deliver good quality early years education, working with the World Bank's Early Learning Partnership and the British Academy. We already support children in the early years of primary education, including the important transition into primary school. We also invest in early childhood development, particularly through support for maternal and newborn health and nutrition
- We will build on this by gradually expanding our research-led approach, focusing on: enabling governments to identify cost-effective interventions that reach poor and marginalised children; sharing UK expertise on how to ensure good quality non-state provision and extending UK support for improvements in teaching to pre-primary education.
- Our main focus will remain on primary and lower secondary education, given our existing strengths in this area and our objective of ensuring children learn the basics of literacy and numeracy, as well as transferable skills.
- Through an education portfolio review planned for 2018, we will review the effectiveness of our current approach to monitoring DFID spending on early years' education.

20. DFID should use its education policy refresh as an opportunity to clarify its value for money approach in this area, ensuring it is fit for purpose when targeting the most marginalised children.

DFID response: Agree

- DFID has detailed value for money guidance to inform decision making at strategic levels and within programmes. Additional guidance has been developed in particular to reflect our focus on reaching the most marginalised and the leave no one behind agenda, setting out how to consider equity in value for money assessments. The guidance for the education sector has also been updated to more explicitly highlight equity considerations, from the minimum principle of doing no harm in our programming to specifically targeting those hardest to reach.
- The education sector value for money guidance document is a live document and we will continue to update this to ensure it is fit for purpose and practical for programme teams, including when targeting the most marginalised.

21. DFID should work where appropriate to support governments to regulate private schools where it has the expertise and resources to do so.

Taken with:

22. More research should be done on how the private sector could be used to improve free, government funded schools. The results of the PSL trial in Liberia are welcome, and it is encouraging that trials like this are creating useful data. This data should be assessed carefully when the Government is deciding if/how to support private operators.

Taken with:

23. DFID should take further steps to satisfy itself that the model of educational provision offered by Bridge International Academies offers an effective educational return on the ODA committed to it. This should include assessment of whether the model is sustainable, cost-effective and scalable but also whether it could be modified or adapted to improve outcomes when compared to other operators and other models.

DFID response: Partially agree

- The state is the guarantor of quality basic education for all, but need not be the sole financer nor provider of basic education services many of which are fee-paying in the state sector. We will support governments to develop accountability, oversight and quality assurance mechanisms to boost quality in the non-state sector and public-private partnerships which improve access to education for poor and marginalised children.
- We will continue to contribute to the evidence base on non-state education provision and how it can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. This will include information from ongoing research into Bridge International Academies (BIA) schools in Nigeria.

- As the UK financial institution CDC has a continued financial intervention in BIA, they will continue to monitor its model and provide assurance of its operations.

## Improving the quality and equity of education

24. If DFID is to be effective in supporting partner countries to improve education systems, it should have a strong understanding of the context in which it is working. A thorough understanding of the political, social and economic circumstances of each of DFID's priority countries should be at the centre of its education programming decisions.

Taken with:

25. To ensure programming is politically informed, DFID and Foreign and Commonwealth Office teams in country should be working closely together on education. To take full advantage of the range of knowledge and expertise within country teams, DFID's governance advisers, as well as education advisers, should be instrumental in planning bilateral engagement on education.

Taken with:

26. DFID's country-specific education advisers are essential to ensuring UK support to education is tailored to each country context, coordinating with other donors, international organisations and NGOs, and—most importantly—developing strong relationships with country governments. If DFID is to support systems reform in the countries it works in, these interlocutors with their intricate knowledge of countries' education systems—from the national to the local level—are essential.

Taken with:

27. Where possible, DFID should maintain an education adviser in every country where it has a bilateral aid programme.

DFID response: Agree

- DFID and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office work very closely together on education. Our new policy establishes system reform and strengthening as one of three key priorities for DFID's work on education, and makes clear that we will pursue a politically-smart approach. We see assessing the political economy of education reform as a key way to identify barriers to improving learning. We will take a tougher stance where national leadership on public sector reform is weak, investing instead in promoting improved transparency, accountability and coalitions seeking better education and investing through alternative channels which deliver for poor and marginalised children.
- Having the right people embedded at country level to deliver this approach is critical. We have Education Advisors in all countries where we have bilateral education programmes. These advisors already work in close partnership with governance and Foreign and Commonwealth Office colleagues, and the Education Policy Team will continue to encourage this approach.

- The Technical Competency Framework for the recruitment and continued professional development of DFID Education Advisers includes knowledge of political economy of education systems. Given the increasing number of DFID education programmes are operating in conflict affected counties, understanding the political economy of a country is of even more importance. Therefore ongoing support for Advisers to further develop their skills takes place throughout the year.
- DFID has also been proactive in strengthening the GPE's work on political economy through financing the Overseas Development Institute to provide guidance for the GPE application process to ensure that the political and social context (and potential challenges to reform) are accounted for in the design of GPE support.

28. The Committee welcomes DFID's considerable investments in research and data on global education. While access and learning outcomes are still poor, the Department's investment in baseline data and evidence on what works to improve education is absolutely vital.

Taken with:

29. DFID should continue to support research on education, such as the RISE programme. It should also continue to support vital data collection, through the Global Education Monitoring Report and others

DFID response: Agree

- DFID will continue to invest in better education data both globally and nationally through supporting efforts by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics to develop a new agreement on minimum levels of learning at key stages of education and globally comparable data on the number of children reaching these standards as well as championing the use of the new global flagship "children learning" indicator. We will work with others to improve the quality and use of education data, prioritising: a) good national and cross-national measures of learning; b) data on teacher knowledge and performance; and c) better data on hard-to-reach girls, children affected by crises, and children with disabilities.
- DFID will continue to develop and grow our education research portfolio, more than doubling our education research spend between 2015 and 2020. We will be developing large new programmes on critical research gaps. A new £20m on education technology research hub is currently being established, and we plan to expand our programmes on early childhood education and education in conflict.
- DFID has established a leadership role in the international community's efforts to raise the rigour, availability and use of education research. The World Development Report 2018 on education drew heavily on academics funded by DFID, particularly those working on the RISE (Research on Improving Systems of Education) programme and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) Post-Primary Education Initiative. The Education Research Team (ERT) worked closely in 2015–16 with the International Commission on Financing

Global Education. The consequence was a strong evidence base in the published report (2016) that also drew on DFID's strategic thinking on systems. ERT is also supporting the work of the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) initiative. DFID continues to co-chair the Building Evidence in Education network of education research funders, driving new standards across research that is commissioned.