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Committee

Follow-up: sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector

First Report of Session 2019–20

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

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The International Development Committee

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Summary

The final report of Oxfam's Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change, published in June 2019, provided a stark reminder of how little has really changed for those who suffer sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by aid workers. Whilst we recognise that there have been efforts across the aid sector to improve safeguarding since early 2018, we are disappointed in the progress made to date in several key areas.

The measures developed by DFID and Bond aimed at providing better reporting and complaints mechanisms for victims and survivors seem to place significant weight on developing the theory and substantially less on ensuring changes in practice. We now want to see greater emphasis on ensuring that changes to policy at the organisational level are felt by those living in humanitarian and development contexts. Resourcing for safeguarding must be built into every programme that DFID funds where there are safeguarding risks, and this should include, where required, provision for safeguarding staff and focal points operating at the programme level. DFID should hold organisations accountable for how resources are being used, including by actively monitoring the implementation of best practice guidance.

We have not yet seen sufficient attention being given to improving the effectiveness of whistle-blowing policies and we are concerned that the importance of protecting whistle-blowers has so far been downplayed. The systematic audit of whistle-blowing practices that was agreed upon at the March 2018 Safeguarding Summit has seemingly been shelved. Either DFID should publish the findings and recommendations on whistle-blowing from its enhanced due diligence and central assurance assessments, or it should work with Bond to conduct and publish the systematic audit of whistle-blowing practices across the sector, previously agreed in March 2018.

The gap between safeguarding policy and practice extends to the United Nations. The UK Government is well placed to press UN agencies towards implementation of best practice, and this should involve ensuring that inter-agency, community-based complaint mechanisms are widely and effectively established.

Whilst we were initially disappointed at the slow pace of collective action on safeguarding by DFID's private suppliers, this seems more due to a lack of coordination than an absence of will. Going forward, DFID should help to break down silos and promote coordination by ensuring that both its private supplier and NGO partners are participating in cross-sectoral safeguarding forums, particularly inter-agency networks on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and inter-agency complaints mechanisms.

Voluntary self-regulation of safeguarding standards allows failures on sexual exploitation and abuse to slip through the cracks: in our view the case for an independent ombudsman remains strong. We welcome the development of the ombudsman proposal by the Dutch Government and we urge the UK Government, together with Dutch Government counterparts, to display international leadership in making the ombudsman a reality.

At the height of the safeguarding scandal in 2018, aid organisations appeared to recognise that transparency on sexual exploitation and abuse is essential for breaking

down the culture of silence and stigma that has so long inhibited victims from coming forward. However, some organisations still seem reluctant to publish information about the number of allegations they have received and the outcome. As a membership organisation of UK NGOs, Bond is well placed to promote transparency by setting an expectation that Bond members will publish annually information about the numbers of SEA allegations received and the outcome. DFID should similarly set this expectation for private sector suppliers, non-UK NGOs and multilateral agencies, who should be equally pressed to improve transparency on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Introduction

1. In July 2018, our report, “Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector (SEA)”, concluded that SEA is a longstanding, widespread issue with evidence of abuse having been found across different countries, organisations and institutions. SEA is ultimately an abuse of power and the aid sector can be one of extreme power imbalance, with those benefitting from aid, particularly in humanitarian crises, some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world. No corner of the aid sector can consider itself immune from the risk of SEA. The problem is a collective one. We urged a full response from the sector hinging on: empowerment, reporting, accountability and screening, with victims and survivors at the centre of any processes, including the process of reform.¹

2. In June 2019, the final report of the Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change (IC), established by Oxfam International, provided a sobering reminder that sexual exploitation and abuse continues to be a horrifying reality in development and humanitarian contexts. As part of the study, the IC commissioned in-depth research into the dynamics of sexual exploitation and abuse within refugee and host communities in three countries across Africa and Asia. The research team found that “sexual exploitation and abuse allegations were pervasive in two of the three research sites”. We were dismayed to read that, according to the findings:

- “Alleged perpetrators belong to many humanitarian and development organisations.”
- There was “a substantial lack of effective, accessible safeguarding mechanisms in the communities [the research team] visited.”
- “interagency reporting mechanisms are not widely available, and people may not even know about them.”
- “General feedback and reporting mechanisms exist in most of the programme sites visited, but community awareness of these mechanisms is weak, information is not always available in local languages, and its use is hindered by the low literacy levels among the local people.”
- There was “little evidence from the focus group discussions that sexual exploitation and abuse reports, when made, were handled appropriately by the responsible organizations, nor whether appropriate assistance was provided.”
- “Focus group participants expressed frustration that reports either went unacknowledged (“into a black hole”) or were dismissed outright.”
- “The team also heard that survivors usually were not provided with any support.”²

1 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)”, HC840

2 Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change, “[Committing to Change, Protecting People: Toward a more accountable Oxfam](#)”, (June 2019)

We note the striking, and depressing, similarities between the issues identified in this report, published in June 2019, and those identified in previous independent reports revealing sexual exploitation and abuse in emergency settings in 2002 and 2008.³

3. In between publishing our original report and taking note of the findings set out above, we have followed up these issues by taking further oral and written evidence on the measures being taken by DFID, NGOs and private suppliers to raise safeguarding standards. We have primarily focused on efforts to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse of the beneficiaries of aid, but we remain very aware of how reforms in this area have implications for the protection of aid workers themselves from sexual abuse and harassment. We recognise that many in the aid sector appear now to be taking safeguarding much more seriously than they were previously. We also appreciate that it is unreasonable to expect that reforms galvanised by a strong focus over a single year would be enough to wipe out sexual exploitation and abuse entirely. However, we are disappointed in the progress made to date in several key areas. In this report, we set out our most pressing concerns.

4. Throughout this follow-up work, we have had the benefit of the guidance and advice of two specialist advisers whom we appointed in March 2019, Professor Rosa Freedman, Chair of Law, Conflict and Global Development, School of Law, University of Reading, and Ms. Asmita Naik, Independent Consultant on International Development and Human Rights, who also co-authored the 2018 Ombudsman study, referenced in this report. We are very grateful for their support. We are also grateful to our Reply Rapporteur on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Pauline Latham, the member of this Committee who first brought these issues to our attention and who remains committed to tackling sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment in all parts of the aid sector, including by leading our follow-up work on this topic.

3 See UNHCR and Save the Children UK, ["Sexual violence and exploitation: the experience of refugee children in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone: Report of assessment mission carried out from 22 October to 30 November 2001"](#) (2002); Save the Children, ["No One to Turn To: the under-reporting of child sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers and peacekeepers"](#) (2008)

1 From paper to practice

5. At the International Safeguarding Summit hosted by the Department for International Development (DFID) in October 2018, the UK facilitated the presentation of commitments from actors across the aid sector, organised around four ‘strategic shifts.’ The first of these shifts was to “Ensure support for survivors, victims and whistle-blowers; enhance accountability and transparency; strengthen reporting; and tackle impunity”.⁴ We were pleased to see DFID and the other summit participants place this level of importance on supporting those affected by sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and on strengthening reporting mechanisms to ensure accountability and remove impunity. In our original July 2018 report, we advocated strongly for a victim and survivor-centred approach to tackling SEA and argued that removing barriers to reporting through improved complaints mechanisms is “vital to understanding the problem, responding to it, and ultimately, to preventing it”.⁵ In particular, we emphasised the need for donors to provide sufficient resources for bringing about effective victim-centred complaint mechanisms, having found it “galling to hear that the main obstacle to progress in this area has been a lack of funding”.⁶

6. The need for effective complaints mechanisms has been reinforced by recent research. For example, the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) Alliance aggregates and publishes data on how member agencies participating in its verification system perform against key commitments. This consistently shows that agencies perform worst when it comes to receiving and handling complaints. CHS’s specific commitment in this area is: “communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints”.⁷ A report commissioned by CHS Alliance in response to this low score found that “organisations often have policies in place related to complaints and feedback, but putting those policies into practice often proves challenging”.⁸ The scoping study for an “International Ombuds for Humanitarian and Development Aid”, commissioned by the Dutch Government in 2018, provides an overview of existing complaints mechanisms in the sector, ultimately concluding that “much remains to be done in terms of ensuring organisations have functioning complaints mechanisms in place”.⁹ The study also found that concerns about SEA “are most likely to come forward through face-to-face contact and through the appointment of focal points at ground level”.¹⁰ Worryingly, the research team for the Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change found that in one of the three refugee sites they visited, “the ratio was one sexual exploitation and abuse focal point per 10,000 people”.¹¹

4 Department for International Development, [Safeguarding Summit 2018: Host’s Outcome Summary](#), October 2018. The other three shifts were: (2) incentivise cultural change through strong leadership, organisational accountability and better human resource processes; (3) adopt global standards and ensure they are met or exceeded; and (4) strengthen organisational capacity and capability across the international aid sector to meet these standards

5 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)”, HC840.

6 *Ibid.*

7 Core Humanitarian Standards Alliance, “[Our Data](#)”, Accessed 2 October 2019.

8 Manisha Thomas, “[CHS Alliance Support to Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms: Unpacking the Complexity to Address the Challenges](#)”, June 2019

9 Dorothea Hilhost, Asmita Naik, Andrew Cunningham, “[International Ombuds for Humanitarian and Development Aid Scoping Study](#)”, September 2018

10 *Ibid.*

11 Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change, “[Committing to Change, Protecting People: Toward a more accountable Oxfam](#)”, (June 2019)

7. On 7 May 2019, we took evidence on SEA from representatives of NGOs and private sector suppliers, as well as from the then Secretary of State for International Development, Rt Hon Rory Stewart OBE MP. This follow-up session was aimed at assessing progress against commitments for tackling sexual exploitation and abuse, six months after these were presented at the October 2018 Safeguarding Summit. Following this evidence, we wrote to the Secretary of State expressing concern that the funding allocations for safeguarding outlined by the Department:

do not seem to put significant weight on frontline measures for tackling sexual exploitation and abuse such as supporting the implementation of complaint mechanisms, on ensuring that allegations are followed by robust investigations, or on the provision of support for those who do come forward to report abuse.¹²

8. DFID and Bond (the UK membership body for development NGOs), have both set out for us the measures they are taking to ensure the provision of effective frontline measures for responding to sexual exploitation and abuse. In DFID's case, these included: "the development of a statement of victims' rights" and a Resource and Support Hub which will "strengthen capacity and capability of local organisations, including offering support with investigations".¹³ Bond told us that one of the NGO working groups, which they coordinate, has prioritised the development of a reporting and complaints toolkit.¹⁴ We note that this toolkit, which was supported by DFID funding, has now been published.¹⁵

9. Whilst we recognise the value of developing best practice guidance and ensuring that it is widely available, we learned from our initial SEA inquiry that the existence of good guidance is only valuable to the extent that it is followed in practice. Our 2018 report concluded that "policies, codes of conduct and response measures" had been developed within the sector since 2002, but a lack of proper implementation meant that they had remained ineffective.¹⁶ We are yet to be reassured that these new measures described by DFID and Bond will ultimately lead to the establishment and operation of effective complaints mechanisms, investigations, and responses to SEA allegations. For example, DFID told us that the Department is providing up to £10million for the establishment of the 'Resource and Support Hub'.¹⁷ In response to a question on how this 'Hub' will ultimately benefit victims and survivors, the then Secretary of State, Rory Stewart MP, implied that it would work by affecting culture change in NGOs and how they respond to reports of SEA.¹⁸ **Whilst culture change is an important part of solutions to SEA, it is not the same as having access to practical resources for receiving and responding to complaints, such as safeguarding staff, focal points and investigators. We note that DFID's Resource and Support Hub does have the potential to provide this practical support:** Peter Taylor, the Head of DFID's Safeguarding Unit, told us that the Hub will be designed to ensure that NGOs "have access to quality-assured services", such as investigative capacity.¹⁹ As

12 [Letter from IDC Chair to Secretary of State for International Development, concerning follow-up to IDC evidence session on sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#), 13 June 2019

13 Department for International Development Annex C ([SAS0009](#))

14 [Q1](#); Bond Annex A ([SAS0008](#))

15 Bond, [Safeguarding report-handling toolkit](#), August 2019

16 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, "[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)", HC840.

17 Department for International Development Annex A ([SAS0004](#))

18 [Q50](#)

19 [Q52](#)

part of its reply to this report, we ask that DFID set out clearly how exactly the Hub will be “offering support with investigations”, distinguishing between describing and signposting, on the one hand, and actual access to, and provision of, services, on the other.

10. With regards to the Government’s support of £45,000 towards a consultation on a UN Statement of Victims’ Rights,²⁰ we asked DFID via correspondence in June 2019 how a statement alone will empower victims and survivors to report in practice, enable investigations into allegations, or provide the necessary support to victims and survivors going through this process.²¹ The then Secretary of State’s response did not provide a clear answer.²² *We ask DFID to provide, as part of its reply to this report, a description of the planned steps—and associated resources—which will embed, promulgate and enable aid recipients to enjoy the rights contained in such a statement once developed.*

11. The Bond toolkit on reporting has the potential to be useful if it is used effectively, but it is unclear to us how the use of the toolkit, and the consequential impact for victims and survivors of SEA, will be ensured. We note that Bond’s CEO, Stephanie Draper, emphasised in a letter to our Chair on 20 May 2019 that the activities so far undertaken by the four NGO safeguarding working groups “are just the first steps towards improved practice”.²³

12. We have received some mixed messages from DFID on its willingness to provide additional resource for safeguarding through grants and contracts. Our July 2018 report concluded that “donors cannot expect aid organisations to integrate safeguarding into their programmes without the resource to do so”. We recommended that DFID provide resource for safeguarding through grants and contracts, by “ensuring that safeguarding is a line in every budget for programmes where there are safeguarding risks”.²⁴ The Government partially agreed with our recommendation, arguing that safeguarding costs should come initially from organisations’ core funding, but agreeing to consider providing additional costs for specific safeguarding measures at programme level, on a case by case basis.²⁵ In his July 2019 letter to our Chair, the then Secretary of State, Rory Stewart MP, emphasised that “partners for any planned or existing DFID-funded programme can request additional funding for safeguarding, including related to creating and using reporting mechanisms or following up on reports made”.²⁶ This was later corroborated by some of DFID’s private suppliers, who told us in oral evidence that DFID has allowed budget lines on safeguarding “to be built into budgets in tenders”.²⁷ In oral evidence to the Committee, however, Mr Stewart suggested that DFID would be inclined to provide additional funding for safeguarding if the bid was made by “a very small NGO” with limited safeguarding capacity rather than by “other very large organisations that

20 Department for International Development Annex A ([SAS0004](#))

21 [Letter from IDC Chair to Secretary of State for International Development, concerning follow-up to IDC evidence session on sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#), 13 June 2019

22 Department for International Development Annex C ([SAS0009](#))

23 Bond ([SAS0003](#))

24 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)”, HC840.

25 International Development Committee, Tenth Special Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector: Government response to the Committee’s Eighth Report](#)”, HC1764

26 Department for International Development Annex C ([SAS0009](#))

27 [Q80](#)

we would expect to have that anyway”.²⁸ *As part of its reply to this report, we would be assisted by DFID setting out how many requests, and for how much additional funding, the Department has received and granted in relation to safeguarding since 2018.*

13. At the International Safeguarding Summit in October 2018, we were pleased to see the emphasis that DFID placed on supporting the victims and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and on strengthening reporting. The measures that DFID and Bond have presented to us which are aimed at providing better complaints mechanisms and improving responses to victims and survivors have the potential to be the first steps towards making this a reality. However, these measures place significant weight on developing the theory and substantially less on ensuring changes in practice. The final report of the Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change provided a stark reminder of how little has really changed for those who are exploited and abused by aid workers. DFID and the wider aid sector now need to place greater emphasis on ensuring that the changes to policy at organisational level are felt in practice by those living in humanitarian and development contexts who have experienced, or who are at risk of experiencing, sexual exploitation and abuse. DFID’s provision of resources through budget lines is a positive step, but the Department’s messaging on this needs to be clearer.

14. *DFID should commit unequivocally to ensuring that any programme it funds where there are safeguarding risks has sufficient resources for safeguarding built into the programme. This should include, where required, provision for safeguarding staff and focal points operating at the programme level.*

15. *As well as providing the resource, DFID should hold organisations accountable for how this funding is used. For example, DFID has supported Bond to develop a complaints and reporting toolkit and has committed up to £10 million towards the establishment of a Resource and Support Hub. The Department should now set out how they will monitor the implementation of the best practice guidance that is set out in the toolkit and which will be available through the Hub, to ensure that it has practical impact.*

2 Empowering and protecting whistle-blowers

16. At a Summit on Safeguarding co-hosted by DFID and the Charity Commission in March 2018, participants agreed to “plan for a systematic audit of whistle-blowing practices across the sector to ensure individuals feel able to report offences”.²⁹ In our July 2018 report, we welcomed this audit, recognising that protection for whistle-blowers is essential for ensuring that staff are safe from reprisal, whether they are advocating for beneficiaries who have been victims and survivors of SEA, or raising concerns about the abuse and harassment of staff. We recommended that “the remit of the audit should go beyond an examination of what exists at the policy level, and should test the extent to which systems and protections are working effectively”.³⁰ We were therefore disappointed when the Government’s response to our recommendations, received in November 2018, stated that this audit had not been carried out because the NGO working groups had not deemed it to be necessary in addition to existing research.³¹ We pursued this in oral evidence on 7 May 2019 with Frances Longley, representing the four safeguarding NGO working groups, coordinated by Bond. Ms Longley indicated that whilst the NGO working groups had not pressed DFID to carry out the audit, they had not obstructed it. They saw it as DFID’s role to take the audit forward:

As I understand it, it was a piece of work that DfID was going to do, not the NGO sector. If DfID wants to do it, we are very happy for it to do so. I think all the working group said was that it was not an urgent piece of work... The work was for DfID to do, rather than the NGO sector.³²

17. Regardless of who was ultimately responsible for the audit not taking place, both DFID and the NGO working groups agreed that the audit was unnecessary, due to the fact that the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Helpdesk has already produced research, commissioned by DFID in early 2018, on the “Effectiveness of Whistleblowing Approaches”.³³ It remains unclear, however, how effective this research has been at improving whistle-blowing policies in practice: when we wrote to Bond to ask what NGOs had done to change or improve their approaches to whistle-blowing on the basis of the research, the CEO of Bond, Stephanie Draper, responded that Bond “would not be able to collect information from members that would allow us to attribute changes in individual NGOs’ approaches to whistleblowing to this helpdesk research”.³⁴

18. We were perplexed to hear that one of the reasons why NGOs had not considered whistle-blowing to be a priority was because whistle-blowing:

29 GOV.UK, [Actions to tackle exploitation and abuse agreed with UK charities](#), March 2018, Accessed 2 October 2019

30 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)”, HC840.

31 International Development Committee, Tenth Special Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector: Government response to the Committee’s Eighth Report](#)”, HC1764

32 [Q13](#)

33 Bond ([SAS0003](#)); Department for International Development Annex C ([SAS0009](#))

34 Bond Annex A ([SAS0008](#))

though well-understood in the global north, is not an established part of many of the cultures where we work. Some common methods for whistleblowing, such as a phone number or an email address, are often not accessible or trusted in contexts where we work.³⁵

We found it surprising that this was presented as a reason for deprioritising whistleblower protection, rather than as an argument in favour of ensuring that whistle-blowers, wherever they may be working, are able to report and be protected if they do so. We do note, however, that in later correspondence, Bond indicate an openness to work with DFID on improving whistle-blowing practices going forward.³⁶

19. In oral evidence on 7 May 2019, the Head of DFID’s Safeguarding Unit, Peter Taylor, told the Committee that checks on whistle-blowing policies are built into DFID’s due diligence assessments. Mr Taylor also said that whistle-blowing is included in the detailed central assurance assessments that DFID has carried out on 16 NGOs, although we note that these do not cover the private sector.³⁷ The then Secretary of State, Rory Stewart MP, asserted in the letter following up to the evidence session that these assessments are having a positive impact on whistle-blowing policies: “we are seeing tangible evidence of partners strengthening their whistle-blowing approaches and that of their implementing partners as a result of the introduction of our enhanced safeguarding due diligence standards last year”.³⁸

20. Protection for whistle-blowers should form part of all frameworks for reporting sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of both beneficiaries and staff. We have not yet seen sufficient attention being given to monitoring and improving the effectiveness of whistle-blowing policies and we are concerned that the importance of protecting whistle-blowers has so far been downplayed. The systematic audit of whistle-blowing practices that was agreed upon at the March 2018 Safeguarding Summit has seemingly been shelved. Both DFID and Bond have seemed reluctant to take responsibility for driving up standards on whistle-blower protection.

21. We are not convinced that the VAWG helpdesk research on whistle-blowing is a substitute for a systematic audit of whistle-blowing practices across the sector, particularly as we have not seen any evidence that this research has had a tangible impact on organisations’ approaches. *If DFID’s assessment of whistle-blowing policies through its enhanced due diligence and central assurance assessments is having a positive impact and raising standards, then DFID should make its findings and recommendations publicly available, so that other organisations can benefit from this learning. If DFID is not willing to publish the findings of these of these assessments as a learning tool, then it should work with Bond to conduct and publish a systematic audit of whistle-blowing practices across the sector, as was previously agreed in March 2018. As we said in our first report, it is vital that this audit takes into account not just the existence of whistleblowing policies, but also their effectiveness in practice.*

35 Bond (SAS0003)

36 Bond Annex A (SAS0008)

37 Q67

38 Department for International Development Annex C (SAS0009)

3 Pressing for progress at the UN

22. Our July 2018 report discussed in some detail the weaknesses of the UN in preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse and we outlined the role the UK could play in driving forward improvement.³⁹ The UN has recently published a fact-sheet, detailing the initiatives that have been launched by the Secretary General since 2017 to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), with an update on the progress of each initiative. We are pleased to see that, amongst other activities, this includes the development of harmonised guidelines for investigations of sexual exploitation and abuse across UN investigative bodies, in line with our recommendation from 2018.⁴⁰

23. However, evidence suggests that the UN still has far to go on SEA and the UK is well placed to push for progress. In December 2018, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) published a review of the UK's approach to funding the UN humanitarian system. It found that, whilst DFID had moved quickly to encourage the UN agencies to strengthen their safeguarding systems, "there is considerable work still to be done at both the international and country levels to identify and implement practical solutions".⁴¹ UN staff interviewed by ICAI noted that UN agencies already had appropriate policies in place, and that the challenge was "to change culture and practice across the UN system so that staff take personal responsibility for preventing exploitation".⁴² ICAI concluded that whilst DFID is now considered to be highly engaged on SEA at the UN, "the measures that DFID is currently promoting are only a first step".⁴³

24. Cooperation between UN agencies is key. Our July 2018 report, whilst recognising that there may be advantages to decentralisation of UN agencies, argued that "this does not preclude coordination and consistency".⁴⁴ When the Committee visited the UN in 2018, we heard about the value of joint inter-agency community-based complaints mechanisms, which can apply not just to UN agencies but all implementing partners including local and national NGOs and private suppliers. It is disappointing these have not yet been implemented more widely. According to a report on complaints and feedback mechanisms published by CHS Alliance, "while the positive elements of inter-agency [community-based complaint mechanisms] have been well acknowledged over the years, they are still not common practice".⁴⁵

25. We note that the new OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) recommendation on ending sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment presses for international coordination on SEA and sexual harassment, recommending closer

39 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, "[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)", HC840.

40 United Nations, "[Fact sheet on the Secretary General's Initiatives to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse](#)", September 2019, Accessed on 7 October 2019.

41 ICAI, "[UK approach to funding the humanitarian system](#)", December 2018

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, "[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)", HC840.

45 Manisha Thomas, "[CHS Alliance Support to Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms: Unpacking the Complexity to Address the Challenges](#)", June 2019

cooperation and collaboration between DAC members, implementing partners, experts and the UN, with “particular efforts... to align standards for survivors’ and victims’ support, investigation management, and reporting by implementing partners”.⁴⁶

26. The gap between safeguarding policy and practice extends to the United Nations. The UK Government, now recognised as actively engaged on sexual exploitation and abuse at the UN, is well placed to press UN agencies towards implementation of best practice. *In particular, the UK should use its position of influence as a donor to ensure that inter-agency community-based complaint mechanisms are widely and effectively established. This may involve actively funding such mechanisms to ensure that they are functioning in locations where multiple agencies are operating.*

46 [OECD Development Cooperation Directorate/Development Assistance Committee, “DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response”, July 2019](#)

4 Strengthening responses through collective action

27. At the International Safeguarding Summit in October 2018, a representative from IMC Worldwide and a representative from Oxford Policy Management (OPM) jointly presented a set of commitments on behalf of UK private sector organisations. These were subsequently published online by DFID alongside the commitment documents from donors, NGOs, the UN, IFIs, and others.⁴⁷ We were surprised to learn some months later that DFID had agreed with private sector suppliers in advance of the October Summit that “private suppliers would not be called to sign-up to the commitment document”.⁴⁸ We were told that there were several bases on which this agreement was made:

- The private sector already has a mechanism for reform across various topic areas including safeguarding, through DFID’s Code of Conduct;
- The private sector does not have an industry body with a membership charter, so it would be challenging for IMC and OPM to develop a document that all suppliers would adhere to;
- Time constraints presented a further challenge as the Summit was only two months away.⁴⁹

28. When we pressed DFID on the value of having a commitment document that no one was obliged to sign up to, Peter Taylor, Head of DFID’s Safeguarding Unit, stressed that private suppliers are already accountable on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) because they are contractually bound by the supply partner code of conduct.⁵⁰ However, we also heard from private suppliers themselves that a purely compliance-based approach is insufficient for driving forward improvements on SEA.⁵¹ Kathryn Hancock, representing IMC Worldwide, and one of the authors of the private supplier commitment document, told us that her involvement in the Safeguarding Summit helped her to “take a compliance document and make that into more of a meaningful thing for my colleagues”.⁵² We were therefore pleased to see that DFID later updated the private supplier commitment document, adding a section where organisations can formally put their name to the commitments.⁵³

29. We were disappointed to learn, in advance of our follow-up evidence session on SEA on 7 May 2019, that private suppliers had not met collectively to discuss progress on safeguarding until six months after the Summit. This meeting, on 1 May 2019, marked the first meeting of the newly established private suppliers Safeguarding Leads Network.⁵⁴ We were told in oral evidence that one obstacle to collective action on safeguarding amongst private suppliers had been the lack of a sector organising body—an equivalent of Bond

47 UK Private Sector Organisations, [Commitments to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the international aid sector](#), 18 October 2018, Updated 3 July 2019.

48 Private sector representatives on the Cross-Sector Safeguarding Steering Group ([SAS0001](#))

49 Private sector representatives on the Cross-Sector Safeguarding Steering Group ([SAS0001](#))

50 [Q36](#)

51 E.g. Crown Agents ([SAS0007](#))

52 [Q94](#)

53 UK Private Sector Organisations, [Commitments to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the international aid sector](#), 18 October 2018, Updated 3 July 2019.

54 Private sector representatives on the Cross-Sector Safeguarding Steering Group ([SAS0001](#))

for private sector development organisations.⁵⁵ Tracy Smith, CEO of British Expertise International, suggested it would be helpful if an industry body was created to fulfil this role for private suppliers.⁵⁶ Our dissatisfaction with the evidence from the private sector on 7 May led us to invite a cross-section of DFID private suppliers to give evidence at a subsequent session on 2 July.

30. We heard that it is important not to draw a false distinction between for-profit and not-for-profit organisations. The former Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Rory Stewart OBE MP, said in evidence on 7 May:

This division between the private sector and NGOs, in relation to international development, is misleading... if we are saying, “This is a DfID project, funded by our taxpayers in somebody else’s country, with a flag on it”, it does not really matter whether the person doing it is KPMG or Oxfam.⁵⁷

At our evidence session on 2 July, Jo Elms, Managing Director of Options echoed this sentiment, arguing that sharing information on safeguarding, “goes way beyond the private sector; it is actually about how international development organisations can share knowledge with each other”.⁵⁸ This was reinforced by Fergus Drake, Chief Executive of Crown Agents, who said, “we have to ensure that there is not a false demarcation between the charity sector and the for-profit sector”.⁵⁹ Sinead Magill, Managing Partner of Palladium Group, emphasised the need for different development actors,—“the NGOs, the finance institutions, DFID itself and ourselves”—to work together to identify community-based complaints mechanisms to enable victims and survivors to report sexual exploitation and abuse.⁶⁰ When our Chair highlighted the UN’s efforts to coordinate joint-agency complaints mechanisms, Ms Magill responded, “we would really welcome the chance to be part of those”.⁶¹ In the 7 May evidence session, Frances Longley, representing the four NGO safeguarding working groups coordinated by Bond, suggested that DFID could be taking “a more advanced role in convening” the range of actors operating within international development.⁶²

31. Whilst we were initially disappointed at the slow pace of collective action on safeguarding by DFID’s private suppliers, this seems more due to a lack of coordination than an absence of will. DFID must recognise the important role it can play as a convener, ensuring that all aid organisations, both for-profit and not-for-profit, have the opportunity to share best practice and learning on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Six months should not have passed after the International Safeguarding Summit before DFID began to facilitate these meetings.

32. Going forward, DFID should ensure that both the private suppliers and the NGOs it is funding are aware of and participating in cross-sectoral safeguarding forums. This will help to break down silos and facilitate coordination and information sharing so organisations can work together to drive up standards collectively on safeguarding

55 Tracey Smith Qq29–30; Peter Taylor Q39

56 Q30

57 Q42

58 Q117

59 Q118

60 Q118

61 Q124

62 Q1

across the sector. In particular, DFID should ensure all partners are aware of and connected to inter-agency PSEA networks and inter-agency complaints mechanisms in the countries in which they are implementing DFID programmes.

5 Moving beyond self-regulation

33. Our July 2018 report concluded that, in the international aid sector, as in so many others—including parliament—self-regulation has failed.⁶³ The weaknesses of self-regulation mechanisms within the aid sector are perhaps illustrated by the fact that in 2018, Oxfam was audited and certified by the aid sector’s self-regulation process, run by the Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative (HQAI).⁶⁴ Then in June 2019, the final report of the Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change (IC) revealed that Oxfam operations had suffered from “a lack of robust, confederation-wide safeguarding and related policies and procedures” including “ineffective reporting mechanisms, safeguarding process failures, and accountability gaps”.⁶⁵ Oxfam International later confirmed that research conducted for the Independent Commission had “raised potential safeguarding issues of direct concern to Oxfam.”⁶⁶ We draw attention to this, not to highlight these weaknesses in Oxfam specifically, but to underline the fact that the aid sector’s existing self-regulation mechanisms seems to be fallible and insufficient for ensuring that safeguarding standards are being upheld.

34. Self-regulation is also undertaken voluntarily, and so the reach of the current audit mechanisms is limited to those who submit themselves to review. In an evidence session on 2 July with representatives from private sector suppliers, Jo Elms, Managing Director of Options Consulting Services told the Committee that he thought an external assessment of safeguarding systems was a good idea, having completed a Keeping Children Safe audit report.⁶⁷ However, the other suppliers represented in the evidence session did not seem to have undergone similar external assessment of their systems, suggesting that the reach of such regulatory mechanisms is patchy at best.

35. Our report in July 2018 recommended the establishment of an international aid ombudsman to act as an effective independent mechanism for responding to breaches of safeguarding standards. When organisations fail to hold abusers to account, an independent aid ombudsman could provide the victims and survivors with their only recourse to justice.⁶⁸ It was deeply disappointing, therefore, to hear from the former Secretary of State that “there does not seem to be support [for an international aid ombudsman] among donors or other institutions who would need to endorse it”.⁶⁹ The former Secretary of State expressed his own concerns to us during oral evidence on 7 May, sharing his worry that it would “become an onerous and perhaps potentially slightly toothless type of ombudsman”.⁷⁰ Whilst we appreciate that donors and international actors will be reluctant to establish an unwieldy, bureaucratic mechanism, we also note that the model that was proposed by the ombudsman scoping study, commissioned by the Dutch Government in 2018, was a lightweight model of ombudsman, which would derive

63 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)”, HC840.

64 HQAI, “[Oxfam International CHS Initial Verification Audit Report](#)”, June 2018

65 Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change, “[Committing to Change, Protecting People: Toward a more accountable Oxfam](#)”, (June 2019)

66 Oxfam International, “[Update to Oxfam statement on the Independent Commission report](#)”, 28 June 2019

67 [Q81](#)

68 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)”, HC840.

69 Department for International Development Annex C ([SAS0009](#))

70 [Q65](#)

its authority from donor funding. Under this model, DFID's funding to organisations and agencies could be withdrawn or restricted if the ombudsman finds that they repeatedly fail to meet safeguarding standards, and this is action that DFID could take unilaterally.⁷¹

36. Voluntary self-regulation of safeguarding standards allows failures on sexual exploitation and abuse to slip through the cracks. In our view the case for an independent ombudsman remains strong. Without one, there is a risk that victims and survivors and their advocates will have no avenue through which they can appeal if the established reporting channels fail them and we see this as a huge, ongoing accountability gap. The ability to appeal to an independent body is a fundamental part of any fair system of justice and, to date, there appears little recognition of this within the sector. We welcome the development of the ombudsman proposal by the Dutch Government and we urge the UK Government, together with Dutch Government counterparts, to display international leadership in making the ombudsman a reality.

71 Dorothea Hilhost, Asmita Naik, Andrew Cunningham, "[International Ombuds for Humanitarian and Development Aid Scoping Study](#)", September 2018

6 Promoting transparency

37. In our inquiry into sexual exploitation and abuse in 2018, we identified a “widespread reluctance amongst aid organisations to become more transparent about where there have been failings”, with organisations hesitant to lead the way on becoming more transparent about allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), for fear of becoming a target of criticism. Our report stressed that transparency on SEA is vital both for rebuilding trust in the sector and for enabling the sharing of best practice. We concluded that “the sector needs to move together on becoming more open about SEA, so that the organisations which are transparent are not singled out for criticism”.⁷² In line with an agreement made by participants at the March 2018 Safeguarding Summit to make annual reports “more transparent, with specific information published on safeguarding including the number of cases”,⁷³ we recommended that aid organisations “report the full number of SEA allegations each year, as well as the number of allegations upheld”.⁷⁴

38. Whilst we recognise that some organisations have taken this forward in their annual reports, this is still not the case across the board. When the then Secretary of State for International Development, Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP, addressed the Bond annual conference in March 2019, she referenced 91 incidents of staff being fired in 2018 in relation to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment cases.⁷⁵ However, there is no publicly available information on which organisations were involved. We are concerned that reluctance by DFID to be fully transparent over which organisations have reported SEA cases to them reinforces the reluctance of aid organisations to publish this information themselves. We note that when Oxfam International published its latest safeguarding data in May 2019, it included the number of reports received across the confederation, the number that remain under investigation, the number that are now closed, and the outcome of the closed cases.⁷⁶ This provides an example of what kind of information other organisations could also make public.

39. We emphasised in our July 2018 report that an increase in the number of reports of SEA, at least initially, will indicate an improvement in the effectiveness of reporting and complaints mechanisms.⁷⁷ In correspondence earlier this year with the CEO of Bond, Stephanie Draper, we suggested that Bond might consider measuring the numbers of SEA reports received by its member organisations as an indicator of whether efforts to improve complaints mechanisms are working.⁷⁸ Ms Draper responded that “we do expect Bond members to follow due process and to report incidents to the relevant authorities or regulators” but there is “no obligation on our members to share such information with Bond”.⁷⁹ We felt that this response perhaps underplays the role that Bond, empowered

72 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)”, HC840.

73 Department for International Development, “[Actions to tackle exploitation and abuse agreed with UK charities](#)”, 5 March 2018

74 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)”, HC840.

75 GOV.UK, [Penny Mordaunt Speech to the Bond Conference 2019](#), 18 March 2018

76 Oxfam International, “[Oxfam publishes latest progress report and global safeguarding data](#)”, May 2019, Accessed on 8 October 2019

77 International Development Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2017–2019, “[Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#)”, HC840.

78 [Letter from IDC Chair to the Chief Executive of Bond, concerning follow-up to IDC evidence session on sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector](#), 13 June 2019

79 Bond Annex A ([SAS0008](#))

by its members, could play in requiring members to include this information in annual reports, and in analysing trends in reporting on the basis of this information. We note that Bond’s guidance to trustees of NGOs does recommend that organisations make public their “approach, practices and experience” of safeguarding on an annual basis, including “a summary of the safeguarding cases handled in the year”.⁸⁰

40. At the height of the safeguarding scandal in 2018, aid organisations appeared to recognise that transparency on sexual exploitation and abuse is a necessary component of a full response and essential in breaking down the culture of silence and stigma that has so long inhibited victims from coming forward. Progress on this across the sector has been limited, with some organisations seemingly more willing than others to publish information about the number of allegations they have received and the outcome. Whilst there is consensus that organisations should be reporting this information to donors and the Charity Commission, we have not seen similar commitment to making data public. *As a membership organisation of UK NGOs, Bond is well placed to promote transparency by setting an expectation that Bond members will publish annually information about the numbers of SEA allegations received and the outcome, and by monitoring which of its members do so. DFID should similarly set this expectation for private sector suppliers, non-UK NGOs and multilateral agencies, who do not have a membership body to play this role, but who should be equally pressed to improve transparency on sexual exploitation and abuse.*

80 Bond, [“Good governance for safeguarding: a guide for UK NGO boards”](#), May 2019

Conclusions and recommendations

From paper to practice

1. Whilst culture change is an important part of solutions to SEA, it is not the same as having access to practical resources for receiving and responding to complaints, such as safeguarding staff, focal points and investigators. We note that DFID's Resource and Support Hub does have the potential to provide this practical support: *As part of its reply to this report, we ask that DFID set out clearly how exactly the Hub will be "offering support with investigations", distinguishing between describing and signposting, on the one hand, and actual access to, and provision of, services, on the other.* (Paragraph 9)
2. *We ask DFID to provide, as part of its reply to this report, a description of the planned steps—and associated resources—which will embed, promulgate and enable aid recipients to enjoy the rights contained in such a statement once developed.* (Paragraph 10)
3. *As part of its reply to this report, we would be assisted by DFID setting out how many requests, and for how much additional funding, the Department has received and granted in relation to safeguarding since 2018* (Paragraph 12)
4. At the International Safeguarding Summit in October 2018, we were pleased to see the emphasis that DFID placed on supporting the victims and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and on strengthening reporting. The measures that DFID and Bond have presented to us which are aimed at providing better complaints mechanisms and improving responses to victims and survivors have the potential to be the first steps towards making this a reality. However, these measures place significant weight on developing the theory and substantially less on ensuring changes in practice. The final report of the Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change provided a stark reminder of how little has really changed for those who are exploited and abused by aid workers. DFID and the wider aid sector now need to place greater emphasis on ensuring that the changes to policy at organisational level are felt in practice by those living in humanitarian and development contexts who have experienced, or who are at risk of experiencing, sexual exploitation and abuse. DFID's provision of resources through budget lines is a positive step, but the Department's messaging on this needs to be clearer. (Paragraph 13)
5. *DFID should commit unequivocally to ensuring that any programme it funds where there are safeguarding risks has sufficient resources for safeguarding built into the programme. This should include, where required, provision for safeguarding staff and focal points operating at the programme level.* (Paragraph 14)
6. *As well as providing the resource, DFID should hold organisations accountable for how this funding is used. For example, DFID has supported Bond to develop a complaints and reporting toolkit and has committed up to £10 million towards the establishment of a Resource and Support Hub. The Department should now set out how they will*

monitor the implementation of the best practice guidance that is set out in the toolkit and which will be available through the Hub, to ensure that it has practical impact. (Paragraph 15)

Empowering and protecting whistle-blowers

7. Protection for whistle-blowers should form part of all frameworks for reporting sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of both beneficiaries and staff. We have not yet seen sufficient attention being given to monitoring and improving the effectiveness of whistle-blowing policies and we are concerned that the importance of protecting whistle-blowers has so far been downplayed. The systematic audit of whistle-blowing practices that was agreed upon at the March 2018 Safeguarding Summit has seemingly been shelved. Both DFID and Bond have seemed reluctant to take responsibility for driving up standards on whistle-blower protection. (Paragraph 20)
8. We are not convinced that the VAWG helpdesk research on whistle-blowing is a substitute for a systematic audit of whistle-blowing practices across the sector, particularly as we have not seen any evidence that this research has had a tangible impact on organisations' approaches. *If DFID's assessment of whistle-blowing policies through its enhanced due diligence and central assurance assessments is having a positive impact and raising standards, then DFID should make its findings and recommendations publicly available, so that other organisations can benefit from this learning. If DFID is not willing to publish the findings of these of these assessments as a learning tool, then it should work with Bond to conduct and publish a systematic audit of whistle-blowing practices across the sector, as was previously agreed in March 2018. As we said in our first report, it is vital that this audit takes into account not just the existence of whistleblowing policies, but also their effectiveness in practice.* (Paragraph 21)

Pressing for progress at the UN

9. The gap between safeguarding policy and practice extends to the United Nations. The UK Government, now recognised as actively engaged on sexual exploitation and abuse at the UN, is well placed to press UN agencies towards implementation of best practice. *In particular, the UK should use its position of influence as a donor to ensure that inter-agency community-based complaint mechanisms are widely and effectively established. This may involve actively funding such mechanisms to ensure that they are functioning in locations where multiple agencies are operating.* (Paragraph 26)

Strengthening responses through collective action

10. Whilst we were initially disappointed at the slow pace of collective action on safeguarding by DFID's private suppliers, this seems more due to a lack of coordination than an absence of will. DFID must recognise the important role it can play as a convenor, ensuring that all aid organisations, both for-profit and not-for-profit, have the opportunity to share best practice and learning on preventing

sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Six months should not have passed after the International Safeguarding Summit before DFID began to facilitate these meetings. (Paragraph 31)

11. *Going forward, DFID should ensure that both the private suppliers and the NGOs it is funding are aware of and participating in cross-sectoral safeguarding forums. This will help to break down silos and facilitate coordination and information sharing so organisations can work together to drive up standards collectively on safeguarding across the sector. In particular, DFID should ensure all partners are aware of and connected to inter-agency PSEA networks and inter-agency complaints mechanisms in the countries in which they are implementing DFID programmes.* (Paragraph 32)

Moving beyond self-regulation

12. Voluntary self-regulation of safeguarding standards allows failures on sexual exploitation and abuse to slip through the cracks. In our view the case for an independent ombudsman remains strong. Without one, there is a risk that victims and survivors and their advocates will have no avenue through which they can appeal if the established reporting channels fail them and we see this as a huge, ongoing accountability gap. The ability to appeal to an independent body is a fundamental part of any fair system of justice and, to date, there appears little recognition of this within the sector. *We welcome the development of the ombudsman proposal by the Dutch Government and we urge the UK Government, together with Dutch Government counterparts, to display international leadership in making the ombudsman a reality.*(Paragraph 36)

Promoting transparency

13. At the height of the safeguarding scandal in 2018, aid organisations appeared to recognise that transparency on sexual exploitation and abuse is a necessary component of a full response and essential in breaking down the culture of silence and stigma that has so long inhibited victims from coming forward. Progress on this across the sector has been limited, with some organisations seemingly more willing than others to publish information about the number of allegations they have received and the outcome. Whilst there is consensus that organisations should be reporting this information to donors and the Charity Commission, we have not seen similar commitment to making data public. *As a membership organisation of UK NGOs, Bond is well placed to promote transparency by setting an expectation that Bond members will publish annually information about the numbers of SEA allegations received and the outcome, and by monitoring which of its members do so. DFID should similarly set this expectation for private sector suppliers, non-UK NGOs and multilateral agencies, who do not have a membership body to play this role, but who should be equally pressed to improve transparency on sexual exploitation and abuse.* (Paragraph 40)

Formal minutes

Wednesday 16 October 2019

Members present:

Stephen Twigg, in the Chair

Richard Burden

Paul Scully

Henry Smith

Mrs Pauline Latham OBE

Mr Virendra Sharma

Draft Report (*Follow-up: Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 40 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

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

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

[Adjourned till Wednesday 23 October at 9.40 a.m.]

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 7 May 2019

Frances Longley, Chief Executive Officer, Amref Health Africa UK, Representative from the Bond NGO working groups, and **Tracey Smith**, Chief Executive Officer, British Expertise International, Representative for private sector suppliers; **Rory Stewart OBE MP**, Secretary of State for International Development, and **Peter Taylor**, Head of the Safeguarding Unit, Department for International Development

[Q1–69](#)

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Kathryn Hancock, Principal Consultant, IMC Worldwide, **Sinead Magill**, Managing Partner, The Palladium Group, **Fergus Drake**, Chief Executive, Crown Agents, **Jo Elms**, Managing Director, Options Consulting

[Q70–126](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

SAS numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Bond ([SAS0003](#))
- 2 BOND Annex A ([SAS0008](#))
- 3 Crown Agents ([SAS0007](#))
- 4 Department for International Development ([SAS0002](#))
- 5 Department for International Development Annex A ([SAS0004](#))
- 6 Department for International Development Annex B ([SAS0005](#))
- 7 Department for International Development Annex C ([SAS0009](#))
- 8 Palladium Group ([SAS0006](#))
- 9 Private sector representatives on the Cross-Sector Safeguarding Steering Group ([SAS0001](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2017–19

First Report	DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind?	HC 367 (HC 914)
Second Report	Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis	HC 504 (HC 919)
Third Report	Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis - monsoon preparedness in Cox's Bazar	HC 904 (HC 1055)
Fourth Report	Bangladesh, Burma and the Rohingya crisis	HC 1054 (HC 1467)
Fifth Report	Definition and administration of ODA	HC 547 (HC 1556)
Sixth Report	DFID's Economic Development Strategy	HC 941 (HC 1599)
Seventh Report	UK's arms exports during 2016	HC 666 (HC 1789)
Eighth Report	Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector	HC 840 (HC 1764)
Ninth Report	Appointment of the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact	HC 1493
Tenth Report	Forced Displacement in Africa: "Anchors not walls"	HC 1433 (HC 2357)
Eleventh Report	UK aid for combating climate change	HC 1432 (HC 2589)
Twelfth Report	UK progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Voluntary National Review	HC 1732 (HC 2651)
Thirteenth Report	DFID's work on disability—inclusive development	HC 1880 (HC 2680)
Fourteenth Report	Tackling violence against workers	HC 2008 (HC 2691)
First Special Report	DFID's use of private sector contractors: Government Response	HC 322
Second Special Report	UK aid: allocation of resources: Government Response	HC 323
Third Special Report	DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind?: Government response	HC 914

Fourth Special Report	Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis: Government response	HC 919
Fifth Special Report	Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis - monsoon preparedness in Cox's Bazar: Government response	HC 1055
Sixth Special Report	Bangladesh, Burma and the Rohingya Crisis: Government response	HC 1467
Seventh Special Report	Definition and administration of ODA: Government response	HC 1556
Eighth Special Report	DFID's Economic Development Strategy: Government response to the Committee's Sixth Report	HC 1599
Ninth Special Report	UK arms exports during 2016: Government Response to the Committees' First Joint Report	HC 1789
Tenth Special Report	Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector: Government response to the Committee's Eighth Report	HC 1764
Eleventh Special Report	Forced displacement in Africa: 'Anchors not Walls': Government response to the Committee's Tenth Report	HC 2357
Twelfth Special Report	UK aid for combating climate change: Government Response to the Committee's Eleventh Report	HC 2589
Thirteenth Special Report	UK's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Voluntary National Review: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report	HC 2651
Fourteenth Special Report	DFID's work on disability-inclusive development: Government Response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report	HC 2680
Fifteenth Special Report	Tackling violence against aid workers: Government Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report	HC 2691