



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Baroness Sugg CBE

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Special Envoy for Girls' Education

King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH
Tel: 0207 008 5000

Email:

PSMinisterSuggAction@fcdo.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/fcdo

Mr D Banisar and Mr S Moody
Group Co-Chairs
Bond Members' Transparency Group
By email to: SJohns@bond.org.uk

Our ref:

MC2020/14271

Mr Banisar + Mr Moody

15 September 2020

Thank you for your email of 8 July to the Foreign Secretary regarding the importance of a continued commitment to transparency in the merger of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to create the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). I am replying on behalf of the Foreign Secretary.

DFID was globally recognised for its expertise and transparency in aid spending. The new department will continue to benefit from that expert knowledge as it delivers aid programmes to some of the world's poorest people. The UK is committed to improving transparency of aid globally and maintaining our high standards for overseas spending. Our partner, the Open Government Partnership (OGP), is supporting countries to integrate open government approaches into countries' response to COVID-19 and longer-term recovery. Through its Open Response and Open Recovery campaign, OGP is working with governments and civil society to ensure transparency and openness in COVID-19 stimulus and safety net packages to enable citizens, civil society, and businesses to track the route of funding in enabling the funds to achieve their intended purposes.

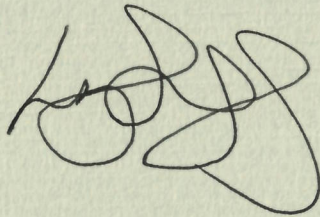
For example, in Malawi, we have been supporting a CSO Alliance who have contributed recently in coordination with the media to raise red flags and highlight procurement and distribution concerns linked to PPE in the last number of months. We will continue to work with governments and partners to include transparency in the COVID-19 response – recognising that corruption risks are elevated as governments commit significant emergency funds to respond to COVID-19.

In the 2020 Aid Transparency Index, DFID remained 'very good' and a top bilateral donor. The FCO improved its performance, moving into the 'fair' category for the first time and scored above average for the non-specialised ministries, such as foreign, defence and trade assessed. The new department will build on this, using its expertise and systems to meet HMG aid transparency commitments.

The FCDO will be accountable to Parliament for how it spends UK aid. The form that select committees take is a matter for Parliament to decide on. The FCDO will also continue to work within the framework set by the International Development (Reporting and Transparency) Act 2006.

Furthermore, the Foreign Secretary has announced that the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) will continue to provide scrutiny of UK aid. In the next few weeks, we will be launching a review across government to consider how ICAI can have an even greater impact on the effectiveness of ODA. The review will look at how ICAI can identify evidence of what works and challenge the big decisions on aid spending so that it can provide more robust, evidence-based recommendations and hold the government to account for delivering the best possible value for money effectively in support of the world's poorest. We will be looking for views from our stakeholders and will let you know how you can contribute in due course.

Finally, I can assure you that the FCDO will champion transparency in all its forms. Be that through the continued independent scrutiny of ICAI; publication of quality and accessible information on our aid programmes; our work with developing and implementing partners to strengthen their own systems; or our own commitment to transparency through the Open Government Partnership. The FCDO is committed to improving transparency of aid globally and maintaining our high standards for overseas spending and will continue to promote this across HMG.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sugg', written in a cursive style.

BARONESS SUGG