



House of Commons
International Development
Committee

**Fragility and
development in the
Democratic Republic
of Congo**

Fifth Report of Session 2016–17



House of Commons
International Development
Committee

Fragility and development in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Fifth Report of Session 2016–17

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

*Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed
20 February 2017*

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)

[Fiona Bruce MP](#) (*Conservative, Congleton*)

[Dr Lisa Cameron MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow*)

[Stephen Doughty MP](#) (*Labour (Co-op), Cardiff South and Penarth*)

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

[Pauline Latham OBE MP](#) (*Conservative, Mid Derbyshire*)

[Jeremy Lefroy MP](#) (*Conservative, Stafford*)

[Wendy Morton MP](#) (*Conservative, Aldridge-Brownhills*)

[Mr Ivan Lewis MP](#) (*Labour, Bury South*)

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

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

The following Members were also members of the Committee during the Parliament:

[Mrs Helen Grant](#) (*Conservative, Maidstone and The Weald*)

[Fabian Hamilton](#) (*Labour, Leeds North East*)

[Albert Owen MP](#) (*Labour, Ynys Môn*)

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.

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 Sarah Hartwell-Naguib (Clerk), Daniel Whitford (Second Clerk), Steven Ayres, Rachael Cox and Louise Whitley (Committee Specialists), Anthony Fenton (Inquiry Manager), Zac Mead (Senior Committee Assistant), Rowena Macdonald (Committee Assistant), Paul Hampson (Committee Support Assistant), and Estelle Currie (Media Officer).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the International Development Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 1223; the Committee's email address is indcom@parliament.uk.

Contents

Summary	3
1 Introduction	5
The development context	6
UK aid spending in DRC	7
Our inquiry	8
2 Politics and conflict	13
The political situation	13
Support to elections	13
Human rights in DRC	15
The resilience of DFID's programme in DRC	17
The conflict and humanitarian situation	18
Peacebuilding and peacekeeping	18
Humanitarian assistance	22
Infrastructure and roads	24
3 Basic services	26
Health and hygiene	26
Education	28
4 Women and girls	30
Empowerment of women and girls	30
Sexual and gender-based violence	31
Sexual violence against men and boys	34
5 Private sector development and corruption	35
Anti-corruption	35
Private sector and business environment reform	37
Élan RDC	37
Essor	39
CDC Group investments	39
6 Conclusion	41
Appendix: Programme from the Committee's visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo	42
Conclusions and recommendations	44

Formal Minutes	50
Witnesses	51
Published written evidence	52
List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament	53

Summary

On 31 December 2016 a deal was reached between the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and major opposition parties for elections to take place in 2017. This is a hugely important and welcome moment for DRC and its people. It is widely accepted that three decades of mismanagement, followed by two decades of severe conflict and instability, have left DRC as one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world. DRC suffers from poor governance and infrastructure, weak basic services, ongoing conflict and one of the longest-running humanitarian crises in the world. It is one of the Department for International Development's (DFID) highest priority countries, with a planned bilateral budget of £147 million for each of the next two financial years and an imputed UK share of multilateral net ODA of £124.75 million going to DRC in 2014.

Planned elections in DRC for 2016 have been delayed, with many observers accusing President Joseph Kabila of pursuing a strategy of 'glissement' (the French word for slippage), finding technical reasons to delay the elections, in order to stay in power. DFID has set aside £11.4 million for support to the electoral process, but has delayed disbursement due to the political climate and chances of timely elections worsening. ***We support its decision to delay its disbursement, but now that a deal has been reached which makes elections likely to occur this year, we recommend that DFID be ready to provide support rapidly. We encourage DFID to work with UNDP and the international community to ensure that elections can take place effectively.***

DFID's support to peacebuilding activities and humanitarian assistance in DRC is substantial. ***We urge DFID to continue bilateral programming on peacebuilding, in order to diversify its efforts and work with local communities to understand and address the local drivers of conflict. We also recommend that the UK advocates at the international level that MONUSCO, the peacekeeping force in DRC, be more proactive in protecting civilians and to ensure that it remains properly resourced, in the face of possible reductions in US contributions to peacekeeping globally.*** Given the protracted nature of the humanitarian crisis in DRC, ***DFID should work to close the gap between humanitarian and development work, by embedding consideration of the humanitarian crisis into all of its other programmes.*** Infrastructure is crucial to providing humanitarian support, peacekeeping and stabilisation activities, access to services and livelihoods. While DFID has had difficulties in its previous road-building programme, ***we recommend that donors should work towards providing further support in the future.***

The low status of women, and violence against women and girls, are both serious issues in DRC. We acknowledge that DFID incorporates gender into all of its programmes, and has incorporated support to victims of sexual and gender-based violence into its health and WASH programmes. Nevertheless, we feel that there is more that it could do in this area. It only has one gender-specific programme, La Pépinière, which is focused on the empowerment of adolescent girls but is currently small in scale. ***DFID should carefully implement the lessons learned from this programme, and also make the political empowerment of women a core part of its work.*** Despite our predecessor Committee recommending that violence against women and girls should be DFID's top

priority in DRC, this has not happened. ***We strongly reiterate that recommendation, and add that DFID should be funding standalone outcome focused projects on this issue.***

DRC has high levels of corruption and a weak private sector. Suspicious mining deals signed between 2010–12, which cost DRC \$1.36 billion in potential revenues, included the alleged involvement of the UK overseas territories and London-listed companies. These are serious allegations to which DFID was not alert, and from which lessons must be learned. ***Policy coherence, between domestic UK laws and the UK's development agenda, is of the utmost important, and we expect a full review by the UK Government of the power it has to hold to account companies registered in the UK. We also reiterate our previous recommendations on corruption; especially that the UK Government should be doing everything it can to persuade the overseas territories to increase transparency by creating public beneficial ownership registers. We expect confirmation that DFID's private sector development work is truly helping the poorest and most marginalised. We believe that we should see much tighter return on investment criteria in economic development programmes. We recommend that DFID undertakes an immediate evaluation of its Essor programme and close it if its remains ineffective.***

We have been very impressed by the work that DFID is doing on healthcare, especially its Access to Primary Healthcare programme, which ***DFID should be ambitious in expanding to more areas. It should, however, put in place a way of measuring the sustainability of its WASH programmes beyond the life of the programme.***

The development context in DRC makes it a highly complex and difficult environment for DFID to work in. Despite this, it has to be generally commended for the way in which it is working, although we hope to see increases in the priority it gives to both anti-corruption and violence against women and girls. The changing circumstances have made the flexibility and resilience of programming of the utmost importance, as well as the use of civil society and strong local partners with good local knowledge. There are lessons to be learned from DRC for DFID's work in other fragile states, and a high level of flexibility should be a core part of this.

1 Introduction

Box 1: A brief history of the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), formerly known as Zaire, gained independence from Belgium in 1960, after 75 years of colonial rule. The country's first democratically-elected Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, was executed shortly afterwards as part of a Western-supported coup. As a result of that coup, and after five years of conflict, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu took power as president. President Mobutu continued as DRC's military dictator for nearly 32 years, overseeing a period of stark economic and infrastructural decline, characterised by high levels of corruption. By the 1990s, President Mobutu was highly unpopular domestically, and his control of the country had greatly weakened.¹

The civil wars in neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi, and genocides in those countries in 1994 and 1993 respectively, badly destabilised the region. A large number of Tutsi refugees fled from the genocides over the borders into eastern DRC. When Rwanda's Hutu-led government eventually fell, these refugee flows began to include Hutus fearing reprisals, including génocidaires and the Interahamwe (a Hutu militia). The result of this was high levels of ethnic tension in the refugee camps in eastern DRC, as well as a number of incursions across the border and attacks against the newly-established Rwandan regime launched from within DRC.

President Mobutu was unable to deal with the issues in the east and so, in 1996, Rwanda and Uganda actively supported a rebellion by the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), beginning the First Congo War. Within 7 months the AFDL had marched across the country and taken control of the capital in the west, Kinshasa. The leader of the AFDL, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, was installed as president.

The Second Congo War began just over a year after the end of the first, when President Laurent Kabila ordered the foreign Rwandan and Ugandan forces, which had remained after helping him take power the previous year, to leave the country. A rebellion against Kabila was launched, which escalated rapidly with the involvement of a number of other African countries. Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi all directly supported the rebel groups against Kabila, while Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia all provided direct support to Kabila and his forces.

The Second Congo War lasted for just under 5 years, becoming the deadliest conflict in modern African history and in the world since World War II, with an estimated 5.4 million people losing their lives.² In 2001, half-way through the conflict, Laurent Kabila was assassinated, leading to his son, Joseph Kabila becoming president, a position which he retains to this day. By the end of the conflict, nine different African countries had become directly involved.³

1 For more on President Mobutu's reign, see Michaela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr Kurtz* (London, 2000)

2 Mercy Corps ([DRC 22](#)) p 2

3 For more on the Congo Wars, see Guy Arnold, *Africa: A Modern History* (London, 2006), Gerard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (New York, 2011), and Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (Philadelphia, 2011)

In 2002, a peace accord was signed in Pretoria, South Africa, which formally ended the conflict. As a result of the Pretoria Accord, all foreign forces withdrew from DRC and a transitional government was formed, led by President Kabila. Democratic elections were subsequently held in 2006 and 2011,⁴ both of which returned Joseph Kabila as president. Despite the peace process, conflict continues to this day in DRC, with a large number of armed groups and militias continuing to operate, especially in the east of the country.

As recently as 2012, a rebel group known as the M23 (formed mostly of ex-members of militias which had been supported by Rwanda during the Second Congo War) managed to take control of the city of Goma. The M23 rebellion was only defeated about a year later, after a major offensive from the Congolese army (FARDC) and the UN peacekeeping force in DRC (MONUSCO).

The development context

1. It is widely accepted that three decades of mismanagement, followed by two decades of severe conflict and instability, have left DRC as one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world. In 2015, its gross national income per capita was only US\$410.⁵ The 2015 Human Development Index, based on data from 2014, ranked DRC 176th out of 188 countries in terms of human development.⁶ It is also larger in population and size than any of the countries beneath it in that index, with a population of just over 77 million people, of whom 63.6% are in poverty.⁷ DRC faces a full range of development issues, causing it to be a very difficult context for agencies to operate in. Conflict has left institutions, governance and the rule of law weak; in turn this has led to DRC facing some of the highest levels of sexual violence in the world, especially in the context of the ongoing conflict. Infrastructure is poor, with most of the rail network in disuse and disrepair since the 1960s and roads often impassable; due to DRC being such a large country and having a large rural population, this makes access extremely difficult. Basic services are also weak, with 3.5 million primary school children out of education⁸ and, prior to DFID's work on healthcare, only 29% of people had access to primary healthcare.⁹ Furthermore, the Congolese economy has recently been damaged by a slump in commodity prices, on which it is reliant, causing the government of DRC to cut its budget by 22% in 2016.¹⁰

2. DRC continues to suffer from one of the most protracted humanitarian crises in the world, which began with refugee flows from Rwanda in the early 1990s. The subsequent conflicts have left more than 2.1 million people internally displaced. Furthermore, continued regional instability and conflict have led to further refugee flows into DRC, from the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. As a result, DRC currently hosts over 450,000 refugees. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), over 4.4 million people in DRC remain food insecure.¹¹

4 Although the legitimacy of the 2011 elections has been questioned by international observers.

5 World Bank, '[Democratic Republic of Congo](#)', accessed 2 February 2017

6 UNDP, *2015 Human Development Report* (April 2015), Annex

7 World Bank, '[Democratic Republic of Congo](#)', accessed 2 February 2017

8 Department for International Development ([DRC 10](#)) para 44

9 IMA World Health ([DRC 19](#)) para 5

10 Africanews, *Congo proposes 22% budget cut in 2016* (May 2016)

11 UNOCHA, *DRC—Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017* (January 2017), p 4

3. Despite its low levels of development, DRC has large amounts of untapped wealth in natural resources and minerals. A 2009 report in *African Business* magazine estimated that DRC has a total mineral wealth of around US\$24 trillion.¹² This includes the vast bulk of the world's coltan, a mineral used in most electronic devices. With stability and good governance DRC has the economic potential to develop; however, due to the issues set out above, achieving this potential is a monumental challenge.

UK aid spending in DRC

4. DRC is one of the Department for International Development's (DFID) highest priority countries, and one of the Department's ten largest bilateral country programmes. In the last financial year, 2015–16, DFID DRC spent £136 million, and it has a planned budget of £147 million for each of the next two financial years (between 3–4% of DFID's regional programmes spend).¹³ There are currently 12 significant ongoing bilateral projects specific to DRC, each with a budget of over £1 million in either 2015–16 or 2016–17, as part of DFID's country programme (Table 1). In addition, DFID's global and centrally-managed Forest Governance, Markets and Climate, and UK Aid Match programmes both provide some support in DRC. A portion of the UK's multilateral spending each year also goes to DRC, with an imputed UK share of multilateral net ODA of £124.75 million going to DRC in 2014,¹⁴ although in this Report we focus primarily on bilateral programmes.

Table 1: DFID DRC projects

Duration	Project	Project budget (£m)	2015–16 budget (£m)	2016–17 budget (£m)
08/12–03/19	Access to health care	185.20	37.47	40.07
06/12–12/17	Humanitarian assistance	168.00	30.22	32.01
07/13–12/19	Increasing sustainable access to water sanitation and hygiene	159.45	25.03	27.18
04/12–03/24	Private sector development	102.50	9.22	19.13
02/14–12/19	Supporting peace and stability in eastern DRC	80.64	11.99	9.67
10/14–12/19	ACCELERE! [Education—joint with USAID]	36.20 ¹⁵	3.10	8.97
05/13–09/19	Support to malaria control	39.80	2.76	5.28
03/12–04/22	Roads in the East	19.49	1.02	6.81
08/13–06/19	Public financial management and accountability	17.00	4.09	4.20
04/15–03/17	Supporting the 2015–2016 electoral process	11.40	1.07	10.33
05/13–10/17	La Pepiniere: Programme for adolescent girls	3.86	1.07	1.74
04/12–04/17	Evidence, analysis and coordination	2.80	0.08	1.29

Source: [DFID DevTracker](#)

12 Daily Nation, [Blood mobile phones fan DRC's murderous conflict](#) (March 2009)

13 DFID, *Annual Report and Accounts 2015–16*, HC (2016–17) 329, p 135

14 *Ibid*, p 154

15 DFID contribution to the project's budget.

5. While DFID is yet to produce or publish an updated country operational plan for DRC, the challenges identified in the last plan (which ran from 2011–16) are still largely the same as those which face the country today. DFID DRC’s vision, as outlined in that plan, was to “address the urgent needs of the most vulnerable and poorest people in DRC now, while working with the government of DRC to enable it to provide and finance basic services in the long-term.” In order to achieve this, its priorities in the country included:

- “Strengthening the rule of law and tackling the root causes of conflict”,
- “Deliver 2.3m life-saving humanitarian interventions per year”,
- “Deliver equitable, inclusive and quality services in the health, education and water and sanitation sectors”,
- “Stimulate economic development”,
- “Promote and open society through empowerment and accountability”, and
- “Transform the way the international community works in DRC”.¹⁶

Our inquiry

6. The International Development Committee last looked at DRC in 2011, when our predecessor Committee inquired into *Working Effectively in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: DRC and Rwanda*.¹⁷ That inquiry followed a commitment from the UK Government to spend 30% of UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) in fragile and conflict-affected states, and looked across both DRC and Rwanda as examples of this spending and to examine the Government’s pledge at an operational level. Specifically on DRC, the previous Committee recommended that:

- DFID should include the reduction of violence against women and girls in its results framework for DRC;
- DFID should open a sub-office in eastern DRC, in recognition of the large size of DRC, and the instability and humanitarian situation in the east;
- DFID’s work on building governance capacity should focus more on community-led, local initiatives which respond to community priorities and give communities more confidence to hold their government to account;
- DFID should set clear conditions around transparency and accountability in the mining sector as part of its continued support to the DRC; and
- The UK should press for the UN peacekeeping mission in DRC (MONUSCO) to become a more mobile and agile force which can quickly respond to incidents and can take a more active approach to apprehending perpetrators of violence.

We explore these issues further in this Report.

16 DFID, *Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Operational Plan 2011–16* (December 2014)

17 International Development Committee, Twelfth Report of Session 2010–12, *Working Effectively in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: DRC and Rwanda*, HC 1133

7. Given DFID's continuing focus on DRC as a priority country and its increased commitment, announced in the UK Aid Strategy in 2015,¹⁸ to spend 50% of ODA in fragile and conflict-affected states and regions, we decided to hold a country inquiry into DFID's work in DRC. We launched the inquiry on 26 April 2016 and invited written submissions into all aspects of DFID's work in DRC,¹⁹ but particularly into the following questions:

- What difficulties do DRC's high levels of fragility and instability present for DFID's efforts to reduce poverty? In light of these, how effective has the UK Government's work in DRC been on peace-building, democracy (including on elections), and strengthening and building resilience into governance structures and institutions?
- What are the major challenges for DFID in providing humanitarian assistance in DRC, and how has it been overcoming these?
- How effective has DFID's work on gender equality been in DRC, including its work to eliminate violence against women and girls and to empower adolescent girls? What could DFID be doing better?
- How much success has DFID's programme on private sector development in DRC, including Élan RDC, had in supporting jobs and livelihoods? What has DFID's work on mining sector reform achieved?
- What impact has DFID's work had on improving basic services in DRC? In particular:
 - How successful has it been in strengthening the health system, including work to control and combat malaria and Ebola?
 - What lessons can be learned from DFID's education programmes in DRC, and what more could DFID be doing to support access to quality education?

Throughout this inquiry we took particular account of Sustainable Development Goal 16²⁰ and the importance of addressing this Goal in light of the challenges faced by DRC.

18 HM Treasury and DFID, *UK aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest*, Cm 9163, November 2015

19 International Development Committee, *Fragility and development in Democratic Republic of Congo inquiry launched* (April 2016)

20 To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Map of the Democratic Republic of Congo



Source: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

8. We visited DRC from 4–8 July 2016. We first went to Kinshasa, the capital in western DRC, before dividing into two groups, one of which went to Goma in the eastern province of North Kivu, and the other of which went to Kananga in the central province of Kasai-Central (formerly part of Kasai-Occidental, and marked on the map above as Lulua province). On our visit we met with ministers and officials of the government of DRC, as well as of provincial government, DFID DRC staff, representatives and staff of NGOs and DFID’s implementing partners, and a number of Congolese people and beneficiaries of DFID’s work in the country. We also undertook field visits to projects in and around Goma and Kananga which are being funded by UK aid. Our full visit programme is set

out as the Appendix to this Report. We would like to thank all of those we met in DRC for the kind welcome they gave us and the contributions they made to our visit and to this inquiry, particularly the DFID officials who arranged our programme.

Table 2: International Development Committee visit to DRC

Sector	Visit activity	Location	DFID programme(s)
Women and girls	Meeting with adolescent girl researchers	Kinshasa	La Pepiniere
Conflict and fragility	Meeting with MONUSCO stabilisation unit	Goma	Supporting peace and stability in eastern DRC
	Lunch with civil society partners and peace builders		
	Dinner with DFID humanitarian partners		Humanitarian assistance
	Visit to ICRC hospital and war surgery team		
	Visit to UNICEF camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs)	South Kivu	
Private sector development	Visit to Matebe hydropower plant	North Kivu	CDC Group investment
	Lunch with DFID private sector partners	Kinshasa	Private sector development
	Visit to Élan RDC	Goma	
Basic services	Visit to Mercy Corp urban WASH programme	Goma	Increasing sustainable access to water sanitation and hygiene
	Visit to Complexe Scolaire Mamu Lumingu school	Kasai-Central	Support to malaria control
	Visit to Tshikaji health zone and community		Access to health care/ Increasing sustainable access to water sanitation and hygiene
	Visit to Tshibwabwa community		

9. In the course of our inquiry we received 24 written submissions and held three oral evidence sessions, hearing from:

- **Session 1**
 - Councillor Jean-Roger Kaseki, Islington Councillor and Associate of the Human Rights and Social Justice Research Institute, London Metropolitan University, Tom O’Bryan, Congo Democracy Project, Harvard University, and Dr Suda Perera, Research Fellow, Developmental Leadership Program, University of Birmingham.
 - Shuna Keen, Regional Programme Manager for DRC and the Great Lakes, International Rescue Committee, and Dr Zoe Marriage, Reader in Development Studies, SOAS.
- **Session 2**
 - Bilge Sahin, Development Academic, SOAS, Sarah Cotton, Public Affairs and Policy Adviser, International Committee of the Red Cross, and Marie-Claire Faray, Member of the Executive Committee, Common Cause UK.
 - Luqman Ahmad, Project Director for Élan RDC, Adam Smith International, and Peter Jones, Campaigner, Democratic Republic of Congo Team, Global Witness.
- **Session 3**
 - Noella Coursaris Musunka, Founder and Chief Executive, Malaika.
 - Larry Sthreshley, Democratic Republic of Congo Country Director, IMA World Health.
 - James Wharton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and Christian Rogg, Head of DRC Country Office, Department for International Development.

We are grateful to all those who gave written and oral evidence to us in this inquiry.

2 Politics and conflict

The political situation

Box 2: The current electoral crisis in DRC

President Joseph Kabila's second term as president was due to end in December 2016. The Congolese Constitution, as agreed in 2006 as part of the peace deal which ended the Second Congo War, which ran from 1998 to 2003, mandates a two-term limit for the president. In 2015, President Kabila failed to secure a change to the Constitution which would have delayed any election until after a time-consuming and costly census had taken place, after large protests against the change.²¹ Throughout 2016 it became increasingly clear that elections would not take place in time for a new president to take over in December. The government of DRC claimed that work to update the outdated electoral roll, to remove a number of dead voters and add a large number of unregistered young voters, would take at least 17 months.²² President Kabila was accused by many observers and his opponents of pursuing a strategy of 'glissement' (the French word for slippage), finding technical reasons to delay the elections and extend his time in power.

In tandem with his alleged strategy of 'glissement', President Kabila has been seeking a process of national dialogue with opposition parties. Participation by opposition parties in talks with the government has been mixed, with the major opposition parties boycotting the national dialogue for a variety of reasons, including ongoing human rights abuses and a belief that the national dialogue is itself a part of 'glissement'. In October 2016 a political deal was reached between the government and some smaller fringe opposition parties.²³ Under this deal, which was criticised by other opposition groups, President Kabila would stay in power until 2018 with a power-sharing government and an opposition politician in the role of prime minister. In late December, negotiations between the government and major opposition parties, mediated by the Catholic Church, finally began to gain traction in earnest. On 31 December 2016, these resulted in a deal.²⁴ Under the new deal, President Kabila will not seek any constitutional change to allow him a third term and will stand down by the end of 2017. The status of the deal, including whether President Kabila will keep to its terms, is still uncertain, particularly after the unexpected death of the main opposition leader, Étienne Tshisekedi, in February 2017.

Support to elections

10. The UK Government position regarding elections in DRC has been consistent and aligned with much of the international community, emphasising that they should take place as soon as practicable. The UK continued to urge the government of DRC to hold elections in 2016 until it was clear that this was no longer possible. DFID has set aside £11.4 million for support to the electoral process in DRC. The majority of this money is a £6.6 million pledge to a UNDP pooled fund (PACEC) to support the Congolese electoral commission (CENI). At the time of the conclusion of this inquiry, none of this money has

21 Department for International Development ([DRC 10](#)) para 5

22 Congo Democracy Project, Harvard University ([DRC 02](#)) para 3.3

23 VOA News, [Controversial Political Deal Sets Congo Poll for April 2018](#) (October 2016)

24 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [UK welcomes DRC political deal](#) (January 2017)

been disbursed.²⁵ Tom O’Bryan, from Harvard University’s Congo Democracy Project, told us in his written evidence that this hesitancy was justified, due to the political climate and chances of timely elections worsening.²⁶ He pointed out the main challenges:

- the international community has long suspected that the government of DRC intended to delay elections for political reasons, “regardless of the financial or technical resources available”;
- the technical challenges to holding elections would undermine their legitimacy; and
- there is little confidence “in the capacity of the UNDP to successfully administer a ‘pooled fund’ for electoral support, particularly after its limited impact in the deeply flawed 2011 elections”, which received poor international support and were widely considered to be illegitimate.²⁷

11. In addition to its commitment to PACEC, DFID has also been providing more targeted support in preparation for the elections. This includes a joint civic education programme with USAID and an election monitoring and observation programme run by the Carter Centre. DFID also has a flexible fund component, which allows it to direct funding where it is required based on where there is a need for that funding. This allows the programme the flexibility to be adaptable to the rapidly changing political circumstances, and the country office staff the ability to disburse smaller amounts of money. This flexibility of programming is a recurring theme in DRC, where the situation is volatile and complex and so requires the discretion of country office staff who know the local context. Two smaller scale programmes, to support human rights defenders and to work with the youth and media respectively, have been approved under this flexible component.²⁸ While such activities are important, we heard that civic education programmes “are relatively over-funded compared to other sectors”, such as political capacity-building, due to not being politically controversial.²⁹

12. In evidence, both Tom O’Bryan and Islington Councillor Jean-Roger Kaseki, an Associate of the Human Rights and Social Justice Research Institute at the London Metropolitan University, argued for supporting capacity-building work with DRC’s political parties. Tom O’Bryan wrote in written evidence that this “will help marshal a more robust check on the power of the presidential majority, provide the Congolese electorate with a wider range of viable choices at the ballot box, and foster an issues-based democratic culture.”³⁰ He told us in oral evidence that, while such work is not risk-free, the risk of appearing partisan can be mitigated, as such projects “function best when you are integrating candidates both from the majority coalition and from opposition parties. That also happens to be a good way of defusing some tension in projects like that.”³¹ In response to these suggestions, Christian Rogg, Head of DFID DRC, spoke of the difficulties involved:

25 [Q6](#)

26 Congo Democracy Project, Harvard University ([DRC 02](#)) para 5.3

27 *Ibid*, para 4.1

28 DFID, *Annual Review—Supporting the 2015–16 Electoral Process in the Democratic Republic of Congo* (March 2016)

29 Congo Democracy Project, Harvard University ([DRC 02](#)) para 4.5

30 *Ibid*, para 6.6

31 [Q8](#)

“In the past, before my time, we supported opposition parties in terms of generating a more issues-based debate, as opposed to personality politics, essentially, if you want to put it that way. That was not the most successful approach in the past. If you look at the political landscape in the DRC, there are hundreds of parties. There are well over 400. Many of them are individuals who set up a party essentially as their own platform. Very few of the parties have any ideology or any platform they present. Many of them, I would argue, are not even liaising with the population to reflect the views of the population. [...] In the absence of a political environment where the discussion is issues-based, we have very little by way of entry points.”³²

13. We support DFID’s decision to delay disbursement of any funding through PACEC. This money needed to be available in case of a rapid mobilisation towards elections taking place. As this did not happen it was a good example of DFID’s flexibility and of it taking seriously its responsibility to spend money wisely. With the serious prospect of elections taking place this year, DFID must now be ready to provide support rapidly and at short notice. Following the example of 2011, legitimacy risks surrounding the elections remain high; the international community must not allow the political crisis in DRC to be extended due to a lack of enough resources to hold elections.

14. DFID should now be working with UNDP to ensure the efficacy of, and international confidence in, PACEC so that it is able to effectively support CENI through the process of updating the electoral roll and carrying out elections when preparations begin in earnest. International coordination and support are required to avoid a repeat of the 2011 elections, and the UK should take a leading role in mobilising this.

15. We are convinced of the benefits of capacity-building work with political parties in a fragmented political system like in DRC. Strong political parties in DRC also provide resilience against abuses by the elite, and empower citizens to hold their government to account. Such work is a necessary step if DRC is to become a fully functioning democracy. We understand the difficulties of doing this, but consider that such work should be a long-term goal for DFID. DFID’s democratic governance work should be working towards building the capacity of political parties from a grassroots level and politically empowering the Congolese people. We hope to see continuing work on governance by DFID.

Human rights in DRC

16. President Kabila’s perceived attempt to hold onto power in DRC led to significant anti-government protests in the latter half of 2016. These protests were violently put down by the Congolese security forces. On 19 September, marking three months until the end of the President’s mandate, protests in Kinshasa led to at least 54 deaths and the burning down of a number of political party offices. The UN Joint Human Rights Office (JHRO) of MONUSCO documented 422 victims of human rights violations, and found that 48 of those who died were killed by state agents, including a five-year-old girl who was shot in

the back.³³ On 20 December, protests across the country again led to violent suppression. So far Human Rights Watch and the JHRO have documented that at least 40 people were killed by security forces, across four different cities.³⁴

17. Alongside these flashpoints, the government of DRC has been gradually clamping down on political opposition and protests. Earlier in the year Moïse Katumbi, the most popular opposition candidate for president, was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison in his absence for illegally selling property. The judge in that case subsequently fled into hiding, claiming that she was pressured by the Congolese intelligence services to convict.³⁵ Journalists and members of young citizens' movements, such as LUCHA, have been frequently targeted and subjected to arbitrary arrest.³⁶

18. DFID told us that DRC “is a UK country of concern for human rights”, noting the recent closing of political and civil society space.³⁷ In September, the USA led the way in imposing sanctions on some senior Congolese officials accused of orchestrating the violent suppression of protests and/or obstructing the electoral process.³⁸ Throughout this inquiry, we have been reassured by DFID that the UK had been seeking similar sanctions from the EU. In December, these were finally agreed and announced by the European Council.³⁹ In addition to sanctions, as we noted above, DFID is working with Avocats Sans Frontières, through the flexible component of its electoral support programme, to support human rights defenders.⁴⁰

19. We are gravely concerned about the human rights situation in DRC. We support the UK's efforts at a European level to secure sanctions against key Congolese officials. DFID's work to support human rights defenders is welcome, but a deterioration in the human rights situation was easily foreseeable. Therefore, in contrast to DFID's justified hesitancy to support PACEC and CENI, its human rights work should have begun much earlier and must get up to speed much faster.

20. *The UK Government should continue to push for those responsible for human rights violations in DRC to be held to account, including further sanctions at an international level if necessary. We hope to see a rapid increase in DFID DRC's human rights work and a clear focus on human rights in its new Country Operational Plan.*

21. We are also concerned about the manner in which DFID responds to human rights issues in its programming more broadly. DFID had a security sector accountability and police reform programme, which it began in 2008 and was planned as the first phase of long-term support to police reform. When in Kananga we were told by both local officials and members of the community that the programme was achieving positive results there. After reports from the UN Joint Human rights Office on human rights abuses in Kinshasa, and subsequent negative media coverage, the programme was suspended and then terminated nationally. Tom O'Bryan told us that, “You look back at historical DFID

33 UN OHCHR, [DRC: UN reports reveal clear use of excessive force, rife impunity for rights violations](#) (October 2016)

34 UN OHCHR, [Accountability for killings of protesters vital, Zeid says, as DRC crisis continues](#) (December 2016)

35 BBC, [DR Congo judge 'pressured' to convict Moïse Katumbi](#) (July 2016)

36 Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo Death Toll Rises, Mass Arrests After Protests](#) (December 2016)

37 Department for International Development (DRC 10) para 16

38 Guardian, [US imposes sanctions on top DRC officials after election delay](#) (September 2016)

39 Council of the European Union, [DRC: EU adopts sanctions against 7 individuals responsible for violence](#) (December 2016)

40 DFID, [Annual Review—Supporting the 2015–16 Electoral Process in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#) (March 2016)

support of the police in particular and I think those resources actually enabled a number of really terrible human rights violations.”⁴¹ A robust response to allegations of human rights violations was necessary. However, in other parts of the country the programme had been performing well—a fact acknowledged in a 2014 Annual Review by DFID which gave it an A+ rating⁴² and in its Completion Review which gave it an A rating.⁴³

22. DFID must be vigilant about human rights abuses by state actors with whom it is working in DRC, and must take action when it discovers that these have occurred. This action must also be proportionate and respond to local circumstances. In the case of the security sector accountability and police reform programme a blanket reaction halted progress on improving human rights elsewhere in DRC. A more targeted and flexible approach could have allowed the positive elements of the programme to continue, while closing those linked to abuses. We recognise that this is a fine line to tread, but DFID should make sure that it is making decisions based upon all of the complexities of a situation, and should avoid knee-jerk reactions to negative media coverage. We urge DFID to explore future work on police reform in areas where the police have not been implicated in human rights violations.

The resilience of DFID’s programme in DRC

23. As a fragile and conflict-affected country, DRC already presents challenges to DFID in implementing its programme. These risks surrounding the conflict and volatility of the situation are well-recognised by DFID in its programme documents. The political crisis in DRC has heightened these risks, though, with particular risk around the flashpoint dates on which major protests were due to take place. In the final few months of 2016, levels of ethnic and militia violence across DRC also increased, linked to the general unrest and political discontent.

24. With these risks in mind, we have been particularly interested throughout this inquiry in how DFID has been preparing for a possible escalation in conflict. In particular, we have been looking at how DFID has been building resilience into its work—ensuring that its programmes can continue working through political and conflict shocks, and that the development gains it makes are not undone by a deterioration in the situation. DFID told us that its programmes in DRC are resilient by design, as they have to work through ongoing conflict, with preparation, planning, close monitoring and the flexibility to adapt quickly if circumstances change. While in DRC, we saw first-hand the resilience of some of DFID’s programmes. We visited a hydro-electric power station, in which CDC Group has recently invested and which was being constructed during the M23 Rebellion in 2012–13. Larry Sthreshley told us how IMA World Health, implementers of the ASSP [healthcare] programme, was preparing during the recent political crisis:

We have prioritised and established what are essential services and what are the extra activities of the project. Of course, the extra activities of the project just stop. Things that expose us a lot to the risk of theft are stopped, i.e. construction and that sort of thing. Those indicators will suffer. Getting

41 Q5, Corrected post publication: replacing “operations” with “violations”

42 DFID, [Annual Review—Security Sector Accountability and Police Reform Programme](#) (February 2014)

43 DFID, [Project Completion Review—Security Sector Accountability and Police Reform Programme](#) (March 2016)

drugs out and keeping the health facilities open is our priority, so that this project can continue and that people are served. So far, we have been very successful with that.⁴⁴

25. We asked James Wharton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at DFID, about the risks for DFID programming. He reassured us that:

My understanding is that, other than in extreme circumstances, the actual likely impact on DFID programmes is limited. [...] We are talking about an environment that is already challenging to operate in, and therefore the programmes by their very design are quite resilient and self-sustaining. However, we do need to be conscious of it. [...] The very clear understanding I have, however, and the reassurances I have been given are that our programmes are both resilient and being very closely monitored so that, as and when circumstances change, we are able to very quickly adapt them.⁴⁵

Christian Rogg, Head of DFID DRC, added that it had had discussions on the possible effects of an escalation in violence with all programmes, and pointed out that many of these programmes and partners are used to working in very difficult situations.⁴⁶

26. DFID DRC took the risk of a potential deterioration in the political situation seriously, and planned for possible effects on its programming appropriately. Of necessity, given the ongoing conflict in the east of DRC, its programmes have been designed, as far as is possible, to be resilient to shock. Their flexibility allows them to adapt to changing circumstances and, combined with the use of strong partners with good local knowledge, have enabled DFID to continue working through a volatile period. While we hope that the worst of the situation has passed, we recommend that DFID remains vigilant.

The conflict and humanitarian situation

Peacebuilding and peacekeeping

27. The Second Congo War formally ended in July 2003, but conflict has continued throughout DRC ever since, especially in the east of the country. In the provinces of North and South Kivu alone, over 60 armed groups continue to operate.⁴⁷ These groups are mostly small militias, such as the many Mai-Mai [local militia] groups which operate in local communities. In 2013, DRC and eight neighbouring countries, including Rwanda, agreed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) to try to build a route to peace in DRC. Unfortunately, the PSCF largely failed. International Alert noted that there was “limited government will and little progress on implementation”.⁴⁸ DFID told us that “Largely due to the Congolese government’s lack of commitment, the PSCF has lost momentum.”⁴⁹

44 [Q85](#)

45 [Q121](#)

46 *ibid*

47 Congo Research Group, [Mapping of armed groups in Eastern Congo](#) (October 2015)

48 International Alert ([DRC 12](#)) p 4

49 Department for International Development ([DRC 10](#)) para 11

28. DFID has committed just over £80 million over five years to supporting peace and stability in eastern DRC.⁵⁰ This was originally focused on the PSCF but, due to its “declining relevance”, is now focused on delivering the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS or I4S). The I4S is the main vehicle for international support to peacebuilding in DRC, which allows coordination among the strategy’s partners in peacebuilding activities and includes a multi-partner trust fund. Coordination of the I4S is supported by MONUSCO’s Stabilization Support Unit, with whom we met while in Goma. The I4S was reviewed by its partners in 2013, as its results on stabilisation were questionable and DFID pushed for it to become “a more coherent, strategic approach [with] strengthened impact.”⁵¹ The revised I4S defined stabilization as “a process of building the capacity of state and society to mitigate local drivers of conflict”, and began to “use community dialogue as a basis for activities.”⁵² In addition to putting money through and towards the I4S, DFID also funds a number of small bilateral peacebuilding projects, such as through Search for Common Ground (SFCG) on security sector reform and through the Life and Peace Institute (LPI) to support local civil society. DFID appears to be increasingly moving its focus away from these interventions towards the I4S.

29. It is still relatively early to assess the performance of the revised I4S, but some witnesses have been cautiously positive. Tom O’Byrne of Harvard University told us that “the concept behind [the I4S] is an excellent one: that there is a strategy driving the interventions of donors and what donors are funding and what NGOs and non-profits on the ground are implementing. The degree to which that is really happening is something that I would potentially take issue with.”⁵³ He argued that the I4S, and international policy more widely, needs to get better at analysing the localised drivers of conflict, rather than seeing it as a singular war. DFID’s latest annual review of its peace and stability programme concludes that it “is an effective funding mechanism”, but acknowledges the risks of “putting a large proportion of our stabilisation commitments into a single coordination basket that is yet to demonstrate effectiveness in implementation.”⁵⁴ International Alert also highlighted that “it may be risky for DFID to channel funding almost exclusively through a UN-led trust fund that has yet to prove operationally functional”. It subsequently recommended that:

DFID DRC should continue to support peace and stabilisation initiatives bilaterally where doing so represents better value for money and has a higher chance of impact, while maintaining focus on spending well (and not just more). This requires increasing staff resources to effectively manage bilateral contracts.⁵⁵

30. Other witnesses, including Dr Suda Perera, a Developmental Leadership Program research fellow at the University of Birmingham, have been critical of DFID’s peacebuilding work in DRC so far. Dr Perera highlighted in her written evidence that “Despite more than a decade of expensive and extensive peacebuilding in the country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and in particular its troubled eastern provinces of North

50 DFID DevTracker, ‘Supporting peace and stability in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo’, accessed 3 February 2017

51 International Alert (DRC 12) p 3

52 Hugo de Vries, *Going around in circles: The challenges of peacekeeping and stabilization in the Democratic Republic of Congo* (August 2015) pp 47–55

53 Q14

54 DFID, *Annual Review—Supporting peace and stability in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo* (February 2016)

55 International Alert (DRC 12) p 4

and South Kivu, remain plagued by violence, fragility, poverty and instability.”⁵⁶ In oral evidence, she explained that this is because peacebuilding programmes have “tended to focus on the short-term humanitarian crises that are taking place and have tended to be about conflict containment and crisis containment rather than long-term development.” She complained about short programme cycles and a quick turnover of staff, and pointed out that solving the local drivers of conflict requires “an investment in the long-term development issues such as investment in secure and stable livelihoods.”⁵⁷

31. Peacebuilding in DRC requires a deep understanding of the context in the country. As a large country, conflict in different parts of the country has very different causes and solutions, and DFID must engage local partners who can help it to understand these. More time is needed to tell if the renewed I4S will provide these solutions, but we welcome it as a long-term and cooperative approach to stabilisation. We saw some good examples of peacebuilding work funded by DFID in DRC, especially in working with communities. However, even as DFID refocuses onto the I4S, we recommend it diversify its efforts and make sure to continue bilateral peacebuilding programmes, especially those which work with local communities to understand and address the local drivers of conflict.

Box 3: MONUSCO

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) is the largest UN peacekeeping force in the world, with an overall strength of over 22,000.⁵⁸ It was given its mandate through UN Security Council resolution 1925 in 2010, to take over from the previous peacekeeping mission in Congo. In 2013, during the M23 rebellion, the Security Council extended its mandate through resolution 2098. This made it the first UN peacekeeping force to have a mandate to unilaterally and proactively pursue and neutralize armed groups, through a newly created Force Intervention Brigade. The largest contributing countries to MONUSCO are Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania and Uruguay.

32. Public trust in MONUSCO is mixed. Recent polling in DRC found that 55.1% of Congolese support MONUSCO’s presence and 63% think it does a good job protecting civilians. However, 29.4% think that MONUSCO should leave the country and only 36% thought that it was not at all corrupt. All of these figures are worst in the areas where MONUSCO is most active, with the majority of people in the Kivu provinces wanting MONUSCO to leave. This comes alongside a general, and historical, mistrust in foreign involvement in DRC. Around 65% of Congolese think that the UK is playing a positive role in the country today.⁵⁹

33. The survey indicates that 63% of Congolese agree that it should take unilateral action against armed groups, including a majority in the areas where most of MONUSCO is based. This was echoed in oral evidence. Councillor Jean-Roger Kaseki told us that

56 Dr Suda Perera (DRC 04) para 1

57 Q10

58 UN, ‘MONUSCO Facts and Figures’, accessed 3 February 2017

59 Congo Research Group, *Impasse in the Congo: What Do the People Think?* (October 2016)

“There is a degree of disappointment that MONUSCO within Congo has failed to protect civilians. I would like to see peacekeepers with a robust mandate to disarm the militias.”⁶⁰
Dr Suda Perera followed up on this:

The mandate to go unilaterally after armed groups has been expanded and, following the success [against] the M23, they were encouraged to go after the ADF and the FDLR. We have not actually seen the replication of the success that they had with the M23, in part because the M23 is a much more conventional fighting force, it is much less embedded among local populations and had less local knowledge, but also in part there is a lack of regional political will. The [Force Intervention Brigade] was massively supported by Tanzania and South Africa and regional partners there.⁶¹

She went on to add that expectations in MONUSCO are unrealistic, and it must be better at communicating what it can achieve. Tom O’Bryan suggested that MONUSCO “is not the perfect silver-bullet answer, but it is the best alternative that we have right now.”⁶² The USA provides 29% of all peacekeeping funding worldwide. A draft executive order being prepared by the administration of President Donald Trump could lead to radical reductions in US contributions to peacekeeping, and could therefore lead to major issues in the resourcing of MONUSCO.⁶³

34. One particular area of concern has been the situation around the town of Beni. Since late 2014, the area around Beni has seen hundreds massacred. While the official line is that these have been carried out by the ADF (an Islamist militia), credible research has found that there has also been involvement by members of the Congolese armed forces in these massacres.⁶⁴ Tom O’Bryan told us that the situation in Beni “is a gigantic challenge. The UN has started to deploy more troops up to the Beni region, but this violence is continuing. We clearly need to direct an awful lot more attention to this or else it is going to continue.”⁶⁵

35. The presence of a peacekeeping force is a crucial part of keeping the security situation in DRC stable. Low levels of public trust in MONUSCO’s operations are therefore deeply worrying. We recognise the scale of the task facing it, but do not think that it has been doing enough to protect civilians over the last few years, especially around Beni. It must be willing and given the resources to venture outside of the Kivu regions to properly bring to account those responsible for civilian massacres, and to restore stability. *The UK must advocate at the international level for MONUSCO to become more proactive in protecting civilians, including flexibility in how it deploys and where it operates, and should be working in DRC to help it better communicate what it can and cannot do. This must include strong lobbying of the US administration to ensure that MONUSCO remains properly resourced. Given the general atmosphere of mistrust about foreign involvement in DRC, the UK should also be making sure that it is properly communicating its own role to the Congolese people.*

60 [Q17](#) [Councillor Kaseki]

61 [Q10](#) [Dr Perera]

62 [Q10](#) [Tom O’Bryan]

63 New York Times, [Trump Prepares Orders Aiming at Global Funding and Treaties](#) (January 2017)

64 Congo Research Group, [Who are the killers of Beni?](#) (March 2016)

65 [Q19](#)

Humanitarian assistance

36. The Rwandan civil war and genocide in the early 1990s led to large refugee flows into DRC and a major humanitarian crisis. Due to the ongoing conflict in DRC since then, this has become one of the longest-running humanitarian crises in the world. As with the conflict itself, the humanitarian crisis is most acute in the east of the country. There are currently more than 250,000 refugees in DRC and more than 1.9 million people are internally displaced. Furthermore, over 4.5 million people in DRC are food insecure. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (UNOCHA) latest appeal identified that nearly 7 million people across DRC were in need of humanitarian assistance.⁶⁶

37. Commensurate with the scale of the humanitarian crisis in DRC, DFID's humanitarian budget for the country is one of its largest bilateral programmes, giving an average of just over £30 million in each of the last four years.⁶⁷ The bulk of this money goes through the UNOCHA-administered pooled humanitarian fund. According to DFID's own written evidence, "DFID DRC is the third largest humanitarian donor to the DRC, and the single largest contributor to the DRC Humanitarian Fund."⁶⁸ In addition, DFID also funds a variety of humanitarian organisations in DRC, including the International Rescue Committee (IRC), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), Action Contre La Faim (ACF), UNICEF,⁶⁹ Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Along with quantitative results, DFID's humanitarian strategy in DRC also focuses on reform of the humanitarian system and resilience.⁷⁰

38. Shuna Keen, the IRC's Regional Programme Manager for DRC and the Great Lakes, told us that the IRC has had "mixed experiences of the UN pooled fund, both positive and negative" and that "that kind of funding mechanism is more effective for smaller-scale crises where time is not of the essence." She also raised mild concerns about its transparency, and that "the fact that decisions are not clear can lead to a question mark over the transparency of what the criteria are for making funding decisions."⁷¹

39. Much of the written evidence which addressed humanitarian issues stressed the need for peace and security if the humanitarian crisis is to ever be solved. Search for Common Ground, which implements one of DFID's peacebuilding projects in eastern DRC, told us that "The current humanitarian crisis in eastern Congo costs British taxpayers hundreds of millions of pounds sterling annually. Addressing root causes, through standalone peace building projects and interventions designed to segue into stabilization is therefore the best possible investment for HMG's taxpayers."⁷² In the shorter term, security is also necessary for humanitarian access. Action Against Hunger wrote in its written evidence that "Security remains a major operational challenge and concern for those providing humanitarian assistance."⁷³ CAFOD also underlined this point, saying that "Violence

66 UNOCHA, *DRC—Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017* (January 2017)

67 DFID DevTracker, '[Humanitarian assistance to the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)', accessed 3 February 2017

68 Department for International Development ([DRC 10](#)) para 21

69 Including a humanitarian cash transfer programme called ARCC, which we visited in South Kivu.

70 DFID, *Annual Review—Humanitarian assistance to the Democratic Republic of Congo* (June 2016)

71 [Q24](#)

72 Search for Common Ground ([DRC 18](#)) p 3

73 Action Against Hunger ([DRC 20](#)) para 13

continues to restrict humanitarian access”.⁷⁴ Shuna Keen said in oral evidence that “One of the main problems for access is security”, highlighting that “There were 11 cases of kidnapping of humanitarian workers this year.”⁷⁵

40. As a protracted humanitarian crisis, DRC is a good example of a country where humanitarian and development needs overlap significantly. IMA World Health, which implements DFID’s major health programme in DRC, told us that:

In a country like Congo where there is low level conflict over many years it is hard to know when humanitarian assistance is needed and when it can shift to development assistance. [DFID’s health programme] has found that if humanitarian assistance is continued for a long time it actually hinders the switch to a development approach. It would be best to limit humanitarian assistance to what is truly an acute crisis, make sure that that assistance does not undermine a transition to development assistance and make the change over to a development approach as soon as it is possible. It will be much less costly and have more impact.⁷⁶

In our own inquiry into *The World Humanitarian Summit: priorities for reform*,⁷⁷ we highlighted the gap between short term humanitarian and longer term development actors, and recommended that steps be taken at the World Humanitarian Summit to close this gap.

41. The scale of DFID’s humanitarian support to DRC reflects the scale of the humanitarian challenge there. If this unfortunate necessity is ever to be reduced, it must come alongside a comprehensive development programme of peacebuilding, democratic governance work, economic development and building livelihoods. DFID’s humanitarian work in DRC therefore cannot be seen in isolation, but instead must be intrinsically linked with its broader programme of work. In addition to meeting basic short-term humanitarian needs, DFID should be using its humanitarian work in DRC to work towards longer term development goals.

42. Given the very protracted nature of the humanitarian crisis in DRC, DFID should work to close the gap between humanitarian and development work. It should ensure that, beyond simply meeting basic needs, all of its development programmes in DRC are reaching those who are affected by the humanitarian crisis. It should further look to work through programmes which tackle the causes of and provide solutions to the crisis, or which build resilience to shocks. In order to achieve this, DFID’s humanitarian spending in DRC, other than contributions to the pooled fund, should be embedded into all of its other programmes, which should have explicit consideration of how they are helping to address the humanitarian crisis.

74 CAFOD ([DRC 23](#)) para 3

75 [Q23](#)

76 IMA World Health ([DRC 19](#)) para 22

77 International Development Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2015–16, [The World Humanitarian Summit: priorities for reform](#), HC 675

Infrastructure and roads

43. In addition to security, another major issue in eastern DRC is the poor infrastructure. Shuna Keen told us that “The road system in the Congo—if you can call it a road system—is inadequate and presents some of the biggest challenges that we face alongside insecurity.”⁷⁸ Dr Zoe Marriage, a Reader in Development Studies at SOAS, echoed this:

I would say that the infrastructure, as well as the militarisation of the east, is the key constraint for NGOs operating particularly in eastern Congo. [...] There are very few roads. Aircraft are unreliable and expensive. It is difficult to underestimate how constraining the infrastructure is. That is actually a key determinant of who gets aid and who does not. Those who are nearer the main road are almost certainly in a better position to receive assistance than those who are not, so infrastructure ends up guiding where assistance is given.⁷⁹

Action Against Hunger supported this point in written evidence, stating:

The major challenge to providing humanitarian assistance in DRC remains physical access to areas in need. The DRC is characterised not only by weak communication, in terms of phone and internet availability, but also inadequate transport infrastructures, including roads, boats and trains, which ultimately impedes the ability of humanitarian NGOs to access parts of the country. This can often create delays in project implementation. For example, trucks carrying humanitarian commodities may have to turn around after weeks of travelling where dirt roads have been demolished.⁸⁰

44. DFID DRC has an infrastructure project in eastern DRC called Roads in the East. This £19.5 million project to rehabilitate a number of key roads was split across South Kivu (implemented by UNOPS) and North Kivu (implemented by IPE, a private contractor). The initial business case identified that there was underinvestment in this area, and that “roads are a key element of the stabilisation effort”, as rebuilding reconnects “these populations to security services, basic services and economic opportunities”.⁸¹ This reflects what Dr Suda Perera told us, that investing in things like roads and “and allowing people to have livelihood opportunities that mean that they do not turn to armed groups, which are a cause of this insecurity, is as important as feeding people in camps.”⁸²

45. Last year the Roads in the East project was heavily scaled down due to very poor performance, with the UNOPS section being cancelled entirely. In its review of ‘DFID’s approach to managing fiduciary risk in conflict-affected environments’, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) found that “consideration of fiduciary risk mitigation in the original programme design was poorly addressed with the business cases treating several major risks as assumptions, rather than risks that had to be actively managed.

78 [Q23](#)

79 [Q30](#)

80 Action Against Hunger ([DRC 20](#)) para 11

81 DFID, [Business Case and Summary—Roads in the East in the Democratic Republic of Congo Phase II](#) (October 2016)

82 [Q11](#)

These assumptions resulted in fiduciary risks being tolerated instead of mitigated and other key fiduciary risks, such as the risk of UNOPS failing to deliver, being missed.” The assumptions made by DFID included that:

- “the government would continue to maintain the roads (without building government or local community ownership before commencing the project)”;
- “weight limits would be adhered to on the road (despite substantial illegal mining operations in the area)”, and
- “the UN or national security forces (MONUSCO and/or GoDRC) would provide security for the work to go ahead (even though control of mining operations is contested by armed groups).”⁸³

46. In its written evidence to us, UNOPS argued that “a number of additional factors provide important context, which suggests that the project’s lack of success—as measured by original criteria—was predominately caused by the extremely difficult and deteriorating security situation—not by lack of effort or performance by UNOPS.” It went on to say that “many of the assumptions that form the core of this criticism are a reality of working in this region.”⁸⁴ DFID’s latest annual review of the project identifies a number of lessons to learn from its failure, including the need to “Understand the partners that you’re working with, or relying, on, and engage with them directly, particularly in complex conflict settings such as eastern DRC”. It notes that “knowledge of how MONUSCO operates was not well known by DFID’s previous programme teams (which were formed of individuals that worked on infrastructure and were based far away in Kinshasa) or by UNOPS themselves.”⁸⁵

47. **We note the substantial challenges of building infrastructure, especially roads, in an area beset by violent conflict. Despite this difficulty, the poor infrastructure in DRC itself is an obstacle to providing humanitarian support, stabilisation activities, access to services and livelihoods. While DFID underestimated the challenge in its Roads in the East project, it should take the opportunity to learn the lessons and improve future work in this area, rather than be put off entirely.**

48. ***We recommend that donors should work towards providing further support to building roads in eastern DRC, but before doing so, however, they should build up the knowledge and expertise required to properly implement such a project, and to make more accurate assessments of security context and maintenance responsibilities. Donors should work together to correct the underinvestment in this area, but this must be done in coordination with the IAS and MONUSCO as part of wider stabilisation activities if it is to be successful.***

83 Independent Commission for Aid Impact, [DFID’s approach to managing fiduciary risk in conflict-affected environments](#) (August 2016) p 28

84 UNOPS ([DRC 21](#)) p 1

85 DFID, [Annual Review—Roads in the East in the Democratic Republic of Congo Phase II](#) (March 2016)

3 Basic services

Health and hygiene

49. DFID's largest ongoing programme in DRC is its *Accès aux Soins de Santé Primaires* (ASSP—Access to Primary Healthcare) programme. Over 5 years, DFID is investing just under £185 million into improving basic health services in DRC. ASSP is focused geographically on 52 health zones (around 10% of DRC's health zones) across five of DRC's 26 provinces, and is implemented by IMA World Health, a faith-based international non-profit organisation based in America, which has been working in DRC for around 17 years.⁸⁶ Alongside this major health programme, DFID also has programmes on increasing sustainable access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and on supporting malaria control.⁸⁷

50. Basic services in DRC, including healthcare, are in a very poor state. As with all of the development indicators we have covered in this Report, they have been in turn damaged by poor governance, poor infrastructure and conflict. The government of DRC underinvests in healthcare, providing only about 3.4% of domestic resources to it in 2015.⁸⁸ IMA World Health reported to us that “When ASSP started in 2013, only 29% of the population in the area of the project were using health services.”⁸⁹ In 2008, only around 24% of the Congolese population nationally had access to safe water.⁹⁰ DRC is also badly afflicted by tropical diseases. It has the second highest share of malaria cases of any country in the world (around 9%),⁹¹ and has been the site of three Ebola outbreaks in the last 10 years (the Ebola virus having been first identified in DRC and named after the Ebola River there).⁹²

51. We are very impressed with DFID's work on healthcare in DRC. Between its ASSP, WASH and malaria programmes, it is providing comprehensive support to DRC's health system. On our visit to DRC we saw both DFID's urban and rural WASH programmes. What we saw was encouraging and appeared to be functioning well and reaching a large number of people. As ICAI recently highlighted in its report on WASH, the true test of these programmes will be their sustainability beyond the life of the projects.⁹³ We saw evidence that sustainability was being borne in mind. The urban WASH programme is being run through a public-private-partnership that should provide an incentive for its continuation beyond active support from DFID.⁹⁴ Similar considerations are also in place for the rural WASH programme. Despite this, DFID does not measure sustainability beyond the life of the programmes, which is five years, after which they are left to be monitored by the government of DRC. We do not think that this is an appropriate or reliable way of ensuring sustainability and value for money.

86 IMA World Health (DRC 19) p 1

87 See DFID DevTracker, '[Increasing sustainable access to water sanitation and hygiene in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)' and '[Support to Malaria Control in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)', accessed 3 February 2017

88 Department for International Development (DRC 10) para 37

89 IMA World Health (DRC 19) para 5

90 World Bank, *Water Supply and Sanitation in the Democratic Republic of Congo* (2011) p 9

91 World Health Organization, *2016 World Malaria Report* (2016) p 41

92 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, '[Ebola Outbreaks 2000–2016](#)', accessed 3 February 2017

93 Independent Commission for Aid Impact, *Assessing DFID's Results in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene* (May 2016)

94 Mercy Corps (DRC 22) p 3

52. *DFID should put in place a way of measuring the sustainability of its WASH programmes in DRC beyond the life of the programmes.*

53. We are particularly impressed with the implementation of the ASSP programme by IMA World Health. This programme displays all of the major factors that we have identified in this inquiry as being important to successful aid projects in fragile and conflict-affected countries such as DRC—flexibility, a long-term focus with strong local partners, and resilience. First, it has been flexible in how it achieves its core results, adapting to the circumstances. Dr Larry Sthreshley, the DRC Country Director for IMA World Health, told us that:

It has been very adaptive. When we started this programme, it was oriented towards [a] kind of a curative approach to malnutrition and it was a very small component of the project, but, quickly, as we did the design phase and we looked at what the priorities were, it shifted around £4 million towards nutrition, with a heavy emphasis on the prevention of malnutrition. [...] In the last 12 months, we have seen the number of malnourished children we can find through this screening process going from 17% down to 10%. When that is causing 50% of the deaths of these children, it should have a very large impact on this country.⁹⁵

54. Second, it has built upon a strong foundation with a focus on long-term results. We were told that ASSP “was a continuation of another 10-year programme that DFID had funded. The model before was kind of a humanitarian approach but with a long funding cycle. Over those 10 years, we had gotten up to 50% to 60% health utilisation rates for those 20 health zones they were serving.”⁹⁶ Combined with this it has a grounding in good local knowledge and work with local groups. Dr Sthreshley described IMA World Health’s work:

IMA, as a faith-based organisation, works with local groups. In the east, we work with HEAL Africa, Panzi Foundation and a local group called PPSSP. We work through local groups so that we can function even if there is conflict going on. We are not expats coming in; we are not short-termers. Even my expat staff, which is only about 10 people, all have 10 to 25 years of experience in the country. We have just adapted. We have lived with [conflict] for a long time. Like I said, I was born there and I have been working there for 28 years. We have functioned through wars and everything.⁹⁷

55. Finally, and crucially in the current Congolese crisis, the programme has been built to be sustainable and resilient to shock. Dr Sthreshley told us that the programme had been built to work through the basic structure of the government health plan. He went on to say that “a lot of people do not look at Congo as being stable in anything, but, because of the destabilisation over the years, it has had to create resilient systems.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, when asked how the programme is being affected by the conflict in DRC, he responded, “We are just constantly monitoring what is going on and working with the community to

95 [Q78](#)

96 [Q78](#)

97 [Q82](#)

98 [Q77](#)

find out how we can work around the problem.”⁹⁹ He outlined how it had would respond if the conflict escalated, through preparation and planning establishing essential services which must continue, and extra activities which can be stopped.¹⁰⁰

56. We have seen the results that the ASSP is achieving in the Congolese health system. IMA World Health’s written evidence lays out the quantitative results, from health service utilisation rising to 52% in the focus areas to the cost of care dropping from \$3.59 per episode of illness to \$1.35.¹⁰¹ We are confident from what we have seen that the Congolese health system as a whole is also being strengthened as a result. Considering that the programme is currently focused on only 52 health zones, achieving results for only about 10% of the population, we asked James Wharton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at DFID, about expanding the programme. He told us that there is a willingness and that DFID programmes are under constant review. With that in mind, he went on to say that “I am not in a position to promise that we are going to expand in the foreseeable future, with all the other challenges DRC faces, but we always look at the opportunities that might arise.”¹⁰²

57. DFID should be proud of the work it is doing on health and hygiene in DRC. Its work through local partners, in a flexible manner and on long timescales, has allowed it to achieve real and life-changing results. The ASSP programme in particular is a good model that DFID should draw lessons from for how to implement health programmes in fragile and conflict-affected environments. Given the results it has already achieved, DFID should be ambitious and seek to expand the geographical scale of ASSP at an appropriate time or when it is designing its successor programme.

Education

58. DFID’s work on education in DRC is still at a relatively early stage. It is jointly implementing a project with USAID called ACCELERE!, to which it is contributing £36 million of the programme’s overall £104 million budget.¹⁰³ The programme aims to improve access, quality and governance. We have not, as part of this inquiry, looked in detail at this programme, in part due to the early stage it is at in its implementation. We have, though, looked at some broader issues surrounding education in DRC, and are also inquiring separately into *DFID’s work on education: Leaving no one behind?*¹⁰⁴

59. The scale of the challenge on education in DRC cannot be underestimated. 3.5 million children of primary school age (one in four) are out of education.¹⁰⁵ Of particular concern is that, despite the government of DRC having a fees-free education policy, most schools in DRC continue to have to charge fees (known as the *minerval*) in order to operate.¹⁰⁶ Part of the reason for this is historical underinvestment by the government of DRC in education; in 2013, only 2.2% of GDP was spent on education.¹⁰⁷ Noella Coursaris Musunka, a

99 [Q82](#)

100 [Q85](#)

101 IMA World Health ([DRC 19](#)) para 5

102 [Q145](#)

103 DFID DevTracker, ‘[USAID-UKAID ACCELERE!](#)’, accessed 3 February 2017

104 International Development Committee, ‘[DFID’s work on education: Leaving no one behind?](#)’, accessed 3 February 2017

105 Department for International Development ([DRC 10](#)) para 44

106 *Ibid*, para 45

107 CIA World Factbook, ‘[Democratic Republic of Congo](#)’, accessed 3 February 2017

Congolese philanthropist and former model, argued that, “We need to increase the budget for education through our government policy. That is key number one. The problem of paying fees in school is that it brings more problems in terms of the gap between rich and poor and in terms of discrimination.”¹⁰⁸

60. The Wonder Foundation laid out its concerns about the education sector in DRC to us in its written evidence. It advocated for communities to be empowered to set up schools, in the absence of proper state educational infrastructure. It stated, “Well-run local education initiatives are in an ideal position to scale-up, sharing expertise that has been developed locally and is known to work. Supporting the expansion of their work, or the replication of their models, is more effective than creating new models that have not yet been tried in these circumstances.”¹⁰⁹

61. Another aspect that the Wonder Foundation focused on in its written evidence was technical and vocational education. This, it wrote, “serves a dual purpose”, in that it both “provides access to good work” and demonstrates that a skilled area of work “is an area in which DRC currently does not have enough trained workers.”¹¹⁰ When we visited DRC, we heard similar statements on the value of life skills and vocational training, including entrepreneurial training. DFID specifically chose to focus its education spending, through the ACCELERE! programme, on primary education. This was due to proposed Belgian and World Bank investment into vocational and secondary education.

62. The ACCELERE! programme, and work on improving education in DRC more generally, faces a great challenge given the poor state of the education sector in Congo. What is clear from the evidence we have received is that any interventions must work closely with communities, while also encouraging the government of DRC to improve its investment into education and to follow through on its promise of fees-free education, with assistance if necessary. DFID’s collaboration with USAID is a good step, and it should also make sure that it coordinates its work with the Belgian government and the World Bank so that education support is being provided to children of all ages and no one is being left behind.

108 [Q95](#)

109 Wonder Foundation ([DRC 14](#)) p 1

110 Ibid

4 Women and girls

63. Women and girls in DRC, as in many parts of the world, face additional and specific development challenges in all of the areas we have already covered. Among the terms of reference for our inquiry, the question on gender equality and violence against women and girls was one of those to be addressed in written evidence most frequently. We are therefore dealing with these issues separately, although DFID incorporates gender equality and gender-specific considerations into all of its programming,

Empowerment of women and girls

64. A major factor in the challenges which women and girls in DRC face, including the high levels of sexual and gender-based violence, is the relatively low status they hold in society. Political participation by women in DRC is particularly low. Only 44 of the 500 members of DRC's National Assembly are women, a percentage of just under 9% which is one of the lowest in the world.¹¹¹ Despite this, there is a definite desire on the part of the Congolese people for an improvement in the role of women in society. Recent polling indicated that around 80% of Congolese people agree that women should run for political office.¹¹²

65. We have received compelling evidence that DFID should work to increase the level of political participation by women. Tom O'Bryan, from Harvard University's Congo Democracy Project, wrote in his written evidence that "Women remain 'critically under-represented in public life in the DRC', and the glass ceiling in Congolese politics will not be broken overnight." He argued that "DFID and other international donors can do more to support programs that provide training for women seeking to run as candidates in future elections and for campaigns that promote women's leadership."¹¹³ Councillor Jean-Roger Kaseki, a Congolese human rights activist, supported this, saying that "we need to help them feel confident about coming forward to stand as candidates in elections at all levels."¹¹⁴

66. DFID told us in its written evidence that it "takes a systematic approach to tackling gender inequality across all our programmes. This includes regular gender equality reviews in each programme".¹¹⁵ Its only standalone programme focusing on women and girls is called La Pépinière (French for 'greenhouse' or 'incubator'). This is a £3.8 million project focusing on the empowerment of adolescent girls. The first phase of this involved a Girl-Led Research Unit of adolescent girls in Kinshasa to provide a 'girls perspective' on how they can best be supported. We met with the girls involved when we visited DRC, and they presented to us some of their findings around the challenges that poverty and the risk of violence present to adolescent girls in DRC. DFID told us, "The current programme aims to generate robust evidence on what works and what doesn't to economically empower adolescent girls. It will underpin a second, scaled-up phase to be implemented from late 2017."¹¹⁶ This involves conducting mini-pilots of interventions, and feeding through to DFID's other programmes. Marie-Claire Faray, a Congolese women's activist,

111 Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Women in national parliaments', accessed 3 February 2017

112 Congo Research Group, *Impasse in the Congo: What Do the People Think?* (October 2016)

113 Congo Democracy Project, Harvard University ([DRC 02](#)) para 6.3

114 [Q7](#)

115 Department for International Development ([DRC 10](#)) para 24

116 *Ibid*, para 25

was cautiously optimistic about the programme. She told us, “It could be effective if it’s a long-term programme and if it is based where the needs are.” She did, though, point out that, “It is based in the Gombe area, which is a very affluent and luxurious area of Kinshasa. These types of programmes need to be contextualised to where the service users are located, for instance in deprived areas of Kinshasa, and localised in other provinces where the need is.”¹¹⁷

67. Adam Smith International (ASI) noted that the small-scale nature of La Pépinière’s work, and the fact that it is confined to Kinshasa, limits “to some extent the transferability of findings to programmes focused on working-aged women across several geographic regions in DRC.” It did, however, say that “collaboration between programmes is definitely improving” and that it looks forward to working with DFID DRC on this.¹¹⁸ ASI’s own Élan programme includes a focus on women and girls, through “economically empowering poor women through broader market development approaches”. It gives examples, such as “helping to make the commercial case among commercial maize farms for engaging women on the same terms as men”, as well as supporting “large numbers of women subscribers to gain access to micro-finance services and greater decision-making influence over incomes.”¹¹⁹

68. **DFID has made a good start in its work on empowering women and girls. The mainstreaming of tackling gender equality through all of DFID’s programmes is particularly welcome; this mainstreaming and the sharing of knowledge on women’s empowerment between programmes should continue and increase. There is now a need for more to be done on the political participation at all levels of women in DRC, which could have wider benefits to socio-cultural norms that are connected to the broader issue of promoting gender equality. *The political empowerment of women should form a core part of DFID’s work, both during the election period in DRC and as part of its peacebuilding and democratic governance work going forward. In addition, lessons learned from the La Pépinière programme should be carefully implemented in order to have a real impact on more of the poorest and most marginalised girls and should expand beyond Gombe and Kinshasa.***

Sexual and gender-based violence

69. Violence against women and girls is a particular problem in DRC. A report in the American Journal of Public Health in 2011 found that somewhere between 407,000 and 434,000 women reported having been raped in the preceding 12 months.¹²⁰ Specific statistics are difficult to gather due to DRC’s size and lack of infrastructure, but evidence we received confirms that the levels are extremely high.¹²¹ In 2010 the UN’s special representative on sexual violence, perhaps indelicately, called DRC “the rape capital of the world”.¹²²

117 [Q51](#)

118 Adam Smith International ([DRC 09](#)) para 4

119 *Ibid*, para 3

120 Amber Peterman, Tia Palermo and Caryn Bredenkamp, *Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, American Journal of Public Health (June 2011)

121 For example, see Department for International Development ([DRC 10](#)), Tearfund ([DRC 03](#)), and International Rescue Committee UK ([DRC 05](#))

122 BBC, *UN official calls DR Congo ‘rape capital of the world’* (April 2010)

70. Evidence suggests that a major cause of the high levels of sexual violence has been the ongoing conflict in DRC, and the associated militarisation of society and breakdown of the rule of law. Marie-Claire Faray, a Congolese women’s rights activist, also told us about the longer term context of gender inequality and violence:

I am not going to say that this crisis of sexual violence and the lack of participation is a cultural problem. It is a phenomenon that has been effected through hundreds of years of history of slavery, colonialisation and dictatorship, and now this repetition of war and lack of rule of law in the Congo. That is where you see that the lack of participation of women, sexual violence and gender-based inequality are rampant, because of the lack of the rule of law in the Congo.¹²³

She therefore argued that “Gender equality can only be achieved through the rule of law in the Congo; that is it. The fact that the state is weak and institutions are weak means we will not achieve gender equality.”¹²⁴

71. We have been told that the perpetration of violence against women is, unfortunately, socially tolerated in DRC. Tearfund wrote that “Such violence is strongly linked to gender inequalities and socio-cultural norms, and is particularly tied up with strong ideas about masculinity, the breakdown of traditional structures, and the militarisation of society.”¹²⁵ Bilge Sahin, a development academic at SOAS, echoed this in her oral evidence:

a general understanding is that masculinity was constructed through the practice of dominance and authority over women. It assumes certain acts of violence as natural and a legitimate right that men have, especially when it comes to domestic violence. [...] Domestic violence and rape in the household is a very common thing, but this is understood as a normal part of the right that men have.¹²⁶

72. Together with the lack of the rule of law, this has created a culture of impunity within DRC. Bilge Sahin told us that “it is very difficult to reach justice.” In addition to cultural barriers, she cited the poor infrastructure and difficulty in getting to a court, followed by the problem of gathering sufficient evidence to achieve a conviction. Achieving a prosecution can be hard within societal hierarchies and, even if a conviction is achieved, “they are all about low-ranking soldiers or scapegoats who are not in the attention of the commander anymore. Unfortunately, no proper prosecution has been made of powerful authorities or soldiers so far in the DRC. This is the first thing. If your perpetrator is going to get caught, you have to hope that it is not someone important; otherwise it is really difficult for it to happen.” Finally, she highlighted that “reparation is not happening. So far, I have never come across a case where reparation has been paid.”¹²⁷

73. DFID’s support to victims of sexual and gender-based violence is predominantly through its humanitarian and health programmes. DRC is “a focus country for the FCO’s Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI).”¹²⁸ This means that the UK

123 [Q37](#)

124 [Q53](#)

125 Tearfund ([DRC 03](#)) para 3.2

126 [Q37](#)

127 [Q42](#)

128 Department for International Development ([DRC 10](#)) para 26

Government is working to lobby the government of DRC on this issue. Organisations which DFID supports, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, also work strongly in this area, including in training the Congolese armed forces with explicit mention of combatting sexual violence.¹²⁹ Finally, DFID’s urban water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programme in eastern DRC is designed to reduce violence against women and girls by providing safer access to water points—a common location for violent attacks as women often go there alone; results have already been achieved on this with “an increased perception by female users that access to water points is safer” in supported areas.¹³⁰

74. Marie-Claire Faray criticised DFID’s work in this area, and argued that it should make greater use of existing civil society organisations:

Having looked at DFID for over 10 years now, we feel that the sectoral and thematic approach might not give long-term solutions or have a long-term impact. They have to really target women in specific projects, contextualising the needs on the ground. They have to trust organisations that are on the ground—Congolese women’s organisations—and find out what their needs are. They already have all these documents. The reports are there. All they need to do now is tap into the projects.¹³¹

In written evidence, CAFOD made similar criticisms. It told us that “DFID has begun to focus on giving big grants (over £10m) to international organisations, in many cases in the form of contracts. This makes it very difficult for local and faith based organisations within the DRC to access funding. This approach is hampering DFID’s ability to [reach] the remotest most marginalised communities.” It recommended that “DFID should build local capacity to do problem solving and implement effective solutions”, that “DFID should reaffirm the principles of partnership and increase the amount of funding that is given directly to local actors”, and that “Funding mechanisms must have the flexibility to allow civil society to build institutional capacity so that they can be credible and powerful actors in their own right.”¹³²

75. When our predecessor Committee inquired into *Working Effectively in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: DRC and Rwanda*, it looked at and highlighted the issue of violence against women and girls in DRC. It concluded that, “Violence against women and girls is a big problem in the DRC, especially in the East, where it is used as a weapon of war. It has multiple causes, some of which are cultural. These must be tackled and will require behavioural changes in men and female empowerment.” As a result, it recommended that violence against women and girls should be DFID’s top priority in DRC and that, as part of this, DFID should “fund standalone projects for reducing and responding to violence against women and girls, such as those supported by the IRC.” Finally, it recommended that DFID should include the reduction of violence against women and girls in its DRC results framework.¹³³

129 [Q46](#)

130 Department for International Development ([DRC 10](#)) para 27

131 [Q52](#)

132 CAFOD ([DRC 23](#)) paras 40–43

133 International Development Committee, Twelfth Report of Session 2010–12, *Working Effectively in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: DRC and Rwanda*, HC 1133

76. Sexual and gender-based violence is a particularly serious problem for DRC, exacerbated by decades of conflict. While we welcome the fact that DFID has incorporated support to victims into its health and WASH programmes, we still think that there is more that it can do in this area. We are surprised that it has not implemented our predecessor Committee's recommendation that violence against women and girls should be DFID's top priority in DRC. We are further disappointed that DFID is not also implementing dedicated programmes on violence against women and girls through civil society and smaller local partners. It is important that DFID is willing to support low-cost but effective programmes.

77. We strongly reiterate our predecessor Committee's recommendation that violence against women and girls should be DFID's top priority in DRC, and that it should be funding standalone outcome focused projects. DFID should also incorporate a greater focus on eliminating violence against women and girls into its humanitarian and peacebuilding programmes. DFID should work with local civil society to strengthen the rule of law, change attitudes towards women and combat the culture of impunity. Indicators on violence against women and girls should be included in DFID's assessments of those programmes, as well as on DFID DRC's results page.

Sexual violence against men and boys

78. It has also been pointed out to us that, while the conversation around sexual violence in DRC often focuses on violence against women and girls, men and boys are often also targeted. This is linked to the use of sexual violence as a tool of power in conflict. Sarah Cotton of the ICRC, told us that "We see this in the work that we do through various listening houses, which I am happy to talk about later, as well as the outreach we do within the communities. Although there is a link, and the other panellists have adequately described that, I would make that broader point about violence against men and boys as well. It is not as widespread, but still a significant problem."¹³⁴ The ICRC also highlighted this in its Special Appeal: Strengthening the Response to Sexual Violence 2016. Bilge Sahin emphasised the importance of considering men and boys when tackling sexual violence, as this is important to the solution. She said that "There is a misunderstanding that 'women and girls' is equal to 'gender'. This is very problematic because, when we define the problem in the wrong way, as being a problem for women and girls, we are missing the solution part. As Sarah mentioned, we are missing the boys and men, for example."¹³⁵ We note this issue to bring it to DFID's attention and ensure that sexual violence against men and boys is not forgotten.

134 [Q37](#)

135 [Q52](#)

5 Private sector development and corruption

Anti-corruption

79. DRC has very high levels of corruption. The private sector in DRC, and the country's natural resources, have traditionally been exploited by the political elite and foreign nationals, with very little benefit to the Congolese people and local communities. DFID told us that “Widespread corruption and poor state revenue and budgetary management constrain social expenditure and harm the business climate. Weak institutions and a lack of accountability create a climate of impunity, breeding predatory and corrupt behaviour. In the absence of improvements in governance, sustained progress in peacebuilding and statebuilding will be extremely difficult to achieve.”¹³⁶ Corruption has a major impact in DRC on both public revenues and the ability of the private sector to operate, as they are often required to pay informal charges.¹³⁷

80. Global Witness's evidence to us, both oral and written, focused heavily on their investigations into corruption in DRC. One of their investigations, *Out of Africa*,¹³⁸ documented “how a series of suspicious mining deals was struck with anonymous offshore companies that cost DRC \$1.36 billion in potential revenues. In every case these deals were routed through British tax havens and often involved London-listed companies.”¹³⁹ Peter Jones, a campaigner in Global Witness's DRC team, went into more detail about how this works, telling us that:

mining and oil assets are being sold at very low rates, sometimes at 5% of their market value. They tend to be sold, in the situations that we have looked at, to offshore shell companies often incorporated in United Kingdom overseas territories and Crown dependencies. This is a huge problem. These shell companies have tended to use the assets to strike extremely lucrative onward deals, so to either flip the asset or strike a more complicated arrangement where they remain as a joint venture partner but their investment is protected by complicated share options and loan agreements.¹⁴⁰

81. These deals were struck without DFID noticing, despite it having an ongoing mining sector reform programme at the time, called Promines. It is suggested that two FTSE 100 companies (Glencore and ENRC, the latter of which is being investigated for its involvement by the Serious Fraud Office) were participants in the deals. Global Witness alleged in its written evidence that “when authorities in DRC and the UK were confronted with evidence of corruption in DRC's mining sector, Promines was used as a fig leaf of reform and an excuse to dismiss concerns. DFID exited Promines in August 2014 due to the project's poor performance.”¹⁴¹ Peter Jones did tell us that “DFID is much more

136 Department for International Development ([DRC 10](#)) para 6

137 [Q70](#)

138 Global Witness, *Out of Africa* (May 2016)

139 Global Witness ([DRC 11](#)) para 6

140 [Q61](#)

141 Global Witness ([DRC 11](#)) para 9

interested in these kinds of suspicious deals now. It is looking into them.”¹⁴² He argued for the UK overseas territories to publish registers of beneficial owners, as “The first thing to tackle is the secrecy that is provided.”¹⁴³ Unfortunately the UK Government rejected our recommendation that it do everything it can to persuade the overseas territories to do so, and has so far failed to act on the other recommendations we made on this topic in our Report on *Tackling corruption overseas*.¹⁴⁴

82. Another of Global Witness’s recent investigations, *River of Gold*, found that a Chinese company had exploited a gold rush in eastern DRC, with little to no benefit for the local community.¹⁴⁵ A 2014 film which is available on Netflix, *Virunga: The Movie*, raised the similar issue of attempts by a British oil company, SOCO International to explore for oil in the Virunga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (and therefore in contravention of Congolese law). It also made allegations of bribery and corruption by SOCO International, including of payments to armed groups, which are supported by investigations by Human Rights Watch and Global Witness.¹⁴⁶ Global Witness’s written evidence to us also raised a number of issues surrounding forestry. We draw its submission to DFID’s attention, and expect that DFID will take the concerns raised in it seriously.

83. The serious effects of corruption are clear in DRC, where it has cost the potential public revenue vast amounts of money which could be spent on development in other areas. UK aid spending in DRC will not reach its full impact until corruption there is eliminated. Allegations of the involvement of British companies in this, including in actions which are fuelling the conflict through funding armed groups, are extremely serious. The fact that DFID was not alert to this is especially concerning, and lessons must be learned so that this does not happen again in future without the UK Government noticing. Failure to do so could give the impression that the UK Government turns a blind eye, and could damage its standing as a donor in DRC.

84. Policy coherence, between domestic UK laws and the UK’s development agenda, is of the utmost importance. The UK Government should urgently produce its long-awaited Anti-Corruption Strategy. UK laws on corruption must be as tight as possible, to make sure that it is possible to bring to justice those in the UK who are seriously damaging development efforts abroad. In light of the allegations we have raised above, the UK Government should undertake a full review and report back to us on the powers it has to hold to account companies registered in the UK and involved in corrupt practices in countries such as DRC, and what action it proposes to take to address this.

85. We have previously looked at the issue of corruption in our inquiry on *Tackling corruption overseas*,¹⁴⁷ and we reiterate all of our conclusions and recommendations from that Report, especially that the UK Government should be doing everything it can to persuade the Overseas Territories to increase transparency by creating public beneficial ownership registers. It remains our belief that stronger diplomatic efforts are required of the UK in this regard.

142 [Q73](#)

143 [Q72](#)

144 International Development Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2016–17, [Tackling corruption overseas](#), HC 111

145 Global Witness, [River of Gold](#) (July 2016)

146 Virunga National Park ([DRC 24](#)) para 23

147 International Development Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2016–17, [Tackling corruption overseas](#), HC 111

Private sector and business environment reform

Élan RDC

86. The private sector in DRC is poorly developed. In the words of Adam Smith International (ASI), which implements DFID’s major private sector development programme in DRC, the business environment “is characterised by few large and often politically connected players, and a multitude of small, often informal private sector actors.”¹⁴⁸ As with all aspects of DRC’s development which we cover in this Report, the private sector has been badly damaged by conflict. DRC’s poor infrastructure, high levels of corruption, and the embryonic nature of its financial sector provide further constraints on business. Furthermore, DRC’s economy has been badly hit in recent years by a slump in commodity prices. DRC is, as a result, ranked 184 out of 190 on the World Bank’s ‘ease of doing business index’.¹⁴⁹

87. DFID is providing just over £100 million over a 10-year period to private sector development.¹⁵⁰ The core of this work is the Élan RDC market development programme, implemented by ASI and worth just over £50 million. Élan takes a Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) approach. This means that it aims to develop markets so that they “function more effectively, sustainably and beneficially for poor people, building their capacities and offering them the opportunity to enhance their lives”.¹⁵¹ In particular, ASI identifies its approach as:

- “Looking for innovation”—encouraging investment into sectors which are perceived to be too risky (including in coffee, financial products for poorer people, and renewable energy);
- “Building capacity of the enterprises to adopt new business models”; and
- “Market research and analysis”.¹⁵²

From this approach, it expects “to improve incomes for over 1.3m poor Congolese, generating a cumulative income increase for them over £126m.”¹⁵³

88. DFID’s latest Annual Review of this project is positive about what it is already achieving. DFID told us in written evidence that it found that “over 150,000 people had been reached by initial interventions, and of these over 36,000 had already achieved an increase in income.”¹⁵⁴ It did not specify whether those reached were the poorest and most marginalised, although Élan RDC does have a clear focus on gender equality, or the extent of the income increase. The review also identified “early signs of systemic change in terms of market actors adopting and investing in new business models”.¹⁵⁵ Luqman Ahmad, Project Director for Élan RDC, told us that, “As a programme that has been operating for three years, we have experienced a lot: everything from the M23 in Goma to Mai-Mai in

148 Adam Smith International (DRC 09) para 6

149 World Bank, ‘[Doing Business Economy Rankings](#)’, accessed 3 February 2017

150 DFID DevTracker, ‘[Private Sector Development programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)’, accessed 3 February 2017

151 DFID, [A synthesis of the Making Markets Work for the Poor \(M4P\) approach](#) (October 2008)

152 Adam Smith International (DRC 09) para 7

153 Ibid, para 10

154 Department for International Development (DRC 10) para 32

155 DFID, [Annual Review—Private Sector Development in DRC](#) (March 2016)

Katanga.” Regarding the possibility of a flare-up on 19 December, he said “We are planning for various scenarios, including a potential pause.”¹⁵⁶ Despite these reassurances, we are not entirely convinced that the Élan RDC programme is as resilient as DFID’s others in DRC. Private sector development work still appears to us to be particularly dependent on the business environment and vulnerable to set-backs from conflict.

89. Tearfund has, however, been critical of the Élan programme. It told us that Élan “appears to be focused on private sector investment with outcomes trickling down to the poor (excluding any third sector partnerships). They use a short-sighted M4P approach that excludes development organizations, civil society, and smallholders - two essential actors in the value chain. Historically in the DRC, this model has widened the economic divide resulting in further marginalization of the poor.” Tearfund advocates the importance of creating links “trading partners who can clearly link their profits with transparent engagement with farmers and speciality markets”, as well as exploiting the “strong contextual knowledge” of development organizations and local farming cooperatives.¹⁵⁷ ASI disputed these criticisms, arguing that “the programme works with a lot of international and national NGOs” and bases its interventions “on our assessments of the benefits being realised.”¹⁵⁸ ***We expect confirmation from DFID that only the poorest and most marginalised are being measured in the Élan RDC programme’s targets, and of the scale of the income increases being achieved.***

90. Élan also has a small, but incidental, focus on anti-corruption, with Luqman Ahmad telling us:

When we work with the private sector, we try to get them to engage the Government on these issues [corruption and illicit trade]. When we first started our work in this area we thought there was no chance that we would be able to affect any of these things. We have had a number of instances in which we have been able to see how, by mobilising people together and getting them into dialogue with Government, you can have small effects.¹⁵⁹

A number of written submissions to the Committee advocated for anti-corruption to be a high priority in DFID DRC’s programmes. Global Witness told us that “Given the significance of the natural resources sector in DRC, the UK Government should prioritise natural resources and anti-corruption measures in its DRC programmes.”¹⁶⁰ Action Against Hunger also stated that “building mechanisms for accountability to tackle corruption” should be “among the most important priorities for DFID in all their work in the DRC.”¹⁶¹

91. ***We believe that there is a more fundamental issue surrounding support for economic development. We believe that we should see much tighter return on investment criteria. Either the majority of the funding should be in the form of returnable capital which can then be re-invested by DFID at a later date or—if it is given in the form of grants—we should see returns of up to 10 times the investment. So in future economic development***

156 [Q75](#)

157 Tearfund ([DRC 03](#)) p 2

158 [Q62](#)

159 [Q70](#)

160 Global Witness ([DRC 11](#)) para 21

161 Action Against Hunger ([DRC 20](#)) para 8

projects costing £1 million should yield £10 million over the course of 4–5 years in either a) increased incomes; b) additional non-DFID investment; or c) very carefully calculated non-cash benefits, such as improvements to health and education.

Essor

92. The Essor project is the £35 million element of DFID’s private sector development work focused on business environment reform and anti-corruption. It is a flexible facility, managed by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC), which provides support when required. The first stage of this has been focused on implementation of OHADA, a treaty which is harmonising business law across a number of west and central African states. It is hoped that this will drive investment into the region. This has been, as of the last annual review of the project in March 2016, the only component of the Essor programme.¹⁶² Essor has therefore been very slow in getting off the ground, including in helping with implementation of OHADA, and was put on a performance improvement plan by DFID last year.

93. Given the importance and scale of the Essor programme, we are very concerned that it had not made more progress when we visited DRC. We acknowledge that there may have been better progress since our visit. However, we recommend that DFID undertakes an immediate evaluation of the programme. If it remains ineffective, we recommend its closure and that DFID consults on more effective ways to assist the reform of the business environment and tackling corruption.

CDC Group investments

94. In addition to DFID’s work through the Élan programme, CDC—the UK’s development finance institution, which is wholly owned by DFID—has also invested in DRC. CDC specifically invests “in countries where the private sector is weak and jobs are scarce, and in sectors where growth leads to jobs.”¹⁶³ To achieve this it provides long-term, patient capital which does not require a return on investment as quickly as most investors would. In North Kivu it has committed US\$9 million to Virunga Energy, “a hydro-electric power business backed by UK charity, The Virunga Foundation.” This investment aims to provide electricity to an area with only “3% electrification”, and therefore to “promote the establishment of business activity that will in turn create jobs in the long-term.”¹⁶⁴ We visited the hydro-electric power station which has already been built by Virunga Energy, and were impressed at the opportunities that it is providing to local communities and the region.

95. This investment has been supported in written evidence to us by other organisations. WWF-UK told us that it “had been suggesting that UK development support be directed at projects such as this hydro-electric scheme which the Dalberg report¹⁶⁵ suggested as part of a viable long term development plan for Virunga, a plan which provides local employment but keeps revenues in the local area.”¹⁶⁶ The Virunga National Park and Virunga Alliance told us that hydro-electric power “aims to offer an alternative to

162 DFID, *Annual Review—Private Sector Development in DRC* (March 2016)

163 CDC Group (DRC 06) para 2

164 Ibid, para 6

165 WWF, *The economic value of Virunga National Park* (July 2013)

166 WWF UK (DRC 13) para 26

expensive and unsustainable charcoal, which is often used by local communities as fuel. The illegal charcoal trade is a significant challenge for the park, it has resulted in vast areas of forest being destroyed through the burning trees for the production of charcoal.”¹⁶⁷

96. Other CDC investments in DRC have been more controversial. CDC invested in 2013 into Feronia, “an agricultural production and processing business focused on palm oil plantations and arable farming.” It claimed in written evidence that this “supports the ongoing rehabilitation of an existing 102-year-old plantation business” and “contributes to the DRC’s reduction of imports of staple goods and to local food security by increasing the availability of edible oil and crop products in the country.”¹⁶⁸ Feronia has been accused of paying very low wages and of illegally occupying land, in reports from organisations including RIAO-RDC—a Congolese NGO, GRAIN—a European land rights organisation, and War on Want.¹⁶⁹ In a media response to these allegations in 2015, CDC argued that it was rehabilitating the company and stated that “it was trying to improve the pay and conditions of the 3,500 workers, but their impoverishment had been caused by decades of war, under-investment and by physical isolation.”¹⁷⁰

97. **The potential for CDC investments in DRC is high, as the country’s particularly difficult business environment drives away other investors but rewards CDC’s approach of patient capital. DRC’s wealth in natural resources has great potential to have a positive impact on poverty reduction, and peacebuilding, through the creation of stable jobs. As such DRC is exactly the sort of country which CDC should be focusing on.**¹⁷¹ We commend it for its investment in Virunga Energy. However, given the poor state of DRC’s private sector, high levels of corruption, and DRC’s history of being exploited for private gain, CDC must be extra careful not to exacerbate these issues. *We recommend that CDC publish a full account of its investment in Feronia, addressing concerns about wages, conditions and land disputes.*

167 Virunga National Park ([DRC 24](#)) para 12

168 CDC Group ([DRC 06](#)) para 9

169 War On Want, *Land conflicts and shady finances plague DR Congo palm oil company backed by development funds* (November 2016)

170 Guardian, *UK development finance arm accused of bankrolling ‘agro-colonialism’ in Congo* (June 2015)

171 As our predecessor Committee recommended in its 2011 Report on [The future of CDC](#).

6 Conclusion

98. DRC remains a very difficult development context, suffering from many of the most acute development issues. However, there is now hope of a clear and peaceful resolution to the ongoing political crisis and for elections this year. DFID DRC has continued to implement a large and comprehensive development programme, covering basic services, humanitarian needs, private sector development, and peacebuilding. In examining these programmes, we have seen that there is great requirement in DRC for development assistance and UK aid there is making a real difference.

99. In such a difficult context as DRC, DFID is to be generally commended for the way in which it is working, although we hope to see increases in the priority it gives to both anti-corruption and violence against women and girls. With DFID's commitment to spending at least 50% of its budget in fragile and conflict-affected states, there are clear lessons which can be drawn from its work in DRC. Most importantly, we would like to highlight that progress in fragile states can be slow, but it is necessary and therefore requires a comprehensive long-term commitment and programme of work from donors. Difficult contexts also require good local knowledge, which can most effectively be achieved through civil society and strong local partners.

100. Changing circumstances in countries such as DRC make the flexibility and resilience of programming of the utmost importance. DFID has responded well to a political crisis, working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to remain alive to the risks posed to its programmes. The flexibility of its programmes allowed it to prepare and adapt appropriately as the situation changed. This flexibility has also been a key part of building the resilience of DFID's programmes in DRC, allowing them to withstand periods of difficulty, as well as political and conflict shock, without development gains backsliding.

101. *A high level of flexibility is needed for effective working in difficult contexts and fragile states, and should be a core part of DFID's future working in all fragile states. DFID should continue to afford a high degree of latitude to its DRC country office, and approve flexible programmes accordingly.*

102. We are particularly pleased to see how successful DFID's eastern office in DRC has been, which followed from a recommendation of our predecessor Committee, in allowing DFID to have a member of staff operating and coordinating much closer to an area where DFID spends a large amount of money. There is still a large amount of the country which remains difficult for DFID staff to frequently get to, due to the size of the country; both areas where DFID has programmes and where it does not. *We therefore urge DFID to consider its geographic reach across the country, and consider extending this model and opening another local office closer to the centre of the country.*

Appendix: Programme from the Committee's visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo

Day 1	
Evening	Arrival in DRC
	Informal meeting with DFID Head of Office and Senior Leadership Team

Day 2	
Morning	Overview of DFID DRC and Visit Programme
	Visit to 'La Pepiniere'—DFID Adolescent Girls empowerment programme
	Meeting with the Minister of Education
	Meeting with the President of the National Assembly
Afternoon	Lunch with DFID Private Sector Partners
	Meeting with DRC Parliamentary Network
	Meeting with the Prime Minister of the DRC
Evening	Reception with DFID Implementing Partners, other Donors and key stakeholders

Day 3	Group 1	Group 2
Morning	Flight for field visit to Goma, Eastern DRC	Flight for field visit to Kananga (Kasai Central)
	Goma visit Overview with Staff	Meeting with the Governor of Kasai Province and provincial Ministers
Afternoon	Meeting with the Governor of North Kivu	Visit to the Provincial Assembly and meeting with the President of the Provincial Assembly
	Political and Security briefing with MONUSCO	Meeting with DFID regional implementing partners: IMA, SANRU, UNICEF, PSI

Day 4	Group 1	Group 2
Morning	Field visit to Matebe (CDC funded Hydropower Facility)	Field visit to Tshikaji health zone: Meeting with village Chief and community Visit to health centre Visit to school and nearby Households looking at Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Meeting with local women Visit to the referral general hospital of Tshikaji health zone and to the nurses' training school
Afternoon	Visit to DFID funded UNICEF IDP site	Visit to school (Complexe Scolaire Mamu Lumingu) to see the malaria programme: Welcoming speeches and short play Meeting with staff and parents
	Visit to ELAN (DFID Private Sector Programme)	Visit to Megatron hybrid solar energy scheme
Evening	Dinner with DFID Humanitarian Partners	Dinner with the Governor of Kasai province and key provincial figures

Day 5	Group 1	Group 2
Morning	Mercy Corp site visit followed by a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Tour	Visit to Tshibwabwa Community to see WASH facilities and to discuss nutrition and family planning
	Visit to ICRC Hospital and war surgery team	Visit to local police station to meet with the Dynamique Communautaire
		Visit to SNCC (railway) and meeting with regional director
Afternoon	Lunch with civil society partners and peace builders	Flight to Kinshasa
	Flight to Kinshasa	
Evening	Flight to UK	

Conclusions and recommendations

Politics and conflict

1. We support DFID's decision to delay disbursement of any funding through PACEC. This money needed to be available in case of a rapid mobilisation towards elections taking place. As this did not happen it was a good example of DFID's flexibility and of it taking seriously its responsibility to spend money wisely. With the serious prospect of elections taking place this year, DFID must now be ready to provide support rapidly and at short notice. Following the example of 2011, legitimacy risks surrounding the elections remain high; the international community must not allow the political crisis in DRC to be extended due to a lack of enough resources to hold elections. (Paragraph 13)
2. *DFID should now be working with UNDP to ensure the efficacy of, and international confidence in, PACEC so that it is able to effectively support CENI through the process of updating the electoral roll and carrying out elections when preparations begin in earnest. International coordination and support are required to avoid a repeat of the 2011 elections, and the UK should take a leading role in mobilising this.* (Paragraph 14)
3. We are convinced of the benefits of capacity-building work with political parties in a fragmented political system like in DRC. Strong political parties in DRC also provide resilience against abuses by the elite, and empower citizens to hold their government to account. Such work is a necessary step if DRC is to become a fully functioning democracy. We understand the difficulties of doing this, but consider that such work should be a long-term goal for DFID. DFID's democratic governance work should be working towards building the *capacity of political parties from a grassroots level and politically empowering the Congolese people. We hope to see continuing work on governance by DFID.* (Paragraph 15)
4. We are gravely concerned about the human rights situation in DRC. We support the UK's efforts at a European level to secure sanctions against key Congolese officials. DFID's work to support human rights defenders is welcome, but a deterioration in the human rights situation was easily foreseeable. Therefore, in contrast to DFID's justified hesitancy to support PACEC and CENI, its human rights work should have begun much earlier and must get up to speed much faster. (Paragraph 19)
5. *The UK Government should continue to push for those responsible for human rights violations in DRC to be held to account, including further sanctions at an international level if necessary. We hope to see a rapid increase in DFID DRC's human rights work and a clear focus on human rights in its new Country Operational Plan.* (Paragraph 20)
6. DFID must be vigilant about human rights abuses by state actors with whom it is working in DRC, and must take action when it discovers that these have occurred. This action must also be proportionate and respond to local circumstances. In the case of the security sector accountability and police reform programme a blanket reaction halted progress on improving human rights elsewhere in DRC. A more targeted and flexible approach could have allowed the positive elements of the

programme to continue, while closing those linked to abuses. We recognise that this is a fine line to tread, but DFID should make sure that it is making decisions based upon all of the complexities of a situation, and should avoid knee-jerk reactions to negative media coverage. *We urge DFID to explore future work on police reform in areas where the police have not been implicated in human rights violations.* (Paragraph 22)

7. DFID DRC took the risk of a potential deterioration in the political situation seriously, and planned for possible effects on its programming appropriately. Of necessity, given the ongoing conflict in the east of DRC, its programmes have been designed, as far as is possible, to be resilient to shock. Their flexibility allows them to adapt to changing circumstances and, combined with the use of strong partners with good local knowledge, have enabled DFID to continue working through a volatile period. While we hope that the worst of the situation has passed, we recommend that DFID remains vigilant. (Paragraph 26)
8. Peacebuilding in DRC requires a deep understanding of the context in the country. As a large country, conflict in different parts of the country has very different causes and solutions, and DFID must engage local partners who can help it to understand these. More time is needed to tell if the renewed I4S will provide these solutions, but we welcome it as a long-term and cooperative approach to stabilisation. We saw some good examples of peacebuilding work funded by DFID in DRC, especially in working with communities. *However, even as DFID refocuses onto the I4S, we recommend it diversify its efforts and make sure to continue bilateral peacebuilding programmes, especially those which work with local communities to understand and address the local drivers of conflict.* (Paragraph 31)
9. The presence of a peacekeeping force is a crucial part of keeping the security situation in DRC stable. Low levels of public trust in MONUSCO's operations are therefore deeply worrying. We recognise the scale of the task facing it, but do not think that it has been doing enough to protect civilians over the last few years, especially around Beni. It must be willing and given the resources to venture outside of the Kivu regions to properly bring to account those responsible for civilian massacres, and to restore stability. *The UK must advocate at the international level for MONUSCO to become more proactive in protecting civilians, including flexibility in how it deploys and where it operates, and should be working in DRC to help it better communicate what it can and cannot do. This must include strong lobbying of the US administration to ensure that MONUSCO remains properly resourced. Given the general atmosphere of mistrust about foreign involvement in DRC, the UK should also be making sure that it is properly communicating its own role to the Congolese people.* (Paragraph 35)
10. The scale of DFID's humanitarian support to DRC reflects the scale of the humanitarian challenge there. If this unfortunate necessity is ever to be reduced, it must come alongside a comprehensive development programme of peacebuilding, democratic governance work, economic development and building livelihoods. DFID's humanitarian work in DRC therefore cannot be seen in isolation, but instead must be intrinsically linked with its broader programme of work. In addition to meeting basic short-term humanitarian needs, DFID should be using its humanitarian work in DRC to work towards longer term development goals. (Paragraph 41)

11. *Given the very protracted nature of the humanitarian crisis in DRC, DFID should work to close the gap between humanitarian and development work. It should ensure that, beyond simply meeting basic needs, all of its development programmes in DRC are reaching those who are affected by the humanitarian crisis. It should further look to work through programmes which tackle the causes of and provide solutions to the crisis, or which build resilience to shocks. In order to achieve this, DFID's humanitarian spending in DRC, other than contributions to the pooled fund, should be embedded into all of its other programmes, which should have explicit consideration of how they are helping to address the humanitarian crisis. (Paragraph 42)*
12. We note the substantial challenges of building infrastructure, especially roads, in an area beset by violent conflict. Despite this difficulty, the poor infrastructure in DRC itself is an obstacle to providing humanitarian support, stabilisation activities, access to services and livelihoods. While DFID underestimated the challenge in its Roads in the East project, it should take the opportunity to learn the lessons and improve future work in this area, rather than be put off entirely. (Paragraph 47)
13. *We recommend that donors should work towards providing further support to building roads in eastern DRC, but before doing so, however, they should build up the knowledge and expertise required to properly implement such a project, and to make more accurate assessments of security context and maintenance responsibilities. Donors should work together to correct the underinvestment in this area, but this must be done in coordination with the I4S and MONUSCO as part of wider stabilisation activities if it is to be successful. (Paragraph 48)*

Basic services

14. *DFID should put in place a way of measuring the sustainability of its WASH programmes in DRC beyond the life of the programmes. (Paragraph 52)*
15. DFID should be proud of the work it is doing on health and hygiene in DRC. Its work through local partners, in a flexible manner and on long timescales, has allowed it to achieve real and life-changing results. The ASSP programme in particular is a good model that DFID should draw lessons from for how to implement health programmes in fragile and conflict-affected environments. *Given the results it has already achieved, DFID should be ambitious and seek to expand the geographical scale of ASSP at an appropriate time or when it is designing its successor programme. (Paragraph 57)*
16. The ACCELERE! programme, and work on improving education in DRC more generally, faces a great challenge given the poor state of the education sector in Congo. What is clear from the evidence we have received is that any interventions must work closely with communities, while also encouraging the government of DRC to improve its investment into education and to follow through on its promise of fees-free education, with assistance if necessary. DFID's collaboration with USAID is a good step, and it should also make sure that it coordinates its work with the Belgian government and the World Bank so that education support is being provided to children of all ages and no one is being left behind. (Paragraph 62)

Women and girls

17. DFID has made a good start in its work on empowering women and girls. The mainstreaming of tackling gender equality through all of DFID's programmes is particularly welcome; this mainstreaming and the sharing of knowledge on women's empowerment between programmes should continue and increase. There is now a need for more to be done on the political participation at all levels of women in DRC, which could have wider benefits to socio-cultural norms that are connected to the broader issue of promoting gender equality. The political empowerment of women should form a core part of DFID's work, both during the election period in DRC and as part of its peacebuilding and democratic governance work going forward. *The political empowerment of women should form a core part of DFID's work, both during the election period in DRC and as part of its peacebuilding and democratic governance work going forward. In addition, lessons learned from the La Pépinière programme should be carefully implemented in order to have a real impact on more of the poorest and most marginalised girls and should expand beyond Gombe and Kinshasa.* (Paragraph 68)
18. Sexual and gender-based violence is a particularly serious problem for DRC, exacerbated by decades of conflict. While we welcome the fact that DFID has incorporated support to victims into its health and WASH programmes, we still think that there is more that it can do in this area. We are surprised that it has not implemented our predecessor Committee's recommendation that violence against women and girls should be DFID's top priority in DRC. We are further disappointed that DFID is not also implementing dedicated programmes on violence against women and girls through civil society and smaller local partners. It is important that DFID is willing to support low-cost but effective programmes. (Paragraph 76)
19. *We strongly reiterate our predecessor Committee's recommendation that violence against women and girls should be DFID's top priority in DRC, and that it should be funding standalone outcome focused projects. DFID should also incorporate a greater focus on eliminating violence against women and girls into its humanitarian and peacebuilding programmes. DFID should work with local civil society to strengthen the rule of law, change attitudes towards women and combat the culture of impunity. Indicators on violence against women and girls should be included in DFID's assessments of those programmes, as well as on DFID DRC's results page.* (Paragraph 77)

Private sector development and corruption

20. The serious effects of corruption are clear in DRC, where it has cost the potential public revenue vast amounts of money which could be spent on development in other areas. UK aid spending in DRC will not reach its full impact until corruption there is eliminated. Allegations of the involvement of British companies in this, including in actions which are fuelling the conflict through funding armed groups, are extremely serious. The fact that DFID was not alert to this is especially concerning, and lessons must be learned so that this does not happen again in future without the

UK Government noticing. Failure to do so could give the impression that the UK Government turns a blind eye, and could damage its standing as a donor in DRC. (Paragraph 83)

21. *Policy coherence, between domestic UK laws and the UK's development agenda, is of the utmost importance. The UK Government should urgently produce its long-awaited Anti-Corruption Strategy. UK laws on corruption must be as tight as possible, to make sure that it is possible to bring to justice those in the UK who are seriously damaging development efforts abroad. In light of the allegations we have raised above, the UK Government should undertake a full review and report back to us on the powers it has to hold to account companies registered in the UK and involved in corrupt practices in countries such as DRC, and what action it proposes to take to address this. (Paragraph 84)*
22. *We have previously looked at the issue of corruption in our inquiry on Tackling corruption overseas, and we reiterate all of our conclusions and recommendations from that Report, especially that the UK Government should be doing everything it can to persuade the Overseas Territories to increase transparency by creating public beneficial ownership registers. It remains our belief that stronger diplomatic efforts are required of the UK in this regard. (Paragraph 85)*
23. *We expect confirmation from DFID that only the poorest and most marginalised are being measured in the Élan RDC programme's targets, and of the scale of the income increases being achieved. (Paragraph 89)*
24. *We believe that there is a more fundamental issue surrounding support for economic development. We believe that we should see much tighter return on investment criteria. Either the majority of the funding should be in the form of returnable capital which can then be re-invested by DFID at a later date or—if it is given in the form of grants—we should see returns of up to 10 times the investment. So in future economic development projects costing £1 million should yield £10 million over the course of 4–5 years in either a) increased incomes; b) additional non-DFID investment; or c) very carefully calculated non-cash benefits, such as improvements to health and education. (Paragraph 91)*
25. *Given the importance and scale of the Essor programme, we are very concerned that it had not made more progress when we visited DRC. We acknowledge that there may have been better progress since our visit. However, we recommend that DFID undertakes an immediate evaluation of the programme. If it remains ineffective, we recommend its closure and that DFID consults on more effective ways to assist the reform of the business environment and tackling corruption. (Paragraph 93)*
26. *The potential for CDC investments in DRC is high, as the country's particularly difficult business environment drives away other investors but rewards CDC's approach of patient capital. DRC's wealth in natural resources has great potential to have a positive impact on poverty reduction, and peacebuilding, through the creation of stable jobs. As such DRC is exactly the sort of country which CDC should be focusing on. We commend it for its investment in Virunga Energy. However, given the poor state of DRC's private sector, high levels of corruption, and DRC's history of*

being exploited for private gain, CDC must be extra careful not to exacerbate these issues. *We recommend that CDC publish a full account of its investment in Feronia, addressing concerns about wages, conditions and land disputes.* (Paragraph 97)

Conclusion

27. DRC remains a very difficult development context, suffering from many of the most acute development issues. However, there is now hope of a clear and peaceful resolution to the ongoing political crisis and for elections this year. DFID DRC has continued to implement a large and comprehensive development programme, covering basic services, humanitarian needs, private sector development, and peacebuilding. In examining these programmes, we have seen that there is great requirement in DRC for development assistance and UK aid there is making a real difference. (Paragraph 98)
28. In such a difficult context as DRC, DFID is to be generally commended for the way in which it is working, although we hope to see increases in the priority it gives to both anti-corruption and violence against women and girls. With DFID's commitment to spending at least 50% of its budget in fragile and conflict-affected states, there are clear lessons which can be drawn from its work in DRC. Most importantly, we would like to highlight that progress in fragile states can be slow, but it is necessary and therefore requires a comprehensive long-term commitment and programme of work from donors. Difficult contexts also require good local knowledge, which can most effectively be achieved through civil society and strong local partners. (Paragraph 99)
29. Changing circumstances in countries such as DRC make the flexibility and resilience of programming of the utmost importance. DFID has responded well to a political crisis, working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to remain alive to the risks posed to its programmes. The flexibility of its programmes allowed it to prepare and adapt appropriately as the situation changed. This flexibility has also been a key part of building the resilience of DFID's programmes in DRC, allowing them to withstand periods of difficulty, as well as political and conflict shock, without development gains backsliding. (Paragraph 100)
30. *A high level of flexibility is needed for effective working in difficult contexts and fragile states, and should be a core part of DFID's future working in all fragile states. DFID should continue to afford a high degree of latitude to its DRC country office, and approve flexible programmes accordingly.* (Paragraph 101)
31. We are particularly pleased to see how successful DFID's eastern office in DRC has been, which followed from a recommendation of our predecessor Committee, in allowing DFID to have a member of staff operating and coordinating much closer to an area where DFID spends a large amount of money. There is still a large amount of the country which remains difficult for DFID staff to frequently get to, due to the size of the country; both areas where DFID has programmes and where it does not. *We therefore urge DFID to consider its geographic reach across the country, and consider extending this model and opening another local office closer to the centre of the country.* (Paragraph 102)

Formal Minutes

Monday 20 February 2017

Members present:

Stephen Twigg, in the Chair

Fiona Bruce

Wendy Morton

Dr Lisa Cameron

Mr Virendra Sharma

Jeremy Lefroy

Draft Report (*Fragility and development in the Democratic Republic of Congo*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 102 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

A Paper was appended to the Report.

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

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

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

[Adjourned till tomorrow at 9.10 a.m.]

Witnesses

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

Tuesday 25 October 2016

Question number

Councillor Jean-Roger Kaseki, Associate of the Human Rights and Social Justice Research Institute, London Metropolitan University, **Tom O'Bryan**, Congo Democracy Project, Harvard University and **Dr Suda Perera**, Research Fellow, Developmental Leadership Programme, University of Birmingham [Q1–19](#)

Shuna Keen, Regional Programme Manager for DRC and the Great Lakes, International Rescue Committee and **Dr Zoe Marriage**, Reader in Development Studies, SOAS [Q20–36](#)

Tuesday 15 November 2016

Bilge Sahin, Development Academic, SOAS, **Sarah Cotton**, Public Affairs and Policy Adviser, International Committee of the Red Cross, and **Marie-Claire Faray**, Member of the Executive Committee, Common Cause UK [Q37–56](#)

Luqman Ahmad, Project Director for Élan RDC, Adam Smith International and **Peter Jones**, Campaigner, Democratic Republic of Congo Team, Global Witness [Q57–76](#)

Tuesday 6 December 2016

Larry Sthreshley, Democratic Republic of Congo Country Director, IMA World Health [Q77–90](#)

Noella Coursaris Musunka, Founder and Chief Executive, Malaika [Q91–116](#)

James Wharton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and **Christian Rogg**, Head of DRC Country Office, Department for International Development [Q117–145](#)

Published written evidence

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

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

- 1 Action Against Hunger ([DRC0020](#))
- 2 Adam Smith International ([DRC0009](#))
- 3 CAFOD ([DRC0023](#))
- 4 CDC Group ([DRC0006](#))
- 5 Common Cause UK ([DRC0025](#))
- 6 Department for International Development ([DRC0010](#))
- 7 Department for International Development Annex A ([DRC0026](#))
- 8 Developmental Leadership Program ([DRC0004](#))
- 9 Global Witness ([DRC0011](#))
- 10 Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government ([DRC0002](#))
- 11 IMA World Health ([DRC0019](#))
- 12 International Alert ([DRC0012](#))
- 13 International Rescue Committee UK ([DRC0005](#))
- 14 Mercy Corps ([DRC0022](#))
- 15 Mr Justin Moore ([DRC0008](#))
- 16 Population Services International ([DRC0017](#))
- 17 Search for Common Ground ([DRC0018](#))
- 18 Tearfund ([DRC0003](#))
- 19 UNOPS ([DRC0021](#))
- 20 Virunga National Park ([DRC0024](#))
- 21 WaterAid ([DRC0007](#))
- 22 Wonder Foundation ([DRC0014](#))
- 23 World Vision UK ([DRC0001](#))
- 24 WWF-UK ([DRC0013](#))

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.

Session 2016–17

First Report	UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals	HC 103
Second Report	DFID's programme in Nigeria	HC 110
Third Report	The use of UK-manufactured arms in Yemen: First Joint Report of the Business, Innovation and Skills and International Development Committees of Session 2016–17	HC 678 (CM 9349)
Fourth Report	Tackling corruption overseas	HC 111
First Special Report	UK aid: allocation of resources: interim report: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2015–16	HC 256
Second Special Report	Crisis in Yemen: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2015–16	HC 557
Third Special Report	The World Humanitarian Summit: priorities for reform: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2015–16	HC 556
Fourth Special Report	UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2016–17	HC 673
Fifth Special Report	DFID's programme in Nigeria: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2016–17	HC 735
Sixth Special Report	Tackling corruption overseas: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 911
Seventh Special Report	Conduct of Adam Smith International	HC 939

Session 2015–16

First Report	Syrian refugee crisis	HC 339
Second Report	Ebola: Responses to a public health emergency	HC 338
Third Report	UK aid: Allocation of resources: interim report	HC 927
Fourth Report	Crisis in Yemen	HC 532
Fifth Report	The World Humanitarian Summit: priorities for reform	HC 675

First Special Report	The Future of UK Development Co-operation: Phase 2: Beyond Aid: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2014–15	HC 339
Second Special Report	Jobs and Livelihoods: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2014–15	HC 421
Third Special Report	DFID's bilateral programme in Nepal: Government Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report of Session 2014–15	HC 422
Fourth Special Report	Department for International Development's Performance in 2013–14: the Departmental Annual Report 2013–14: Government Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report of Session 2014–15	HC 420
Fifth Special Report	Syrian refugee crisis: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2015–16	HC 902
Sixth Special Report	Ebola: Responses to a public health emergency: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2015–16	HC 946