

## **House of Commons**

### **International Development Select Committee UK aid: other government departments**

#### **Written evidence from the British Council**

**14 February 2017**

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## 1. SUMMARY

1.1 The British Council manages ODA through its core grant-in-aid (via the Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and through contracts and partnerships with government. In 2016/17 £119m out of a total grant of £158m is delivering ODA. By 2019/20 all our grant – £167m – will be delivering ODA. We have an excellent track record with regards to ODA funded programmes, bringing benefits to the ODA countries in which we work as well as the UK.

1.2 The British Council focuses its ODA spending on those countries on the OECD DAC list and in line with the OECD Aid principles. We further prioritise our work in line with UK government and devolved administration strategies.

1.3 In addition to running ODA funded programmes from our core grant-in-aid, the British Council successfully delivers programmes with and for DFID. The British Council also manages the £30 million Cultural Protection Fund on behalf of DCMS and delivers the £735m Newton fund on behalf of BEIS.

1.4 In a financial environment where non-ODA funding is increasingly scarce, ODA funding is extremely important not only in supporting programmes in fragile and developing countries but also in our work in the emerging economies, including India, China, South Africa, Mexico, Nigeria, Brazil. This ensures that we are able to meet the outcomes of the UK Aid Strategy, whilst also delivering enhanced cultural and educational relationships and impact for the UK in the places of greatest strategic importance for the UK's long term foreign policy interests.

1.5 The British Council is also bidding to the new £700m Empowerment Fund, established by the 2015 Spending Review, to work with partners to increase our impact in:

- tackling extremism and promoting good governance in the Middle East and North Africa and other NSC priority countries;
- building stronger relationships with countries neighbouring Russia; and
- enhancing UK influence and partnerships with major emerging economies including India and China
- responding to the Syrian refugee crisis

## **2. THE BRITISH COUNCIL**

2.1 The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries.

2.2 We make a lasting difference to the security of the UK by fostering engagement and debate across cultures in strategically important countries. We contribute to the UK's prosperity by building trust to create favourable conditions for trade, investment and tourism. Our work also supports the UK's international influence by increasing connections and networks with decision makers globally, including the number of people who know and trust the UK.

2.3 Through our work in arts and culture, education, English language, sport, science and civil society we make a positive contribution to the people, institutions and governments of the countries we work with. This changes lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. In turn these relationships enrich UK culture and society.

2.4 We work with over 100 countries worldwide. These include all of the places of high priority for the UK, from China, India, Brazil and Russia, to North America and the European Union and Commonwealth countries, to the Middle East and North Africa. We are at the forefront of the UK's international networks and soft power.

2.5 Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online, via broadcasts and publications.

## **3. BRITISH COUNCIL AND OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA)**

3.1 The British Council's contribution to UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) is long-standing and has been formally recognised since the 1970s. The British Council manages ODA through its core grant-in-aid (via the Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and through contracts and partnerships with government – including with DFID, DCMS and BEIS.

3.2 Increasingly the core grant-in-aid is focused on ODA. In 2016/17 £119m out of a total grant of £158m is delivering ODA. By 2019/20 all our grant – £167m – will be delivering ODA. It is a critical source of funding for the British Council to deliver its cultural relations programmes, which result in developmental benefits in ODA countries and also support the UK's long term prosperity, security and influence globally.

3.3 The British Council has always worked according to the principle of mutuality so that our ODA interventions benefit ODA countries (primary benefit) and the UK (secondary benefit). We have an excellent track record with regards to ODA funded programmes, across the full portfolio of sectors in which we work. We make a positive contribution to the people, institutions and governments we work with – creating opportunities, building connections and trust. In addition, we make a lasting difference to the security, prosperity and influence of the UK and contribute to the stability, development and connections of the places we work.

### 3.5 Prosperity and Development

3.5.1 The British Council is a key partner in the **UK-India Education and Research Initiative** (UKIERI) that aims to enhance educational links between India and the UK. UKIERI has helped to create 1,000 UK-India partnerships in education and research that have the potential to deliver substantial, long term prosperity benefits for both countries. It has enabled 25,000 exchanges of academics, researchers, staff and students creating lifelong links between the UK and India. It has also benefitted 35 million young people who have been reached via train the trainer programmes.

3.5.2 Our cultural festivals and seasons strengthen the creative and artistic sectors in host ODA countries and increase the UK's profile with key influencers and leaders, supporting lasting creative connections, with a number of priority countries. For example, our **Brazil Transform programme** changed the cultural relationship between Brazil and the UK in the four years between the 2012 Olympic Games in London and Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Brazil Transform delivered 114 projects across Brazil; engaged 20,000 people in training; reached an audience of 1.5 million through events and 131 million through media; and worked with 2,300 cultural professionals in UK and Brazil. We have recently held similar successful seasons in Mexico, South Africa and Nigeria.

3.5.3 We are one of the 15 UK delivery partners for the **Newton Fund**. This initiative builds research and innovation partnerships with 16 partner countries to support their economic development and social welfare, and to develop their research and innovation capacity for long-term sustainable growth. It has a total UK Government investment of £735 million up until 2021, with matched resources from the partner countries. The Newton Fund is managed by the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), and delivered through 15 UK delivery partners, which include the Research Councils, the UK Academies, the British Council, Innovate UK and the Met Office.

3.5.4 The **Bihar Language Initiative for Secondary Schools (BLISS)** ran from 2012-2015 and was funded by DFID and the British Council and aimed to address the needs of the teacher educators, teachers, learners and the wider community in Bihar by providing access to high quality teaching and learning materials as well as increased awareness of the value of English for employability. A 2016 DFID commissioned external evaluation of their technical assistance education portfolio conducted in India reviewed BLISS and concluded that it had a first-rate monitoring and evaluation strategy. The report stated that "given the increasing importance accorded to learning achievement and the dearth of studies which unpack pedagogic processes, the BLISS approach is a potentially important exemplar for DFID's future education strategy".

3.5.5 The British Council has worked with over 2,200 teacher educators in 24 teacher training colleges in Burma to raise English proficiency and improve teaching methodology, through the **English for Education College Trainers (EfECT)** project, funded by DFID and the British Council. An external evaluation completed this year confirmed that it had met all of its targets to date. Of the teachers who were trained during the project's first year, 93 per cent improved their English proficiency, as measured by the British Council's Aptis test, and participants overwhelmingly rated their confidence in English as improved.

### **3.6 Security and Stability**

3.6.1 The British Council's **Young Arab Voices** programme launched in October 2011 in response to the needs of young people in the wake of the uprisings in the MENA region. The programme leads youth-led debate and dialogue in CSOs, universities and schools to develop critical cognitive skills, challenging established and dangerous beliefs and gaining skills for self-directed and social action. Across MENA 90,000 people have participated in YAV so far; in Tunisia alone 720 debate clubs have been formed. A 2014 evaluation reported "Young Arab Voices is the only source of support in many cities across the region for debate training and debate activities. It is because of this support that debate opportunities exist at all".

3.6.2 Through our award winning **Pyoe Pin** project in Burma, funded by DFID and the Swedish International Development Agency, we support local organisations and individuals to act co-operatively in addressing the needs of the country's people. The project's first phase engaged over 8,000 individuals and 1,000 organisations, and over 185,000 individuals have directly benefited from the project.

3.6.3 Through **Justice for All (J4A)**, a DFID-funded programme, we are supporting people working to develop the justice and security sectors in Nigeria. This has led to the successful introduction of community-based policing through the establishment of over 70 modern police stations and the setting up of five centres for victims of sexual assault. We are also supporting policymakers to instigate justice sector reform across 21 of Nigeria's 36 states.

3.6.4 Our **Culture and Development** agenda draws on the strengths of UK Arts and Creativity sector and uniquely combines it with work in education, society and language. An external recently commissioned evaluation report summarised that the "programme has enabled human rights to be realised, including the promotion of diversity and freedom of expression, in a number of important ways. The programme supported projects which challenged accepted cultural norms, promoted and enabled freedom of expression and self-determination and encouraged participation from women, girls and other groups often under-represented in cultural and community activities."

3.6.5 We are working to mitigate some of the effects of refugee displacement by providing Syrian refugee children with better access to education in more inclusive, nurturing learning environments. Through our **Language for Resilience** learning and teaching programmes in Jordan, the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey we have worked with over 120,000 Syrians and members of host communities since the start of the crisis. Evaluation reports indicate a clear change in perceptions of diversity from both teachers and students, with students fostering a greater sense of belonging and self-esteem through the strengthening of pluralistic identity in the classroom.

### **3.7 Influence and Attraction**

3.7.1 The second phase of our international schools programme, **Connecting Classrooms 2: building global awareness and cross-cultural learning among young people**, co-funded with DFID, ended in 2015. Rated A+ (exceeding expectations) in DFID's annual review process, the programme reached over 18,000 schools. Of those, over 70 per cent reported improvements in the teaching skills of their staff and 75 per cent reported enhanced

global citizenship content in the curriculum and the development of a more global ethos across the school.

#### 4. FOCUS IN ODA SPENDING

4.1 The British Council focuses its ODA spending on those countries on the OECD DAC list and in line with the OECD Aid principles. We further prioritise our work in line with UK government and devolved administration strategies, including:

- 2015 Aid Strategy – strengthening global peace, security and governance; strengthening resilience and response to crises; and, promoting global prosperity. This broader focus enables the design of innovative programmes which support both primary developmental outcomes in ODA countries and secondary outcomes for the UK.
- 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review – a secure and prosperous UK, with global reach and influence.
- International Education: Global Growth and Education strategy – ensuring the UK remains a global leader in international and transnational education and collaboration in science and innovation.
- UK government’s ambition for a global Britain – protecting the UK’s cultural and educational ties and aiming to grow connections with countries around the world.
- 2016 Culture White Paper – using the power of culture to increase our international standing such as being a global leader in international cultural heritage.
- 2015 Counter Extremism strategy – countering extremist ideology and build more cohesive communities.

4.2 In a financial environment where non-ODA funding is increasingly scarce, ODA funding is extremely important not only in fragile and developing countries but in the richer emerging economies, including India, China, South Africa, Mexico, Nigeria, Brazil. These are not only important countries for the UK, but emerging economies are home to five of the world’s seven billion people and 73% of the world’s poor<sup>1</sup>. In spite of high economic growth rates, they are characterised by inequality, above-average socio-political instability, higher unemployment and greater dependence on the informal economy for jobs. ODA funding ensures UK partners and the British Council can continue to deliver strong developmental impact in these countries and also deliver wider benefits for the UK in support of prosperity, security and influence. This is important, as these are countries that have the potential to be major future trading partners for the UK and places where the UK will need strong future relationships as their influence grows. Without this funding the British Council’s work in emerging economies would be severely diminished and we would only be able to work in places where we were able to operate viable commercial projects, severely reducing our impact for the UK.

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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank, *Middle Income Countries Overview*. Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mic/overview>

## **5. ROLE OF DFID IN SUPPORTING OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**

5.1 The British Council and DFID have a positive client-contractor relationship. Since 2015, the British Council has been included on DFID's list of key suppliers. For example, under Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform (SPHEIR), the British Council leads a consortium to support higher education transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

5.2 The British Council and DFID partner to co-create programmes. For example, Connecting Classrooms is a major programme co-funded by the British Council and DFID. So far, the programme has trained 45,000 teachers in 42 countries and will reach over 5 million of pupils around the world over the next three years.

5.3 The British Council and DCMS partner to co-create and launch the £30 million Cultural Protection Fund, which the British Council manages on behalf of HMG. This is creating sustainable opportunities for economic and social development through building capacity to foster, safeguard and promote cultural heritage in conflict-affected countries over the next four years.

5.4 The Newton Fund is managed by BEIS, and the British Council works with the Universities UK International and national co-funders to run the programme in a number of areas. DFID was involved during the genesis of the fund in 2014 to help guide and shape it, and continues to be involved in the monitoring of the impact of the fund and supporting its ongoing development, but the overall leadership of the fund rests with BEIS. At the outset of the scheme, BEIS did a good job in enabling the various UK delivery partners, each of which have deep understanding and knowledge of the UK and international science and innovation context, to feed in to the shaping and development of the initiative, ensuring that proposed interventions were practical and achievable.

5.5 There is further scope for mutually beneficial strategic coordination in key sectors and countries. For example, the British Council and DFID are exploring the possibility of co-hosting outreach events for research communities and educational technology suppliers in the Global South to ensure that learning and opportunities reach key stakeholders in country.

5.6 We would like to work with DFID and OGDs to support the messaging of how ODA is used by other government departments in countries that are beyond DFID geographical priorities.

5.7 We have quality standards for ODA programmes in the British Council based on ICAI's and IATI standards and are using similar evaluation methodologies as DFID.

5.8 We would like to continue working with DFID and OGDs to strengthen the evaluation and evidence base across the delivery of ODA in order to share good practice, for example, cooperation on complex factors that help address the drivers of insecurity and extremism.

5.9 The 90% target of spend of ODA between March to December is difficult to achieve and has the potential to lead to reduced impact. Outside of the need to continue to pay fixed cost from January to March, our experience is that often projects are delayed until the new calendar year when overseas government budgets are finalised. We also deliver significant

education related activities with schools and universities and the period between November and April is an important time for delivery – outside of the beginning of the academic year and prior to the examination period. It would be helpful if changes to this target could be made in the future.

## **6. AMBITION FOR THE FUTURE**

6.1 The British Council is supporting the UK's ambitions for a stronger role on the world stage, ensuring that leaders and influencers globally know, understand and experience the UK as an outward-looking and globally engaged nation. Our strategy, focused on the core UK priorities of security, prosperity and influence is included in Annex 1.

6.2 The British Council will shortly be bidding to the new £700m Empowerment Fund, established by the 2015 Spending Review, to work with partners to increase our impact in:

- tackling extremism and promoting good governance in the Middle East and North Africa and other NSC priority countries;
- building stronger relationships with countries neighbouring Russia; and
- enhancing UK influence and partnerships with major emerging economies including India and China
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## ANNEX 1 – BRITISH COUNCIL STRATEGY

