



House of Commons
International Development
Committee

Bangladesh, Burma and the Rohingya crisis

Fourth Report of Session 2017–19



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**Bangladesh, Burma and
the Rohingya crisis**

Fourth Report of Session 2017–19

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

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The International Development Committee

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

Contacts

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.

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Summary

Burma

In the face of the ethnic cleansing, some argue genocide, of the Rohingya by the Burmese authorities—and with a return to attacks against ethnic groups in the North East of Burma—it is time for the DFID once again to review its engagement with Burma.

The UK Government should adopt a frame of reference for relating to Burma that reflects that country's deliberate, state-sanctioned long-term, ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people which has resulted in huge costs, of all kinds, for the Rohingya, Bangladesh and the international community as well as potentially protracted and intractable displacement challenge on a huge scale.

The UK needs to build an effective alliance across the international community whereby relations with Burma are consistently imbued with an expectancy of accountability and conditionality. Burma has created huge human, moral, financial and economic debts. A bill should be coming for what the Burmese army has done and what elements of Burmese government and society have become accessories to. And it is not limited to the Rohingya. Recent reports and evidence of Burmese military offensives in Northern Shan, Kachin and Karen states, inevitably give rise to the very grave concern of whether a perceived lack of accountability or consequence has emboldened the perpetrators.

The UK and allies should gather support for the UN Security Council to refer Burma to the International Criminal Court and to apply targeted financial sanctions at all identifiable key figures. There needs to be a realisation and acknowledgement by the Government of Burma that there are consequences for such human rights violations. There also needs to be a recognition by the UK Government that State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi herself is now becoming part of the problem.

The result of this is a need to re-frame the UK's aid and development programmes in Burma. Our predecessors recommended that DFID Burma needed to maintain flexibility in case of a situation change. The main DFID programme and policies were drafted at a time of high optimism: democracy appeared to be opening up, a Nobel Peace Prize winner was de facto President. Since then there has been ethnic cleansing, the breaking of ceasefires, a closing of civil society space, including restrictions on media freedoms and the persecution of journalists, and a reduction in religious freedom.

The situation has now dramatically changed and as a result we need to see dramatic change in our engagement with Burma.

Unfortunately, the only change we have been made aware of so far by the UK government, nine months after the start of the Rohingya crisis is the end to training of the Tatmadaw, the Burmese army, by UK military forces.

British tax payers must be assured that none of their money is being used to prop up a government accused of crimes against humanity. In response to our report, DFID must clearly outline all of the UK's on-going financial commitments in Burma, including those through multinational organisations, identifying in each case, the justification

for continued engagement and the due diligence undertaken to reach that position—including results that have been achieved. This is particularly important and urgent in relation to UK aid-funded support for:

- the peace process, and
- parliamentary strengthening

which, from all the evidence we have received, seem to be going backwards not forwards.

DFID also needs to consider increasing the funding for the ethnic communities caught up in the recent conflicts in the North and East and those still trapped in refugee camps on the Thai border whose funds have recently been cut back.

There is a model the UK could return to and that is the model of aid to Burma before the lifting of sanctions.

The Rohingya crisis

The Rohingya crisis remains, as we described it in our initial report, a huge human tragedy and humanitarian crisis, ‘staggering in scale and complexity’. The immediate priority for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh remains protective and mitigating arrangements for the impact of the monsoon season and possible cyclones; the subject of our most recent report. The UK Government’s reply—just received and published alongside this report—points to 200,000 Rohingya refugees at risk from flooding and landslide; of who 24,000 are “extremely vulnerable” and in need of relocation. Our recent discussions with Bangladesh government figures suggested reticence, perhaps simply uncertainty, about plans for relocation. We welcome the UK Government’s reply which stated that 800 acres of additional land has been made available close to the existing camps and engineering work was underway to make as much of it suitable for safe relocation of refugees at risk.¹

Bangladesh

We commend the generosity and compassion of Bangladesh’s authorities and local communities pursuing the open border policy for Rohingya people fleeing the violent ethnic cleansing campaign conducted by the Burmese army. We recognise the enormous responsibilities that offering this sanctuary has engendered for Bangladesh—already one of the most densely populated countries in the world; one of most vulnerable to natural disasters; and home to around 21 million people living in extreme poverty. It is for these reasons we urge the UK Government to continue and strengthen its efforts to persuade the international community fully to shoulder and share these responsibilities in line with World Humanitarian Summit commitments to recognise the ‘public good’ that countries who host refugees provide for the world. Perhaps once the immediate threat of this year’s monsoon season has receded, we regard the integration, legal status and longer-term issues, such as education and livelihoods, for the Rohingya as of paramount importance for purposeful dialogue with the Bangladesh authorities.

¹ *Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis—monsoon preparedness in Cox’s Bazar: Government response to the Committee’s Third Report, Fifth Special Report, 2017–19, HC 1055, 22 May 2018, p iv*

Looking more broadly at DFID's work in Bangladesh, the situation was more positive. Bangladesh recently graduated to lower middle-income status, after many years of sustained economic growth, and a 'development success' story in-the-making, has been confirmed. The positive gesture made towards the Rohingya, in the spirit of international humanitarian norms, must not be allowed to be the cause, real or perceived, of any lessening of Bangladesh's development trajectory. We pull no punches, Bangladesh has plenty of other challenges to the quantity, equality and sustainability of its economic performance and we touch on these: persisting extreme poverty; unequal wealth distribution; restrictions on open society; abuses of human rights; abuse, discrimination and violence against women and girls; corruption and—looming over it all—threats from both insidious and shocking climate change-related disasters.

However, there was a lot of energy and confidence in the people we met, the projects we visited and the places we travelled through. Our perceptions and our evidence indicate to us that the work of DFID in Bangladesh is well-targeted, at or around the challenges we identified, and appropriately agile, working to demonstrate, showcase and promote good practices (rather than attempt, with limited resources, the heavy-lifting). DFID works alongside many partners, both international and local, but perhaps head and shoulders above the rest is BRAC, Bangladesh's homegrown development facility, now the biggest NGO in the world. The strategic partnership between DFID and BRAC, now into its second 5-year tranche, should be studied and its lessons and virtues replicated where appropriate.

1 Introduction

Previous reports

1. In October 2017 we commenced an inquiry into DFID's work in Bangladesh and Burma and the Rohingya crisis. Due to the severity and urgency of the unfolding plight of the Rohingya refugees we have published two reports on that situation in advance of completing this wider look at the two countries DFID programmes.² These earlier reports complement this one.

2. The first report in the series examined:

- the origins, build-up and conduct of the Burmese government's violent ethnic cleansing and expulsion of the Rohingya people;
- the humanitarian, diplomatic and political response of Bangladesh, the UK and the international community (both states and international NGOs); and
- the implications of these matters in the light of the commitments made by the international community at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and elsewhere.³

We received and then published the Government's response to this report on 28 March 2018.

3. The latter report - on monsoon preparedness - followed our visit, in March, to the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, and arose from the conditions we saw and the obvious necessity of taking urgent action before the annual heavy rains of June, July and August devastated the fragile sanctuary given to the Rohingya in that area.

4. We received the Government's reply on 14 May 2018 and we are publishing it alongside this report.

5. This report, our third from this inquiry, provides:

- an examination of DFID's engagement with Burma and DFID's wider development work in Bangladesh; and
- the latest available information on the plight of the Rohingya people and the response of Bangladesh, the UK and others.

Assistance during the inquiry

6. We are grateful to all those who contributed to our inquiry by providing written and/or oral evidence. We also thank our hosts and interlocutors in Bangladesh - not least DFID's team there and the British High Commission - for the high quality and quantity of the site visits, meetings and discussions we were able to experience, despite challenging

2 *Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis, Second report, 2017–19, HC 504, 15 January 2018; and Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya Crisis - monsoon preparedness in Cox's Bazar, Third report, 2017–19, HC 904, 20 March 2018.*

3 *Op. cit.*, and see *Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis: Government response to the Committee, Fourth Special report, 2017–19, HC 919, 28 March 2018.*

logistics. We would like to record particular appreciation for the Rohingya representatives we met in Cox's Bazar for whom discussion of their recent experiences of violence, loss and devastating deprivation, was very plainly no easy matter.⁴

Refusal of visas to visit Burma

7. We also express appreciation for the efforts of DFID Burma, the UK Ambassador there, FCO Ministers and staff in London, and Mr Speaker, for their efforts and interventions in trying to persuade the Burmese government to authorise visas for members and staff of the Committee to visit Burma to see DFID's work at first hand. Unfortunately, these efforts were in vain.⁵

8. We were disappointed not to be allowed to visit Burma to see *any* UK aid projects in that country funded by the UK's allocation of £100 million development assistance per year. Visas were refused at the last minute—and reportedly by decision taken at the highest level. The reasons given varied but were essentially spurious.⁶ **We can only assume that the Burmese government was reacting to the criticism contained in our first report on the Rohingya crisis and voiced by many other members of both Houses during questions and debates on the matter.**

9. As Mr Speaker, Rt Hon John Bercow MP, highlighted during the Urgent Question on the matter on 28 February: “In democracies, parliamentarians do criticise governments. That is a lesson that the Burmese Government will have to learn.”⁷ The effect was to curtail our scrutiny of DFID's work and sharpen our focus on whether UK aid for Burma was being channelled and focused in an appropriate way given the new circumstances, post-August 2017.

10. *We recommend that DFID seek to agree with the authorities of any country in receipt of multiple millions of pounds worth of UK aid—whether any of that aid is channelled via government agencies or not—that there is a presumption of access to scrutinise the relevant projects on the ground for UK personnel engaged in audit or accountability, including the relevant parliamentary select committee. Indeed, the principle of diplomatic reciprocity indicates that the UK parliamentarians should have access to any country with whom the UK has diplomatic relations.*

4 See the Chair's account: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/as-desperate-rohingya-refugees-await-the-rains-where-is-the-world-to-help-tlzxgz3g>

5 See HC Deb, 28 February 2018: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-02-28/debates/38C514F3-0169-4817-810D-1035CCA4F398/InternationalDevelopmentCommitteeBurmaVisas>.

6 We were told that: there was a public holiday in Burma (which had been factored in to our plans from the start); access to Rakhine state was restricted for security reasons (we had alternative destinations); and there was unhappiness that individual members of the Committee had signed a letter calling for the Burmese army to be held to account for its conduct in Rakhine (the Burmese have arrested ten of its soldiers for such conduct—unlikely to be the full story but an admission of problems nonetheless).

7 Hansard <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-02-28/debates/38C514F3-0169-4817-810D-1035CCA4F398/InternationalDevelopmentCommitteeBurmaVisas>

2 Burma

Introduction

11. Up to 2012, DFID's aid to Burma, in line with many other donor countries, was limited; a response to the nature of the regime in power. After the apparent reforms of 2012, UK aid was swiftly ramped up, rising from £8m in 2007 to the £100m planned for 2018. DFID told us that:

For our programme to be successful, Burma must work towards the implementation of inclusive peace agreements, a new political settlement; and the military serving rather than ruling Burma.⁸

However, we were struck by the view put to us by Burma Campaign UK, echoed by other witnesses, that:

British aid to Burma needs to be completely re-evaluated based on the reality that Burma is not in a transition to democracy, the military are an obstacle, not a partner in reform, and that the Aung San Suu Kyi led government does not respect human rights.⁹

12. In this chapter, therefore, we examine whether Burma is indeed in 'transition to democracy', working towards peace, and establishing a new democratic political settlement. In other words, whether (against DFID's own criteria) the UK's aid programme in Burma has any chance of success in its current form?

DFID's work in Burma pre-2012

13. Before the suspension of sanctions in 2012, and their abolition in 2013, the UK provided assistance to Burma in line with the EU Common Position, which stated that non-humanitarian (development) aid should be suspended, with exceptions made for:

- human rights, democracy, good governance, conflict prevention and building the capacity of civil society;
- health and education, poverty alleviation and in particular the provision of basic needs and livelihoods for the poorest and most vulnerable populations;
- environmental protection, and in particular programmes addressing the problem of non-sustainable, excessive logging resulting in deforestation. (Article 5).¹⁰

14. At this time, DFID's modest programme in Burma consisted of:

8 Department for International Development ([DBB016](#))

9 Burma Campaign UK ([DBB027](#))

10 [Council Common Position 116/77, 27 April 2006, Article 3.](#)

Table 1: DFID's Burma programmes before 2012 suspension of sanctions

DFID's programmes in Burma and with Burmese refugees 2004

Grant to 'Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar' - £10 million over three years. The Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar supports programmes that contribute to the UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS. The Fund brings together donors and implementing agencies including UN agencies, NGOs and the National Aids Programme and promotes co-ordination and lesson learning amongst partners.

Technical assistance to Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar - £185,300, one year. This programme provided additional capacity to help set up and manage the Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar.

World Health Organisation (WHO)–£246,578 over two years. DFID is supporting a WHO position to provide technical and operational support to strengthen the technical relevance and implementation of policies for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in the country.

BBC World Service Trust for Radio Soap Opera on HIV/AIDS and health messages–£1,249,179 over two years. This grant aims to raise awareness about health care including HIV/AIDS for people in Burma and to provide information and practical solutions, where they exist, to their everyday healthcare problems. The project will also support the efforts of people and organisations working to develop civil society.

Health Unlimited work on basic health care programmes in Wa and Kachin–£362,033, one year. This programme seeks to establish a basic primary health care service that covers 55,000 people in the Kachin Independence Organisation controlled areas and 82,000 people, prioritising women and children in Wa region. This was an extension of previous support to the Health Unlimited programme, which had been provided on a year-by-year basis.

Burmese Border Consortium food aid and relief programmes on the Thailand Burma Border–£450,000, one year. DFID provided funds via Christian Aid to support the Burmese Border Consortium to enable refugee communities to sustain a basic livelihood through provision of food and other relief items, whilst ensuring that the special needs of new and relocated refugees are addressed.

Coordination of health services at Thailand-Burma Border–£420,000 over two years. DFID is funding the World Health Organisation in order to improve the health of the population in the border areas of Thailand and Burma with a special focus on the health and humanitarian aspects of the most vulnerable groups.

DFID's programmes in Burma and with Burmese refugees 2004

Small grants to civil society organisations—£110,000 each year. The British Embassy in Rangoon operates the Small Grants Scheme that provides funds to a number of civil society organisations working to meet humanitarian needs and tackle poverty.

Street and working children—£451,224 over five years. DFID is supporting work by World Vision to improve the status and quality of life among children in Burma.

Community Action for HIV/AIDS Care and Support in the Mekong Sub-region—£236,295 over three years. This World Vision programme aims to develop community capacity and the growth of civil society organisations to respond to the ever-increasing threat of HIV/AIDS.

Looking Before Leaping: Migration and Trafficking of Vulnerable Women, Youth and Children—£235,352 over five years. This World Vision programme seeks to reduce the number of women, youth and children trafficked for sex work or other forms of exploitative labour by raising awareness among community members and community based organisations about trafficking and other risks of migration.

Source: DFID Burma Country Assistance Plan, 2004

15. In 2007, when our predecessor Committee scrutinised DFID's support for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burma and Burmese refugees on the Thai border, the budget was £8.8 million for the year (2007–08).¹¹ Both the 2004 and 2010 DFID country plans for Burma stated that substantial increases in development aid would be forthcoming if Burma embraced a range of political, economic and human rights reforms, for example by re-allocating scarce resources from military expenditure to health and education.^{12,13}

DFID Burma post-2012 to now

16. After 2013, and the lifting of the EU sanctions, DFID's programme had risen to £60million per year. DFID's ambition for Burma was then to "help create a better governed, more peaceful and prosperous Burma that uses its increased wealth to reduce poverty."¹⁴

11 *DFID assistance to Burmese internally displaced people and refugees on the Thai-Burma border*, Tenth Report, 2006–07, HC 645

12 DFID Burma Country Assistance Plan, 2004

13 DFID, [UK Aid in Burma](#), 2010

14 DFID Burma [Operational Plan](#) 2011–16

Table 2: The development of DFID's engagement in Burma

	DFID Burma 2007	DFID Burma 2013	DFID Burma 2018
Budget	£8 million	£60 million	£100 million
Aim	Increased opportunities for the poor and excluded people of Burma and refugees from Burma living in neighbouring countries.	A better governed, more peaceful and prosperous, Burma that uses its increased wealth to reduce poverty.	Help Burma continue on a path to being a better governed, fairer and more peaceful society, through working with the government towards increased wealth and better public services shared by all of its people.
Key Objectives/ Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced incidence of communicable and vaccine preventable diseases particularly in vulnerable and marginalised populations. • Enhanced food security and productive assets for the poor. • Increased access to quality basic education for poor people. • Increased prospects for successful transition to a democratic society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace building and conflict resolution • Improve state capability, democratic governance and accountability • Economic transformation and job creation • Supporting the development of a dynamic and resilient rural population and economy • Developing human capital 	<p>i) Building Burma into a stable ally and trade partner for the UK through supporting negotiations towards peace and a new political settlement, helping to deliver credible elections and fostering inclusive growth, investment and trade.</p> <p>ii) We also aim to end poverty and vulnerability by helping to build stronger public and private systems for health and education, reaching women and children with improved nutrition, water and sanitation, and providing humanitarian assistance to those in need.</p> <p>iii) We will help to stem radicalisation and the outflow of narcotics, trafficked people and drug-resistant disease.</p> <p>iv) We press the government to end discrimination in Rakhine State, support individuals to migrate safely and stop modern slavery and are a lead funder of programmes that address drug resistant malaria.</p>

Source: Department for International Development ([DBB016](#)) and country plans

17. DFID’s planned Burma programme for 2018 now amounts to £100 million. The most obvious change to DFID’s approach as seen from the table above is that the government of Burma is now seen as a ‘partner’. DFID states:

The UK is one of [*Burma’s*] most significant diplomatic and development partners encouraging progress on the so-called ‘triple transition’, from authoritarian government to democracy; from conflict to peace; and from a closed to an open economy.¹⁵

Additionally, now top of DFID’s list of objectives is “building Burma into a stable ally and trade partner” pushing the aim of ending poverty and vulnerability into second place.

18. We are concerned that recent events raise serious questions about the DFID country plan’s terms of engagement with Burma. These questions are:

- Whether Burma’s “pivotal moment” has in fact passed?
- If the UK should “ally” with a government whose conduct UK Ministers regard as amounting to ethnic cleansing?¹⁶
- What the UK’s relationship with Burma should be when its treatment of the Rohingya has been described by senior UN officials as having the hallmarks of genocide?¹⁷
- Whether “maintaining stability” can encompass Burma’s military operations in Rakhine, Kachin or Shan states?
- How encouraging prosperity can avoid largely rewarding those responsible for orchestrating atrocity crimes?
- Whether Burma remains on a path to better government, fairer and more peaceful society with public services shared by all of its people? and
- If those living in conflict-affected areas, “out of the reach of the Burmese state” are not better off that way in the light of what happened to the Rohingya?

UK policy following the Rohingya crisis

19. We have been interested to explore what the consequences have been for the military and Burmese government following ethnic cleansing. Burma Campaign UK said:

Almost 8 months on from the start of the Rohingya crisis, Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the military, has still paid no price for what he has done. [...] The British government has led on words but not on practical action that will pressure the military to end attacks on ethnic people and hold them to account.¹⁸

15 DFID Burma [Country Programme](#) 2017

16 *Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis—monsoon preparedness in Cox’s Bazar: Government response to the Committee’s Third Report*, Fifth Special Report, 2017–19, HC 1055, 22 May 2018, p vi

17 UN Human Rights Council proceedings: 5 December 2017 and 12 March 2018

18 Burma Campaign UK brief for Westminster Hall Debate Monday 16th April 2018

The situation is that there have been very few obvious consequences: no constitutional change despite promises; sanctions have not been re-imposed except on a small number of officers and Min Aung Hlaing, head of the Burmese military, is not receiving invitations to relevant events from the EU; development aid still flows in; the army seems to be more popular if anything; and Burmese military spending has risen markedly.¹⁹

20. DFID said:

DFID Burma is a challenging friend to the civilian Government, supporting policy development (such as in health and education) where it will help benefit the poor, but challenging where needed.²⁰

However, as a challenging friend it is of interest to understand whether we are actually being listened to and our opinions considered. The Minister told us:

it is the view of the British Government that [Aung San Suu Kyi] needs to speak out against the atrocities that the military has perpetrated in Rakhine. There is more she could do to ensure the civilian Government act in ways that would address the situation, including allowing humanitarian access, setting out a pathway to citizenship for the Rohingya, setting out a clearer vision for the conditions under which refugees would be treated on return, addressing constraints on freedom of movement for the Rohingya and ensuring media freedom is protected.²¹

But there has been no observable response so far. The one achievement the Minister could point to of UK's challenging friendship was the setting up of the advisory board, by Aung San Suu Kyi on 22 January. He told us:

I do not think something like that would be happening if it had not been for diplomatic efforts and diplomatic determination. Is it where we want it to be? Is Burma where we want it to be? No, but if we did not press our points, stand up for what we believe and continue to take that message, it would be so much the worse.²²

However, this same advisory board, as highlighted in our January report, was referred to by one of its own members as “a whitewash”.²³

21. DFID said:

DFID Burma is currently reviewing its entire portfolio in response to recent events. The 2016–2020 Business Plan Strategic Objectives remain valid, but we are submitting advice to Ministers to suggest revised approaches for achieving them: the UK still aims to achieve poverty reduction and support peace and inclusion in Burma; the most effective means to do this will be to continue to support an emerging democracy.²⁴

19 Burma Campaign UK ([DBB027](#))

20 Department for International Development ([DBB016](#))

21 Q212

22 Q207

23 Exclusive: [Richardson quits Myanmar's 'whitewash' Rohingya crisis panel](#), Reuters 24 January 2018

24 Department for International Development ([DBB016](#))

We consider below, whether Burma is really still ‘emerging’ as a democracy. As yet the only significant change to the UK programme in Burma is, as we found in our January report, the suspension of training for the Tatmadaw in December 2017.²⁵

Burma’s “path to democracy”

22. There are many measures of democracy but it is widely accepted that key elements are a democratic constitution; a freely elected legislature (with some influence over Ministers); observance of the rule of law; and freedoms and rights, including freedom of expression; and a free media.

23. The 2008 constitution was drafted by the military without consultation with political parties or civil society. DFID at the time referred to it as “a political process neither inclusive nor consultative, viewed by most of the international community as a means of entrenching military rule.”²⁶ Aung San Suu Kyi herself said she wanted the constitution to be amended “because we want a country firmly on the road to democracy” insisting the constitution was “fundamentally undemocratic”.²⁷

24. The NLD government has not sought to amend the constitution. It is assumed that the military with its 25% of seats would veto any amendments but this is untested.

25. Human Rights Watch (HRW) record some positive reforms such as: ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; trying to resolve past land confiscation cases and some minor reform of laws regulating speech and assembly. However, HRW also highlighted the NLD government’s increasing use of repressive laws to prosecute journalists, activists, and critics for the peaceful expression of opinions deemed critical of the government or military.²⁸

26. Various organs of the UN have recommended, in total, 237 actions or reforms in relation to human rights to the Burmese government since 2013. One has been implemented and two partially implemented. As we highlighted in our previous report²⁹ parts of the UN, like us, have been denied access to Burma. The UN Human Rights Council’s fact-finding mission and the UN’s special rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Yanghee Lee, have been prevented from entering, as well as many of the human rights activists who once campaigned for Aung San Suu Kyi’s release.³⁰ David Baulk of Fortify Rights told us: “we have seen a crackdown by the Government of Myanmar on human rights defenders, journalists, human rights monitors and others”.³¹

Media freedom

27. The ‘crackdown’ on media freedom has been brought to the world’s attention with the arrest and prosecution of Burma-based Reuters reporters, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo. They now face up to 14 years in prison under an Official State Secrets Act dating from 1923.

25 *Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis*, Second Report, 2017–19, HC 504, paragraph 27

26 DFID [submission](#) to IDC, July 2008

27 [Aung San Suu Kyi: Burma ‘not on road to democracy’](#), BBC October, 2013

28 Human Rights Watch [2018 World Report](#), Burma

29 *Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis*, Second report, 2017–19, HC 504, 15 January 2018 pg 61–62

30 Mark Farmaner and Zoya Phan of Burma Campaign UK, Ben, Khin Ohmar, 88 gen activist, Kurt Mausert, Civil society trainer

31 Q147

In the past year, at least 12 journalists have been arrested, and others have faced threats of violence while reporting on ongoing conflicts and other sensitive issues, contributing to a deteriorating environment for freedom of expression in the country.³² Time reported that:

Reporters have expressed frustration with Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government, which has proven itself firmly in alignment with the country's powerful military to repress critical coverage. International media organizations operating in Myanmar have begun publishing stories without by-lines to protect their local reporters, who have faced escalating intimidation, harassment, and death threats from the public and the authorities. Some outlets have even temporarily shifted personnel out of Myanmar.³³

Burmese news agency Frontiers Myanmar reported in 2017 that:

The government is as secretive and non-transparent as its predecessors. Journalists remain locked out of parliament sessions and are regularly denied information by government agencies, including when using the information request provisions of the News Media Law. It continues to subsidise state media outlets that unashamedly push government propaganda.

But it's the growing application of section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law that is the most worrying development. As has been well documented, there were seven cases under the former government, but 38 from when the National League for Democracy took office to the end of 2016.

The NLD government has been complicit in these prosecutions, because every case requires sign-off from the Ministry of Communications and Transport. It has the power to stop them, but it has chosen not to do so. It has also been slow to act on amending the law, although it insists changes are coming.³⁴

Political Prisoners

28. More than 200 political prisoners were released when the NLD came to power in 2016, and 36 this April 2018. But reportedly, a similar number are still in jail or on bail awaiting trial.³⁵ (This does not include the unknown number of Rohingya).

29. However, a recent investigation by Myanmar Times, entitled "Not all female political prisoners became State Counsellor", reported that the Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) had identified up to 240 female political prisoners still behind bars. In April when the NLD granted pardons to 36 political prisoners, none of them were women. It also found that female political prisoners had a tougher time in prison than their fellow male inmates—there were less of them and they were less likely to mobilise for better conditions than their male counterparts.³⁶

32 [Myanmar: HRC must act on dehumanising 'hate speech' and criminalisation of journalists](#), Article19, March 2018

33 [Time, 'It's Dangerous to Write the Truth.' Journalists Fear the End of Press Freedom in Myanmar](#), January 19 2018

34 ['Has press freedom really improved?'](#), Frontier Myanmar, May 2017

35 [Assistance Association for Political Prisoners \(Burma\)](#), March 2018

36 ['Not all political prisoners became state counsellor'](#) Myanmar Times, May 2018

Religious Freedom

30. We received evidence that religious freedom was under serious threat. Benedict Rogers from Christian Solidarity Worldwide has written:

I have made over fifty visits to Myanmar and its borders over the past eighteen years, but I have not known a level of religious intolerance and hatred as severe as the situation over the past six years.³⁷

A recent report from Quilliam highlights:

Legislation to restrict inter-religious marriage and religious conversions has been introduced as part of the “Protection of Race and Religion” laws. Myanmar’s equivalent of a blasphemy law, Section 295 of the Penal Code, has been used several times in recent years.³⁸

The report highlights abuses of Christians as well as Muslims. Nationalists, supported by the state have set up “Muslim- free zones” across the country. These are signposted villages, denying Muslims access. Christians, particularly in Kachin State, are being targeted for abuse and intimidation. The counter-extremism organisation Quilliam report states that “Freedom of religion or belief, a basic human right set out in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is increasingly violated in Myanmar.”³⁹ The United States’ State Department has categorised Myanmar as a ‘Country of Particular Concern’ for religious freedom every year since 1999.⁴⁰

Parliamentary democracy

31. We received evidence of Aung San Suu Kyi’s increasingly authoritarian leadership style, centralising power and suppressing independent voices within the NLD. Academic, Dr Dasandi told us that democracy seemed to be shrinking under her:

Since 2015 when the NLD came to power, what we have seen is far more centralisation of power under Aung San Suu Kyi. There are lots of reports of parliamentarians in the NLD party effectively having proposals to table motions being rejected. We have been told that backbenchers for the NLD have been told not to ask tough questions.⁴¹

A report in the Economist observed that: the parliament under the NLD government was less active, and less responsive to public opinion than under the USDP; the previous parliament turned out twice as many laws per session; asked substantially more questions of the government; and passed almost four times as many motions aimed at the executive.⁴² Other media reporting claims that NLD legislators have been muzzled by their party leaders, one has left the party and others plan not to stand in the next election.⁴³

37 [The Rise of Religious Nationalism, Intolerance and Persecution in Burma](#), Quilliam

38 [The Rise of Religious Nationalism, Intolerance and Persecution in Burma](#), Quilliam

39 [The Rise of Religious Nationalism, Intolerance and Persecution in Burma](#), Quilliam

40 [The Rise of Religious Nationalism, Intolerance and Persecution in Burma](#), Quilliam

41 Q197–198

42 ‘Democracy has muzzled Myanmar’s parliament’, Economist, June 2017

43 [‘How Myanmar’s ruling party keeps its lawmakers under control’](#), Tea Circle Oxford, March 2018

32. With the legislature not questioning government actions, or challenging Ministers in debate, the result is very little reporting in the media of its work. This is likely to reduce public interest in proceedings and hamper the development of a body of engaged active citizens. Another constraint may come in the form of legislation restricting international NGOs from certain lobbying activities.⁴⁴ In addition, the NLD government has proposed bills and amendments in parliament restricting free speech suggesting a growing hostility towards to civil society. A recent CNN report concluded:

there are questions over the National League for Democracy's commitment to reform. Suu Kyi's party has a parliamentary majority, which gives it the power to remove repressive legislation. Instead, it has failed to carry out any discernible human rights reforms, and oppressive laws continue to be in force giving the government powers to detain and charge its critics.⁴⁵

33. A recent report in Frontier Myanmar noted how some of the most important discussions in the parliaments occur during committee meetings but they cannot be reported. It concluded:

In Myanmar, transparency in governance is lacking and one reason is the restrictions on public and media access to parliaments. MPs, parliamentary speakers and government officials need to start practising proactive disclosure to provide the transparency essential to build a successful democracy.⁴⁶

Hkanhpa Tu Sadan, Trustee, The Kachin Relief Fund UK said:

There is a great deal of talking in the parliament and a lot of debates going on, but there is nothing in action we have seen. They argue about a full stop or a comma, but nothing on the ground. That is the worrying part of the parliamentary work in Burma.⁴⁷

The Peace Process

Conditions for participation

34. This year will mark the seventh year of the peace process aimed at bringing to the negotiating table Burma's many armed ethnic (and regional) groups, struggling in what has been described as the longest civil war in the world. Only around half of these groups have signed a ceasefire agreement and, of those, most had little or no military capacity or were already allied to the Burmese military. The largest armed groups have not yet signed ceasefires and there appears no foreseeable prospect of them doing so. This is because of the military's six conditions for the peace process:

- to have a keen desire to reach eternal peace,
- to keep promises agreed to in peace deals;

44 Civic Freedom Monitor: [Myanmar](#) (Burma), January 2018

45 [Aung San Suu Kyi is neglecting her moral responsibility](#), CNN September 2017

46 ['It's time to open the Hluttaws'](#) Frontier Myanmar, December 2017

47 Q170

- to avoid capitalising on the peace agreement,
- to avoid placing a heavy burden on local people,
- to strictly abide by the existing laws, and
- to march towards a democratic country in accord with the 2008 Constitution⁴⁸

35. The inclusion of agreement to the 2008 Constitution and existing laws are unacceptable to ethnic organisations being the primary cause of conflict in the first place. The implication of surrender before talks can begin is an unlikely basis for negotiations. Hkanhpa Tu Sadan, Trustee, The Kachin Relief Fund UK told us:

The founding principle of the union of Burma is the general federal unions, which we signed in the Panglong Agreement in 1947. That is the spirit of what we wish for, but the 21st Century Panglong Conference does not mean that at all.⁴⁹

Peace is everybody's wish. It is what everybody wants—the whole of Burma, the whole nation; we all want peace, but the term of peace they use in the military is the motto of, “One nation, one blood, one command”. That is their motto, so if I am Kachin, as long as I become a Brahmin or Buddhist, I will get peace.

That is the mentality they have. They do not care about diversity; they do not care about our equal rights. That is the term they are using. In terms of the peace agreement, they will talk very nicely in beautiful, flowery language in front of the TV, but in reality, they want to wipe out your battalions and control your natural resources and so on.⁵⁰

David Baulk of Fortify Rights told us that: “The peace process in its current guise has been dictated to ethnic nationality populations by the Myanmar military since day one. The peace process has taken place at the barrel of a gun since the first negotiations took place and that continues now. [...] The Myanmar military would like to see peace across Myanmar, as long as it is a peace that allows them to control every square foot of the country, which makes no space for the demands of ethnic nationality populations.”⁵¹

Peace and war

36. Since the peace process began, the intensity of conflict and human rights violations increased rather than decreased. The military has stepped up military operations in ethnic states and conflict and human rights violations have increased. Ceasefires have been broken in Shan State, Kachin State and most recently Karen State.⁵² David Baulk of Fortify Rights said:

48 [‘Tatmadaw outlines 6 point policy for peace talk’](#) The Nation, Thailand, September 2014

49 Q164

50 Q162

51 Q160

52 [‘All the Civilians Suffer: Conflict, Displacement and Abuse in Northern Myanmar’](#) Amnesty International, 2017

At the very moment when that peace agreement was signed, in October 2015, we started to see a spike in attacks in northern Shan State, mass displacement of civilians and mass human rights violations. That pattern continues today.⁵³

At this moment, there is more conflict in the north of Myanmar than at any time in recent history. Mass human rights violations continue and the rule of law is nowhere to be seen.⁵⁴

Hkanhpa Tu Sadan said, in regard to the ceasefires:

The whole peace process currently is focused on a ceasefire signed on a paper. Everybody can sign a paper and the next day they can throw it away, so that is not an issue.⁵⁵

I would remind you that in the second 21st Century Panglong Conference, in August 2017, when our Kachin leader attended the meeting they sent fighter jets to attack the Kachin position in Gidon post, so how can we say that process is tangible?⁵⁶

37. The Burmese army has recently broken the ceasefire in Karen state. More than 2,000 villagers have been displaced.

53 Q154
54 Q157
55 Q153
56 Q155

Box 1: Letter to Aung San Suu Kyi

28 March 2018

We, the Indigenous Karen leaders of 16 villages in Luthaw Township, northern Mutraw (Hpapun) District, draw your attention to over 2,000 villagers who have fled their homes due to an ongoing Tatmadaw offensive that began on March 4, 2018. Tatmadaw soldiers, who plan to build a military operation road through our lands and villages, have shot at us and our livestock and repeatedly clashed with KNLA (Karen National Liberation Army) soldiers.

In the past, we made our living by cultivating rice fields and raising livestock, and we enjoyed abundance. However, between 1974 and 2010, the Tatmadaw launched repeated large-scale offensives against the KNU (Karen National Union) in our area. The soldiers murdered civilians, slaughtered our livestock, looted and burned our villages, and destroyed our food supplies, forcibly displacing us over and over again. Many of our fellow villagers were forced to flee to Thailand as refugees. Decades of these Tatmadaw abuses have so traumatized us that mere mention of the Tatmadaw brings back nightmares.

In 2012, the KNU signed a bilateral ceasefire agreement with the Myanmar government, leading us to believe that the Tatmadaw would stop attacking us, withdraw its troops from our lands and allow us to return and rebuild our villages. However, contrary to our expectations, Tatmadaw troops have not withdrawn; instead, they have built more bases and fortified existing camps. Now, the Tatmadaw's actions threaten us once again.

The Tatmadaw's military roads in our homeland are a source of great fear for us, since they facilitate movement of troops and transport of heavy weapons into our areas. We are often in danger of being shot by Tatmadaw soldiers near these roads. For example, Saw Maw Kay, a Khershorter Community Forest ranger in Luthaw township, was shot dead by Tatmadaw soldiers on at 10:00 AM on February 22, 2015 while he and other villagers were clearing their upland rotational farms. Now, advancing Tatmadaw soldiers once again threaten our safety

Since February 27, 2018, soldiers have shot at villagers on at least 4 occasions while some of us were collecting our rice. Furthermore, the Tatmadaw's plan to construct a military operation road threatens to permanently displace us from our ancestral lands and villages, pushing us into poverty and food insecurity. Nearly 2,300 of our villagers, including elders, women and children, have already fled their homes and are now hiding in the forest, while more than 600 additional villagers are at risk of being driven from their homes as well. In this mountainous region, it is cold at night, and displaced villagers are suffering from psychological trauma and other illnesses, exacerbated by food and medicine shortages.

38. Fighting in Kachin State has intensified dramatically recently. According to the UN, more than 5,000 people have been displaced in the last month following attacks by the military in townships across the State.⁵⁷ A non-governmental organization based in Kachin state has sent an open letter to the Kachin State Minister on 18 April, asking for the permission to rescue civilians but the permission has not yet been granted.

57 ['Asia and the Pacific: Weekly Regional Humanitarian Snapshot \(24 - 30 Apr 2018\)'](#) Reliefweb

“We have been asking permission to rescue people who are trapped in the jungle and they are in a very critical condition,” said Aung Ja, a member of Kachin State Women Network, which helps displaced women. “But the state minister said only if the military granted us access, we can rescue these civilians.”⁵⁸

On April 8, following a six-day mission to Burma, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Ursula Mueller called the conflict in Kachin “a forgotten humanitarian crisis,” noting, “Humanitarian access in Myanmar has significantly worsened in the last year, not only in Rakhine but also in Kachin and Shan States.”⁵⁹

Aung San Suu Kyi's role

39. We were interested to determine what Aung San Suu Kyi's role was in the peace process and how the ethnic minority groups viewed her. Minister Burt told us:

The peace process is long-lasting. The civil war in Burma is the world's longest-running civil war, and Aung San Suu Kyi has convened the most inclusive peace dialogue since Burma's internal conflict began in 1947.⁶⁰

Other witnesses spoke of the hope that had blossomed with Aung San Suu Kyi's release and rise to power. Hkanhpa Tu Sadan, Kachin Relief Fund, said:

In terms of the Kachin, when Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest we had great hope for the opening up of Burma. [...] Her father came, in 1946, before Burma got independence, and persuaded us to be a general federal union with equal rights, so we trusted her as we did her father.⁶¹

David Baulk, Fortify Rights, took a similar line:

there was a lot of hope for what Aung San Suu Kyi's role would be, what she would be able to achieve in the office that she has of State Counsellor, with regard to peace. On the election trail, peace, rule of law and human rights were a leitmotif across her speeches and her party's campaigning position.⁶²

However, both witnesses said that disappointment and disillusionment swiftly followed. Hkanhpa Tu Sadan told us: “we did trust her, but at the moment she has sided with the military. She is not in the middle; she is on the other side and we need the peace process. She has refused to acknowledge and condemn the atrocities. She has refused to go on the correct path of the peace process.”⁶³ David Baulk said: “levels of trust among ethnic populations with regard to Aung San Suu Kyi ... have been eroded to the point of non-existence, frankly.”⁶⁴

58 [2,000 Kachin trapped by Myanmar fighting lack food, medicine](#), Daily Mail, 19 April 2018

59 [Myanmar: Two Kachin Religious Leaders Freed in Amnesty](#), Fortify Rights, 17 April 2018

60 Q256

61 Q156

62 Q157

63 Q164

64 Q157

DFID's role

40. DFID reported its support for the Peace Process as, in total, £50.5 million between 2017 and 2022, comprising:

- Joint Peace Fund (11 donors) with UK funding via the CSSF, managed by DFID (£5 million as of March 2018)
- *Paung Sie Facility* (PSF) (3 donors) funding managed by DFID (£10.8 million as of March 2018)
- InterMediate (UK INGO) funded via the CSSF, managed by FCO (£1.9 million since 2015 to date)

Prospects for peace

41. Minister Burt's position appeared to be that any process was better than no process. He told us: if people are not fighting, and if people are still talking, I reckon the programme is working."⁶⁵ And: "Nothing is acceptable about violence, but nor is it acceptable, if there is a chance of preventing it, or a chance of finding an answer, to walk away, so we will continue to support the processes so long as there is an opportunity for success."⁶⁶ Hkanhpa Tu Sadan, Kachin Relief Fund, argued that there was no chance of finding an answer within the current process. He said: "when I was learning about the Northern Ireland peace process, the British Government, the IRA and everyone recognised that nobody was going to win the war. At the moment, the Burmese military still think they win the war. That is the key point here."⁶⁷

42. Richard Montgomery, DFID Director, pointed out that there were groups that were invested in the peace process and parts of Burma that were less violent than others. He said what was needed were some dividends, some incentives, from the Burmese government and the military, as well as from the ethnic groups. He suggested a political settlement could come later. He cautioned us:

Investing in the peace process may not have tangible outcomes like a vaccination programme, but it is probably a more important piece of work for the UK Government to be pump-priming than many others that you could see across the world.⁶⁸

Hkanhpa Tu Sadan said that DFID should understand that, while the Burma military and its government were seen as pursuing peace and national reconciliation, at the same time they were laying the foundations for even more complicated conflicts that could take many more decades to resolve. He said: "the current approach to peace is not working and we urge DFID to stop peace funding, such as Joint Peace Fund, review its policy and initiate more meaningful initiatives for peace and justice."⁶⁹

65 Q257

66 Q259

67 Q167

68 Q262

69 Kachin Relief Fund ([DBB021](#))

A political settlement

43. Hkanhpa Tu Sadan said: “Burma’s problem is a political issue and there is no clear path to finding a solution for the political grievance.” David Baulk agreed: “many of the longstanding demands of ethnic populations, be they Kachin, Ta’ang or Rakhine, have not been met by the Government of Myanmar, and that is a fundamental root cause of many of the conflicts in the country today.”⁷⁰ “The Myanmar military, is unwilling to listening to the grievances of ethnic nationality populations and amend the constitution of the country and the fundamental structures that discriminate against ethnic nationality populations. If that does not change, we can expect those conflicts to continue for a very long time to come.”⁷¹

44. DFID’s 2004–09 country assistance plan stated:

these ceasefires do not address the underlying issues of equity and distribution of power, and a comprehensive political solution is still needed.⁷²

On balance, it appears to us that this position has not changed.

45. **We believe there may be a fundamental problem with the peace process that the UK is supporting. The problem is that one side is unlikely to be sincerely engaged and probably has a completely different agenda. We think it highly likely that the process is just window-dressing for the Burmese Army.**

46. ***We recommend that DFID commission and conduct an independent review of the peace process, evaluating its prospects for progress. There should be robust benchmarks set which, if not met, mean that the programme is suspended.***

IDPs and refugees

Box 2: IDPs in Burma

Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are described by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as “individuals or groups of people who have been forced to flee their homes to escape armed conflict, generalized violence and human rights abuses.” In Burma’s case, conflict is not the only factor in displacement. The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement framework highlights that displacement can also be caused by large-scale development projects, and in Burma state-sponsored natural resource extraction and major infrastructure construction have displaced, and continue to displace, communities and destroy the local environment. Displacement is also caused by inappropriate state policies that drive people from their homes, such as forced labour; lack of food due to limited productive land and poor access to markets; and a dearth of basic social services such as schools and clinics.

Source: DFID assistance to Burmese internally displaced people and refugees on the Thai-Burma border, Tenth Report, 2006–07, HC 645

70 Q149

71 Q159

72 DFID Burma Country Assistance Plan 2004

47. Rights and aid groups have reported that the Burmese Government have dramatically increased restrictions on humanitarian assistance to some internally displaced people in Burma. They claim that the government has virtually denied all access for the United Nations and other international humanitarian groups. David Baulk, Fortify Rights, and Hkanhpa Tu Sadan, Kachin Relief Fund both described features of how humanitarian aid was restricted by administrative regimes of permissions and paperwork.⁷³

DFID funding

48. One of DFID's main aims is: to provide aid to those in conflict. DFID are funding programmes in areas of current conflict such as Kachin and Shan state. However, it has been stopping and reducing funding to organisations such as The Border Consortium helping victims of previous conflict when it is still not safe for people to return and where there is still need. Kachin Relief Fund claim that:

Since many armed organizations signed the NCA peace agreement, the international donors' attitude gradually became a demand to sign the fake peace accord or be cut off from aid.

DFID should understand that the Kachin revolution started because of inequality and injustice against the Kachin population, not because of hunger. The "peace or no aid" approach will not work in the Kachin case. This means that the demand to sign the fake peace accord will prolong conflict in a place where aid should be viewed purely as assistance given on humanitarian grounds, not used as a political tool.⁷⁴

73 Q167

74 Kachin Relief Fund ([DBB021](#))

Box 3: Letter to international community from the Shan people

August 30, 2017

Urgent appeal to continue providing food aid to refugees and IDPs on Shan-Thai border

We, the Shan State Refugee Committee (Thai Border), are appealing to the international community to continue providing food aid to the refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on the Shan-Thai border.

There are about 6,200 refugees and IDPs in six camps along the border, which have been set up since 1999. Over two-thirds of the camp residents are women and children.

The refugees and IDPs have all fled from the war and Burma Army persecution, particularly the mass forced relocation during 1996–1998 in central Shan State. At that time, about 300,000 people from over 1,400 villages were forced at gunpoint from their homes. Hundreds were killed, tortured and raped by the Burma Army.

Most of the forcibly relocated villagers, including elderly and young children, fled to Thailand, but have never been given protection, nor been recognized as refugees by UNHCR.

Wanting to stay close to our communities in Shan State, some of us settled on the Thai-Shan border. The camps where we stay are located on mountaintops, where it is difficult to grow food. We have therefore had to rely on international donations of rice since our camps were first set up.

We are very grateful for the aid we have received, which has enabled us to survive as communities, with our own schools, health centres and places of worship.

However, the food aid we have received has been gradually reduced, and will be totally stopped in October 2017.

We appeal to international donors not to cut off this aid while the peace process is still so uncertain.

We cannot yet return to our homes, because our villages are now derelict, or have been occupied by the Burma Army, their militia or the United Wa State Army. Despite the peace process, the Burma Army has expanded its troops, and is continuing to carry out military operations and attacks around our villages. Villagers continue to be arrested, tortured and killed.

We appeal for our rights as refugees to be respected - the right to receive adequate humanitarian aid, and to be given protection until we can return in safety and dignity to our homes once there is a political settlement and genuine peace in Shan State.

From The Shan State Refugee Committee (Thai Border)

49. Kachin Relief Fund highlighted:

DFID should be aware that Burmese government is spending more money on the military whilst neglecting emergency humanitarian needs in war-affected non-Burmese ethnic communities. We urge DFID to prioritize

the disenfranchised ethnic communities, such as those in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States, with little access to the government public funding/resources and majority Burmese public support.⁷⁵

The Minister said:

We are supporting a £34 million, multi-year project focused on the Thai-Burma border, aimed at meeting the humanitarian needs of refugees and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to reintegrate when they return home.⁷⁶

Richard Montgomery added:

We are also looking at re-orientating some of our health and education work to make sure that we are working more with ethnic organisations that provide health and education. That is something that we have been discussing with the Secretary of State. It is not just about a humanitarian lifeline, although we are helping to provide assistance to about 100,000 people in northern Shan and the Kachin, and in the Thai border camps. Through the livelihood and food security programme, we are also doing work up in these areas on nutrition, on maternal health and on trying to provide opportunities for farmers and people involved in forestry to make better livelihoods. These are, again, incentives for peace in the longer term.⁷⁷

Supporting local groups

50. Supporting local groups to assess and deliver against need in IDP communities has consistently been a recommendation of this Committee in 2007 and 2013. The Committee reported in 2007:

Ethnic, religious and community groups often have relatively open access to government-controlled and ceasefire areas and can provide important development (and some limited protection) assistance to IDPs. Such groups can assess IDPs' needs at first-hand and tailor their response accordingly. Another key benefit to assistance provided by local grassroots organisations is their ability to go beyond emergency humanitarian assistance to undertake more sustainable development work with communities.⁷⁸

The Committee concluded:

Providing funding to community-based organisations (CBOs), who often manage their own clinics, schools and projects, is a way for donors to assist IDPs without channelling funds through the military regime. Such groups can go beyond emergency assistance to carry out crucial sustainable development work at grassroots level. [...] We recommend that DFID

75 Kachin Relief Fund ([DBB021](#))

76 Q256

77 Q263

78 *DFID assistance to Burmese internally displaced people and refugees on the Thai-Burma border*, Tenth Report, 2006–07, HC 645

increase substantially the funding it gives to CBOs within Burma. Capacity-building and training of such groups is a crucial complementary strategy if funding is to be used effectively.

Funding CBOs provides donors with the means to support human rights and democracy work within Burma.⁷⁹

Equally, the Committee recommended: “We recommend that DFID begin appropriate funding of exile groups who carry out crucial work both inside and outside Burma to support IDPs and other vulnerable groups. Support to such groups would have the simultaneous benefit of supporting and raising awareness about the plight of IDPs.”⁸⁰

51. In 2010 DFID reported:

About 20% of our long-term funding for Burma is allocated to communities affected by conflict. These include more than 140,000 Burmese refugees in Thailand, 500,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Burma, and two million people living in ethnic cease-fire areas in Burma. Our aid provides food, shelter and access to legal assistance for refugees in Thailand. It also helps to provide IDPs in Burma with food, improved water and sanitation, primary health care and education services, all delivered by community-based organisations from both Burma and Thailand.⁸¹

DFID’s support for civil society brings together local groups to work more effectively on issues of particular importance to ordinary Burmese people. Our programmes have contributed to a growth in humanitarian activities by independent local NGOs. They aim to assist people to participate better in decision-making processes affecting their welfare and livelihoods.

52. The Kachin Relief Fund has been critical of DFID’s use of the larger INGO contractors in the country. It highlights:

- each of these foreign firms have minimal ‘development’ experience. DFID has selected them because of their accounting/compliance systems.
- they are all expensive, and often they are adding yet another layer to the aid bureaucracy. How much more of DFID’s funding for Burma will now end up in the pockets of (mainly UK or ‘global-based’) companies and consultants?
- civil society interests and support will fall further down the list of priorities now that the funds are being managed by commercial operators.
- DFID’s accountability to the people of Burma is becoming even more difficult and vague. The donor now has these firms and contracts to hide behind. The governance of these firms is all based 000’s of kilometres away and is focused on what is best for the company.

79 *DFID assistance to Burmese internally displaced people and refugees on the Thai-Burma border*, Tenth Report, 2006–07, HC 645

80 *DFID assistance to Burmese internally displaced people and refugees on the Thai-Burma border*, Tenth Report, 2006–07, HC 645

81 DFID, [UKAID in Burma](#), 2010

- The local NGOs are genuinely focused on effective humanitarian work, and DFID needs to empower them to undertake compliance, such as accounting, project monitoring and records keeping. At the same time, many Kachin local NGOs are already equipped with such knowledge, as they have been working in such fields with international NGOs. The DFID contractors are expensive and do not speak local languages—this hinders the work DFID is investing in and wastes UK taxpayers’ money.
- Although the Kachin Relief Fund is a small charity based in the UK, by using our networks we have access to anywhere in the Kachin State. Our charity may be small but we use every penny of our donations for relief efforts. Similarly, our local partners are well qualified to work with DFID. We urge DFID and other UK policy makers to work with Kachin local NGOs and Church based humanitarian departments. These groups have a well-coordinated body, called the Joint Strategy Team (JST), through which DFID could have a space to listen to their concerns, and those of the people they represent and work with, and to engage in strategic, longer-term partnership.⁸²

53. Burma Campaign UK have found that as far as they are aware from their contacts in Burma:

- support for Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN) was ended (after conditions for funding were imposed which SWAN, as a small NGO, could not meet).
- Support for Mae Tao (medicines) has ended.⁸³
- Funding for refugees in camps has been reduced (refugee numbers are down but other donors have cut funding or switched away from food, shelter etc, so people are on reduced rations and say they are being starved back to Burma before its safe).
- Funding for the cross-border backpack health workers will end in June 2018.
- IDPs in Karen State and Shan State no longer receive DFID support as The Border Consortium stopped supporting them due to budget cuts.

Violence and sexual violence

54. The Shan Human Rights Foundation highlighted that there are six camps along the Shan-Thai border sheltering over 6,200 particularly vulnerable refugees such as mothers, children, the old and disabled. They are all from active conflict areas where Burmese military forces continue to conduct violent human rights violations. The Foundation asserted that, even after a ceasefire was signed in 2015, fighting has continued; intensifying since 2017 with gross human rights violations against civilians in the ceasefire areas including extra-judicial killings and sexual violence.⁸⁴ The Shan Woman’s Action Network (SWAN) have been documenting rapes and other forms of sexual violence; their report, Licence to Rape, documented rape of 625 women by personnel from 52 different Burmese Army battalions. The head of the UN’s international fact-finding mission in Burma, Marzuki Darusman,

82 Kachin Relief Fund ([DBB021](#))

83 Karenaid ([DBB018](#))

84 Shan Human Rights Foundation ([DBB022](#))

reported to the UN Human Rights Council that rape was being used as a weapon of war by the Burmese military in the area.⁸⁵ However these IDP camps had their aid from the international community cut off in October 2017 [see Box 3] but their inhabitants clearly feel unable to return home due to the continuing violence.⁸⁶

Empowering IDPs

55. Kachin Relief Fund have found:

Since 2011, the Kachin internally displaced people (IDPs) are directly relying on donors for their daily survival. This will cause problems in the longer-term since we cannot predict when it will be safe to return to their home. The traumatic experiences they have endured as a result of the war and conflict will not be eased by creating dependency—the aid handouts could create further disempowerment for the IDPs.

DFID should consider an alternative way of funding the IDPs—for example, helping IDPs to generate income to support their families. It is very important to support for education and healthcare of the IDPs, whether they reside in government- or non-government controlled areas. If DFID is missing this out, there will be various gaps in the next younger generations.⁸⁷

56. These requests are in line with the Grand Bargain from the World Humanitarian Summit and the Wilton Park Principles as highlighted in our January report on the Rohingya Crisis. They also shed light on the similarities between the refugee camps in Thailand and those in Bangladesh; in particular their longevity. DFID needs to consider how it can work within the principles the UK signed up to within the Grand Bargain when dealing with the refugee and IDP camps, old and new, in south Asia.

Options for the future

57. David Baulk of Fortify Rights said:

What emboldens the Myanmar military to continue to perpetrate atrocity crimes is the complete absence of accountability for many decades of atrocities meted out to ethnic nationality populations in the country.⁸⁸

58. Here are some of the options available to the UK and EU and we consider some and others in this section:

85 [Burmese soldiers accused of escalating violence against northern minorities](#), Daily Telegraph, 15 March 2018

86 Shan Human Rights Foundation ([DBB022](#))

87 Kachin Relief Fund ([DBB021](#))

88 Q148

Key options:	What is the UK position?		What is the EU position?	
Support the establishment of a UN mandated global arms embargo.		Not supporting.		Not supporting.
Support a referral of the situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court.		Not supporting.		Not supporting.
Ban the supply of any equipment to the military, not just arms.		UK is implementing this.		The EU decided not to ban all European companies from supplying the military in Burma.
Ban investment and business dealings with military owned companies.		Not supporting.		Not supporting.
Implement a visa ban on members of the Burmese military entering the EU and asset freeze.		Supporting the EU position of a visa ban and asset freeze for a small number of military officers. The British government has admitted it is highly unlikely that they have any assets in the EU.		A visa ban and asset freeze for a small number of military officers. Yet to be implemented as military officers not identified yet.
Review co-operation and support with the government of Burma in light of its denial of human rights violations and continuation of policies of repression against the Rohingya.		The government has so far concluded no change in policy is needed.		The EU has so far concluded no change in policy is needed.
End all military training and co-operation programmes.		UK suspended its military training programme in September 2017.		The EU decided not to end all training programmes with the military.

Changes to the DFID programme

59. The Committee in 2013 concluded that:

DFID Burma's programme should not roll forward whatever the situation. It should be nimble and flexible to change. [...] If reform in Burma does start to falter and things start moving backwards DFID and the UK Government should be strong to act, reducing or diverting funding and projects.⁸⁹

60. The Minister told us recently:

All things are flexible, and we would be remiss in our duty if we did not look hard at the possibility of change when it is necessary. [...] No one wants to carry on if it is pointless, but I will say that a decision of that nature also has consequences.⁹⁰

Anthony Smith, Chief Executive of Westminster Foundation for Democracy said:

Decisions about whether to step away and how to engage are incredibly important and incredibly difficult.⁹¹

Which programmes could be withdrawn?

Economic Development

61. One potentially controversial area for DFID's engagement is in its economic development work in Burma. DFID Burma says:

The UK's focus and international leadership on economic development is a vital part of Global Britain - harnessing the potential of new trade relationships, creating jobs and channelling investment to the world's poorest countries. Throughout history, sustained, job-creating growth has played the greatest role in lifting huge numbers of people out of grinding poverty. This is what developing countries want and is what the international system needs to help deliver. Whilst there is an urgent need for traditional aid in many parts of the world, ultimately economic development is how we will achieve the Global Goals and help countries move beyond the need for aid.

62. DFID's country profile states that it wants Burma to be in a position to "support UK interests and bilateral trade." It also says

In the future, with one of the fastest growing economies and large oil and gas reserves, Burma could offer significant investment and trade opportunities for the UK.⁹²

89 [Democracy and Development in Burma](#), Ninth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 821, para 180

90 Q270

91 Q204

92 DFID [Burma Country Profile](#) July 2017

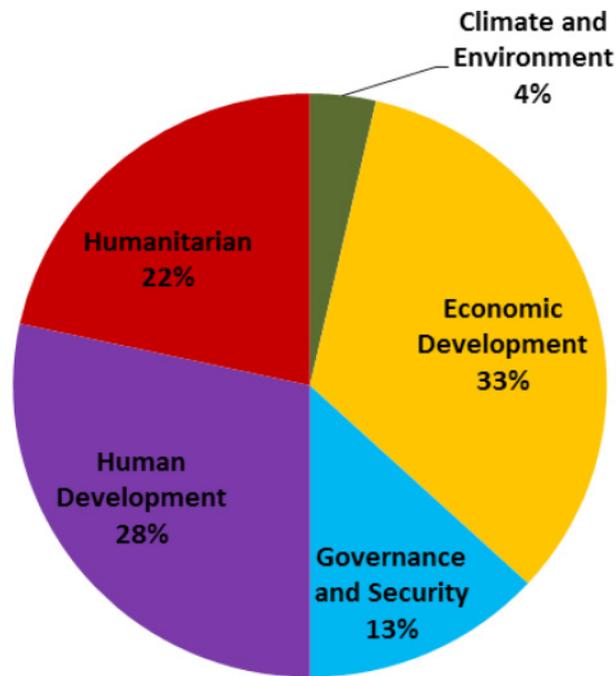
63. DFID’s 2011 to 2016 Country Plan states that “ We are also initiating some private sector partnerships to stimulate inclusive and responsible investment”⁹³ It also said DFID was working on:

Major new investment on inclusive, transformative economic growth policy. This may include reform of the financial sector and business climate, building markets, infrastructure, trade, reforming state enterprises and increasing opportunities for private investment—with the aim of generating much needed new jobs and increased private investment (including from abroad) in Burma.⁹⁴

A significant part of DFID’s programme in Burma is economic development.

Box 4: DFID bilateral Burma country budget

Sector breakdown of 2017/18 bilateral plans



Source: DFID [Burma Country Profile](#) July 2017

64. Minister Burt said:

Our work with the private sector is focused on creating jobs, and expanding the economy and moving it away from what has effectively been a military autocracy, a crony-based system, which does not deliver economic development but delivers vast wealth for the few. There is a determination to disempower that sort of structure. We are working on measures that will improve the nature of the economy and make it livelier. We are very

93 DFID BURMA [Operational Plan 2011–2016](#), Updated December 2014

94 DFID BURMA [Operational Plan 2011–2016](#), Updated December 2014

determined to see that happening. There will be a benefit to the UK, but principally it is of benefit to Burma, the development of the Burma economy, and of course the politics as well.⁹⁵

65. Burma Campaign UK has found an example of why there needs to be policies ensuring no UK aid ends up directly or indirectly benefitting the military. Irrawaddy Green Towers in Burma was created from development aid loans from European countries, including CDC group, under the control of DFID. It is working for MYTEL, the new mobile phone company set up by the Burmese military in conjunction with the Vietnamese military, so it could be deemed that UK aid is helping the Burmese military make money. We have also been told of a UK part funded programme to build an overpass in Yangon, even though DFID acknowledges that the military businesses are heavily involved in transport and infrastructure.

66. Richard Montgomery from DFID told us:

In terms of our due diligence, this is about digging into not just the partners we work with but also the downstream partners that they work with or that are included in our programmes. There is a facility that we have brought in that does that digging for us.⁹⁶

However, he also admitted that:

there are some donors and multilaterals that will provide finance to the Government, which, in principle, includes UK taxpayers' money. Whenever the World Bank lends, that is 15% of our money in IDA.⁹⁷

67. We note that at the same time as we were denied visas to visit Burma, the UK government was hosting a trade delegation from Burma including members of the Burmese government. **In response to this report we would like the UK Government to set out how its support for UK/Burma trade takes into account concerns about the Burmese military's involvement in the economy and human rights abuses. This should include information covering UK spending other than ODA or which is through funds and programmes outside of DFID's control, for example the Prosperity Fund.**

Parliamentary Strengthening

68. DFID said:

- DFID is supporting parliamentary strengthening and electoral processes by funding domestic civil society to observe elections, and supporting women's political participation and leadership; and
- By July 2017, DFID had improved electoral governance and increased access to civic and voter education. 492,930 voter education materials were distributed and 34,000 of these materials were translated into five ethnic languages.⁹⁸

95 Q248

96 Q252

97 Q253

98 Department for International Development ([DBB016](#))

69. We questioned the organisation managing DFID's programme in the Burmese Parliament: The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). Its Chief Executive Anthony Smith told us:

Democratic governance is an essential part of a country's development and a parliament is an essential part of any democracy. The parliament needs to play a proper and effective role in representing all the people of the country. It needs to be able to debate all the issues, including the conflict issues that we have heard about. It needs to hold institutions to account, the executive, security forces, et cetera. Without that, you will not have a fully functioning democracy⁹⁹

70. However as discussed earlier, the Burmese Parliament, in many ways, is not performing these functions nor does it seem likely to in the near future. We asked what evidence or examples there were of a positive impact from the parliamentary strengthening programme in Burma, for example had there been any scrutiny of the Rohingya crisis? However, we have not been provided with any evidence of any serious debate or questions in the Burmese Parliament on the Rohingya crisis. We also asked Anthony Smith whether WFD had considered what conduct or behaviour by the Burmese authorities would be so bad as to cause the programme to be suspended? He said: "What the [WFD] board discussion [has been] trying to assess is whether we are going to help the Rohingya—or any other community that is excluded, persecuted and subject to human rights abuses—more by remaining engaged and trying to build institutions that would challenge that behaviour and change it over time, on the one hand, or by leaving? So far within the board and with all of those other partners, the conclusion is that we should keep trying to build that."¹⁰⁰

We also pursued this with the Minister who said:

We are trying to make sure that the programme is shaped to ensure that Parliament communicates more regularly and effectively on the Government's humanitarian and rehabilitation responses to events, works more closely with civil society, including with Rohingya representatives, and understands more about how other Parliaments have responded to violent conflict.¹⁰¹

71. We asked the Minister whether there were any flames of democracy left in Burma worth fanning? He said:

Our estimation is that there are those who are looking forward to a further development in Burma, but, necessarily, the nature of their system makes it extremely difficult for them to self-identify. Our concern is that, if the voice of people who believe in what we believe in—in terms of parliamentary democracy and Parliament acting as opposition and making people like me accountable—is not there, that process will not continue. It is difficult, and I cannot give you a list, but is it worth doing, and are we confident

99 Q173

100 Q191

101 Q265

there are people who want to continue a transition that is already in place? It is not as if the military was still in place and there was a solely military Government.¹⁰²

72. However, David Baulk argued:

The behaviour of the Government of Myanmar in recent years at the very least calls into question the support that this Government give around parliamentary development in Naypyidaw. We have seen quite consistently people arguing that there are reform-minded parliamentarians in Myanmar and reform-minded uniformed personnel in the Government, and they have been silent in recent months as the international community has cried genocide and other atrocity crimes in Rakhine State and elsewhere. It is very important that the Department for International Development and the UK Government more broadly think very seriously about how supporting this Government with parliamentary development could be supporting the very people who should be at the International Criminal Court.¹⁰³

73. There is an argument that MPs could be empowered by enabling their constituents to hold them to account, thereby strengthening their willingness to speak out. This could be an effective alternative form of Parliamentary support building. A stronger emphasis is needed on alternatives, that support good people but in different forms than current programmes via government support.

74. All aid organisations need to keep under review their terms of engagement with state institutions in countries where there are substantial human rights concerns. We recommend that DFID, together with the WFD and the UK Parliament and other UK organisations supporting the ‘Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’—coordinate in securing an objective review of such programmes. This review needs to determine if any substantive progress has been made in equipping and/or inspiring the Burmese legislature to do more to hold the government to account, engage the public or other flexing of parliamentary muscle. If little or nothing tangible has been achieved, we recommend suspending these programmes.

Engagement with the Burmese government

75. We considered the following statements from DFID:

- No direct financial aid goes to Government of Burma.
- [we are] working through technical assistance to reform-minded ministries to strengthen capacity in civilian government.
- The Rohingya crisis [...] has further exposed the very real challenges of the Burmese military’s continued significant influence on the country’s governance.
- DFID Burma provides indirect support to Burma’s Ministry of Finance and Planning to monitor and better report progress against the Sustainable Development Goals.

102 Q247

103 Q169

- DFID Burma is also working [...]to encourage the Government of Burma to produce a national development plan for the country, against which all donors could align to support positive development.
- as part of our membership of the Cooperation Partners' Group (CPG), we have inputted suggestions to the Government's (still draft) Development Assistance Policy which sets out how the Government of Burma will work with donors.
- DFID Burma received a specific request from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) to support the operationalisation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women in Burma (NSPAW).¹⁰⁴

So, although DFID is not providing financial aid directly to the Government of Burma it is providing 'technical assistance' and advice to the Government of Burma which is not without cost.

76. Dr Dasandi told us:

If it is felt that the situation is likely to deteriorate and there is very little we can do to help by political engagement as an international community, then the answer, if that is the response, is, yes, you start to stop working with that Government, if it is felt that this is no longer going to help. It is a question of what the alternatives are to that and whether the situation is going to get drastically worse. If it is felt there is no longer any point of engagement, then the UK Government should be considering those options.¹⁰⁵

77. Richard Montgomery from DFID said:

we have been discussing with the Secretary of State how we make sure we are working on the right things in Burma going forward, given that there have been these atrocities. One of the focuses that we want to give is on building the capacity of the seven states and divisions rather than just central Government. If we are to do that, we need to have some remit to engage with the central Government, because that is where a lot of the money comes from. If we want to build the capacity of states and regions, we need to engage with both the central and the state systems. That comes back to the Minister's point that, if we really want to nudge change forward and back people who want progressive change, we have to have some level of engagement with the Government.¹⁰⁶

78. The Minister's view was:

We can be sure that, if there is a cut-off of the relationship with Burma—if it returns to isolation—those voices in Burma that know that what has happened is wrong and that wish to challenge what has happened will have no support from us, because we will have cut off the contact. I do not think that is the right approach for diplomacy, so we will continue our efforts. Have they resulted in what we want so far? No, but those efforts will continue.

104 Department for International Development ([DBB016](#))

105 Q204

106 Q255

The arguments about disengagement with Burma are very clear. In a state that has seen this happen within its own borders, where it is quite clear that an element of the state, the military, has been responsible for the atrocities that we have seen, it is a very easy question to raise to say we should cut off the contact. If we do, those voices that want to be part of something different and that struggle to be heard, those who have sought change in Burma, and those who are working with the poorest in the most difficult of circumstances, where they need health, sanitation and education, would just have to find it elsewhere. If we were not there, who would be? Those are the reasons for engagement.¹⁰⁷

79. There is a difference between ending support to the government and ending engagement with it, and ending support to the government does not meet not supporting reform minded people via other means which we discuss in the next section on civil society.

80. **The UK is providing advice to government departments which although not classified as 'direct aid to government' it is British taxpayers' money being used to engage with the Burmese government which DFID itself admits is significantly influenced by the military. However, as the Minister says to disengage is to lose any influence over the government. We ask DFID to re-evaluate its balance of spending between economic development, human development and on meeting urgent humanitarian needs.**

Support for civil society

81. DFID said:

DFID Burma works closely with NGOs and civil society organisations to deliver objectives on civic education, inclusion and participation in public life. This support includes working innovatively to build coalitions between groups with little to no prior history of collaboration. It also promotes improved accountability on issues relevant to broader social and political change, not least through our continued support to electoral processes as well as budget monitoring and systems improvement. DFID also provides core funding to local civil society organisations to strengthen their internal management and governance and enable them more actively and effectively to advocate for sustainable, inclusive development in Burma.¹⁰⁸

82. However, the evidence from the CSO says otherwise. Many civil society organisations consider that the move to work through INGO consortia with CSOs as implementing partners in the past years has been detrimental to their ability to tailor their programs to the fast-changing political landscape (see pages 27-28).

83. Burma Campaign UK has suggested DFID has been selective in its support of more compliant civil society groups rather than those stronger on human rights and government accountability. DFID must be more willing to support grassroots civil society organisations which document and advocate on human rights and are more critical of the military, government and international community.

107 Q244

108 Department for International Development ([DBB016](#))

84. Dr Dasandi said:

What has gone unrecognised in the past year is that you have had a diverse group of civil society organisations making strong statements in January and August last year. [...] In terms of opening up that space, obviously it is not going to be a big fix, where civil society will come in and solve all these problems. Certainly, there are actions that could be done to empower those who are willing, within Myanmar, to speak out, who are doing something to address some of these issues. It is a question of engagement. We have to include those groups, trying to work with those groups and trying to increase the influence of those groups.¹⁰⁹

International Criminal Court referral

85. David Baulk of Fortify Rights said:

When we think about what the international community can do now to help end mass human rights violations and hold the perpetrators of these accountable, it is absolutely fundamental that the Government of this country and others across the world speak up for what is happening to innocent people in Rakhine State, in Kachin State and elsewhere, and say that it is unacceptable and that the situation in Myanmar should be referred to the International Criminal Court. The Government of this country have a great deal of leverage in the UN Security Council and should be applying that in every way possible to help bring criminal accountability for these crimes.¹¹⁰

86. Burma Campaign UK:

The British government has refused to support, in principle, the UN Security Council (UNSC) referring the situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court (ICC). When asked about their position, they hide behind the argument that there is no consensus at the UNSC in support of this, or that Russia and China would veto a resolution. This is deliberately misleading. Consensus can only start to be built when a member seeks to build support. The British government does not as yet support the UNSC making a referral. Taking soundings on existing positions is very different from actively seeking support.

Nor is there an automatic obligation on rushing for a resolution if the UK supports a UNSC referral. It would be more sensible to take the time to build support within the whole UN membership to increase the chances of overcoming opposition. This process can't start when the UK doesn't support a referral itself. The process of countries publicly supporting a referral to the ICC could in itself make the military think twice before launching further attacks as it will reduce their sense of impunity.¹¹¹

109 Q202

110 Q166

111 Burma Campaign UK Briefing: British government response to the Rohingya crisis House of Lords Debate, 10th May 2018

87. Rushanara Ali MP has written in the media that the Foreign Secretary should now campaign for Min Aung Hlaing to be called before the International Criminal Court. She argued that

Yes, it is the case that particular countries will protest against such action, namely Russia and China. However, Britain should call this out for what it is and take a leadership role in holding to account the perpetrators. Without accountability, Min Aung Hling can continue to act with impunity.

Accountability is not just about justice but also about deterring future injustices. [...] if Min Aung Hlaing has learnt one thing in the last year, it is that the international community will not take any meaningful steps against him.¹¹²

88. It was in fact a letter to the UK government on this written by Rushanara Ali and signed by 100 MPs which we were given as one of the reasons that our visas were denied. It therefore must be a fear of the military - to be held to account for what they have done. Just the possibility of an ICC referral may be enough to give Min Aung Hlaing pause for thought before ordering further attacks against the Rohingya or other ethnic groups—and that could save lives.¹¹³

89. The ICC Prosecutor is now instead seeking a ruling that she can investigate the crime of deportation under the Rome Statute, as Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh, which is a signatory of the Rome Statute. This is a very welcome move. Aung San Suu Kyi has issued a statement criticising the move, denying Rohingya were deported. This continues her longstanding approach of denying human rights abuses have taken place and seeking to obstruct moves towards justice and accountability. The Burmese Government issued a statement that it was “seriously concerned” about the ICC prosecutor’s application and reiterated that it has not deported any individuals and in fact has “worked hard in collaboration with Bangladesh to repatriate those displaced from their homes.”¹¹⁴

Sanctions

90. David Baulk of Fortify Rights said:

Briefly on the question of sanctions, what we are calling for is targeted financial sanctions on people with demonstrated command responsibility for atrocity crimes. We think that is appropriate and punishes the right people rather than the innocent people of Myanmar writ large.¹¹⁵

Hkanhpa Tu Sadan:

Can I add one more and include any businesses associated with the military as well? The British Government have the responsibility to sanction the

112 [Haul Myanmar’s military leaders before the international criminal court, Rushanara Ali, The Guardian, 13 February 2018](#)

113 Rushanara Ali [Letter to the Foreign Secretary](#), 21 February 2018

114 [‘Myanmar says ICC lacks jurisdiction to probe Rakhine crisis’](#), Frontier Myanmar, 13 April 2018

115 Q166

army that perpetrates human rights violations and crimes against humanity and then war crimes to its own people. The British Government have the responsibility to sanction those associated with the military.¹¹⁶

Rabat Plan of Action

91. Following several workshops on the prohibition of incitement to national, racial and religious hatred organized by the United Nations in various regions of the world, a plan of action to prevent incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, as outlined in Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, was presented by internationally recognized experts at an event held in Geneva on 21 February 2013.¹¹⁷

92. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, in her opening statement, stated:

In recent years, incidents involving hate speech, negative stereotyping in the media, and even advocacy of religious or national hatred by public officials and political parties have resulted in killings of innocent people, attacks on places of worship and calls for reprisals. This spiral of violence has made it incumbent on us to renew the search for the correct balance between freedom of expression—which is among the most precious and fundamental of our rights as human beings—and the equally vital need to protect individuals and communities from discrimination and violence.¹¹⁸

93. Aung San Suu Kyi seems to have failed the test set by the Rabat Agreement which was articulated at the time by UN Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng:

National and local authorities can exacerbate the severity of the speech, but they have also the potential to counter hate speech through positive speech and messages of tolerance and restraint.¹¹⁹

94. David Baulk of Fortify Rights said:

She has made no attempts to counter hate speech or send positive messages about tolerance and restraint. Instead she has either remained silent or referred to ‘fake news’. Aung San Suu Kyi is not giving them orders, but she is standing up in public and defending the actions of the Myanmar military, whether that is in the west of the country or the north. That makes her complicit in atrocity crimes. When we think about if there is any way back for her in terms of the trust lost among ethnic nationality populations, it will be a very long road to regaining that trust. If she is earnest about winning back that trust, the first thing that needs to happen is for her to say publicly that perpetrators of these atrocity crimes must be held accountable for their actions.¹²⁰

116 Q166

117 [Rabat Outcome Document](#)

118 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner: [Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence](#)

119 OHCHR: [Fighting incitement to crimes against humanity](#), February 2013

120 Q165

Burma Campaign UK highlight that:

Aung San Suu Kyi has been criticised for her silence over the Rohingya crisis, but she has not been silent. When the violence first escalated against the Rohingya in 2012 she talked about it in terms of immigration and the rule of law, sending a clear message to the people of Burma that she did not see the Rohingya as being from Burma, and thereby encouraging and legitimising prejudice.

Before the current crisis, Aung San Suu Kyi kept in place military era laws and policies which were designed to drive the Rohingya out of Burma using a combination of deliberate impoverishment and human rights violations. She kept in place restrictions on humanitarian aid which killed people, including children.

During the military offensives against the Rohingya in 2016 and 2017 her government vociferously defended the military and denied human rights violations have taken place. She even had a flashing 'fake rape' sign on her website.

Aung San Suu Kyi does not control the military but nothing obliges her to defend their actions, deny human rights violations are taking place, and ban UN investigators and rapporteurs from the country. Aung San Suu Kyi's government is also banning an increasing number of human rights activists from the country, and placing much greater restrictions on journalists obtaining visas.

Aung San Suu Kyi has not said Rohingya belong in Burma, has not changed the law to ensure they get citizenship, has not taken action to tackle hate speech, and in fact her government used state media and social media to spread fear and hatred of Rohingya.¹²¹

Media commentary has included:

There is no broader reform agenda if she continues to preside over a state that sanctions racism and terror. Her position within the government is not merely symbolic; she occupies at least three offices as state counsellor, foreign minister and minister of the president's office. As a politically elected representative of the government, she bears the moral responsibility to do right by her people, which include the Rohingya Muslims.¹²²

95. Among the key factors put forward in the Rabat Plan of Action to prevent incitement to hatred are the collective responsibility of public officials, religious and community leaders, the media and individuals, and the need to nurture social consciousness, tolerance, mutual respect, and intercultural dialogue.

121 Burma Campaign UK Briefing: British government response to the Rohingya crisis House of Lords Debate, 10th May 2018

122 [Aung San Suu Kyi is neglecting her moral responsibility opinion](#), CNN

3 The Rohingya refugees

Introduction

96. We have published two reports on the Rohingya crisis and discussed Burma's role and responsibilities extensively in Chapter 2.

97. In our previous work we concluded that the horrific campaign of violence that led to the expulsion of the Rohingya was the culmination of decades of marginalisation and abuse and a textbook example of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Burmese military and security forces. This caused a humanitarian crisis of staggering size and complexity for Bangladesh and the international community to cope with. We acknowledged the immediate challenge of providing shelter, water, food, security, health and education services for an enormous, displaced and traumatised population. We recognised the further intractable challenges around the Rohingya's longer term future, especially their accommodation and location; constitutional status, security and access to fundamental legal and human rights; as well as the likelihood that establishing satisfactory conditions for repatriation would be a protracted process.

First report and reply

98. We received and published the Government's reply to our initial report on the crisis. In that reply, the Government demonstrated a broad measure of agreement with our analysis of the situation, with the exception of our conclusions that: evidence of discrimination and abuse of the Rohingya had been ignored; or that UK policy towards Burma had been unduly optimistic about the potential for full transition to democratic rule. We believe the key strategic sentiments in the Government's reply are:

- "... it is only in a democratic, peaceful and developing Burma that the Rohingya are likely to find a long-term future. The Government will continue to support the democratic transition and look for ways to strengthen civilian rule."
- "We assess that there is credible evidence of widespread abuses, directed overwhelmingly against Rohingya civilians and carried out by the Burmese military and ethnic Rakhine militias. The acts of ethnic cleansing taking place in Burma may amount to crimes against humanity as defined by the Rome Statute of the ICC".
- "DFID is aware that further discussions with the Government of Bangladesh will now be needed in order to manage what will be a protracted crisis over the medium and longer term."
- "We also recognise that large-scale returns are unlikely to be possible in the near term and that some, possibly many, Rohingya may no longer wish to return."
- "There needs to be a full investigation into what happened in Rakhine, but without the cooperation of the Burmese authorities and full access, only partial evidence collection will be possible."

- “... the 5-point plan remains a valid framework for addressing the current crisis.” ... “It is unfortunately true that limited progress has been made on these objectives.”¹²³

Second report and reply

99. Our further report on the crisis was, essentially, an urgent call for action in the light of the compelling pleas we heard in Cox’s Bazar for measures to be facilitated to protect the Rohingya from the expected heavy rainfall of the monsoon season. The key request was for more land to be found and prepared to enable those most vulnerable to move to safer ground. Since this second report on the crisis published in March after our visit to the refugee camps there have been a few developments but no emerging clarity about the longer term.

Recent developments

100. Recent key developments have been:

- In the “Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence” for 2017 (dated 23 March 2018) Burma’s military forces, the ‘Tatmadaw’, were named and added to the list of armies known to commit sexual violence in armed conflict.¹²⁴
- Over nine months since the expulsion of the Rohingya by Burma, Save the Children, amongst others, highlight “a child protection crisis on the doorstep” as babies begin to be born—and some abandoned—arising out of the multiple cases of rape of Rohingya women and girls by Burmese military personnel.¹²⁵ In addition to this further human tragedy and trauma, the UN Envoy for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, and UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour, have jointly pointed out the grave risks of inadequate access to midwifery and medical assistance due to the heavy stigmatisation of pregnancy in such circumstances as well as the imminent onset of the monsoon season.¹²⁶
- The Burmese military have punished seven soldiers for the murder of 10 Rohingya in the village of Inn Din in Rakhine. A statement from the Burmese army said: “Four officers were denounced and permanently dismissed from the military and sentenced to 10 years with hard labour at a prison in a remote area. Three soldiers of other rank were demoted to the rank of ‘private’, permanently dismissed from the military and sentenced to 10 years with hard labour at a prison in a remote area”. Subsequently, on 18 April, there were conflicting media reports of these men being released under a prisoner amnesty.¹²⁷

123 *Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis—monsoon preparedness in Cox’s Bazar: Government response to the Committee’s Third Report*, Fifth Special Report, 2017–19, HC 1055, 22 May 2018

124 Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, paragraphs 10, 12, 17, 55–60 and Annex - List of parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, p34, “Parties in Myanmar, State actors: (a) Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw).” (<http://undocs.org/s/2018/250>) But see

125 [Nine months on, a race against time to find pregnant Rohingya rape survivors](#), IRIN news, 16 April 2018

126 [Pregnant Rohingya Refugees Are in Desperate Need](#), Joint article by UN Envoy for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, and UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour, Bloomberg, 9 May 2018

127 [‘Did Soldiers Jailed for Killings Go Free? Myanmar TV Says Yes \(Briefly\)’](#) The New York Times, 18 April 2018

- On Tuesday 8 May, in response to the UN coordinated Joint Response Plan, the Secretary of State announced a further package of humanitarian aid for Bangladesh and the Rohingya of £70 million (bringing the running total up to £129 million). The aid was described as aiming to deliver: materials to strengthen shelters; food and clean water; nutrition for pregnant and new mothers; access to midwifery care; bathing facilities; and access to healthcare services.¹²⁸
- A UN Security Council mission (with the UK represented by Karen Pierce, UK Ambassador to the UN), has visited the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh and Burmese leaders (including Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief) and had some access to Rakhine state, overflying it and visiting some repatriation facilities. The resulting bland UNSC press statement, and subsequent US criticism of the process,¹²⁹ leaves us in no doubt that the UN Security Council remains hamstrung by the refusal of, at least, China's refusal to support action against Burma.¹³⁰

Conclusions

101. We stand by our two previous reports and the conclusions and recommendations we set out there. Alongside many other members of both Houses, we are increasingly horrified as more and more evidence and testimony emerges about the violent expulsion of the Rohingya by Burmese military forces. Yet, this is almost eclipsed by the threat to the Rohingya's fraught and fragile foothold in Bangladesh as the monsoon season comes ever closer. At the same time, we would urge that the grave concerns we have identified over the longer term future of the Rohingya are not ignored in seeking solutions to this more imminent further chapter in the crisis.

102. We very much welcome the £70 million of new aid allocated by the UK to bolster the on-going work in Cox's Bazar to prepare for the monsoon season. These resources will make a substantial difference and we trust that further donors will be inspired to follow suit.

103. We can only interpret the UNSC press statement of 9 May, issued following the visit by UN Security Council representatives to Bangladesh and Burma, as meaning that China, at least, threatens to veto any proposal for collective action in response to the Rohingya crisis.

104. In addition, to our previous work, there are two points to repeat and one to make at this juncture:

- *The Bangladesh Prime Minister, government, other services, and the people and authorities of Cox's Bazar, must be thanked and commended for the way sanctuary was provided to the Rohingya.*
- *While in Bangladesh (in March), we heard grave and convincing concerns from many quarters that a substantial proportion of the Rohingya refugees' accommodation (and services) was extremely vulnerable to the heavy rainfall*

128 This contribution will see the UK providing 10.5% of the total budget set out in the JRP of March 2018.

129 [U.S. criticises China for shielding Myanmar from U.N. action](#), Reuters, 15 May 2018

130 [UN Security Press Statement](#), 9 May 2018, SC/13331

that the imminent monsoon season would bring. Without decisions and action being taken very quickly to enable relocation to begin -- and to facilitate other mitigations -- people were going to die.

- *The threat of monsoon or cyclone only reinforces the need to persuade the Bangladesh government to seize the nettle and start laying the foundations for a plan to provide for the longer term, including registration.*

4 Bangladesh

Economic growth and development

105. DFID, and other commentators, regard Bangladesh is a development success story. There are various indicators commonly quoted:

- the achievement of the majority of the Millennium Development Goals.
- reaching Lower Middle-Income status in 2015 (after sustaining average annual growth of more than six per cent over the last 10 years and 7.3% in 2016–17).
- the halving of poverty levels between 1990 and 2010, a marked rise in female employment and other recent improvements measured by the Global Human Development Index.
- development activity that has been distinctively pervasive and distributed through the country (largely due to a substantial and active NGO sector).¹³¹
- a growth path that, if maintained, would lead to Middle-Income Country Status in 10–15 years and a development trajectory with some positive features for sustainable and inclusive growth.¹³²
- For the immediate future, the youthfulness of Bangladesh’s population was highlighted; 48% of the population is aged under 26 years old. This represented both an opportunity and a test with 2.2 million people entering the job market each year.

Challenges

106. Of course, significant challenges remain, both in terms of some weaknesses and fault-lines in the overall picture and potential fragility in the face of external ‘shocks’—such as the arrival of a traumatised Rohingya community expelled by Burma as well as Bangladesh’s well-evidenced vulnerability to natural disasters.

Equality

107. The relatively impressive economic growth overall, unsurprisingly, is not distributed as equitable benefits throughout Bangladesh society. While DFID wrote that: “progress in poverty reduction has been impressive, and substantially ahead of what might be expected from the country’s income level”, the estimates of current poverty levels are of between 37–40 million people living in poverty, of whom 21 million were in extreme poverty. The Institute for Development Studies wrote that “comparatively high growth rates in Bangladesh have not automatically translated into decent work or living wages” nor have they generated the skilled labour force that Bangladesh’s needs for the future. Other witnesses agreed, saying that one of the country’s key challenges was to “get up the value chain”.¹³³ Joe Devine, Social and Policy Sciences, Bath University, illustrated

131 Q106

132 Department for International Development ([DBB016](#)), BRAC ([DBB036](#)), Institute for Development Studies ([DBB024](#)), plus DFID country briefing

133 Q110

Bangladesh's uneven distribution of the wealth created by its GDP growth, telling us: "The top 10% of the country have sped away ... we are talking about luxury lifestyles that most of us cannot imagine. The bottom 40% have dropped significantly. The middle class, around 50%, is ... retaining its consumption from before. You have a real inequality brewing and increasing."¹³⁴

108. There also seem to be inequalities arising from the competing attractions of continuing education and immediate employment in Bangladesh. Farah Kabir, ActionAid Bangladesh, pointed to the fact that the country had about 400,000 people at mid-manager level from India and other parts of south Asia due to a lack of educational attainment in Bangladesh schools. She said that these were not imported 'experts' but people with basic management skills. There had been a huge improvement in enrolment and access to a basic education but too soon the government's priorities kicked in—or those of struggling parents—and young people were pushed towards "vocational or the overseas market" (not helped by legislation legalising full-time employment at age 14).¹³⁵

109. The 'overseas market' was important because remittances (money sent home by nationals living and working abroad) have been important as a source of foreign exchange (\$12.7 billion in 2016/17¹³⁶). Meenakshi Ganguly, Human Rights Watch, South Asia, told us that the Bangladesh government's approach was "pretty much competing with other countries to undercut the wages for these people to travel";¹³⁷ and the "poorest record" in trying to protect their rights and welfare. The emigrant population is significant with 750,000 Bangladeshis migrating to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Singapore and Malaysia in 2017 alone—not far off the number of Rohingya arriving after 'deportation' from Burma. In total, almost nine million Bangladeshis are estimated to be working overseas, of whom a majority are located in the Middle East.

110. There was also the enduring issue of gender inequality. Although, we were told that Bangladesh now has more girls in school than boys, that was on the basis of enrolment. The drop-out rate from secondary education for girls was close to 50%; the equivalent for boys was about 41%. This feeds through to the workplace and business environment. In the ready-made garment sector (80% female employees), men would be likely to be earning twice what was paid to a woman and occupy many times more supervisory positions. In the small business sector, it would appear that men earn about 80% more than women.

111. With DFID's focus on tackling poverty and 'leaving no-one behind', unsurprisingly, a substantial portion of the overall Bangladesh programme is aimed at tackling the poorest and, in doing so, mitigating the inequality of mainstream economic growth. On the upstream side, £197.4 million was allocated to three education programmes, overall spanning 2008 to 2020, aimed at primary education, English language skills and reaching under-privileged young people with basic and vocational education aimed at employability. More directly aimed at improving the livelihoods and economic opportunities of women, the poor and disadvantaged populations are a basket of programmes, covering different planning periods, which include objectives such as assisting solo, micro and small

134 Q106

135 A joint Bangladesh government/LO survey of child labour identified 3.45 million working children of whom 1.7 fell under the definition of child labour.

136 15% lower than recent performance

137 Q106

businesses, improving the provision of skills in the pervasive garment-making sector and also construction, formal job creation, and improving the quality of existing formal jobs in the garment sector.¹³⁸

112. We received favourable impressions of a number of providers, and from a number of beneficiaries, of such programmes during our visit to Bangladesh earlier this year. These included: a maker and importer of shoes who was looking forward to opening a second (tiny) shop and renegotiating the terms of his import deal; a number of women investigating the potential to move from solo home-working on garments to some form of collective or association, and a further group of solo entrepreneurs being assisted in documenting their financial ‘identity’ as a foundation for discussions with a bank about access to finance.

113. Two issues came to the fore during this portion of the visit that we raised with Minister Burt when he came to give evidence at the conclusion of the inquiry. First, we visited an impressive collaboration between DFID, Ambagan Technical School and a number of private sector sponsors, under the Underprivileged Children’s Education Programme (UCEP). This is a project to re-connect young people with education and vocational skills training. It was quite clear from the students we talked to that, without the incentives of UCEP’s structure and the likelihood of employment, the chances of them spending time back in education, as opposed to informal employment, was remote. However, DFID is withdrawing funding from the initiative and we challenged the wisdom of stopping something that seemed to be working well. Richard Montgomery, DFID Director, indicated that the point behind projects such as UCEP’s Ambagan school was to showcase the approach, draw in other funding and become self-sufficient. He said that UCEP would be able to apply to a successor challenge fund (but acknowledged the process was a competitive one). On a practical note, he added: “we have this dialogue with a lot of organisations and every time we say, “Okay, we are not going to stick to what we said before, and we are going to give you another piece of funding”, we create an incentive for the next round of negotiations with another organisation. That is problematic.”¹³⁹ **We acknowledge the principle of seed-funding, showcasing and consequent self-sufficiency but are grateful for the Minister’s under-taking further to consider the funding of UCEP’s programme for disadvantaged youth skills training. We look forward to a report of his conclusions as part of DFID’s reply to this report.**

114. Secondly, we visited an obviously and avowedly successful garment manufacturer in a special enterprise zone in Chittagong which was receiving DFID’s support to implement a superior training methodology which got workers from induction to the factory floor more quickly than traditional methods and with superior productivity. We questioned why such a business needed subsidy from UK aid to train its workers?

115. Minister Burt summarised the approach by saying “sometimes programmes are designed to encourage those who *have* the resources to *place* the resources in the right place.”¹⁴⁰ Richard Montgomery, DFID Director, recalled the infamous Rana Plaza building collapse¹⁴¹ and the consequent coalition of Bangladesh authorities, aid donors, NGOs and retailers (including many big UK brands) which worked together to improve

138 DFID country programme briefing

139 Q284

140 Q279

141 [The Rana Plaza disaster](#), DFID & FCO, April 2014

infrastructures, environment and conditions, as well as inspection and audit arrangements, to prevent repetition. The programme we saw was a further step in this process, a more explicit showcase, to demonstrate the ‘bottom line’ benefits of better training, better conditions, better employee engagement. Mr Montgomery said: “I do not think we see this as a long-term hand out. We are seeing this as a hand up to factories to demonstrate that better training is worthwhile ... The UK taxpayer can be really proud of the way that we have helped, along with many others, improve the ready-made garment industry, which now supports not just 4 million women directly through wages but supports about 15% of the Bangladesh population”.¹⁴² In response to challenge from the Committee, Mr Montgomery agreed that a low-interest loan, what he then termed “development capital”, might have been used in recognition of the boost being given to an already profitable entity in the private sector.¹⁴³ Minister Burt also acknowledged that “development changes ... the instruments and facilities that we use change over time.”¹⁴⁴ **We will return to the evolution of instruments and facilities used to deploy UK aid in a future inquiry into DFID’s Economic Development Strategy.**

‘Civic space’, open debate

116. Our evidence suggested that Bangladesh’s relatively open ‘civic’ space¹⁴⁵ had played a major role in its successful economic growth and development. Evidence from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) said that the freedom and confidence for DFID and Bangladeshi NGOs, such as BRAC, to form “enduring and innovative partnerships” had contributed to relatively equitable and inclusive development over time.¹⁴⁶ Joe Devine, Head of Social Policy Sciences, Bath University, told us: “Bangladesh is probably unique in the world in that, especially through NGO activity, the development activity has been pervasive and widespread throughout the country”.¹⁴⁷ IDS also pointed to the freedom of the media, and other civil society organisations, to highlight, discuss and criticise the activity and performance of government, as a “crucial foundation” for Bangladesh’s “wider human development success” and external trust in the economic and business environment.¹⁴⁸ Meenakshi Ganguly, Human Rights Watch South Asia, also coupled tolerance of scrutiny and criticism with successful development, telling us: “If you are going to deem your entire opposition as most likely linked to terrorism, it is a huge challenge. That means half of [the government’s] political opponents are in jail or have charges coming up. That bit of it is problematic and it creates an environment that will, in the end, hurt the economy.”¹⁴⁹

117. Our witnesses were clear that recent activity by the Bangladesh authorities was aimed at restricting freedom of debate and the capacity and willingness of civil society representatives to speak out and criticise.¹⁵⁰ The 2014 general election in Bangladesh had

142 Q279

143 Q282

144 Q282

145 Except for labour organisation and representation

146 Institute for Development Studies ([DBB024](#)), 1.1

147 Q106

148 Institute for Development Studies ([DBB024](#)), 2.3

149 Q114

150 Department for International Development ([DBB016](#)), Institute for Development Studies ([DBB024](#)), and *passim* on 23 January 2018, HC 504

been controversial and violent and the main BNP opposition party had boycotted it. Our evidence indicates that since then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government has been exerting increasing pressure on critics and opponents, directly, using intimidation, arbitrary arrests, vexatious proceedings and enforced disappearances and, indirectly, with repressive legislation and administrative rules; pressure on the judiciary and other authorities independent of government; and the politicisation of the police, courts and other public agencies.

118. DFID is similarly concerned; Minister Alistair Burt told us that: "There has been a shrinkage of the political space" in Bangladesh adding that the UK Government raised concerns—for example about draft legislation on digital security or challenges to journalists and others—with the Bangladeshi authorities in public and in private.¹⁵¹ Discussions during our recent visit to Bangladesh indicated that, while in recent history, extra-judicial disappearances have been mostly aimed at terrorist suspects, they are increasingly aimed at opposition parties.

119. There was a further narrative, presented in evidence, that polarisation between Awami League and the BNP supporters had percolated everywhere, including in civil society organisations, because, as Joe Devine, Bath University, told us: "survival depends on being properly aligned with X party or Y party".¹⁵² This led to the further diminution of the space for the "public good", and non-partisan debate, in Bangladesh. Mr Devine recommended DFID should focus on supporting the independence of the public policy 'think tank' sector, such as the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, which were "very, very good" but also "under fire at the moment". In Chittagong, Bangladesh we had visited part of an impressive DFID programme, co-funded with USAID¹⁵³ and badged as 'strengthening political participation', which includes efforts to bring younger people from the different parties together to bridge exactly this divide. We heard, in particular, that this programme had benefited over 5,300 women who had since been appointed to grassroots party committees. Minister Burt welcomed the Committee's interest and noted that, globally, political polarisation and confrontation was currently acute and that DFID was looking for opportunities to foster the recognition of the legitimacy of political differences, including in Bangladesh.¹⁵⁴

Human rights

120. In general, human rights, while enshrined in Bangladeshi law, are reported to continue to be being abused widely. Bangladesh remains a Priority Country in this respect for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Credible reports from human rights organisations list: extra-judicial killings; arbitrary arrests followed by long detentions without charges; and enforced disappearances, allegedly at the hands of law enforcement officers. As mentioned above, victims of these activities have included opposition figures in recent times. The use of intimidation, ill-treatment and torture in custody remains rife.

121. We visited the Dhaka District and Metropolitan Courts and discussed the challenges of accessing justice in Bangladesh. One over-riding feature was the sheer quantity of cases with a backlog—or caseload depending on your point of view—of about three million

151 Q271 and see Annex 1 (FCO 2016 Human Rights report)

152 Q118

153 The DFID element is currently £16.2 million between 2017 and 2021

154 Q275

cases, both civil and criminal. Commentators described this backlog as a barrier to justice in all type of cases giving rise to constraints upon all areas of economic and social activity. We were staggered by the quantity and distribution of mountains of physical files in the facility we visited (yet impressed by the apparent ability of the paralegal staff we met to navigate this paperwork).

122. While Bangladesh's total prison population is lower than that of England and Wales, the proportion of 'untried' detainees at any one time was around 75–80%, 56,000 people (compared to the E&W equivalents of nearer 10% and 9,000).¹⁵⁵ In the Bangladeshi case, however, a large majority of untried detainees may well be eventually acquitted; some after decades of incarceration. DFID has allocated £33.5 million between 2013 and 2021 to improving access to justice in Bangladesh with the specific aim of benefitting up to "2 million poor people" and reducing the remand population by up to 17,750 across 35 prisons. More effective and efficient justice and criminal justice systems should, eventually, encourage more than the 8% of Bangladeshis who currently feel comfortable reporting crime to the police, and the 1.5% willing to go to court; it may also assist improving upon the obscenely high proportion, 99.6%, of cases of gender-based violence that fail.

123. We raised with DFID, evidence we had received which alleged continuing abuses and violence committed by Bangladeshi security forces against ethnic minorities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in south eastern Bangladesh.¹⁵⁶ Minister Burt responded that the UK did not have programmes addressing violence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts at present due to a perception that "the pressures that were evident 20 years ago had eased to some degree, but the evidence that you heard has interested us, and we will look at that."¹⁵⁷ The Minister said that a programme entitled Enabling Pathways out of Extreme Poverty had the potential to be extended to the Hill Tracts in the future, providing some "basic help, access to services, work opportunities and the like".¹⁵⁸ **We were grateful to the Minister for undertaking to investigate reports of Bangladeshi military violence and consequent unrest in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. We look forward to a response on this point when the Government replies to this report.**

Women and girls

124. Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world despite legislation in place prohibiting marriage for girls under the age of 18 and boys under the age of 21.¹⁵⁹ Over half of women currently between the ages of 20–24 were married before their 18th birthday and one in five were married before their 15th birthday.¹⁶⁰ Bangladesh faced criticism in 2017 from human rights groups¹⁶¹ when it passed an amendment to relevant statute permitting girls under age 18 to marry under "special circumstances," such as "accidental" or "illegal" pregnancy, with permission from their parents and a court. There is no age limit on how early girls can marry under this exception.¹⁶² Women

155 World Prison Brief: [Bangladesh](#)

156 Mr Felix Dawes ([DBB037](#))

157 Q226

158 Q226–227

159 DFID country briefing

160 DFID country briefing

161 Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2018](#) Bangladesh

162 DFID country briefing

also face very high levels of violence in Bangladesh. Over 80% of married Bangladeshi women are estimated to suffer abuse from their partner during their marriage. There are also high levels of dowry killings, acid attacks, stalking, sexual harassment and rape.¹⁶³

125. DFID is funding the Manusher Jonno Foundation which has helped over one million people (60% women) to hold government to account and claim their rights; including helping 45,852 female survivors of violence to get compensation, resolution or legal services.¹⁶⁴

Business and working environment

126. A further potential restraint on further economic development was the general business environment in Bangladesh. Our witnesses pointed out that “in every single indicator that exists in terms of corruption, Bangladesh does poorly.” Corruption in Bangladesh was described as endemic; from big contracts and grand schemes — such as the Padma Bridge project¹⁶⁵ (from which the World Bank was said to have withdrawn on grounds of concern about corruption) — to small, everyday, things like the ‘garbage’ collection.¹⁶⁶ Bangladesh features at 177th out of 190 countries in the World Bank’s ‘Doing Business 2018’ survey and 143rd out of 180 in Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index for 2017. A related challenge is that public revenue generation in Bangladesh equated to only about 9% of GDP (in contrast to, for example, a western European norm of above 30%).

127. DFID’s response to these challenges, specifically, are £59 million worth of programmes, running to 2021, aimed at supporting the strengthening of the management and transparency of official information for citizens, including obviously civil society and businesses, to improve the tools and means for holding public authorities and agencies to account—with a particular programme aimed at the system of public expenditure.

Climate change

128. Bangladesh is widely recognised as one of the most vulnerable countries in terms of the impacts of climate change and also for its cutting-edge achievements in addressing the issue. We were grateful to be able to discuss these issues with leading experts, led by Professor Ainun Nishat, in Dhaka in March.

129. Bangladesh’s vulnerability arises from its extensive floodplains, low elevation (two thirds of the country being less than five metres above sea level), high population density, high levels of poverty and substantial reliance on agriculture for economic subsistence and food security. More than 80% of the population, more than 128 million people, are at risk of exposure to floods, droughts and earthquakes; and over 70% are at risk from cyclones.

130. These risks are very real and have materialised in the past with terrifying regularity claiming millions of lives and negating prior development gains. Since 1954, Bangladesh has experienced 21 abnormally high floods (of which four were ‘exceptional’ and two were

163 DFID country briefing

164 DFID country briefing

165 A \$3.7 billion, 6km, road and rail bridge under construction on the Padma River which runs across the middle of Bangladesh.

166 Q112

catastrophic). In addition, a severe cyclone hits the country every three years or so. For example, in July 2015, the concurrent impacts of Cyclone Komen and monsoon season flooding caused \$1.56 billion in damage to assets and impacted upon 2.6 million people.

131. Other impacts may be more insidious but are very worrying nonetheless. Erosion along Bangladesh's long low coastline accounts for an annual loss of around 10,000 hectares as well as weakening natural coastal defences and aquatic ecosystems. There is a large problem - particularly in western Bangladesh - of scarcity of fresh water due to 'salinisation'. Water intrusion from rising sea levels in low-lying plains has worsened the decline of agriculture and related production and employment opportunities as well as increasing the spread of water-related diseases.

132. Bangladesh has invested heavily in disaster readiness and response and has been supported in doing so by DFID and other donor partners. Investment of the order of \$10 billion over 25 years has been directed at both infrastructure (such as strengthening river embankments and coastal polders, building cyclone shelters and developing early warning systems) and adaptation (government agency capacity, livelihood diversification and adapting rural farming methods). One example given was of increased crab farming or "fattening" taking advantage of the water salinisation (however the point was made that crab meat was far from a Bangladesh staple).

133. DFID's assessment is, however, that "the impacts of global warming and climate change still have the potential to challenge the country's development efforts, human security and the future."¹⁶⁷ The response has been both a specific climate change adaptation and risk reduction programme (£75 million between 2008 and 2017), a more general disaster preparedness and response improvement programme (£105 million between 2016 and 2021) and the 'mainstreaming' of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures across all programmes (for instance, clean energy, off-grid, for the rural poor and new schools doubling up as cyclone shelters for over 50,000 people in the vulnerable coastal zone).

Health and nutrition

134. DFID also runs two further programmes in Bangladesh aimed at: improving access, particularly by the poor, to essential health, population and nutrition services (£120 million between 2011 and 2017); and strengthening care for mothers and new-borns amongst the poor (£38 million between 2013 and 2018). Undernutrition in Bangladesh is the highest in South Asia (and the percentage of babies born with 'low birthweight' is the highest in the world). Tackling undernutrition effectively is an end in itself (SDG2), as well as contributing to the reduction of global disease; and avoiding the economic costs (2–3% of GDP and 10% of earnings); and it breaks the inter-generational cycle. The Bangladesh government has consistently prioritised key aspects of life-saving health services (such as vaccinations, antenatal services and family planning) and DFID described access to basic health services as "almost universal" but identified: low availability of skilled assistance during childbirth, TB, diabetes, hypertension, cancers and accidents as key contributing factors to premature deaths in Bangladesh.¹⁶⁸ We visited both a HOPE developing midwifery project in Cox's Bazar and had a discussion with 'Suchana' nutrition programme deliverers (Save the Children International).

167 DFID country briefing, 94

168 *Ibid*, 90

BRAC

135. A unique feature of DFID's work in Bangladesh is its strategic partnership with BRAC, the giant home-grown, now global, NGO. Since 2011, DFID has been in a Strategic Partnership Arrangement (SPA) with BRAC. This is a flexible funding agreement in which BRAC receives a sizeable, multi-annual allocation of ODA to deliver a defined set of agreed development objectives covering a wide range, if not all, of DFID's strategic objectives for its work in Bangladesh. The original SPA concluded in 2016 and SPA II has been agreed to be concluded in 2021. BRAC itself states that the SPA arrangement "gives BRAC the flexibility and funding security to innovate and implement extremely effective programmes that have achieved transformative results in Bangladesh. SPA II is funded by £224.5 million between 2016 and 2021. Looked at on an annual basis, that amounts to virtually £45 million, getting on for a third DFID's annual budget for development aid for Bangladesh (setting aside the recent allocations for the Rohingya).

136. The original SPA portfolio performed well against expectations. Evidence submitted by BRAC in relation to mid-term results from SPA II demonstrates:

- Services provided to at least 110 million people in 2017.
- 86,000 households participating in BTRAC's ultra-poverty initiative.
- 1.8 million students enrolled in BRAC educational programmes.
- 1.3 adolescents and pregnant women in receipt of counselling on balanced nutrition and dietary practice.
- Like DFID, BRAC is incorporating climate change resilience and gender equality.

137. BRAC has developed from the 'Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee' to be No. 1 NGO in the world, and almost, an experiment in government - or at least key public service provider - as a non-partisan, meritocratic, social enterprise. We visited a number of BRAC projects, and met a great number of BRAC personnel and were impressed. One such, was a small community early years school. We consulted the parents and there was very vocal support for the institution which they wanted to 'grow' up with the children and not have to use the 'government school'.

138. BRAC seems to have avoided the sort of partisan contamination, or political polarisation, that our witnesses alerted us to. Equally, BRAC seems to be handling, or working around, the shrinkage of the public, democratic and/or civil society 'space' (of course it is possible that BRAC eschewed this space in the first place). *Whatever BRAC is doing, or not doing, in the background to reach and surpass its objectives while seeming to steer clear of political interference and the other challenges we have identified above, DFID should take note and put in place a process to capture, and consider, the lessons that can be learned.*

Conclusions

139. Overall, we conclude that DFID's work in Bangladesh is to be highly commended. The country is on a welcome overall trajectory and the UK as a longstanding ally, critical friend and partner has made a clear contribution to this direction of travel. DFID

appears to have programmes and partners in place with the potential to demonstrate where and how the fault-lines and weaknesses within that positive picture might be mitigated. This is particularly important in view of the Sustainable Development Goals' emphasis on 'leaving no-one behind' which points to a focus on extreme poverty, women and girls and disabled people in Bangladesh.

140. A crucial test will be how Bangladesh responds to, and copes with, a number of forthcoming challenges; and what further assistance DFID and the UK Government can deliver and help orchestrate from the rest of the international community. We see these as:

- the fair and peaceful conduct of the forthcoming elections and the relaxing of the space for debate and criticism between and from all the elements of civil society.
- tackling the inequalities and fragilities within the overall positive economic outlook to avoid reaching the limits of capacity and perhaps stalling or freezing further improvements for all of Bangladesh, and
- maintaining the focus, in line with the relevant UK development assistance statute, on the inequalities suffered by Bangladeshi women and girls in terms of abuse and sexual violence (inside and outside matrimony), access to a continuing education, child marriage and to uneven earning power and promotion prospects within the economy.

141. A fourth challenge is the Rohingya crisis; but it is most clearly not a challenge for Bangladesh alone. Bangladesh is to be thanked and commended for opening its borders to these refugees fleeing violent persecution in Burma. Bangladesh needs to face up to the requirement for a long-term solution and, the international community should provide the required resources.

142. The objective assessment is for just under \$1 billion per year to meet the needs of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The international community, with the UK in the lead, should call on the World Bank to come up with one or more funding instruments for use by the international community to provide resources to countries providing a global 'public good' by hosting refugees, migrants or displaced persons.

Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

1. We can only assume that the Burmese government was reacting to the criticism contained in our first report on the Rohingya crisis and voiced by many other members of both Houses during questions and debates on the matter. (Paragraph 8)
2. *We recommend that DFID seek to agree with the authorities of any country in receipt of multiple millions of pounds worth of UK aid—whether any of that aid is channelled via government agencies or not—that there is a presumption of access to scrutinise the relevant projects on the ground for UK personnel engaged in audit or accountability, including the relevant parliamentary select committee. Indeed, the principle of diplomatic reciprocity indicates that the UK parliamentarians should have access to any country with whom the UK has diplomatic relations.* (Paragraph 10)

Burma

3. We believe there may be a fundamental problem with the peace process that the UK is supporting. The problem is that one side is unlikely to be sincerely engaged and probably has a completely different agenda. We think it highly likely that the process is just window-dressing for the Burmese Army. (Paragraph 45)
4. *We recommend that DFID commission and conduct an independent review of the peace process, evaluating its prospects for progress. There should be robust benchmarks set which, if not met, mean that the programme is suspended.* (Paragraph 46)
5. *In response to this report we would like the UK Government to set out how its support for UK/Burma trade takes into account concerns about the Burmese military's involvement in the economy and human rights abuses. This should include information covering UK spending other than ODA or which is through funds and programmes outside of DFID's control, for example the Prosperity Fund.* (Paragraph 67)
6. All aid organisations need to keep under review their terms of engagement with state institutions in countries where there are substantial human rights concerns. *We recommend that DFID, together with the WFD and the UK Parliament and other UK organisations supporting the 'Pyidaungsu Hluttaw'—coordinate in securing an objective review of such programmes. This review needs to determine if any substantive progress has been made in equipping and/or inspiring the Burmese legislature to do more to hold the government to account, engage the public or other flexing of parliamentary muscle. If little or nothing tangible has been achieved, we recommend suspending these programmes.* (Paragraph 74)
7. The UK is providing advice to government departments which although not classified as 'direct aid to government' it is British taxpayers' money being used to engage with the Burmese government which DFID itself admits is significantly influenced by the military. However, as the Minister says to disengage is to lose any influence

over the government. We ask DFID to re-evaluate its balance of spending between economic development, human development and on meeting urgent humanitarian needs. (Paragraph 80)

The Rohingya refugees

8. We stand by our two previous reports and the conclusions and recommendations we set out there. Alongside many other members of both Houses, we are increasingly horrified as more and more evidence and testimony emerges about the violent expulsion of the Rohingya by Burmese military forces. Yet, this is almost eclipsed by the threat to the Rohingya's fraught and fragile foothold in Bangladesh as the monsoon season comes ever closer. At the same time, we would urge that the grave concerns we have identified over the longer term future of the Rohingya are not ignored in seeking solutions to this more imminent further chapter in the crisis. (Paragraph 101)
9. We very much welcome the £70 million of new aid allocated by the UK to bolster the on-going work in Cox's Bazar to prepare for the monsoon season. These resources will make a substantial difference and we trust that further donors will be inspired to follow suit. (Paragraph 102)
10. We can only interpret the UNSC press statement of 9 May, issued following the visit by UN Security Council representatives to Bangladesh and Burma, as meaning that China, at least, threatens to veto any proposal for collective action in response to the Rohingya crisis. (Paragraph 103)
11. In addition, to our previous work, there are two points to repeat and one to make at this juncture:
 - *The Bangladesh Prime Minister, government, other services, and the people and authorities of Cox's Bazar, must be thanked and commended for the way sanctuary was provided to the Rohingya.*
 - *While in Bangladesh (in March), we heard grave and convincing concerns from many quarters that a substantial proportion of the Rohingya refugees' accommodation (and services) was extremely vulnerable to the heavy rainfall that the imminent monsoon season would bring. Without decisions and action being taken very quickly to enable relocation to begin -- and to facilitate other mitigations -- people were going to die.*
 - *The threat of monsoon or cyclone only reinforces the need to persuade the Bangladesh government to seize the nettle and start laying the foundations for a plan to provide for the longer term, including registration.* (Paragraph 104)

Bangladesh

12. We acknowledge the principle of seed-funding, showcasing and consequent self-sufficiency but are grateful for the Minister's under-taking further to consider

the funding of UCEP's programme for disadvantaged youth skills training. We look forward to a report of his conclusions as part of DFID's reply to this report. (Paragraph 113)

13. We will return to the evolution of instruments and facilities used to deploy UK aid in a future inquiry into DFID's Economic Development Strategy. (Paragraph 115)
14. We were grateful to the Minister for undertaking to investigate reports of Bangladeshi military violence and consequent unrest in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. We look forward to a response on this point when the Government replies to this report. (Paragraph 123)
15. *Whatever BRAC is doing, or not doing, in the background to reach and surpass its objectives while seeming to steer clear of political interference and the other challenges we have identified above, DFID should take note and put in place a process to capture, and consider, the lessons that can be learned.* (Paragraph 138)
16. Overall, we conclude that DFID's work in Bangladesh is to be highly commended. The country is on a welcome overall trajectory and the UK as a longstanding ally, critical friend and partner has made a clear contribution to this direction of travel. DFID appears to have programmes and partners in place with the potential to demonstrate where and how the fault-lines and weaknesses within that positive picture might be mitigated. This is particularly important in view of the Sustainable Development Goals' emphasis on 'leaving no-one behind' which points to a focus on extreme poverty, women and girls and disabled people in Bangladesh. (Paragraph 139)
17. A crucial test will be how Bangladesh responds to, and copes with, a number of forthcoming challenges; and what further assistance DFID and the UK Government can deliver and help orchestrate from the rest of the international community. We see these as:
 - the fair and peaceful conduct of the forthcoming elections and the relaxing of the space for debate and criticism between and from all the elements of civil society
 - tackling the inequalities and fragilities within the overall positive economic outlook to avoid reaching the limits of capacity and perhaps stalling or freezing further improvements for all of Bangladesh, and
 - maintaining the focus, in line with the relevant UK development assistance statute, on the inequalities suffered by Bangladeshi women and girls in terms of abuse and sexual violence (inside and outside matrimony), access to a continuing education, child marriage and to uneven earning power and promotion prospects within the economy. (Paragraph 140)
18. A fourth challenge is the Rohingya crisis; but it is most clearly not a challenge for Bangladesh alone. Bangladesh is to be thanked and commended for opening its borders to these refugees fleeing violent persecution in Burma. Bangladesh needs to face up to the requirement for a long-term solution and, the international community should provide the required resources. (Paragraph 141)

19. The objective assessment is for just under \$1 billion per year to meet the needs of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The international community, with the UK in the lead, should call on the World Bank to come up with one or more funding instruments for use by the international community to provide resources to countries providing a global 'public good' by hosting refugees, migrants or displaced persons. (Paragraph 142)

Formal minutes

Tuesday 15 May 2018

Members present:

Stephen Twigg, in the Chair

Richard Burden	Nigel Evans
Pauline Latham OBE	Chris Law
Ivan Lewis	Lloyd Russell-Moyle
Paul Scully	Virendra Sharma
Henry Smith	

Draft Report (*Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 142 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth 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 Tuesday 22 May at 9.40 am.]

Witnesses

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

Tuesday 14 November 2017

Question number

David Mepham, UK Director, Human Rights Watch; **Dr Champa Patel**, Head of Asia Programme, Chatham House; **Mark Farmaner**, Director, Burma Campaign UK; **Tun Khin**, President, Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK [Q1–26](#)

Matthew Saltmarsh, Senior Communications Officer, UNHCR; **Daphne Jayasinghe**, Senior Policy and Advocacy Adviser, International Rescue Committee; **Ian Mowatt**, Regional Portfolio Manager, World Vision [Q27–48](#)

Wednesday 22 November 2017

Mr Khondker M Talha, Deputy High Commissioner of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Kingdom [Q49–73](#)

The Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP, Minister of State for International Development and Minister of State for the Middle East at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, **Dr Richard Montgomery**, Director, Asia, Caribbean & Overseas Territories Division, DFID, and **Patrick Moody**, Additional Director, Asia Pacific Directorate, FCO [Q74–105](#)

Tuesday 23 January 2018

Dr Joe Devine, Head of Department, Social and Policy Sciences, University of Bath; **Meenakshi Ganguly**, South Asia Director, Human Rights Watch; and **Dr Ipshita Basu**, University of Westminster [Q106–131](#)

Asif Saleh, Senior Director, Strategy, Communication and Empowerment, BRAC and BRAC International; and **Farah Kabir**, Country Director of ActionAid Bangladesh [Q132–146](#)

Wednesday 14 March 2018

David Baulk, Myanmar Human Rights Specialist, Fortify Rights; **Hkanhpa Tu Sadan**, Trustee, The Kachin Relief Fund UK [Q147–172](#)

Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Westminster Foundation for Democracy; **Dr Niheer Dasandi**, Birmingham Fellow, Birmingham University [Q173–205](#)

Tuesday 20 March 2018

The Rt Hon. Alistair Burt MP, Minister of State for International Development and Minister of State for the Middle East at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; **Richard Montgomery**, Director of Asia, Caribbean and Overseas Territories Division, DFID; **Patrick Moody**, Foreign and Commonwealth Office [Q206–284](#)

Published written evidence

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

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

- 1 Action Against Hunger ([DBB0012](#))
- 2 ActionAid UK ([DBB0008](#))
- 3 Age International ([DBB0040](#))
- 4 BRAC ([DBB0036](#))
- 5 Burma Campaign UK ([DBB0007](#))
- 6 Burma Campaign UK ([DBB0027](#))
- 7 Christian Aid ([DBB0029](#))
- 8 Christian Solidarity Worldwide ([DBB0001](#))
- 9 Christian Solidarity Worldwide ([DBB0028](#))
- 10 Department for International Development ([DBB0016](#))
- 11 Department for International Development Annex A ([DBB0020](#))
- 12 Department for International Development Annex C ([DBB0023](#))
- 13 Department for International Development Annex D ([DBB0025](#))
- 14 Department for International Development Annex E ([DBB0035](#))
- 15 Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar ([DBB0017](#))
- 16 Foreign and Commonwealth Office ([DBB0031](#))
- 17 Fortify Rights ([DBB0003](#))
- 18 Fortify Rights ([DBB0041](#))
- 19 Human Rights Watch ([DBB0015](#))
- 20 Institute of Development Studies ([DBB0024](#))
- 21 International Rescue Committee ([DBB0019](#))
- 22 Internews ([DBB0034](#))
- 23 Karenaid ([DBB0018](#))
- 24 Ministry of Defence ([DBB0039](#))
- 25 Mr Felix Dawes ([DBB0037](#))
- 26 Ms Alison Winter ([DBB0010](#))
- 27 Overseas Development Institute ([DBB0009](#))
- 28 Professor David Lewis ([DBB0033](#))
- 29 Protection Approaches ([DBB0014](#))
- 30 Save the Children ([DBB0030](#))
- 31 Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) ([DBB0022](#))
- 32 The All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief ([DBB0006](#))
- 33 THE KACHIN RELIEF FUND ([DBB0021](#))

- 34 The Rt Hon the Lord Hague of Richmond and The Baroness Helic ([DBB0032](#))
- 35 UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency ([DBB0011](#))
- 36 University of Sussex ([DBB0026](#))
- 37 Westminster Foundation for Democracy ([DBB0042](#))
- 38 World Vision UK ([DBB0004](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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

Session 2017–19

First Report	DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind?	HC 367
Second Report	Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis	HC 504
Third Report	Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis - monsoon preparedness in Cox's Bazar	HC 904
First Special Report	DFID's use of private sector contractors: Government Response	HC 322
Second Special Report	UK aid: allocation of resources: Government Response	HC 323
Third Special Report	DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind?: Government response	HC 914
Fourth Special Report	Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis: Government response	HC 919