Independent Commission for Aid Impact

How UK aid learns

A rapid review

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Executive Summary

As ICAI has observed in many of its reviews, applying learning to programmes is fundamental to the quality, impact and value for money of UK aid. Since 2015, the UK government has involved more departments in the spending of UK aid. Around a quarter of the £14 billion annual aid budget is now spent outside DFID. This has given rise to a major organisational learning challenge, as 18 departments and funds have worked to acquire the knowledge and skills to spend aid effectively.

This rapid review assesses the quality of the learning processes around non-DFID aid. Building on a 2014 ICAI review of *How DFID learns*, it looks across the other aid-spending departments. It draws on findings from past ICAI reviews of particular funds and programmes, together with light-touch reviews of learning processes within each department, using an assessment framework developed for the purpose. Our findings per department are summarised in the Annex, and are intended to encourage departments to look in more depth at their own learning needs and capabilities. We also assessed how well aid-spending departments exchange learning with each other and with DFID.

Learning within aid-spending departments

The decision to allocate the UK aid budget across multiple departments posed a major learning challenge. Departments with new or increased aid budgets had to acquire the systems, processes and capabilities needed to meet the eligibility requirements for official development assistance (ODA), HM Treasury rules and the 2015 UK aid strategy requirement of 'international best practice' in aid management. There was no structured process for developing these capabilities, and no additional resources were provided to support the learning process. Past ICAI reviews have found that there were significant value for money risks involved in scaling up departmental aid budgets before the necessary capacities were in place.

Each department has gone about meeting this learning challenge in its own way. Overall, they have made important progress in building up their aid management capabilities, with investments in learning that are broadly commensurate with the size and complexity of their aid budgets. Departments with large aid budgets have developed more complex systems for generating and sharing learning. Those with smaller aid budgets, or whose aid spending is more transactional (for example support costs for refugees in the UK by the Department for Education), have made do with simpler arrangements. A third group of departments, which are actively pursuing larger aid budgets, have been the most active in building up their aid management capabilities, including drawing on learning from other, more experienced departments.

However, we find that learning processes are not always well integrated into departments' systems for managing their aid. Learning is often treated as a stand-alone exercise or a discrete set of products produced to a predetermined timetable. The challenge is to ensure that the resulting knowledge is actively used to inform management decisions in real time. This involves building a culture of evidence-based decision making, and a willingness to embrace failure as well as success as a source of learning. The ultimate goal of learning systems is not to meet an external good practice standard, but to make departments more effective in the management of their aid portfolios.

In many instances, departments have contracted out monitoring, evaluation and learning functions to commercial providers. Outsourcing learning can be an effective way of overcoming internal capacity constraints and accessing technical expertise. However, the knowledge and know-how may then accumulate in the commercial supplier, without being properly absorbed by the department itself.

A potential benefit of involving more departments in delivering UK aid is the ability to draw on technical skills from their core mandates – such as on health, justice or taxation.

We find that their expertise is indeed being used, with significant exchanges of learning between aid programmes and other activities in many departments.

Learning between aid-spending departments

We found many good examples of the exchange of learning between departments. Many of the key informants we interviewed recognised the importance of shared learning, and we identified a large number of learning interactions. There has been a proliferation of cross-departmental groups and forums where learning is exchanged. However, many of these structures are new and not yet fully operational. A clearer architecture and set of expectations would enable more shared learning.

The best prospects for shared learning emerge where aid-spending departments work closely together in country. Stakeholders agreed that co-location of staff in UK missions overseas facilitates learning, collaboration and coherence.

The UK government has made a strong commitment to transparency in UK aid, recognising it as a driver of value for money. It is also a facilitator of cross-government learning. The 2015 aid strategy commits all aid-spending departments to achieving a ranking of 'good' or 'very good' on the Aid Transparency Index, which measures the progress of donors on publishing their data to an international open data standard for aid known as the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). So far, progress towards this target is mixed, with some departments yet to publish data in this format.

DFID publishes its programme documents on an online platform, DevTracker, providing other departments and the public with detailed information on the design and performance of its programmes. Most other aid-spending departments are not providing this level of transparency. There is no overarching requirement on the publication of aid-related documents.

A number of departments have made progress on developing information platforms that capture learning on development practice. DFID, the Prosperity Fund, the Home Office (on modern slavery) and UK International Climate Finance (BEIS, DFID and Defra) all have promising technical platforms for knowledge management. However, these platforms are currently not accessible across departments, both because of information security concerns and because technical constraints prevent them from being interoperable. There is therefore considerable scope to improve both the publication of aid data and sharing of learning between departments.

DFID's support for other aid-spending departments

Under UK government rules, each department is accountable for its own expenditure. DFID is mandated under the UK aid strategy to support other departments with their aid expenditure, but has no formal mechanisms for overseeing their work or ensuring good practice.

We find that DFID has been active in supporting other departments with their learning on aid in a wide variety of ways, including:

- **People:** DFID seconds over 100 staff per year to other departments, and others are loaned for short periods to support specific tasks.[1]
- **Tools:** The Smart Rules, and the guidance and software that DFID uses to support programme management, are available to other departments.
- **Skills:** DFID shares its knowledge and expertise through training, advisory support and helpdesk services.
- **Networks:** DFID has established a range of networks to share learning with other departments on particular thematic areas or aid management challenges.

1. Note: more than 160 DFID staff are on loan to other departments working on Conflict, Stability and Security Fund and Prosperity Fund portfolio and programme delivery. Additional staff have transferred permanently into other government departments, such as the FCO, from DFID.

However, there are some practical limitations to DFID's offer; its networks, for instance, are not widely publicised.

Most departments have welcomed DFID's support, recognising its important role as a repository of expertise on aid management. As the International Development Committee observed in June 2018, "DFID has a crucial role to play in ensuring that all other government departments understand how to administer ODA programmes effectively and efficiently."[2]

Importantly, exchange of learning between DFID and other departments goes both ways. We came across a range of examples where cross-government technical expertise was being drawn on to raise the quality of DFID programming. In particular, secondments and staff transfers are proving to be an important mechanism for transferring learning across government.

Despite its important role, DFID has not received any additional staffing resources to support learning on aid management across government. Given the scale of the challenge involved in building aid management capacity across multiple departments, this is a significant omission. We expect that the question of resourcing support to other departments will come up in any future Spending Review.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

DFID should be properly mandated and resourced to support learning on good development practice across aid-spending departments.

Recommendation 2

As part of any Spending Review process, HM Treasury should require departments bidding for aid resources to provide evidence of their investment in learning systems and processes.

Recommendation 3

The Senior Officials Group[3] should mandate a review and, if necessary, a rationalisation of major monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) contracts, and ensure that they are resourced at an appropriate level.

Recommendation 4

Where aid-spending departments develop knowledge management platforms and information systems to support learning on development aid, they should ensure that these systems are accessible to other departments and, where possible, to the public, to support transparency and sharing of learning.

2 *Definition and administration of ODA inquiry*, Final Report, International Development Committee, 5 June 2018, link.

3 The Senior Officials Group on ODA is made up of directors from aid-spending departments and is co-chaired by HM Treasury and DFID.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 In our 2014 ICAI review of *How DFID learns*, we wrote that "excellent learning is essential for UK aid to achieve maximum impact and value for money."[4] Learning is fundamental to the ability of any organisation to achieve its objectives – particularly in times of change and uncertainty, when it needs to learn and adapt in real time.[5] It is ICAI's experience that continuous learning is essential to the achievement of impact and value for money. The quality of learning is therefore an area that we explore in many reviews.

1.2 Building on the 2014 review, this review looks at learning across other aid-spending departments and cross-government funds. It incorporates findings from a number of other ICAI reviews that have looked at learning in non-DFID funds and programmes.[6] The review explores how learning takes place *within* departments, and what resources they are devoting to the learning process. We also look at what learning is taking place *between* departments and the extent to which they exchange knowledge with DFID.

1.3 As we did in *How DFID learns*,[7] we define learning as the process of gaining and using knowledge and know-how to shape policies, strategies, plans and actions. There are many ways of building a learning organisation; we are not looking for any particular approach, but for evidence of a deliberate and thoughtful approach to learning.

1.4 Our review covers the period since the 2015 aid strategy, which signalled a growing role for other departments and cross-government funds in the delivery of UK aid.[8] We explore how departments have tackled the challenge of acquiring a knowledge of good practice in aid management and development cooperation. Although not our original objective, the topic has also generated insights into how the sharing of knowledge and learning between departments enhances or constrains coherence across a fragmented aid budget – an issue that the National Audit Office has recently highlighted.[9]

1.5 This is a rapid review, conducted over seven months, based on interviews with the relevant departments and documents provided by them. As a rapid review, it is not scored, but it does reach evaluative judgments based on our review questions (see Table 1). With 18 departments and funds[10] involved in the spending of UK aid in 2018, the depth of analysis of individual departments is necessarily limited, but each has been given an opportunity to comment on our findings and correct any errors.

1.6 Our findings follow the main review questions below. As it became clear that DFID has a specific role to play in cross-government learning on UK aid, we added a third review question on how DFID interacts with other departments.

4. *How DFID learns*, ICAI, 2014, p. 1, link.
5. *The glue to managing change,* Alec Steel, NAO blog, 4 October 2016, link.
6 These include reviews of the Prosperity Fund, the Global Challenges Research Fund, the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, UK International Climate Finance and the Newton Fund.
7. *How DFID learns,* ICAI, 2014, link.
8. *UK aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest,* November 2015, link.
9. *The effectiveness of Official Development Assistance expenditure,* NAO, June 2018, p. 8, link.
10. We reviewed 13 departments and five funds with ODA spend.

Table 1: Our Review Questions

Review questions	
1. **Relevance**	To what extent do aid-spending departments have systems and processes, resources and incentives in place to enable effective learning about their spending of ODA? How effectively is learning being used to improve the design and delivery of aid programmes within aid-spending departments?
2. **Effectiveness**	How effectively is learning shared across aid-spending departments and used to improve the effectiveness and value for money of aid?
3. **Effectiveness**	How well does DFID support learning across government?

2. Methodology

Figure 1: Overview of the methodology

2.1 In order to cover 18 departments and funds within the scope of a rapid review, we chose a methodology that was broad rather than deep. It draws on four interlocking sources of evidence:

i) **A review of the recent literature:** We updated the literature review on learning that we undertook for *How DFID learns*.[11] As well as bringing in more recent studies on good learning practice, the scope of the literature review was expanded to cover adaptive programming, the contribution of learning and knowledge management to 'joining up' government and the elements of a supportive institutional architecture for learning. This literature update can be viewed on the ICAI website.[12]

ii) **Document review:** We collected and analysed over 450 documents from aid-spending departments on their approach to learning.[13] We also collected evidence from past ICAI reviews since 2015 that assessed learning within aid-spending departments other than DFID and/or cross-government funds.[14]

iii) **Key informant interviews:** We conducted more than 100 interviews (see Figure 2) with officials from aid-spending departments, both in person in Whitehall and by telephone with representatives from two selected countries, Kenya and Pakistan (see Box 1).[15] We also conducted interviews with a range of external stakeholders, including from other development partners and aid-spending organisations.

11. *How DFID learns*, ICAI, 2014, link.
12. The Literature update is available for download on the ICAI website, link.
13. Our request for information and interview questions have been designed to cover the main areas of the assessment framework.
14. *The cross-government Prosperity Fund*, ICAI, February 2017, link; *The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund's aid spending*, ICAI, March 2018, link; *The Global Challenges Research Fund*, ICAI, September 2017, link; *The Newton Fund*, ICAI, June 2019, link; *ICAI follow-up review of 2016-17 reports*, ICAI, June 2018, link; *ICAI follow-up review of 2017-18 reports*, ICAI, July 2019, link; *The current state of UK aid: A synthesis of ICAI findings from 2015 to 2019*, ICAI, June 2019, link; *The UK aid response to global health threats*, ICAI, January 2018, link.
15. These interviewed respondents are government officials working on ODA ranging from monitoring and evaluation specialists to senior civil servants and diplomats.

iv) **Inter-departmental relationship mapping:** We have mapped the exchange of learning among aid-spending departments in the 2016-18 period, including support provided by DFID to other departments.

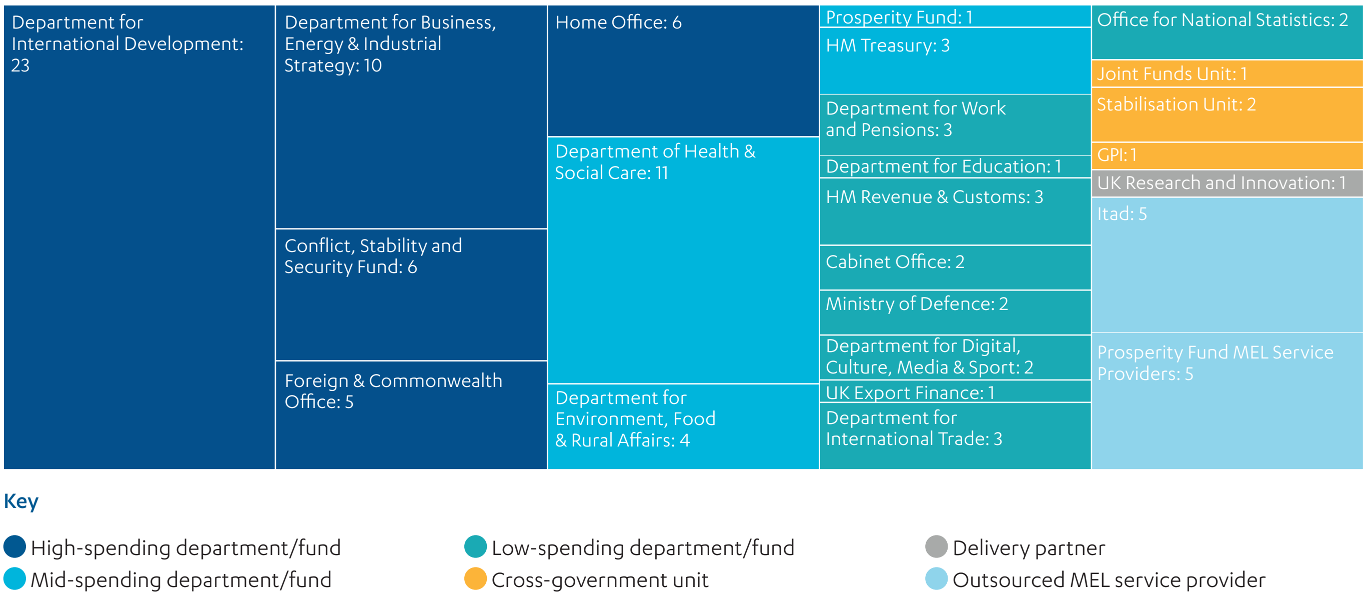
Box 1: Country selection

Some aid-spending departments have representatives in developing countries, based in UK diplomatic missions or embedded within national institutions. To extend our analysis of how departments collaborate and share learning at the country level, we selected two countries: Kenya and Pakistan. These countries were selected as demonstrating a number of criteria of interest to the review, including:

- fragility and conflict risk (which arguably calls for a quicker and more adaptive approach to learning)
- importance as a trading partner for the UK (active engagement by more UK departments)
- sizeable UK aid expenditure
- a significant number of ODA-spending departments represented in country.

Figure 2: Stakeholders interviewed for this review

We interviewed 103 people across 18 government departments and funds:



GPI Government Partnerships International

2.2 To support our analysis, we developed an assessment framework to help us identify good learning practice. The framework specifies the various elements needed to ensure an effective learning organisation, depending on the size and complexity of their aid budgets. It draws on the 'maturity model' that the National Audit Office has developed for performance measurement and its use in decision making.[16] The framework recognises that the diversity of aid portfolios across departments – from single transactions to multi-million pound programmes – also calls for differences in learning approaches.

16. *Performance measurement: good practice criteria and maturity model*, NAO, 2016, link.

Figure 3: Assessment framework: 'what good looks like'

ODA learning in and across departments.

Assessment framework stages	Existing	Functioning	Enabling	Challenging/ Changing	Optimising/Sharing
Developing and maintaining a **process for learning** when delivering ODA.	A process or overall system for learning is in place.	A process or system provides an overview of the programme's/ fund's/department's performance.	A process or system provides a clear line of sight between objectives and strategic goals – enabling objectives to be clearly formulated at all levels and types of delivery.	A process or system is adjusted as appropriate to accommodate change.	Processes or systems are informed and improved by learnings from other ODA-spending departments/funds.
Working with **information** (e.g. putting in place metrics and feedback loops to measure change) when delivering ODA.	Information is collected and stored.	Information captured is timely, accurate and useful – setting a baseline and tracking change over time.	Information is aligned, summarised and prioritised – enabling the information to be interpreted at various levels and areas of focus.	Information is validated and contextualised based on targets and benchmarks – challenging or confirming existing findings and analysis.	Information is available to other programmes and ODA-spending departments/funds.
Working with **knowledge and know-how** when delivering ODA.	Knowledge and know-how exists.	Knowledge is easily accessed over any phase of the delivery cycle or timeline – addressing biases such as the acceptance of failure and stopping the aid delivery at any time.	Knowledge is developed that enables possible improvements in effectiveness and value for money – creating a synthesis of knowledge and experience into delivery guidance.	Knowledge is combined with know-how and experience to make appropriate and timely changes within a continuous learning process.	Knowledge and know-how is embedded, shared and jointly used throughout the department and by other ODA-spending departments/funds.

Source: The ICAI team has developed the assessment framework from the *Performance measurement: Good practice criteria and maturity model*, NAO, 2016, link.

2.3 We used this framework to guide our assessment of individual departments/funds, based on interviews and relevant documentation. Our assessments of individual departments are summarised in the Annex. We hope these will be used as starting points for the departments in question to look in more depth at their learning needs and capabilities.

2.4 Our methodology and an advanced draft of this report were peer-reviewed.

Box 2: Limitations to our methodology

There are limitations to the depth of our analysis given the high number of departments and funds reviewed and the limited scope of this rapid review. While we recognise that learning is also occurring within and between non-departmental public bodies and delivery partners, they were not the focus of this review. Our questions are at the level of departmental/fund ODA spending. We were only able to speak to a limited number of respondents per department. Obtaining key documents across multiple departments proved challenging and delayed our initial delivery timeframe. In the context of an ongoing Spending Review, our findings provide only a snapshot of progress at this point in time. This review is intended to be a preliminary assessment only, to encourage further self-assessment by aid-spending departments.

3. Background

The importance of learning to organisational performance

3.1 Effective learning is key to the effectiveness and value for money of UK aid. The literature is clear that an active approach to learning is an essential feature of any effective organisation. However, there is no single model for learning. It can range from the simple exchange of information to more sophisticated processes for turning information into knowledge and know-how. What is critical is that learning is applied to practice, leading to adaptation and improvements in performance.

3.2 The processes of learning and adaptation usually require at least three steps:

i) generate accurate, timely and relevant feedback on performance

ii) create opportunities to reflect, challenge, assimilate or accommodate this feedback

iii) choose and implement timely and appropriate change.

This process requires supportive cultures and systems.

Box 3: Six elements of effective learning

In our 2014 review of *How DFID learns,*[17] drawing on a review of the literature on organisational learning, ICAI identified six elements in the learning process:

- Clarity: a shared vision of how learning takes place
- Connectivity: establish a 'learning community' in which individuals and networks can interact
- Creation: using data and information to generate knowledge and know-how
- Capture: assimilating knowledge and know-how
- Communication: sharing knowledge and know-how across the organisation
- Challenge: using knowledge and know-how to challenge practice.

3.3 A key insight from the literature – and a finding from our 2014 review of *How DFID learns* – is that learning occurs through both formal and informal processes. The former are mandated and supported from the top of an organisation, with dedicated structures and processes. But learning also takes place spontaneously, through informal interactions. Successful learning strategies therefore also help to build broader social networks that expand opportunities for informal learning.

3.4 There also needs to be a balance between individual and organisational learning. Motivated people will find opportunities to learn, according to their preferences. However, people move on, and their experience and know-how need to be captured in a more structured way in order to be accessible across the organisation.

3.5 Finally, learning is about managing complexity and change. Development cooperation is inherently complex and development assistance work takes place in very dynamic contexts. Learning therefore needs to be continuous and embedded throughout the delivery cycle, rather than confined to fixed learning products delivered to a predetermined cycle. In recent years, DFID has worked to introduce adaptation into its management processes, to facilitate continuous learning at the programme level. At a higher level, continuous learning means ensuring that performance information and learning are closely integrated with the management process, to allow for a rapid learning cycle.

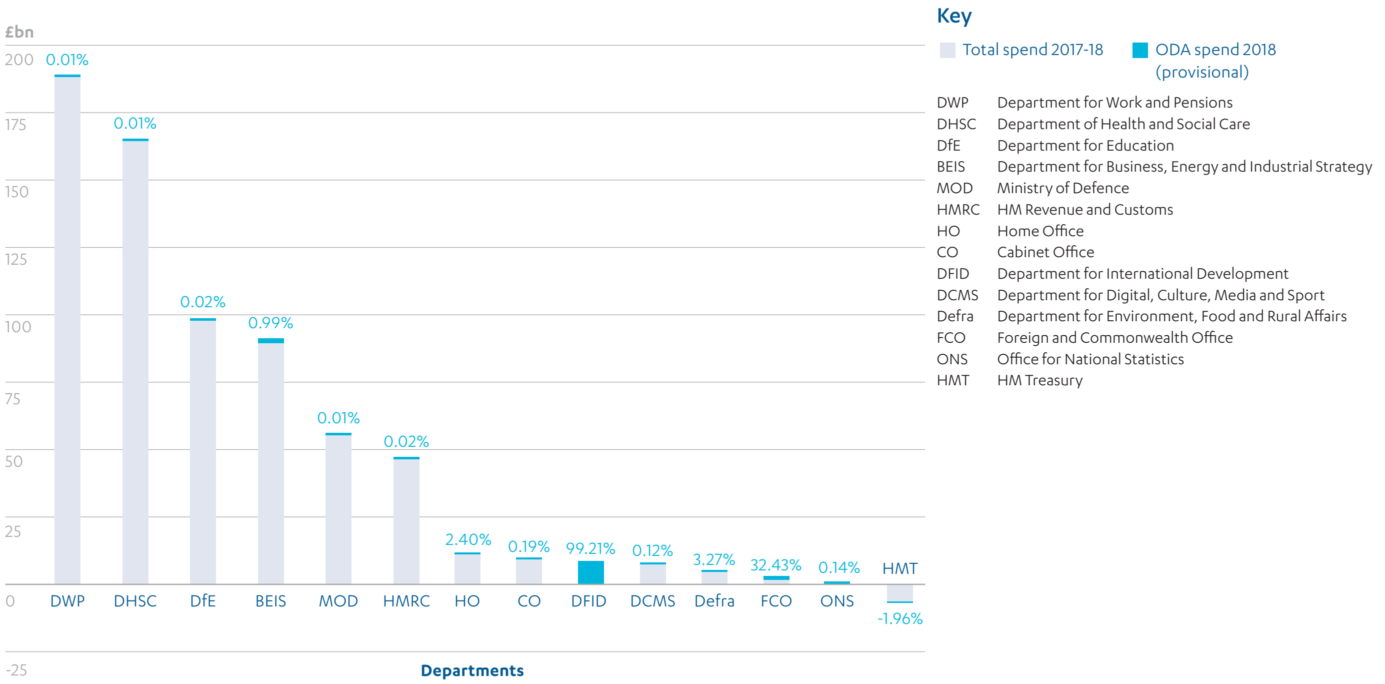
17. *How DFID learns*, ICAI, 2014, link.

The evolving architecture of UK aid delivery

3.6 Since the 2015 aid strategy, the proportion of UK aid spent by departments other than DFID has rapidly increased – from 14% in 2014 to 25% in 2018, or just under £3 billion. While DFID's budget has continued to rise in absolute terms, aid expenditure in a number of other departments has grown much more rapidly. Figure 4 shows the major aid-spending departments. However, with the exception of DFID and the Foreign Office, ODA accounts for only a minor share of each department's overall budget.

Figure 4: More departments now have substantial aid budgets, although for most it represents a minor share of their overall budgets

Total 2017-18 departmental spend and 2018 ODA spend



Note:

HM Treasury shows a negative spend because transactions from 2013-14 onwards have been affected by financial sector interventions.

Although UK Export Finance has an ODA budget of £4 million we have not included it in this figure as its accounts are structured in a different way.

Department for International Trade began spending ODA in 2018-19 and hence is excluded from this figure.

Source:

Total spend – *Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2018*, HM Treasury, July 2018, p.31, link.

ODA spend – *Statistics on International Development Provisional UK Aid Spend 2018*, DFID, April 2019, p.9, link.

ONS – Total spend and ODA spend values provided by ONS.

3.7 Potentially, this wider distribution of UK aid across departments allows the aid programme to benefit from a broader range of technical expertise – for example, on health, education, justice or taxation. However, it also amounts to a fundamental shift in the organisation of the UK aid programme, requiring aid management capacity to be developed across multiple departments. For new aid-spending departments, it takes several years to put the necessary systems and capacities in place.

3.8 The large number of government aid spenders creates new challenges around ensuring coherence and accountability for UK aid as a whole. UK aid is now spent by multiple funds and programmes with different objectives, approaches and systems. There are processes in place to ensure that the legislative requirement of spending 0.7% of gross national income on aid is met, and that UK aid statistics are accurate. However, each department is responsible for managing its aid expenditure according to its own rules and procedures, with no overall mechanism for ensuring the quality of aid investments.

3.9 In 2018, the *National Security Capability Review* introduced the 'Fusion Doctrine' – the objective of increased coherence among the UK's tools of external influence, in pursuit of common objectives.[18] This implies a need for an even more sophisticated learning process, capable of linking up development cooperation with other areas of external engagement, including diplomacy, trade and security.

3.10 The International Development Committee has questioned whether the current organisational arrangements support the goal of increased coherence. In June 2019, the National Audit Office also raised concerns that a fragmented aid architecture was working against coherence in UK aid.[19]

> "Strong and effective cross-government mechanisms should form the bedrock of an effective system of cross-government ODA. The current arrangements leave opportunities for gaps in coherence and ambiguity in where oversight of ODA lies across Whitehall. This creates a risk of duplication, overlap or conflicting priorities in programmes. Without a single person responsible, this also means that there is no single check on the overall coherence or quality of UK ODA as a whole and no central point for capturing examples of added value."
>
> *Definition and administration of ODA inquiry, Final Report, International Development Committee, 5 June 2018 link*

3.11 The November 2015 aid strategy states that all aid-spending departments are required to meet 'international best practice' in their processes for spending UK aid.[20] In May 2018, three years after departments had begun to receive their new funding, HM Treasury and DFID elaborated on some of the requirements, including in financial management, procurement, programme design and monitoring and evaluation.[21] Meeting the high standard of international best practice consistently across UK aid implies the need for active exchange of knowledge and learning across departments.

18. *National Security Capability Review,* HM Government, March 2018, pp. 10-11, link.
19. *The effectiveness of Official Development Assistance expenditure,* NAO, June 2018, link.
20. *UK aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest,* HM Treasury and DFID, November 2015, p. 21, link.
21. *UK Official Development Assistance: value for money guidance,* HM Treasury and DFID, May 2018, link.

4. Findings

4.1 In this section, we set out our findings against our review questions. We comment first on how well ODA-spending departments/funds are learning around the delivery of aid. We then look at how well these departments are sharing learning with each other. Finally, we comment on the extent to which they are exchanging learning with DFID.

To what extent do aid-spending departments have systems and processes, resources and incentives in place to enable effective learning about their spending of ODA?

There was no structured process for building aid management capacity in new aid-spending departments

4.2 The decision to allocate the UK aid budget across multiple departments has been a major organisational shift, raising complex learning challenges. The 2015 UK aid strategy states that:

> "All departments spending ODA will be required to put in place a clear plan to ensure that their programme design, quality assurance, approval, contracting and procurement, monitoring, reporting and evaluation processes represent international best practice."[22]

4.3 Departments that were new to aid spending, or that saw their aid budgets increase rapidly, faced a major challenge in developing systems, processes and capabilities to meet this 'international best practice' standard.

4.4 To comply with the international ODA definition and UK legislation, they had to put in place processes to ensure that the expenditure promotes the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective, and that it is likely to contribute to poverty reduction.[23] They also had to ensure that they considered options for advancing gender equality within each aid programme.[24]

4.5 HM Treasury rules governing the spending of any UK public money require, among other things, evidence-based business cases for programmes and processes for monitoring and evaluating results, proportionate to the scale and risk of the expenditure.[25] Value for money guidance issued by the Treasury and DFID in May 2018 summarises these requirements and sets out additional good practice principles, including the need for context- and conflict-sensitive programme design, policies to safeguard vulnerable people and environments, and robust monitoring of inputs, outputs and outcomes.[26] However, the three-year delay between committing new spending to departments in 2015 and the publication of this guidance was problematic since departments were left to decide for themselves what good practice looked like.

4.6 There was no overall plan for how these capacities would be developed, and no structured process to help new aid-spending departments build the necessary systems and processes. Nor were any additional resources provided to support the learning process. We find this to be a striking omission. Past ICAI reports have found that it takes several years to develop the capacity to spend aid well. Scaling up departmental aid budgets before the necessary systems were in place entailed both value for money risks and dangers of non-compliance with the ODA definition.[27] The National Audit Office (NAO) similarly noted the risk that departments might seek access to ODA funds without a full understanding of whether they have the capability to carry out the work.[28]

22. *UK aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest,* November 2015, p. 21, link.

23. The international definition of ODA is set by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: see Official Development Assistance (ODA), OECD, April 2019, link. Most UK aid is spent under the authority of the International Development Act 2002, link, which specifies that the assistance must be "likely to contribute to a reduction in poverty".

24. International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014, link.

25. *The Green Book: Central Government Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation,* HM Treasury, 2018, link.

26. *UK Official Development Assistance: value for money guidance,* HM Treasury and DFID, May 2018, link.

27. *The current state of UK aid: A synthesis of ICAI findings from 2015 to 2019,* ICAI, June 2019, p. 22, link.

28. *The effectiveness of Official Development Assistance expenditure,* NAO, June 2019, p. 11, link.

Departments have been on a steep learning curve

4.7 In the absence of a structured change management process, each aid-spending department has approached the task of acquiring the necessary learning in its own way. We find that most have made important progress in building capacity to deliver aid. Past ICAI reports have pointed to a range of initial shortcomings, such as:

- a lack of rigour in assessing ODA eligibility (the Prosperity Fund, as well as the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as owner of the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and the Newton Fund)
- delays in developing fund-level strategies, including clarity on primary and secondary objectives (BEIS: GCRF and Newton Fund)[29]
- a lack of appropriate monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) arrangements (the Prosperity Fund, the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), BEIS: GCRF and Newton Fund).[30]

4.8 However, when we have subsequently followed up with departments on their response to our reports, they have in many cases been able to show significant improvement.[31] This demonstrates that learning is indeed occurring, albeit to different degrees.

4.9 The Annex sets out our summary findings on the state of learning on aid for each aid-spending department. We would expect to find that the level of effort put into building learning systems is broadly commensurate with the size, type and complexity of each department's aid budget. High-spending departments such as the Foreign Office (FCO) and BEIS require more complicated systems, deeper learning and more sharing of knowledge and know-how. We would expect them to invest in platforms to store and access information, and also to build the capacity to add value to that information. They should have processes to ensure its accuracy, and to share their knowledge and know-how internally, across government and with partners.

4.10 The FCO has a large and complex aid portfolio, spread across a large number of thematic programmes and overseas posts. This diversity of topics and proliferation of spending channels has been a barrier to the emergence of a shared learning architecture for its aid expenditure. Since 2015, the FCO has taken steps to develop a more integrated approach to managing its programmes, covering both ODA and non-ODA expenditure, under an FCO Portfolio Board. It has increased its investment in staff training and technical support facilities, and built up a 140-person Project Delivery Cadre. However, we found that learning practices are still uneven across the department. The planned development of a common operating framework for aid programmes may help to encourage greater consistency in approach. The FCO is exploring options for a more adaptive approach to learning, but this work remains at an early stage.

4.11 In the case of the CSSF, we found significant ongoing activity to build learning capacity – partly prompted by an ICAI report in March 2018 that was critical of its approach to results management.[32] The CSSF has recruited additional staff and contracted in external expertise. It has set up regional contracts to provide monitoring and evaluation support and enhance its internal capacity. It is upgrading its programme-level theories of change and focusing its results frameworks on measurable outcomes. It has also introduced new programme management tools. While much of this is still under development, it represents a significant investment in increased learning capacity. The CSSF also funds the cross-government Stabilisation Unit, which provides research and technical advice in support of UK aid in conflict settings, and Government Partnerships International, which works with other departments to provide peer-to-peer support to public institutions in partner countries. Both these units have a strong learning orientation.

29. *The Global Challenges Research Fund,* ICAI, September 2017, link; *The Newton Fund,* ICAI, June 2019, link; *ICAI follow-up review of 2017-18 reports,* ICAI, July 2019, link.

30. *The cross-government Prosperity Fund,* ICAI, February 2017, link; *The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund's aid spending,* ICAI, March 2018, link; *The Global Challenges Research Fund,* ICAI, September 2017, link; *The Newton Fund,* ICAI, June 2019, link; *ICAI follow-up review of 2016-17 reports,* ICAI, June 2018, link.

31. *ICAI follow-up review of 2016-17 reports,* ICAI, June 2018, link; *ICAI follow-up review of 2017-18 reports,* ICAI, July 2019, link.

32. *The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund's aid spending,* ICAI, March 2018, link; *ICAI follow-up review of 2017-18 reports,* ICAI, July 2019, link; *The current state of UK aid: A synthesis of ICAI findings from 2015 to 2019,* ICAI, June 2019, link.

Box 4: Government Partnerships International (GPI)

GPI is funded through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, DFID's Partnership for Development Programme and other UK government funds. It has existed in various guises for some years, most recently as the National School of Government International. It both delivers training and helps UK departments and agencies to provide peer-to-peer support to partner governments overseas. Given the UK government's policy of showcasing UK expertise through the aid programme, GPI has helped to improve the ability of a number of departments and agencies (such as the Office for National Statistics and HMRC) to offer high-quality knowledge-based assistance.

4.12 BEIS is currently the largest spender of UK ODA after DFID, with responsibility for a significant share of the UK's International Climate Finance and two major research funds. We found mature learning processes for UK International Climate Finance, including:

- increased in-house capacity, particularly in its analyst team, with stronger oversight from senior managers
- a new strategy for strengthening MEL, with increased effort to synthesise evidence and share lessons between programmes and with external partners
- a programme for procuring external research (the Knowledge, Evidence and Engagement Programme)
- improvements in portfolio management, including clearer statements of expected results, key performance indicators and an operating manual.

4.13 However, these positive learning practices were not applied to the two BEIS-managed research funds, the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and the Newton Fund (NF).[33] There have been improvements in the GCRF's approach to performance management since our 2017 review. However, in June 2019 we awarded the Newton Fund a red score for learning, on the basis that, five years after its establishment, it had yet to develop a workable system for capturing development results at the portfolio level. BEIS has established a working group on results and is in the process of identifying key performance indicators. However, these will not be in place until the final year of the Fund's operations, which leaves little space for learning.[34]

4.14 Lower-spending departments do not require the same depth and complexity of learning mechanisms as the higher-spending departments or funds. Departments whose aid spending is more transactional (such as support costs for refugees in the UK by the Department for Education) may have no need for aid-specific learning processes. In such cases, we found that the limited learning needs were adequately met by current arrangements.[35]

4.15 Some departments currently have small aid budgets but are actively building their aid-management capacity in order to access more ODA funding. Examples include the Department for International Trade which began spending ODA in 2018; the Office for National Statistics which plans to increase its ODA budget; and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) which has been exploring different modes of ODA delivery. Amongst this group, departments are investing in internal learning systems and processes, and learning from more experienced aid-spending departments. We identified a range of investments in working with information and data, developing knowledge and know-how, documenting lessons and developing networks to share learning. This is rightly recognised as part of demonstrating a capability to manage ODA. The process of bidding for more ODA funds has therefore proved to be a useful spur to learning.

33. *The Global Challenges Research Fund*, ICAI, September 2017, link; *The Newton Fund*, ICAI, June 2019, link; *ICAI follow-up review of 2017-18 reports*, ICAI, July 2019, link; *The current state of UK aid: A synthesis of ICAI findings from 2015 to 2019*, ICAI, June 2019, link.

34. We note that BEIS is one of a group of government departments and research funders working in international development in the UK Collaborative for Development Research. More information is available in the Annex.

35. This review divided departments into high-level, mid-level and low-level ODA spenders, as set out in the first page of the Annex.

Box 5: Department for International Trade (DIT)

DIT, one of the lower-level ODA-spending departments, is building its capacity in preparation to increase its ODA spending. It is engaging with both DFID and the FCO to learn from their experience. It produces quarterly updates (heat maps) on its emerging capability to manage its first two ODA programmes and identify risks. It has shared this self-assessment tool with other departments, including the Joint Funds Unit and DFID (which is considering how to include it in support for other departments). DIT has established an awareness training programme covering the legal framework, the UK aid strategy, transparency commitments, fraud, risk, programme delivery, safeguarding and media relationships. A number of other ODA-spending departments have also participated in this training.

4.16 Our findings show that investments in learning are broadly commensurate with the size and complexity of each department's aid portfolios – even if these systems are not yet fully operational. However, we remain concerned that learning is often treated as a stand-alone activity or set of products produced to a predetermined timetable, without being properly integrated into the management of aid portfolios. The value of learning is ultimately around improved decision making. As DFID's Smart Rules note,

> "continuous learning and adapting is essential for UK aid to achieve maximum impact and value for money. It is important that learning is systematically planned, adequately resourced and acted on in ways that are strategic and can maximise results."[36]

4.17 A key outstanding challenge is therefore to ensure that whatever knowledge is being generated is actively used to inform management decisions in real time. Not all departments have given enough thought to which management processes should be informed by learning and which stakeholders need access to the knowledge, in order to tailor their learning processes accordingly. There is more work to be done in building a culture of evidence-based decision making, with a willingness to embrace failure as well as success as a key source of lessons. The ultimate goal of learning systems is not to meet an external good practice standard, but to make departments effective in the management of their aid portfolios.

Outsourced learning arrangements are not well integrated into aid management processes

4.18 In many instances, departments and funds have contracted out capacity for MEL to commercial providers. This can be an effective approach to overcoming internal capacity constraints and accessing technical expertise. Buying in these experienced providers has enabled the departments and funds to fill capacity gaps in the face of rapidly increasing aid budgets.

4.19 Departments are using these external providers in a variety of ways. They are providing support on ODA eligibility screening and introducing departments to programme management methods, some adapted from DFID guidance and good practice and some developed by MEL suppliers themselves. Given competing demands on officials' time, the MEL suppliers increase the departments' capacity to experiment and analyse the results. Internal cultures within government departments sometimes work against acknowledging and learning from failure;[37] according to some key informants, an MEL contract can help create space for discussion of what has not worked and why by providing an arms-length perspective.

4.20 Outsourcing is also helping to join up learning across programmes, departments and funds. There is a relatively small pool of commercial firms providing these services, often to several departments. We saw examples of contractors sharing lessons internally.

36. *Smart Rules: Better Programme Delivery,* DFID, p.17, link.

37. For a discussion of fear of failure as a disincentive to learning, see: *How DFID learns,* ICAI, 2014, p. 9, link.

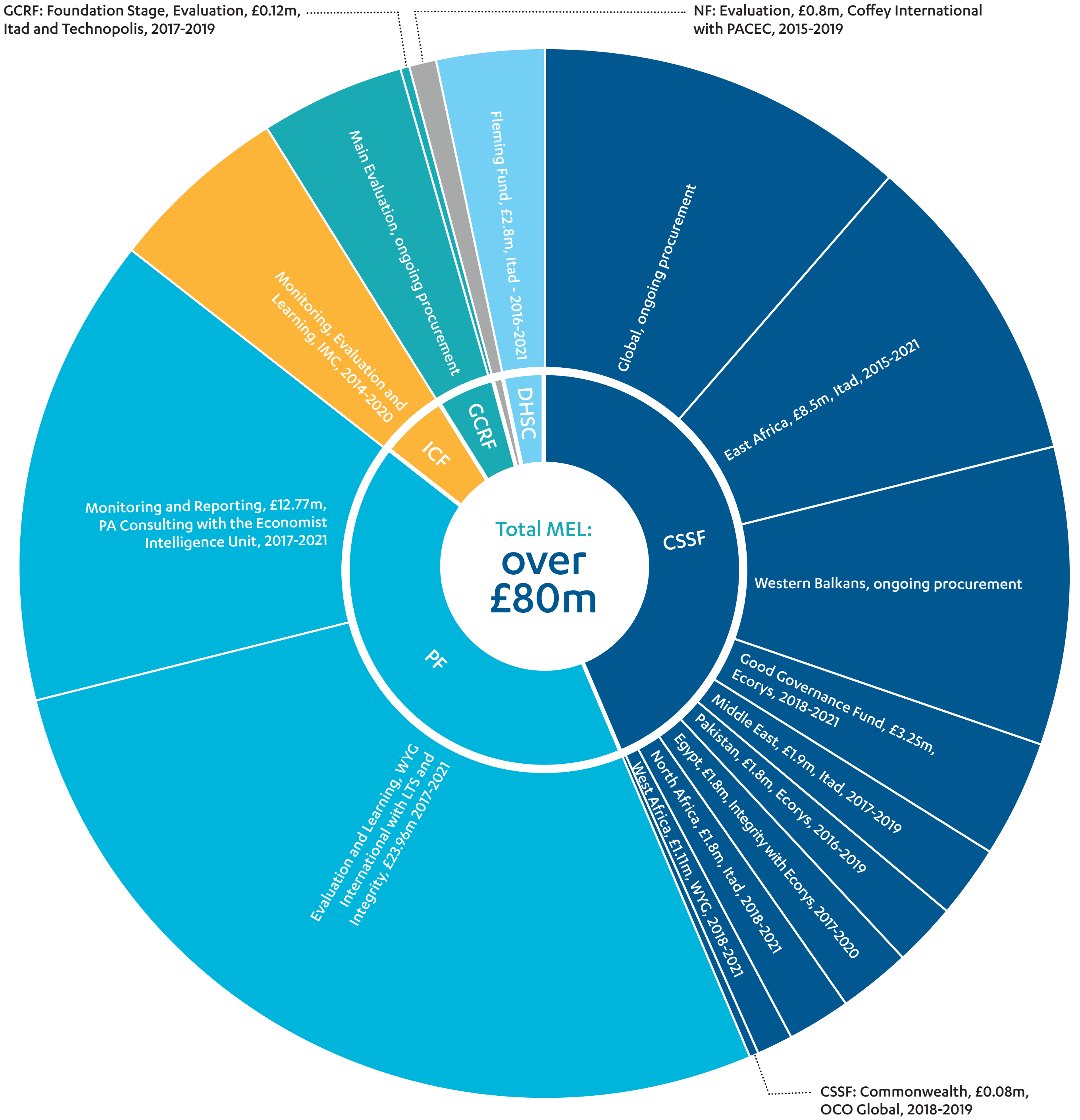
4.21 The chief drawback of outsourced learning is that the knowledge may accumulate in commercial firms without being properly absorbed by the responsible departments or used to inform aid management decisions. In the most extreme examples of this, key elements of learning in MEL contracts were only developed after the programme or fund in question had already committed most of its expenditure. This was the case with both the GCRF and the Newton Fund.[38] It was not clear how learning generated by the external provider could influence the ongoing development of the portfolio when most of the funds had already been allocated. In other cases (such as the Prosperity Fund),[39] we see risks where institutional memory has been externalised and capacity built within a service provider at the expense of civil servants.

4.22 Looking across the MEL contracts that we have identified (see Figure 5), it is difficult to discern any clear rationale for the size and pattern of expenditure. Aid-spending departments obviously see a need to make substantial investments in learning but there is no consistency in how they have done so. The proliferation of MEL contracts has also led to duplication and overlap, not just between departments and funds, but also within them. For example, the CSSF has multiple contracts across different geographical and thematic areas, provided by a range of contractors. Having engaged its providers on a case-by-case basis, it is not clear to us that the CSSF is managing its MEL portfolio so as to extract the best value. Across government, there are no common rules or expectations for the outsourcing of MEL resources for aid portfolios and no oversight as to whether these outsourced contracts represent good value for money. Given that these departments and funds often work on overlapping topics and in the same geographies, there is a risk of duplication of data and analysis.

38. *The Global Challenges Research Fund,* ICAI, September 2017, link; *The Newton Fund,* ICAI, June 2019, link.
39. *The cross-government Prosperity Fund,* ICAI, 2017, link.

Figure 5: Externally outsourced monitoring, evaluation and learning contracts

Over £80 million is spent on outsourced monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) contracts. This chart displays the breakdown of the contracts across departments/funds and individual contracts. The inner circle shows the proportional amount of money spent on outsourced MEL by each respective department/fund. The outer circle provides details of the name, the value (where publicly available), the service provider and the dates of the contract.



Key

CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
PF	Prosperity Fund
ICF	International Climate Fund
GCRF	Global Challenges Research Fund
NF	Newton Fund
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care

Departments are drawing on their core technical expertise to inform their aid programmes

4.23 A potential benefit of involving more departments in delivering UK aid is the ability to draw on their core technical expertise. We found that this is happening, with significant exchange of learning between ODA and non-ODA activities within many departments. The FCO uses common programme management systems for both ODA and non-ODA funds (although it has created a separate ODA team that scrutinises whether funding is ODA-eligible). The CSSF provides the FCO with both ODA and non-ODA funding to support the implementation of National Security Council strategies, and both are informed by the FCO's thematic expertise in areas such as the promotion of human rights and good governance. Other departments make a clearer distinction between ODA and non-ODA activities, while actively sharing expertise between the two areas of work. Examples include the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Office for National Statistics (see Box 6).

Box 6: How departments are bringing their expertise to the support of UK aid

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is accessing UK health expertise to inform its own ODA programmes and those delivered jointly with other departments. For example, the department tells us that it has drawn on the experience and expertise of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), which delivers research to support health and care in England. The NIHR Global Health Research programme aims to commission and support high-quality applied health research in low- and middle-income countries. Building on the NIHR principles of Impact, Excellence, Effectiveness, Inclusion and Collaboration, the programme strengthens global health research capability and training through equitable partnerships. In one example, experienced NIHR researchers from Manchester are working in partnership with researchers and community workers in Kenya and Tanzania to reduce the number of stillbirths. The UK researchers shared their know-how and helped combine their UK experience with that of local practitioners and communities to support stillbirth prevention and care in low-resource settings. DFID has also drawn on NIHR's track record of commissioning high-quality research to inform its own health research.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is also drawing on UK experience to help DFID and other aid-spending departments. In our review of the UK's International Climate Finance, we saw examples in the areas of environmental planning and marine protection and in promoting the idea of 'natural capital', which brings an understanding of the value of nature into economic assessments. DHSC has requested Defra's help on its international work on animal health and zoonotic diseases.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) informs us that it is developing peer-to-peer partnerships with statistical institutes in developing countries, including by pairing its own experts with professionals in the partner country. The learning is going both ways: returning experts share their experience with colleagues, and this in turn is reportedly informing the ONS culture and its approach to challenges in the UK.

4.24 While departments bringing their expertise to bear on ODA programming is a positive finding, we note that it may not be necessary to allocate ODA resources to departments in order to achieve this result. Other methods of drawing on their expertise could be devised.

How effectively is learning shared across aid-spending departments and used to improve the effectiveness and value for money of aid?

There is a good level of exchange of learning between aid-spending departments

4.25 While each department has gone about building a knowledge of effective development cooperation in its own way, we have found many positive examples of the exchange of learning between departments.

4.26 In past reports, ICAI has noted many instances of departments working together to shape the UK aid response to global crises. The joint effort to strengthen the international health crisis response system in the wake of the 2013-16 West Africa Ebola epidemic stood out as a strong example.[40] We have also seen examples of departments seeking out expertise across government. For instance, the BEIS International Climate Finance team drew on CSSF expertise of working in conflict-affected environments when developing the business case for addressing deforestation in Colombia. We have also seen examples of departments that bid for ODA funds in the 2019 Spending Review, such as DIT, learning from other departments with established aid programmes.

4.27 Figure 6 maps the learning interactions between departments that were mentioned in our interviews (leaving interactions with DFID, which are discussed under question 3). While not a comprehensive list, this provides an indication of the complexity and range of learning interactions taking place.[41]

A set of cross-government learning networks are beginning to emerge

4.28 The UK government is beginning to put in place some high-level, cross-government structures to oversee the UK aid programme. The National Security Council sets the UK's strategies, priorities and policy direction for external engagement across the fields of security, diplomacy, trade and development cooperation. It provides direction to the two cross-government funds: the CSSF and the Prosperity Fund. It has established cross-departmental groups to support the implementation of National Security Council thematic objectives.[42] There is a Senior Officials Group on ODA, which is co-chaired by HM Treasury and DFID and meets at director level. While its initial mandate was to ensure that the 0.7% of gross national income spending commitment was met, its remit was widened in 2018 to include coherence and strategic guidance.

4.29 A cross-government architecture for learning is also beginning to emerge. Many of the key informants we interviewed recognised the importance of cross-government learning. There has been a proliferation of groups and forums where learning is being exchanged on thematic issues. Examples include the Strategic Coordination of Research (SCOR) Board, which was put in place in response to ICAI's 2017 report on the GCRF,[43] the Global Health Oversight Group, and the Cross-Whitehall Safeguarding Group. There are also learning networks whose remit is broader than aid, such as the Chief Scientific Advisers' Network.

4.30 Recently, new groups have been established for sharing learning about aid management, including a Cross-Government Evaluation Group. There is an ODA Commercial Oversight Group where commercial directors convene to explore procurement and commercial issues, supported by a Commercial Working-Level Group (with representatives from DFID, the FCO, the Home Office, BEIS, DIT and DHSC) and a Cross-Whitehall Financial Instruments Knowledge Network.[44] We are also aware of networks that have emerged to share experience on thematic or technical issues, such as urban development, global health research, modern slavery and the mobilisation of private finance. Most of these groups are still being established, but interviewees believed they would provide valuable spaces for learning and collaboration.

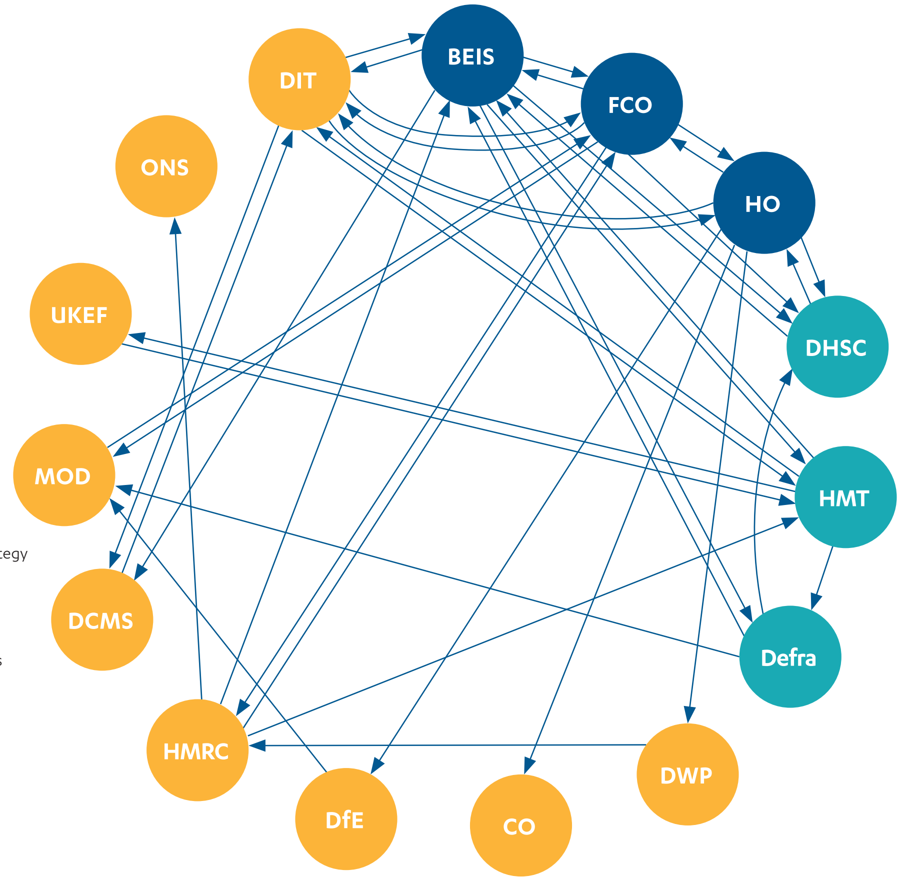
40. *The UK aid response to global health threats,* ICAI, January 2018, link.
41. We have conducted the relationship mapping based on an analysis of all interviews. They were analysed for mentions of cross-departmental sharing of learning/support and gatherings (for example BEIS to DHSC) with mentions prioritised by how many times they were referred to in different interviews.
42. For example, the National Security Secretariat Implementation Group on migration: *Forced displacement in Africa: 'Anchors not Walls',* Government response to the International Development Committee, June 2019, p. 31, link.
43. *HM Government Response to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact rapid review of the Global Challenges Research Fund*, HM Government, September 2017, link.
44. The Government Commercial Organisation is setting up a UK centre of excellence – operationalising a cross-government commercial approach to UK ODA

Figure 6: Complexity of learning interactions between government departments

Figure 6 shows the complexity of learning interactions between aid-spending departments other than DFID. The lines show only the learning interactions that were mentioned in our interviews and are indicative only. See the individual department pages in the Annex for more detail.

Key

- High-spending department
- Mid-spending department
- Low-spending department



BEIS	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
HO	Home Office
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
HMT	HM Treasury
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
CO	Cabinet Office
DfE	Department for Education
HMRC	HM Revenue and Customs
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
MOD	Ministry of Defence
UKEF	UK Export Finance
ONS	Office for National Statistics
DIT	Department for International Trade

4.31 Peer-to-peer exchange among professionals can be one of the most effective methods of learning.[45] Communities of practice have developed across government among staff performing similar tasks in support of UK aid to share learning and develop relationships. We found examples of tax and public financial management, economics, gender economics and families, and monitoring and evaluation. Many were initiated by DFID staff. They are mostly at an early stage, consisting of email lists of interested individuals and sometimes online platforms for discussion and sharing materials. They are a good start but will need further investment to become effective.

4.32 Another mechanism for joining up is technical professional groups (for example on infrastructure, evaluation or climate change). Members of professions are accredited as having particular skills or expertise. They can be useful agents for exchange of learning and promoting common standards across departments. DFID itself organises its advisory staff into 13 such groups, called cadres, each run by a head of profession. It has offered cadre accreditation to other departments, and some departments, such as FCO, are in the processes of establishing professional groups of their own. Some formal professional

45. *A Guide to Peer-to-Peer Learning*, Effective Institutions Platform, 2016, link.

groups exist right across government, for instance for economics and statistics, as do looser technical groups on issues such as infrastructure, evaluation, climate and environment. Developing common technical qualifications across aid-spending departments would be potentially useful for promoting common standards and practices.[46]

Co-location within countries facilitates exchange of learning across departments

4.33 From our own observations, and from the evidence gathered, shared learning happens most readily among UK government representatives within developing countries, close to the frontline of aid delivery. Stakeholders were in agreement that co-location of government departments in UK missions facilitates learning, collaboration and coherence. This echoes findings from past ICAI reviews.[47]

4.34 Our interviews with officials in Pakistan and Kenya suggest that departmental representatives abroad tend to act and learn as one team – especially where senior staff champion joined-up working. In Kenya, the CSSF has run workshops with the FCO and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to identify scope for management efficiencies in aid programmes. It is also working with DFID to deliver joint training to colleagues from different departments.

4.35 Joint working on external relations has long been an objective of the UK government, promoted through the One HMG Overseas initiative and more recently through the Fusion Doctrine (see Box 7). However, it is an ambitious agenda, given the different cultures and priorities of departments. To succeed, it will need a more active approach to the exchange of learning across departments. It is also a resource-intensive process. Staff in Pakistan and Kenya reflected that home departments in London do not always appreciate the time required to support One HMG working.

Box 7: Cross-government measures to improve joint working abroad

One HMG Overseas: Since 2011, the One HMG Overseas initiative has sought to remove barriers to joint working among departmental staff based in British diplomatic posts overseas, so that the government can deliver on its objectives more effectively and efficiently. As the NAO noted in 2015, "Given the many partners and disparate objectives of those involved, this has been and remains an ambitious agenda, requiring considerable culture change."[48]

Fusion Doctrine: The Fusion Doctrine was introduced in the National Security Capability Review 2018[49] as an initiative to harness together the tools for external engagement – security, diplomacy and economic engagement – in support of a common set of objectives. It builds on the creation of the National Security Council in 2010 to strengthen the delivery of the UK's international objectives. Its aim is to drive forward and support a 'whole of government' approach to national security, bringing out improvements in accountability and efficiency. The government is in the process of implementing groups for particular geographical areas and thematic objectives, under the National Security Secretariat.

The cross-government architecture for learning about aid is not yet mature

4.36 While our findings show a growing network of links across the aid programme, many of these structures are new and yet to be fully operational. The system has grown organically, without conscious design and with no single body responsible for overseeing it. Its ad hoc nature means that learning across the UK aid programme is still unstructured, with inevitable gaps and overlaps.

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46. DFID plans to develop a staff competency framework for each cadre that is both a transparency exercise and opens up career opportunities and progression for advisers.

47. *DFID's governance work in Nepal and Uganda*, ICAI, June 2018, link.

48. *One HMG Overseas*, NAO, March 2015, p. 10, link.

49. *National Security Capability Review*, HM Government, March 2018, p. 10, link.

4.37 There have been efforts to improve coordination across the UK government since the 1990s, if not earlier. One review of the experience identifies a number of success factors: most notably, a clear central mandate for joint working and a strong and supportive architecture that encourages innovation and cooperation.[50]

4.38 For the time being, the mandate for joint working is still not sufficiently clear. The requirement for joint learning and basic principles for how this should occur have not been set out, nor is there currently a clear architecture to support joint learning. As the International Development Committee recently observed:

> "There is a conundrum in any joined-up or cross-government working, which is the balance between the opportunity of benefitting from different views and new skills and expertise and the risks of strategic incoherence, duplication and other unintended consequences."[51]

More guidance is needed to help departments get this balance right.

The UK aid programme lacks an agreed standard for publication of aid data

4.39 Transparency is recognised in the UK aid strategy as a driver of value for money. Transparency improves the accountability of aid-spending departments, both to UK taxpayers and to citizens in partner countries. It is also a key facilitator of cross-government learning.

4.40 In June 2010, the UK government introduced an 'Aid Transparency Guarantee', with a commitment to publishing detailed information about DFID programmes, using the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standard.[52] It committed to requiring all recipients of UK funding to publish their data to the IATI standard, and also to encouraging other donors to do so. First launched in 2008, IATI initially focused on the transparency of development funding and has since been broadened to cover development results.[53]

> "Aid transparency is critical to improving the effectiveness and value for money of aid. Making information about aid spending easier to access, use and understand means that UK taxpayers and citizens in poor countries can more easily hold DFID and recipient governments to account for using aid money wisely. Transparency creates better feedback from beneficiaries to donors and taxpayers, and helps us better understand what works and what doesn't. It also helps reduce waste and the opportunities for fraud and corruption."

UK Aid Transparency Guarantee, DFID, 3 June 2010, link.

4.41 Progress by donors on publishing their data to the IATI standard is assessed in the Aid Transparency Index, an annual publication by the non-governmental organisation Publish What You Fund.[54] By 2015, DFID was rated in the index as 'very good', making it a global leader on transparency. The aid strategy included a new commitment that all other aid-spending departments would be ranked as 'good' or 'very good' on the index by 2020. On the recommendation of the International Development Committee, the government has commissioned Publish What You Fund to report on progress against this commitment, with an initial assessment due in December 2019.[55] DFID has established a working group on transparency and provides technical and financial advice support to other departments.

50. *What works in joined-up government?* An evidence synthesis, Carey, G and Crammond, B, International Journal of Public Administration, 2015, p. 9, link. See also: *You Win Some, You Lose Some: Experiments with Joined-Up Government,* O'Flynn, J. et al., International Journal of Public Administration, 2011, link.
51. Definition and administration of ODA inquiry, Final Report, IDC, 5 June 2018, pp. 22-23, link.
52. *UK Aid Transparency Guarantee*, DFID, 3 June 2010, link.
53. *2018 Aid Transparency Index: Guidelines*, Publish What You Fund, 2018, link.
54.. Publish What You Fund, Aid Transparency Index, link.
55. The results will be produced by the end of 2019, in time to check progress before the UK aid strategy's 2020 transparency commitment date.

4.42 So far, progress is mixed across the departments. Some have yet to generate expenditure data in the right format. BEIS, DCMS, Defra, DHSC, FCO, ONS, MOD and DIT are all publishing at least some of their data to the IATI standard, but DWP, DfE, HM Treasury, HMRC, UKEF and the Cabinet Office are yet to do so. DFID has created an online tool, DevTracker, that summarises data published by any UK government department – and some implementing partners – to the IATI standard. This tool is able to produce convenient summaries of UK aid by country, sector or spending department, although for the time being the data on non-DFID expenditure is incomplete (see Figure 7).

4.43 Surprisingly, in interviews conducted for this review, some departments argued that the commitment to transparency in the aid strategy was general in nature, requiring aid-spending departments to include basic information on their departmental website, but leaving them discretion as to which data to publish. For instance, the CSSF and the Prosperity Fund currently only publish a selection of portfolio and programme data on their respective websites.

4.44 In addition to expenditure data, DFID publishes its main programme documents, including business cases, annual reports and programme completion reports, on DevTracker. Most other departments are not doing so. These documents summarise the progress of each programme towards its intended results and include DFID's programme performance scores. This is an important contribution to transparency, which also facilitates the sharing of learning across government and with external stakeholders by making performance data accessible via internet search engines. There is no overarching requirement for aid-spending departments to publish programme documents, progress reports or learning products.

Aid-spending departments lack access to each other's learning platforms

4.45 Some departments have made progress on building information platforms to capture data on aid expenditure and/or lessons learned on good development cooperation, for their own internal purposes. However, many of these systems are not accessible to other departments or to the public, which inhibits the sharing of learning.

4.46 DFID's Aid Management Platform (AMP) presents and analyses data on expenditure and programming from its management information system, to support management decision making at programme and portfolio level. While DFID has been promoting AMP to other departments, it was not designed to be a common platform and other departments cannot use it without additional technical investment.

4.47 Other departments are also pressing ahead with developing technical learning platforms. The Prosperity Fund's Learning Platform is a strong example (see Box 8). The Home Office has a knowledge platform on modern slavery (known as Delta 8.7), while there is a knowledge platform for UK International Climate Finance that aggregates results across multiple programmes and funding streams.

4.48 However, these platforms are not being shared. While we acknowledge that, for some departments, confidentiality and security requirements preclude the sharing of some information, there is nonetheless scope to improve information sharing within and across departments.

Figure 7: Use of technical platforms across ODA spending departments/funds

Dept./ fund	Dev Tracker	Office 365	Google Drive	Share point	AMP	PF Learning	Prospero	Home Office Delta 8.7	ICF Knowledge Platform	Other
DFID	Using	Using	Using	Using	Using	Exploring	Using	Not using	Using	Skype for business
BEIS*	Using	Using	Not using	Using	Exploring	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Excel
BEIS ICF	Using	Using	Not using	Using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Using	
CSSF	Not using	Using	Not using	Using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	
FCO	Using	Using	Not using	Using	Not using	Exploring	Using	Not using	Not using	Skype for business
HO	Using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Using	Not using	
DHSC	Using	Not using	Using	Using	Not using	Exploring	Not using	Not using	Not using	
Defra	Using	Exploring	Not using	Using	Exploring	Not using	Not using	Not using	Using	
PF	Not using	Using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Using	Using	Not using	Not using	
HMT	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Using	Using	Not using	Not using	
DWP	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Filing systems
DfE	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	
HMRC	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Google forum
CO	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	
MOD	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	
DCMS	Not using	Not using	Using	Not using	Not using	Using	Not using	Not using	Not using	
UKEF	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	
DIT	Using	Not using	Using	Using	Exploring	Exploring	Exploring	Not using	Not using	
ONS	Using	Not using	Not using	Using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	Not using	

Key Using the platform · Currently exploring · Not using the platform

AMP	Aid Management Platform
PF Learning	Prosperity Fund Learning Portal
DFID	Department for International Development
*BEIS (NF and GCRF)	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Newton Fund and Global Challenges Research Fund)
BEIS ICF	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (International Climate Fund)
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
HO	Home Office
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
Defra	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
PF	Prosperity Fund
HMT	HM Treasury
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
DfE	Department for Education
HMRC	HM Revenue and Customs
CO	Cabinet Office
MOD	Ministry of Defence
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
UKEF	UK Export Finance
DIT	Department for International Trade
ONS	Office for National Statistics

Box 8: The Prosperity Fund’s Learning Platform

The Prosperity Fund has invested in the development of its own information system, the PF Learning Platform, which went live in October 2018. It is designed to respond dynamically to learning needs and link people together with interests in topics such as transparency, procurement and economics. While still at an early stage, this platform stands out as a strong example of using technology to enhance learning, at a time when legacy technical systems are standing in the way of effective sharing of information and knowledge. It incorporates:

- Learning networks on thematic areas, responding to interest expressed by stakeholders. There are networks on commercial issues, gender and inclusion, and a planned network on achieving benefits to the UK (‘secondary benefits’).
- Learning forums and pop-ups, which allow participants to access expert advice face to face or via teleconference/webinar, and which support discussions on areas of common interest across programme teams.
- A library of evaluation reports, thematic guidance and other outputs.

As of March 2019, the Platform had acquired 478 users across departments, including a growing group of ‘super users’ who have logged on 20 times or more.

How well does DFID support learning across government?

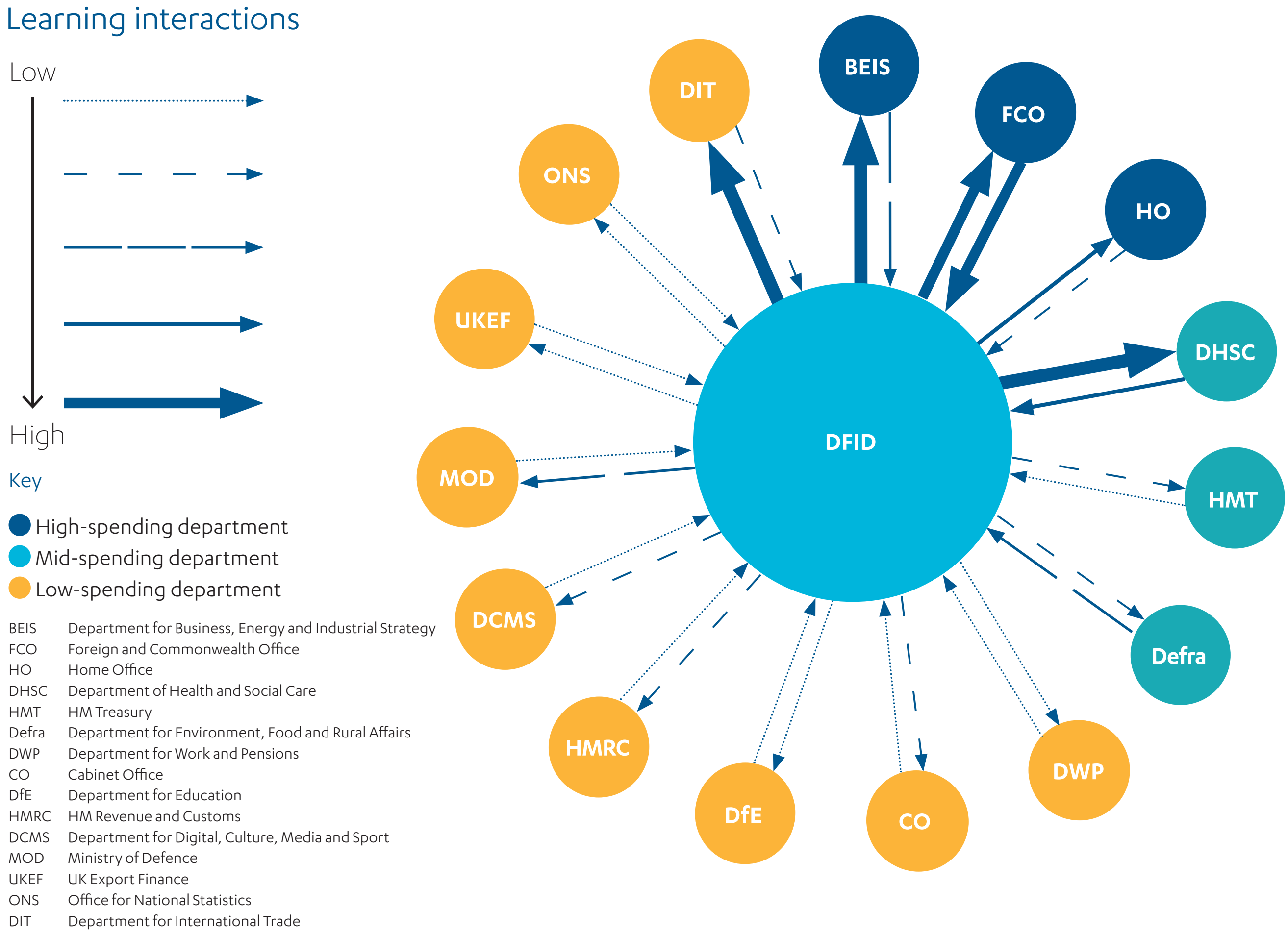
DFID provides extensive support to other departments

4.49 Under UK government rules, each department is accountable for its own expenditure. While DFID is given the role under the UK aid strategy of supporting other departments with their aid spending, it has no mandate to oversee their work or to enforce good practice standards. Nor was it provided with any additional staffing resources for this support function.

4.50 Despite these constraints, we find that DFID plays an important role in supporting aid-spending departments. Figure 8 maps the instances of such support that we encountered. It shows that DFID has provided help to every aid-spending department. It also shows that other departments have provided DFID with technical advice and support.

Figure 8: Support for learning interactions between DFID and other aid-spending departments

Figure 8 gives an indication of learning interactions between DFID and other aid spending departments. The lines are weighted to show the density of interactions mentioned in our interviews and are indicative only. See the individual department pages in the Annex for more detail.



4.51 Figure 8 shows that DFID's support has gone far beyond peer-to-peer exchanges of information and learning. For example, DFID requires its advisers to devote 10% of their time to providing support to programmes beyond their direct responsibility, in areas such as design, procurement, annual reviews and evaluations. Some of this support has been extended to other departments, although we are informed that it is not always available and can in practice be difficult to access.

Figure 9: Examples of support offered by the Department for International Development to other departments

People

DFID provides staff to other departments on loan to support the delivery of their programmes.

- DFID currently has over 100 staff on loan to other departments.
- DFID has provided staff to support complex procurements (eg, for the Department of Health and Social Care Fleming Fund).

Tools/Systems

DFID provides other departments with tools, systems and guides to support ODA delivery.

- Guidance documents: Smart Rules, ODA Value for Money guidance, toolkits.
- Procurement frameworks.
- DevTracker, a system for publishing aid data.

Skills/Expertise

DFID staff share knowledge and experience with other departments through training and advice.

- ODA eligibility support and technical advice, including on programme design, procurement, mobilisation and evaluation.
- Programme delivery training.
- Helpdesk services: Evaluation Quality Assurance and Learning Service (EQUALS) and the Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development (K4D) platform.

Networks

DFID has established a number of networks to share learning with other departments.

- Networks: Capability Network, Transparency Network.
- Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Communities of Practice.
- Cadres: DFID is refreshing its technical competency frameworks, which may make the cadre model more relevant and amenable for cross-government use.

4.52 Most departments have welcomed DFID's support, recognising its important role as a repository of expertise on aid management. We fully agree with the conclusions of the International Development Committee in June 2018, that:

> "DFID has a crucial role to play in ensuring that all other government departments understand how to administer ODA programmes effectively and efficiently, including programme management and reporting, and highlighting when required administration standards are not being met.[56]

Other departments are also helping DFID to learn

4.53 Importantly, the exchange of learning between DFID and other departments goes in both directions. We came across a range of examples where cross-government technical expertise was drawn on to raise the quality of DFID programming. For example, DFID has drawn on DHSC's expertise on health systems research and vaccine development.

56. *Definition and administration of ODA inquiry*, Final Report, International Development Committee, 5 June 2018, link.

4.54 Secondments and staff transfers across departments have proved to be an important mechanism for sharing learning. DFID has over 100 staff currently on loan to other departments.[57] On their return to DFID, they bring new experiences and knowledge, as well as stronger personal networks to facilitate ongoing exchange of learning.

No additional resources have been given to DFID to support learning across government

4.55 Supporting other departments with their aid expenditure is a time-consuming process. While DFID's overall budget has continued to grow in absolute terms since the 2015 aid strategy, the department has operated under tight headcount constraints. This means that time spent supporting other departments detracts from DFID's capacity to manage its own aid budget.

4.56 Furthermore, DFID staff told us that UK government financial rules made the charging of other departments for knowledge-based services difficult. For example, DFID has offered its EQUALS programme (an outsourced monitoring and evaluation facility) to other departments. While these departments are required to pay for the support they use, DFID would need to go through a new programme approval process in order to include the additional funds in the EQUALS budget.[58]

4.57 As a result, DFID has struggled to meet the demand from other departments for support. We were told that the resourcing of such support was a concern for DFID in the recent Spending Review.

57. This does not include short-term redeployments, for instance for Brexit planning.

58. DFID and the Treasury have subsequently informed us this should be soluble. We look forward to seeing progress on this in our follow-up process.

5. Conclusions & recommendations

Conclusions

5.1 The UK government's decision to increase the number of departments involved in spending UK aid created a substantial organisational challenge. As noted in a number of ICAI reviews, some departments saw rapid increases in their aid budgets before the necessary systems and capacities were in place, entailing significant short-term value for money risks.

5.2 The 2015 aid strategy required all aid-spending departments to achieve international best practice in their management of aid. The government has also set the objective of improving joint working across aid-spending departments and between the aid programme and other tools of external influence. This has created major learning challenges, both within and between departments.

5.3 It is striking that the UK government did not give more consideration to how new aid-spending departments would acquire the necessary learning, and what additional support they would need.

5.4 Our findings nonetheless show that departments are making significant investments in learning. With a few gaps, these investments are commensurate with the size and complexity of their aid budgets. We have also seen many initiatives to share learning between aid-spending departments. However, departments are at different points on this journey and many of the new systems for generating and exchanging learning are not yet fully operational. The learning assessment framework that ICAI developed for this review is intended to help them assess their learning needs and monitor their progress.

5.5 DFID is providing a good range of support to other departments. However, it lacks a clear mandate to set and enforce good practice standards across the UK aid programme, and is not resourced to provide adequate support across the many aid-spending departments and funds. If the UK's status as a 'development superpower' rests on the quality and integrity of the aid programme, as well as the size of the aid budget, then this is a significant gap. While a diversity of knowledge and approaches across aid-spending departments may be a source of strength, it should be accompanied by a clear commitment to share learning on good development cooperation. Without a shared understanding of what good looks like, there is a danger that a fragmented aid programme will lose coherence and quality.

5.6 It is telling that departments that bid for aid resources as part of the 2019 Spending Review are among the most active in building learning systems and engaging with more experienced departments. This competitive pressure creates healthy incentives for rapid learning. We offer the following recommendations to enhance and extend these incentives.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

DFID should be properly mandated and resourced to support learning on good development practice across aid-spending departments.

Problem statements:

- DFID has a crucial role to play in ODA learning as a repository of expertise on aid management. Other departments welcome its support.
- While DFID is given the role under the UK aid strategy of supporting other departments with their aid spending, it has no mandate to oversee their work or to police good practice standards.
- Providing support to other departments has resource implications for DFID.
- DFID has not been able to meet the current demand for assistance from other departments.

Recommendation 2:

As part of any Spending Review process, HM Treasury should require departments bidding for aid resources to provide evidence of their investment in learning systems and processes.

Problem statements:

- It is not clear that the allocation of ODA across departments takes into account aid management capacity – particularly as the size and complexity of ODA spending varies in each department. Aid-spending departments lack strong incentives to be best in class in aid management.

Recommendation 3:

The Senior Officials Group should mandate a review and, if necessary, a rationalisation of major monitoring, evaluation and learning contracts, and ensure that they are resourced at an appropriate level.

Problem statements:

- While outsourced monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) services are part of the solution to overcoming capacity constraints on aid management, there is currently no clear rationale for the shape or size of MEL contracts.
- The proliferation of MEL contracts has created risks of overlaps and duplication, potentially compromising value for money.

Recommendation 4:

Where aid-spending departments develop knowledge management platforms and information systems to support learning on development aid, they should ensure that these systems are accessible to other departments and, where possible, to the public, to support transparency and sharing of learning.

Problem statements:

- At present, technical platforms to support aid expenditure do not easily exchange information/learning across government – or in some cases within departments.
- A number of departments are still a long way from meeting UK government commitments on the transparency of UK aid.
- There is no requirement in the 2015 aid strategy to publish information on learning which leaves discretion to departments to decide what to put in the public domain.
- At present, technical platforms for supporting aid expenditure do not easily exchange information/learning across government in a format all staff can read – or in some cases within departments.
- Incompatible systems between departments (particularly when co-located in UK overseas missions) are an obstacle to learning and effective collaboration on development cooperation.

6. Annex

This Annex contains one-page overviews of each official development assistance (ODA)-spending department and fund. The intention is to have a consistent approach to the summary information while respecting that each department and fund has a different level and complexity of spend. Each overview contains at least four sections:

- key facts/details of ODA spending and resources
- summary or general overview
- working groups and other cross-government engagements
- key insights.

To assist in this process, in addition to the assessment framework described in paragraph 2.2, we have created a form of classification which reflects the learning that is relevant for the different departments.

Two important distinctions have been identified that cannot be looked at in isolation from each other: the size of ODA spending and its nature. The size of a department's spending is determined as the total amount spent over the financial years 2016-18. This categorisation of departments according to their level of ODA spending was developed for the sole purpose of this review.

Size of spending:

- <u>High-level spender</u> (£500 million and above): We expect a significant depth and complexity of learning that has in place an effective process of working with information and data, encourages the ongoing development of knowledge and know-how, and continues to maintain the necessary network of relationships for sharing the learning. Departments in this category include BEIS (GCRF and Newton Fund), ICF, FCO, CSSF, Prosperity Fund and the Home Office.

- <u>Mid-level spender</u> (£100-500 million): We expect the learning at this level of ODA spending to span all elements of learning, from supporting a process of working with information and data to the ongoing development of knowledge and know-how, and the maintenance of a network to share the learning. However, the depth and complexity can be less than for the high-level spenders. Departments in this category include DHSC, Defra, HM Treasury and HMRC.

- <u>Low-level spender</u> (up to £100 million): The departments at this level of spending can vary significantly in the depth and complexity of their learning. The nature of the ODA spending has a particularly strong influence on each department's need to manage information and data, develop knowledge and know-how, and maintain the necessary network of relationships in place to share the learning. Departments in this category include DIT, ONS, DCMS, UKEF, DWP, DfE and MOD.

Nature of the spending:

- <u>Transactional:</u> In terms of learning, these departments are focused primarily on working with specific data and information, with limited contact with other departments. Departments in this category are UKEF, DWP and DfE.

- <u>Scaling up:</u> Current low-level ODA-spending departments which plan to increase their spending significantly or try to establish a new fund are considered to be scaling up their learning work to align with a higher spending level. They are beginning the necessary process of working with information and data, developing knowledge and know-how, and setting up the necessary network of relationships to share the learning. Departments in this category are DIT, ONS and DCMS.

- Mixed portfolio/programme: The spending tends to combine a variety of elements within a department's portfolio. This can include programme delivery, policy programmes, research programmes, transactional spending (including retrofitting), administrative costs and so on.

Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

International Climate Finance

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: High-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- The UK's International Climate Finance (ICF) budget is £5.8 billion (2016-2021). BEIS is responsible for £2 billion in this period
- Staff managing ODA: Approximately 90 FTEs working directly on ICF, five people dedicated to Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MEL) (+ interns), including two level G7 evaluation specialists
- The ICF is a portfolio of investments which aims to help developing countries achieve low-carbon, climate-resilient development that supports growth and reduces poverty. DFID, BEIS and Defra all contribute to the ICF and participate in its management.

Summary: BEIS ICF has made promising steps to enhance its learning capacity. The new BEIS ICF MEL team strategy seems to be appropriate. There is a focus on the strengthening of MEL processes, the review and synthesis of evidence and the sharing of key learnings between programmes and with external partners. However, the strategy is new and it is too early to assess how well it will be implemented. While improvements in learning architecture have been evident, challenges remain. There was a pause while the ICF MEL contract was re-scoped, which has delayed progress in producing and sharing fund-level learning. The Knowledge Platform, facilitating result reporting, has not met its objectives around sharing learning. There are also ongoing postponements in planned movement of ICF results from the bespoke ICF Knowledge Platform to DFID's Aid Management Platform (AMP).

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Cross-government Ministerial ODA Board
- Cross-Whitehall Senior ODA Officials Group (SOG)
- Cross-Whitehall Urban Development Group
- Cross-Whitehall Financial Instruments Knowledge network
- Cross-Whitehall Mini-Grids Donors Group
- Cross-Whitehall Infrastructure working group
- DFID Capability Network
- DFID Evaluation Cadre
- MEL Community of Practice (recently established)
- The ODA Evaluation Group
- BEIS ICF has gained agreement from DFID's Climate and Environment Head of Profession to trial ICF team membership to the cadre
- Government Social Research (GSR) Cadre
- Prosperity Fund MEL Team.

MEL outsourcing details: ICF is outsourcing a significant amount of portfolio level evidence generation to IMC Worldwide; The central monitoring, evaluation and learning programme for ICF operates with £12.8m budget. Of this, £9.5m was budgeted for the Compass external contract. After a strategic review of Compass in 2017, the contract was re-scoped and the financial limit was reduced to £4.7m. In addition, ICF has also outsourced the MEL support for UK PACT (Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions) programme. While PACT Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is outsourced, elements of the learning are retained in house.

Key insights: BEIS has an ICF team which manages its investments throughout the programme lifecycle. The ICF team has high-level oversight and control over programmes. There is comprehensive guidance on strategy and an operational model for its delivery cycle in place. Programmes must report results against at least one fund-level indicator, although in reality many report more than one, including transformational change assessment. The KPIs are capturing programme results that are used for reporting.

However, due to a pause while the ICF MEL contract was re-scoped, the fund has not yet delivered on all its objectives around portfolio-level learning which are bunched towards the end of the cycle. There has been some recent progress: the first thematic portfolio evaluation was completed in November 2018, the second completed its interim reporting phase and the third is coming to the completion of its interim reporting phase now. BEIS potentially plans to conduct separate evaluations on thematic areas which may not always be a priority for other ICF departments.

BEIS ICF has been steadily building its in house capacity. The department has increased its analyst team, including G7 analysts, to provide help with programme development and analysis, portfolio management and wider planning. In March 2019, BEIS ICF finalised a new MEL Team strategy after a consultative process, drawing on key lessons from ICAI's 2019 ICF report. This new strategy has potential to increase sharing learning within and outside departments, but it is too early to assess its implementation.

BEIS has been strengthening its capacity for learning, such as through the Knowledge, Evidence, and Engagement Programme (KEEP), which ring-fences the budget and improves the process around procuring external research to inform programme design. BEIS ICF has gained approval from KEEP and the BEIS Research Committee (early 2019) for technical assistance (TA) research, which aims to improve ICF monitoring and learning from TA programmes and for climate change mitigation options research.

While there is evidence of ICF sharing learning and expertise internally and with other departments, this is not done in a sufficiently systematic manner.

The ICF MEL Team is providing advice on KPIs and MEL work to other government departments eg, the Prosperity Fund.

The Knowledge Platform facilitates results reporting, and achieved and expected results are published annually on the government website. The Platform has not met its objectives around sharing, particularly sharing with stakeholders outside ICF. It was intended to be a short-term platform until DFID's own AMP was able to incorporate monitoring and reporting data. However, the Platform has been extended several times, now up to February 2020, as the DFID AMP is still unable to accommodate ICF results. We note that the Prosperity Fund has an online platform, which is available to all government departments and being used by the FCO, DFID and 62 other users from other government departments (see the Prosperity Fund one pager).

Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Newton Fund & Global Challenges Research Fund

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: High-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- The Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF) has a budget of £1.5 billion between FY2015-16 to 2020-21
- The Newton Fund (NF) has a budget of £735 million over FY2014-15 to 2020-21
- Staff managing ODA: NF and GCRF are delivered together through a combined team: 7 FTE employed by BEIS, 15 FTEs UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) but funded and activity managed by BEIS, 15 PTEs employed by BEIS and 34 FTEs employed via the FCO and located in embassies in NF countries. This includes five people dedicated to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), including one level G7 evaluation specialist.

Summary: While there is some evidence of BEIS improving the learning capacity of its two research funds (the GCRF and the NF) fundamental challenges still remain. As found in previous ICAI reviews, both Funds still lack a comprehensive and consistent approach to gathering evidence on their outputs and outcomes, which limits the extent to which performance can be assessed and learning generated at Fund level. There is no Fund-level overview of the GCRF and NF's projects and spending, except for an Excel-based activity tracker. While there are some encouraging solutions planned, these come late in the Funds' life span, particularly for the NF. There is a concern that in the absence of strong governance arrangements and strategic management by BEIS, the secondary objectives around benefits to the UK have tended to predominate. BEIS is outsourcing a large amount of its learning processes, such as development and implementation of its KPIs and evaluations to a contracted evaluation firm. While this is a common practice across government, BEIS does not appear to be fully integrating learning from this approach in a timely manner. There seems to be a good exchange of information through some formal and several informal mechanisms, often led by the delivery partners. Cross-government sharing of learning on development-related research activities has improved with the creation of the Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements – GCRF and NF:

- Cross-government Ministerial ODA Board
- Cross-Whitehall Senior ODA Officials Group (SOG)
- BEIS Research & Innovation ODA Portfolio & Operations Management Board (POMB)
- Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board (BEIS, DFID, DHSC, UKRI and Wellcome Trust)
- BEIS ODA Communications Group
- Cross-UKRI Groups and Cross-Delivery Partner Groups both for GCRF and NF
- DFID's Evaluation Cadre
- Government Social Research (GSR) Cadre
- Cross-Government 'Evaluating ODA' Group
- DHSC, BEIS, UKRI ODA Working Group
- UKCDR Standing Groups in Research Capacity Strengthening, Health Funders Forum, Disasters Research Group and Communications Forum
- GCRF: The Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)
- NF: Developing a Newton Global Alumni Network (July 2019).

MEL outsourcing details - GCRF:

External evaluation of the GCRF - £123,650 Foundation Stage Evaluation outsourced to Itad and Technopolis: circa £4 million. Main Evaluation to be outsourced.

MEL outsourcing details - NF:

External evaluation of the Newton Fund - £760,403 plus additional £33,985 for Newton Strategy update outsourced to Coffey International and Public and Corporate Economic Consultants (PACEC).

GCRF key insights: The GCRF has recently made some improvements to its learning capacity, although challenges remain. For example:

- A fund-level theory of change was developed by the MEL Service Provider in 2018, using a collaborative approach
- Development of KPIs led by the external provider
- The Reporting Transformation Project (RTP).

However, the late development of a theory of change and lack of indicators has hampered BEIS's ability to produce and share learning at fund level.

The GCRF lacks systems to overview and improve delivery at the Fund level – information is shared by Excel spreadsheets. This was recognised by BEIS and a new system is currently under development (the RTP). Improvements have been made to better monitor, produce and share learning. While BEIS was involved in this process, significant improvements were developed and delivered by the GCRF's partners, especially UKRI. For example, UKRI is improving its reporting, has launched 12 interdisciplinary Research Hubs and recruited nine GCRF Challenge Leaders.

There seems to be good exchange of information through some formal (eg, the BEIS-led UK Delivery Partner Forum) and informal mechanisms. Learning is often shared across delivery partners – channels are sometimes delegated to or led by delivery partners.

NF key insights: The NF does not have an overarching strategy in place. The theory of change was developed by the Monitoring and Evaluation Service Provider two years into the process and there are no KPIs that would measure performance at the Fund level. This is currently being addressed by:

- The development of KPIs by the external provider
- Updating of country strategies and a new allocations process
- The Reporting Transformation Project (RTP).

UKRI is trying to address the lack of tailored reporting mechanisms through the ongoing Benefits Realisation Project.

There is no Fund-level overview of the NF's projects and spending, except for an Excel-based activity tracker. The activity tracker does not record the outputs of the Fund's activities, and there is no central reporting or recording of outputs and outcomes of the Fund's activity. BEIS is planning to address this by creating a cloud-based IT results collection system.

While we saw a number of learning exchange mechanisms within individual partnerships and some informal sharing of lessons, it remains largely ad hoc. For example, while the UK Delivery Partner Forum is led by BEIS, other mechanisms are often delegated to or led by delivery partners. Shared learning between the NF, GCRF and other government departments may improve with the creation of the SCOR board.

HM Government

Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF)

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: High-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) has spent £2,095 million on ODA between 2015-16 and 2018-19 (46% of total budget)
- The CSSF combines ODA and non-ODA funding to address issues of conflict and instability in specific countries. It was established in April 2015
- Staff managing ODA: 461 FTE CSSF-funded administrative staff (no breakdown of ODA/non-ODA staff).

Summary: The CSSF has shown limited learning capacity, but there is progress and the CSSF is currently operationalising learning processes and mechanisms. The CSSF shares learning in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) advisers' community of practice, formally established in May 2018 and more recent governance community of practice, established in early 2019. It is also considering the possibilities for a new CSSF information exchange system. The CSSF has made progress in transparency and results management. The latter remains fragmented, but this may be resolved with recently finalised (March 2019) CSSF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Strategy and the contract for its central external MEL support. If these initiatives are successful, the result is likely to be stronger with more evidence-based programming, better results, and less risk of doing harm.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Cross-government Ministerial ODA Board
- Cross-Whitehall Senior ODA Officials Group (SOG)
- National Security Council sub-committee
- CSSF Governance Network (set up in 2018)
- CSSF Cross-government Portfolio and Strategy Boards
- Global Lessons Workshop
- The ODA Evaluation Group
- Transparency Working Group
- CSSF M&E Community of Practice
- DFID Evaluation Cadre
- MEL Advisors Group
- Portfolio Leads Network
- Programme Managers Network.

MEL outsourcing details: The CSSF has seven ongoing outsourced MEL regional contracts currently live in 19/20: Ecorys – GCF £3.25m, Pakistan £1.8m. Integrity with Ecorys- Egypt £1.8m. Itad – Middle East £1.9m, North Africa £1.8m, East Africa £8.5m. WYG – West Africa £1.11m and OCO Global – Commonwealth £0.08m was live in 18/19. In addition, CSSF also has two ongoing procurements – including a new global MEL contract. It was noted that contracts aim to build CSSF's internal MEL capacity.

Key insights: CSSF has increased its learning capacity (partly as a response to the 2018 ICAI review) with additional funding, staff recruitment, and independently contracted expertise. A Learning Lead has been appointed by the CSSF team to support the delivery of the learning component of the new MEL Strategy. They are responsible for organisational learning, working with the HR Capability Manager who is responsible for individual learning within the CSSF and Prosperity Fund. Also, the CSSF has set up regional MEL contracts that aim to provide monitoring and evaluation support and strengthen internal MEL capacity.

The CSSF has taken various steps to strengthen results management and learning mechanisms:

- Encouraging the use of results management tools at project level
- Upgrading the development of theories of change
- Results Frameworks more focused on the measurability on the impact, outcomes and outputs
- The systematic inclusion of outcome assessments in the programmes' Annual Review processes.

However, there is no centralised framework in place to manage the Fund's results and generate lessons from its interventions. There is a need for a Fund-level framework that allows for results to be collated per sector or theme. The new CSSF MEL Strategy, approved in March 2019, is trying to address this issue.

The CSSF has been improving its evaluation and learning efforts to produce learning:

- The CSSF's new MEL Strategy provide steps to improving its evaluation and learning efforts, however for example evaluation is often conducted for major programmes with larger budgets (with some notable exceptions). This is a problem since the Fund's spending is mostly through programmes that include smaller projects
- The Fund uses specific evaluation and learning tools, such as the Political Access and Influence (PAI) framework, conflict sensitivity and gender markers
- In 2019, CSSF Eastern Africa teams across the region have developed PAI Case Stories in collaboration with the MEL Partner for CSSF Eastern Africa. Each Case Story provides a headline statement of the Fund's achievement, followed by a contextual description of the issue the UK is interested in, the approach taken, and the results achieved.

The information platform remains at the planning stage. There is currently no method of centrally storing information that can be accessed across government departments. The Joint Funds Unit is looking at options for making use of Office 365 Teams functionality to create an online platform. The CSSF is learning lessons from the development of the PF learning platform.

There is some evidence that the CSSF shares learning and expertise with other departments, but it is unclear as to whether Fund portfolios use existing mechanisms for sharing lessons consistently.

- Defra-ICF has drawn on the CSSF's expertise in the development of a new business case, addressing deforestation in Colombia
- The CSSF shares learning through a variety of groups. These include for example the M&E advisers' community of practice and recently established governance network. While creation of these groups has been encouraging, more could be done to use these forums to disseminate lessons learned.

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Low-level spender, scaling-up
- The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has spent £15 million on ODA between 2016-2018
- The DCMS supports a small number of funds and programmes
  - Cultural Protection Fund
  - Digital Access Programme (DAP) and the UK-India Tech Hub
  - subscription to the International Telecommunications Union (via Ofcom)
  - funding for Marlborough House.
- Staff managing ODA: The DCMS does not monitor the specific number of people managing ODA spend.

Summary: The DCMS has been increasing internal learning capacity along with the growth of its ODA spend. The department has a mix of transactional ODA spend (where ODA is a financial classification) and programme funding. There is no overall departmental MEL strategy in place. Individual programmes track and evaluate results, but practices vary considerably. The DCMS is a relative newcomer to ODA spending. While it is actively engaging with other departments, it is too early to assess to what extent it transfers and uses learning from other departments during this scaling-up phase. The DCMS uses its non-ODA expertise to inform its programming and share information with other departments.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Cross-government Ministerial ODA Board
- Cross-Whitehall Senior ODA Officials Group (SOG)
- Governance Board (FCO, DFID, JFU, PF)
- DCMS ODA SRO sits on the Prosperity Portfolio Board
- Transparency Working Group
- Cross-government Cultural Protection.

Key insights: The DCMS is looking to better manage its portfolio of ODA projects; there is (at present) no central level of assessment of overall performance. The review of effectiveness falls to policy leads.

The DCMS doesn't have department-wide strategies and guidance around ODA Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), but it has started to build its learning capacity through advice from other departments. DFID has for instance advised the DCMS on setting up governance structures for ODA spend. Individual programmes have result management mechanisms in place, but these vary considerably. For example:

- Cultural Protection Fund: British Council staff determine and carry out Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) on each of their 51 projects. A theory of change is in place and progress is measured against KPIs
- Under the Prosperity Fund (PF), the UK-India Tech Hub is at the scoping/diagnostics phase, while one of five Digital Access Programme countries have entered the delivery phase. For Monitoring, Reporting, Evaluation and Learning (MREL), the DCMS is obliged to use PA Consulting (for monitoring and reporting), and Integrity (for evaluation and learning) which is a requirement for all programmes under the Prosperity Fund.

The British Council-led Cultural Protection Fund is a good example of continuous learning at programme-level: learning is fed into the funding rounds and delivery of projects through a programme board and an independent advisory board comprised of heritage protection professionals and officials from similar organisations/funds. However, programme-level learning is not yet the norm within DCMS and learning at the departmental level is absent.

The DCMS has a shared ODA (repository) drive that all staff members can access. It is regularly updated and reviewed by International Strategy team members. The ODA drive includes ODA guidance, project examples and best practice.

There are examples of cross-learning between ODA and non-ODA activities from DCMS's arm's-length bodies (partner organisations). For example, DCMS has some unique skills and expertise:

- DCMS holds specific expertise in cultural heritage currently not present in other major ODA departments (notably DFID).
- DCMS can add value around technology (including artificial intelligence)
- There are policy overlaps between DCMS expertise and DFID programmes in the area of inclusive citizenship and learning is being shared between teams.

DCMS is working with a number of departments and funds:

- DFID provides help, support, advice and training to build capacity on ODA issues and transparency, including buddy/mentoring support
- DCMS is learning about the start-up process of managing ODA funds through engaging with BEIS, DIT and DFID.

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Low-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) spent over £203 million on ODA between 2016-2018
- Staff managing ODA: approximately 55 staff partially manage ODA including 0.5 G6, 1 G7, 1 SEO, 1 HEO, 1 EO and 1 SEO, 1 HEO finance business partner and 2 AO finance support
    - International Climate Finance (ICF) team: includes 1 G6, 1 G7, 3 SEO, 5 HEO + (1 HEOD), 1.5 G7 economist, 1 HEO analyst
    - Competitive grant schemes: 0.5 G6, 1 G7, 2 HEO, 1 EO
- Nearly three-quarters of Defra's ODA budget is spent through the ICF and Defra's competitive grant schemes. The remainder supports Multilateral Environmental Agreements, Defra policy work, the Met Office and climate change-related activities.

Summary: Defra has systems in place to learn and adapt, but challenges remain. A board now manages the department's ODA portfolio and the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team has been enlarged. A number of KPIs relating to forests have been developed (to be used across the ICF - Defra, DFID and BEIS). There are good examples of products identifying what works in programming. However, the sharing of learning is often done informally or through SharePoint; while this might reach staff within the department, it does not always provide an opportunity to share knowledge across the rest of government. Defra does not yet have a streamlined process across all programmes and divisions; there is a risk knowledge gets lost at portfolio and programme level.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Cross-government Ministerial ODA Board
- Cross-Whitehall Senior ODA Officials Group (SOG)
- Cross-Whitehall Forestry Group
- Cross-Whitehall ICF Analysts Group (monthly meetings)
- ICF Management Board and ICF Strategy Board
- The Cross-Whitehall Infrastructure working group
- DFID Capability Network
- Cross-Whitehall Safeguarding Group
- Cross-Whitehall Monitoring and Evaluation Group
- Engaging with DFID on the prospect of staff joining DFID professional cadres.

MEL outsourcing details: The competitive grant scheme's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) workstream is delivered by LTS International. The contract has a fixed cost of £169,375 per annum.

Key insights: Defra's ODA information is shared via face-to-face meetings, email and SharePoint and meeting records are stored in an internal filing system. The lack of government-wide IT systems has limited the department's ability to share knowledge and lessons across ODA-spending departments. Defra is currently exploring Office 365 for sharing information with other government departments and is in ongoing communication with DFID on the use of the Aid Management Platform (AMP) system. The ICF Knowledge Platform has failed to share learning between departments.

Defra's ODA spend has been increasing. The department has a promising number of initiatives that will enhance its ability to learn and adapt. Improvements have been made by setting up a central team that includes leads from all central programmes, to deal with eligibility, transparency and MEL. Defra is consulting with BEIS and DFID to build its capacity.

There are processes in place to oversee ODA spend. For example, for International Climate Finance (development portfolio shared by Defra, DFID and BEIS), Defra has developed of a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relating to forests, for use by all three departments in monitoring and learning. There is also a set of monitoring and evaluation requirements. However, the department does not have a unified process across ICF and non-ICF ODA programmes, rather processes and approaches vary within each element. Therefore, there is no single strategy on how learning should be produced or shared within and between other departments. It was noted that knowledge is shared informally through meetings, email and regular touch points with other departments.

There are some good examples of the production of lessons learned:

- Defra has produced a synthesis review on poverty, climate change and biodiversity, which it has shared with DFID and BEIS
- competitive grants: Defra is conducting an annual lessons learned process with its external MEL provider.

Cross-government sharing and learning:

- the department is bringing domestic expertise (non-ODA spend) into its international ODA work, on the understanding that Defra's expertise could further benefit other departments (for instance DHSC's reach-out to Defra on animal health and zoonotic diseases)
- Defra is engaging with DFID on the prospect of staff joining DFID professional cadres
- there is learning from participating in cross-departmental ICF meetings for both analysts and policy/programme managers
- Defra is attending the BEIS-run Delivering Effective Aid Programme course together with BEIS, DFID and DIT.

Department of Health & Social Care

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Mid-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has an ODA budget of £921.5 million between 2016-2021
- Main spend: Global Health Research, Global Health Security and Tobacco Control teams
- Within Global Health Security sits The Fleming Fund with a budget of £265 million
- The Fund aims to support low/middle-income countries to gather and share data on antimicrobial resistance
- Staff managing ODA: Global Health Research: 12 FTEs (including 2 vacancies); Global Health Security: 23.05 FTEs (including 4.75 vacancies); Tobacco Control: 1 FTE; Cross-programme/other: 2.9 FTEs

Summary: The DHSC is quite new in ODA programming, but it appears to be relatively agile and has improved its learning processes considerably. The DHSC has a close relationship with other departments (notably DFID), organisations and funds and it is apparent that learning is being shared both ways. There is also good evidence that the two teams working on Global Health Security (GHS) and Global Health Research (GHR) are cooperating and sharing learning, aided by co-location. There are some good examples of non-ODA learning influencing ODA programming. While the DHSC capacity is improving, there are challenges that the department is trying to address: 1) steps to include adaptive learning into its portfolio, 2) addressing weaknesses in formal plans for disseminating lessons that go beyond the programmes generating them, and 3) strengthening evaluation strategies.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Cross-government Ministerial ODA Board
- Cross-Whitehall Senior Officials ODA Group (SOG)
- Global Health Oversight Group – co-chaired by DHSC and DFID
- DHSC/DFID working group on Global Health Research
- DHSC/UKRI/BEIS working group on Global Health Research
- Cross-government working group on safeguarding
- The ODA Evaluation Group
- ODA Transparency working group
- ODA Commercial working group (both strategic and working level)

The DHSC is active in UKCDR's Interest Groups:

- Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board
- Data Management Analysis Group (DMAG)
- Health Funders Forum
- Research Capacity Strengthening Group
- GHS will be participating in the newly formed UKCDR epidemic response group.

MEL outsourcing details: The DHSC outsourced a major Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) contract (£2.8 million) to Itad for evaluating the Fleming Fund's regional and country grants and fellowships programme. This is an embedded evaluation. Additionally, DFID's Expert Advisory Call Down Service framework agreement was used by GHR and GHS to commission MEL specialists to: advise on the GHR Units and Groups' Theory of Change and Results Framework; develop indicators for the GHS Theory of Change indicators; undertake an Annual Review for the Fleming Fund; and undertake a Process Evaluation for the Vaccine Network.

Key insights: The DHSC is prioritising learning, including adaptive learning, in its programming which is resulting in improvements. This includes how it shares its learning. For example, the Fleming Fund is using the Adaptive Management Plan to capture and share learning. Internal lesson-learning is a feature of many programmes but formal evaluation processes are variable. Evaluation activities have recently increased. The department does not always have formal plans for disseminating learning beyond the programmes generating it. The DHSC is taking steps to address this.

The DHSC is improving processes for sharing learning within the department, and between various teams:

- GHS has developed a new Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy to be used as guidance and reference for implementation plans at both project and programme level. This includes an annual assessment of the theory of change and of how programmes are effective in lesson sharing, and the use of "glory sheets" to provide summaries of success.
- The GHS and GHR teams are represented on each other's Programme Board. Representatives from GHR attend the GHS weekly team meetings. Co-location also means that there is a continuous flow of help, advice and transfer of learning.
- Efforts are being made to facilitate collaborative working across projects. For example, this has led to identifying complementary thematic areas and establishing cross-project thematic groups such as the Global Surgery and the Respiratory thematic groups. Learning between GHR Units and Groups is shared in annual meetings for the directors of groups and units initiated in 2018.
- The DHSC is using IWS system (a cloud-based service) to share learning within departments. The Fleming Fund has recently launched (June 2019) a 'Partner Portal', a cloud-based service that external partners can access.

The DHSC is using its experience of non-ODA NIHR and from Public Health England in its ODA programming and is sharing this learning with DFID. This is not yet the norm, but there are some good examples (eg, DFID learning from its agile approach to the procurement of research). NIHR is seen as a world-leading research organisation which, potentially, has much know-how to pass on.

The DHSC has increased learning shared between itself and other departments (most notably DFID). For example:

- The GHR Programme Board endorsed a proposal to establish a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Global Health Journal, allowing open access full publication of all research funded through NIHR GHR programmes.
- DFID has representatives on the GHS programme board, the International Health Regulations Strengthening project board, and the Global Antimicrobial Resistance Innovation Fund project board. DFID attends as an observer at NIHR funding committees and at meetings of the Independent Scientific Advisory Group. Evidence shows a two-way relationship; learning is shared through working groups and through ad hoc meetings both informally and formally.
- DFID shared its ODA expertise with the DHSC, providing support for the design and procurement of the Fleming Fund.

Department for International Trade

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:
- Size and nature of ODA spend: Low-level spender, scaling-up
- The Department for International Trade (DIT) has spent £340,000 on ODA spend in FY 2018-2019
- Investment Promotion Programme (IPP), via the Prosperity Fund
- Staff managing ODA: 31 FTE work on ODA in Strategy, Capability, Governance & Delivery, and IPP Strands.

Summary: DIT's depth of experience and learning on ODA spend reflects the fact that it is in the scaling-up phase. DIT (comparable with ONS) is proactively building its ODA capability in preparation to becoming an ODA-spending department, learning from other departments and DFID in particular. At present, DIT has one live programme: The Investment Promotion Programme (IPP), running from 2018/19 to 2022/23; and uses its ODA to expand its Africa network. Previously, all ODA reporting has been conducted via the Prosperity Fund, but DIT has recently published its own transparency data via aid stream, gov.uk and DevTracker. DIT has engaged with other departments to assess its role in overall ODA, in order to minimise duplication and overlaps. As DIT learns about ODA, it is sharing this learning with other departments, for instance through the ODA awareness training programme, which is attended by other departments, and by distributing the ODA Preparedness Assurance (heat map).

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:
- Cross-Whitehall Senior ODA Officials Group (SOG)
- Communications Network
- Safeguarding Group
- DFID/DIT/UKEF Steering Group
- ODA Commercial working group (both strategic and working level)
- DIT engages with thematic boards including International Regulations and Standards alongside BEIS and DCMS
- DIT engages with BEIS, FCO and DCMS, and will work with the Home Office on sharing information
- Transparency Network
- Commercial Network.

Key insights: In preparation for becoming an ODA-spending department, DIT is focused on:
- defining the portfolio
- ensuring it has skilled delivery people
- ensuring systems, processes, guidance and training are in place and that an audit function exists.

Some systems and processes are in place to share learning within and outside the department. However, it was noted that DIT is currently looking to update its system, most notably looking into potential use of DFID's AMP, Prospero and PF Learning mechanisms. In building capability, DIT has recognised some of the challenges of moving from being a policy department towards being a programme delivery department. They have engaged with the FCO to learn how they dealt it programme scale-up challenges.

DIT produces quarterly ODA Preparedness Assurance (heat map) updates to provide a self-assessment and overview of the capability within the department to support its first two ODA programmes. The DIT Permanent Secretary has Accounting Officer responsibilities. The department has also simplified the language in the Theory of Change and Results Framework to make it more accessible and enable the team to better grasp the work they are doing.

In November 2018, DIT established an ODA awareness training programme to strengthen the department's capability. This now includes monthly sessions for all London-based staff who may work on ODA. As of 31 July 2019, 214 staff in the department have received ODA training via a range of forums including:
- bespoke workshops for corporate service teams at DIT HQ
- immersion days in London and East Kilbride for SCS leads and specialist corporate service staff
- full-day and two-hour training sessions for staff in relevant UK-based and regional teams, such as Africa, EECAN and MEAP.

Training provides information on the legal framework, the aid strategy, the transparency commitments, fraud, risk, programme delivery and media relationship. DIT has shared this training with other departments. Internally, the department has budgeted 3% of staff salary for ODA-related Learning and Development. Budgets are currently under review.

DIT has been working with DFID and the FCO and has engaged with a number of other government departments. This includes:
- DFID staff seconded to DIT to provide support, helping DIT to define its niche, weekly calls to monitor progress
- DFID sharing Smart Rules on Google Drive
- DIT-developed tools (eg, heat map) which have been shared with other departments including the Joint Funds Unit and DFID. There have also been informal discussions about the tools with BEIS and the FCO.

DIT has a Development Portfolio Board chaired by the Portfolio and Development Director. The board provides strategic direction, assurance for upcoming programmes and assurance and oversight for live programmes. It was set up in anticipation of more live programmes and feeds into the Projects and Change Committee.

Department for Work & Pensions

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Low-level spender, transactional
- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has spent £81 million on ODA between 2016-2018
- ODA is spent on: Subscription paid to International Labor Organization (ILO) and high-level estimate of the working age benefit costs of refugees entering the UK on the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme
- Staff managing ODA: No staff directly manage ODA.

Summary: In comparison to the department's total overall spend, the DWP's ODA spend is fractional. The DWP's ODA spend is transactional and the need for deeper learning is limited. However, there is some evidence that learning is taking place across The DWP's work with ILO and through engagement with other departments including the Home Office and DFID. The DWP does not routinely produce forecasts but the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme is due to end on 31 March 2020 and expenditure in 20/21 will become nil. The DWP's ODA spend will be reduced to only the ILO subscription.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- The DWP is reporting spend to DFID and DFID is actively producing guidance for the DWP's ODA spend
- The DWP relies heavily on DFID for guidance and expertise
- Informal groups and engagements across Whitehall which are formalised when necessary: ie, at ministerial level
- Attends Annual International Labour Conference.

Key insights: For the two current spending streams:

International Labor Organisation (ILO):

- The DWP is responsible for the UK's engagement with the ILO. It pays the annual contribution required as a condition of membership. 60% of the ILO contribution is classified as ODA – but does not constitute a department-led programme. The DWP does not have a programme approach, therefore there is no programme Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) or monitoring and evaluation mechanisms associated with this spend.
- The overall responsibility for the DWP's engagement with the ILO, as well as with the EU and international affairs in general, lies with the Deputy Director. The DWP actively engages across government with ministers in formulating the UK's position on a range of different ILO matters such as budget, policy, focus and programme implementation. The department also holds the ILO to account, ensuring that the ILO carries out monitoring and evaluation effectively and that it adapts its evaluation approach. There is some evidence of learning taking place in DWP's work with the ILO emerging from both ODA and non-ODA funded activities.

Refugee costs: Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR):

- The DWP's role in the Home Office's VPR scheme is based on how claims are made with reference to job seekers, benefits and employment. The DWP liaises with local authorities to determine which job centres refugees will need to travel to in order to lodge a claim. The department then books an appointment for them to make their claim. Once the claim has been processed and approved, it is logged onto a spreadsheet. Learning around ODA is limited due to the transactional and retro-fitted nature of the spend.
- In terms of helping Other Government Departments (OGDs), the DWP collects data on asylum seekers at the point of entry – something HMRC has not been able to do. The DWP has therefore started to collect data on asylum seeker children for HMRC on child tax credit and child benefit (which HMRC counts as ODA spend). It was suggested that the DWP could also collect data on the ages of asylum-seeking children for DfE at the point of entry at the start of the year, to improve its data collection process.
- Once the VPR scheme ends, the DWP will spend no more ODA on refugee costs. Its only ODA spend will be on ILO contributions.

Department for Education

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Low-level spender, transactional
- The Department of Education has spent £72 million on ODA between 2016-2018
- ODA is spent on refugee costs – education provided to asylum-seeking children
- Staff managing ODA: 0.2 FTE staff work on producing the ODA estimates.

Summary: The Department for Education's ODA spend is very small and transactional, therefore advanced learning mechanisms are not expected to be in place. If spend was to increase in the future, further capacity would be needed. No ODA money is spent abroad, instead the education provided to asylum seeking children in their first 12 months in the UK is counted as ODA. The department does not have a specific amount of ODA spend but there is a calculation regarding how much of the wider revenue funding should be allocated based on the number of asylum seekers in the last 12 months.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Engagement with DFID Lead Analyst
- Home Office provides data on refugees to DfE.

Key insights:

- ODA spend is based on calculations driven by a modelling process.
- Comprehensive technical notes are kept (including standards around modelling). While formal minutes are not taken, there is a process in place to document changes, review outcomes, and capture required improvements and recommendations in document logs allowing for full document control. This process allows for another team member to access and follow the process or methodology. Quality analysis is carried out within the team.
- Continuous improvement is a standard component of modelling. Many team members use forecasting for internal expenditure, employing an ongoing model development process allowing for constant improvement. The modelling behind ODA is no different.
- The ODA share of DfE's funds calculations using data on asylum-seeking children is provided by the Home Office
- The department consulted closely with DFID statistical analysts during the course of 2017, when it was developing the improved methodology for estimating DfE ODA spend introduced for 2018.

UK Export Finance

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Low-level spender, transactional
- UK Export Finance (UKEF) has spent £9 million on ODA between 2016-2018
- UK/Cuba Debt Agreement No.5
- Staff managing ODA: 3 staff members.

Summary: UKEF's ODA is very limited and transactional. Therefore, advanced learning mechanisms are not expected to be in place. UKEF reports debt relief that arises from debt agreements put in place with debtor countries. Most come from multilateral agreements which are signed by Paris Club creditors. UKEF does not have an ODA budget, but can forecast how much debt it will cancel in the next years. At present, UKEF only has Cuba debt eligible for cancellation in the calendar year 2019.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Meetings with HM Treasury and DFID
- Paris Club (HM Treasury, UKEF).

Key insights: UKEF attends Paris Club meetings about eight times a year, where countries with sovereign debt are regularly discussed. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) give economic and political summaries on the countries discussed at these meetings.

UKEF has no discretion on the amounts of debt cancellation, as these are set in the terms of the debt agreement (usually by the Paris Club). A read-out is written of each meeting by UKEF and HM Treasury representatives and finalised by HM Treasury before being sent to embassies and interested parties. There is also a written report for UKEF's credit committee.

Before a debt treatment there is a reconciliation between UKEF and the debtor country to align figures on amounts outstanding. A debt sustainability analysis is produced by the IMF/WB which is used by the Paris Club to inform the terms of a debt treatment. UKEF's own economists review the analysis to ensure there is agreement on assumptions made.

At the moment, UKEF is reporting debt cancellation under the UK/Cuba Debt Agreement No. 5. Cuba is due to make annual payments to UKEF under the Agreement. As long as payment is made in accordance with the terms of the Agreement, Cuba receives a corresponding percentage of late interest cancellation which UKEF reports as ODA.

DFID provides ODA guidance for reporting plus a statistics spreadsheet. UKEF seeks to meet deadlines set by DFID for submitting ODA returns while also ensuring its own internal database is up to date. Knowledge on processes sits with long-term staff.

UKEF provides advice to HM Treasury (Head of the UK Paris Club Delegation) but the final decision on debt policy sits with HM Treasury. There is no internal group where UKEF exchanges or shares knowledge, but it does have meetings with HM Treasury and DFID.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: High-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) has spent £1,764 million on core ODA only between 2016-2018 (ie, excluding cross-government Funds)
- A significant portion of the FCO's ODA is spent on Frontline Diplomatic Activity in support of ODA-eligible objectives for the government overseas as a whole
- FCO has its own programme: the International Programme. It also provides ODA grants to the BBC World Service and the British Council. (Note: The FCO delivers specific programmes through the CSSF and the PF covered under separate one-page notes)
- Staff managing ODA: The FCO does not record ODA activity at the level of individual officers but at the level of posts/home departments.

Summary: The FCO has taken encouraging steps to enhance its ability to learn and adapt, however the diversity of topics and proliferation of spending channels for the FCO aid is inhibiting the development of a coherent learning architecture. Improvements have been made by the creation of the Portfolio Management Office (PMO), but this is still a relatively new position. The PMO is increasing the FCO learning at departmental level. It includes the development of an operating framework for project and programme staff and of the FCO-specific adaptive learning similar to DFID's Smart Rules. It is also building know-how and sharing learning through the Project Delivery Cadre and International Policy Faculty. The Department operates a portfolio model, integrating both ODA and non-ODA programming. This presents an increased challenge for disaggregating data for reporting UK ODA spending to the DAC.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Cross-government Ministerial ODA Board
- Cross-Whitehall Senior ODA Officials Group (SOG)
- Cross-Whitehall Regional Boards
- FCO ODA policy group
- FCO governance boards (Portfolio Board, chaired by Permanent Under-Secretary, and Infrastructure, Investment and Operations Committee)
- FCO Regional Teams/Cross-departmental Board – FCO, DFID and HO
- Cross-government Health Oversight Group
- Cross-government Transparency Working Group
- Cross-Government National Security Strategy Implementation Groups.

Key insights: Since 2015, the FCO has consolidated its ODA work by moving to a portfolio model. It takes an integrated (ODA and non-ODA) approach to policy development and programme delivery. However, structures have only been operational since 2018 and are not yet fully developed. For example, the International Programme has a distributed delivery model with limited evidence of guidance on learning or a Theory of Change provided from the centre. The Portfolio Management Office is preparing an Operating Framework for project and programme staff. This might contribute significantly to their ability to learn.

There is no specific ODA learning budget given that the FCO's operating model integrates ODA and non-ODA. However, the FCO reports that it is taking steps to improve ODA/non-ODA delivery. For example:

- The FCO provides a variety training to staff eg, Heads and Deputy Heads of Mission receive programme training including a specific ODA module before taking up posts through the Overseas Leadership Development Programme
- The FCO is using DFID learning and expertise eg, guidance, helpdesk and the Evaluation Quality Assurance and Learning Service (EQUALS) contract
- Steps are being taken to increase know-how in delivery. The Project Delivery Cadre within the FCO is now 140 strong. Staff at all levels who work in project delivery can join the cadre to access a network of expertise from across the department. Also, the FCO's International Policy Faculty within the Diplomatic Academy is being revamped to include programming training.

There are processes in place to oversee ODA spend. An FCO Portfolio Board oversees the whole of FCO expenditure (including cross-government, ODA and non-ODA). There is a mix of regional and thematic boards at directorate level that review specific expenditure and project documentation. However, there is limited evidence that the FCO has an overview of overall ODA portfolio performance. This is in line with its operating model of integrating ODA and non-ODA in order to deliver NSC objectives. It has started to discuss results and performance and is looking at how to aggregate all programmes and review sources as a proxy for overall performance. The new Portfolio Management Office provides services to the Portfolio Board and oversees the FCO's ODA and non-ODA funded programmes. In terms of more immediate feedback, learning and change, the FCO is interested in adaptive learning and is adjusting DFID Smart Rules into its own model, but this work is still at an early stage.

In terms of cross-government sharing and learning:

- The FCO has made a commitment to improve its transparency – the FCO is now publishing data on all areas of its ODA spend in the required IATI format
- There are several structures in place to manage FCO spending and share learning, although these remain mainly at senior level
- The department has noted that the mobility of skills across government and access to information and know-how is an issue
- The FCO has been informally sharing its experience with DIT eg, by sharing learning on its transparency work.

HM Revenue & Customs

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Mid-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has spent £34 million on ODA between 2016-2018
- ODA spend on Refugee Costs, Tax Capacity building/ Leadership Training, Trade Facilitation, WCO Subscription
- Staff managing ODA: Data on staff not available

HMRC runs the Tax Capacity Building Unit (CBU) country programme. CBU is a 10-year tax capacity building programme delivered in partnership between HMRC and DFID country offices. In place since 2014, the CBU is located in and funded by HMRC, supported by a funds transfer from DFID on an annual basis, and by country offices in some cases.

Summary: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has taken promising steps to build their learning capacity. While improvements appear to be appropriate, they are relatively new. A new life-cycle document provides guidance for all phases of a programme's delivery cycle. Furthermore, all programmes have developed theories of change and indicators to measure their progress. The department is using a global learning platform to share and use tax knowledge and expertise, although further use is required across the capacity building community. The Tax Capacity Building Unit (CBU) uses a spreadsheet document to regularly review problems and successes to inform and improve its management and programming. There is evidence of the mutual sharing of learning with other governmental departments, but HMRC needs to further improve mechanisms to communicate learning across government as well as between programmes and country offices.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Programme Management Committee (HMRC, DFID, HM Treasury), meets once a quarter
- The Steering Group (CBU, HMRC, DFID, HM Treasury), meets bi-annually
- Community of Practice on Tax and Public Financial Management, meets every two months
- Tax Capacity Building Network (OECD forum on tax)
- NSGI/Government Partnerships International.

Key insights: HMRC has refocused its strategic direction and business model from an outsourcing model and an established in-house unit that can be approached by countries seeking HMRC's help. There is capacity to modify and change programming during the life cycle to adapt to country requirements.

HMRC has improved its monitoring and evaluation framework, moving away from input-based measures – all programmes have developed theories of change and measure its progress against defined milestones. Key success measures are built into country frameworks and KPIs have been developed to measure planned activity strands against actual delivery with a target of 80%.

To increase flexibility, HMRC created a programme life-cycle document (2018, updated in March 2019) that covers all phases of the delivery cycle. This was developed based on DFID's approach to programmes but tailored to HMRC's governance mechanisms. Various departments were consulted including: CBU Programme Managers and Head of Unit, Deputy Programme Managers, Mission Experts, LTAs and contributing staff from DFID (use of Smart Rules), HM Treasury, National School of Government International (NSGI), and programme management professionals from wider HMRC and government. While this guidance seems to be appropriate, it is too early to know how well it will be implemented.

The CBU team uses a lessons learned document to regularly review programme successes and problems. HMRC plans to develop bi-monthly meetings to delve into relevant detail. It aims to cultivate a cultural shift from a fault-finding (blame) to a fact-finding (improvement) approach.

The Knowledge Sharing Platform for Tax Administration (KSPTA), created in Canada, is a global online tool to promote the sharing of tax knowledge and expertise and to support capacity development in tax administration. HMRC populates the tool with information on where it is working and approaches implemented to limit duplication of work. It also tries to learn from other countries working in the area. The KSPTA includes a library (online courses, reference materials); information on events (calendar of events, registration, evaluation); communities of practice for subject matter experts, with discussion forum and webinars. While this is a useful tool, its full benefit will only be achieved with consistent use across the capacity-building community.

CBU convenes monthly lessons learned forums which include PMG and Tax Experts, the outputs from which are shared with DFID, HM Treasury and NSGI (GPI). The CBU needs to develop a way to share lessons between programmes, including disseminating lessons on capacity-building in general across government and across country offices.

The MOU between HMRC and DFID has been developed, setting out roles and responsibilities, and ways of working between the two departments delivering tax capacity-building programmes.

HM Treasury

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Low-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- HM Treasury (HMT) has spent £157 million on ODA between 2016 and 2018
- ODA spend on Admin and Core Contributions to Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and other counter illicit finance multilaterals
- Staff managing ODA: 19 staff working in ODA-eligible areas during 2018
- HMT spends ODA through investments to AIIB (shareholding and the AIIB Special Fund) and grants to FATF and other counter illicit finance multilaterals, and bilateral programming.

Summary: The majority of HMT's ODA is spent through two investments in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB): the UK's shareholding in the AIIB and a bilateral contribution to the AIIB Special Fund, and a grant fund for pre-project preparation, through the Prosperity Fund. While AIIB is responsible for MEL functions regarding shareholding, which includes updates on the progress of projects and periodic learning assessments, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) for HMT's AIIB Special Fund investment was outsourced to consultants through the Prosperity Fund and is managed by the Joint Funds Unit. HMT provided a Theory of Change for shareholding in the AIIB and, along with consultants have developed a Theory of Change and Result Framework for the AIIB Special Fund. The Special Fund's results are reviewed annually and lessons learned are shared across Prosperity Fund programmes. There is some evidence of learning being shared across departments. HMT also spends ODA (total budget c. £3 million) to support developing countries tackle corruption and other sources of illicit finance by strengthening their anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing efforts.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Cross-government Ministerial Board
- Cross-Whitehall Senior Officials Group (SOG)
- When working with the AIIB on changes to the Rules and Regulations of the Special Fund, HMT consulted across government, including with DFID
- HMT is sharing knowledge with its network of organisations through UK delegations, including IDB, ADB, World Bank, and other Multilateral Development Banks
- The AIIB Board of Directors meets quarterly; discussions focus on strategic direction of the AIIB.

Key insights: The UK government has an internal strategy for HMT priorities vis-à-vis the AIIB that are agreed with constituency counterparts (the UK represents some other European countries on the Board of Directors). The AIIB has its own central budget covering learning and development opportunities for AIIB staff. HMT covers learning and development opportunities for HMT staff. MEL teams sit within the AIIB itself and are not outsourced. HMT provided a Theory of Change for shareholding in the AIIB during the development of the business case for the AIIB shareholding investment.

The AIIB Special Fund's MEL is outsourced to consultants through the Prosperity Fund and is managed by the Joint Funds Unit (JFU). The HMT programme team works with these MEL consultants who have helped to develop a logframe and theory of change for the programme. Progress is reviewed through annual reviews. HMT reports regularly to the JFU on the progress of the Special Fund, including risks and lessons learned. It uses the Prosperity Fund online learning platform to share information and learning with other departments and Prosperity Fund programme teams. The programme manager takes part in various exercises on the platform.

Through HMT's shareholding in the AIIB, the UK has a seat on the AIIB Board of Directors. HMT's internal governance board acts as an audit function to ensure value for money and is chaired by the International Director. The AIIB provides quarterly updates to the Board of Directors on the progress of projects and periodic learning assessments. The rules and regulations which underpin the AIIB Special Fund are mandated by the Board of Directors.

The AIIB recently reviewed how the Special Fund works. As a result of this exercise, some changes to the rules and regulations were approved by the Board of Directors. HMT makes decisions on the Special Fund as an AIIB shareholder rather than through its bilateral contributions.

There is good evidence of HMT sharing knowledge through formal and informal channels with other government departments; also learning is shared with HMT's informal network of organisations, including IDB, ADB, World Bank, and other multilateral development banks.

HMT's Anti-Corruption project contributes to the objectives of the UK Government Prosperity Fund Global Anti-Corruption Programme. Programming and performance reviews are informed by regular engagement with a wide network including implementing partners and recipient countries.

Home Office

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: High-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- The Home Office (HO) has spent £1022 million on ODA over 2016-2018
- Spend on Admin, Capability building, Capacity building, Refugee Costs, In-donor asylum costs
- Staff managing ODA:
  - Hunter and Chaucer projects: 0.5 G6, 6 G7, 10-12 SEOs
  - Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC): 3 FTEs, 2 PTEs
  - Modern Slavery - 4 FTEs
  - Capability building - 29 FTEs (including two in Central Programme Office) within projects managing delivery overseas.

Summary: The HO lacks the complex learning architecture expected to be in line with its large ODA spend. The HO does not have an overall departmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) strategy and lacks overview of projects at departmental level. However, the department is starting to build its capacity and capability to spend ODA with help from DFID. Also, there are some programmes that demonstrate good learning such as the Modern Slavery programme, which has a learning architecture in place that supports learning and sharing with other government departments. The department has made commitments on transparency and is increasing the documentation available online.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Cross-Whitehall Senior ODA Officials Group (SOG)
- ODA Commercial Working Group (both strategic and working level
- Modern Slavery Implementation Group
- Cross-Whitehall Modern Slavery programming group (DFID-led)
- DFID's Capability Network
- Cross-Whitehall Transparency Group
- Cross-Whitehall Safeguarding Group.

Key insights: The HO is planning to increase its learning capacity, but significant challenges remain. There is no overall departmental MEL strategy and individual programmes follow different, inconsistent monitoring and evaluation practices of varying quality throughout their life cycle. For example:

- Not all programmes conduct annual reviews
- The Modern Slavery programme and fund have some monitoring and learning processes in place. The mid-project review of the first phase of the Modern Slavery Innovation Fund identified lessons for each project and the Innovation Fund as a whole: delivery partners have been asked to act on project-specific lessons, and Fund-level lessons are being integrated into planning for phase two.
- An independent audit of the Hunter and Chaucer programmes was carried out by the HO's International Directorate. It was noted that this review was substantive, in-depth and carried out in country. It brought about change including the enhancement of Programme Management Office function. There is no formal process for sharing learning for Hunter and Chaucer programmes. Note: Hunter and Chaucer projects aim to build capabilities of host countries to 1) build international targeting capabilities in ODA countries to help deter the movement across national borders of individuals and goods, and 2) develop local law enforcement border control capabilities to prevent and fight organised drugs crime, through capability building and mentoring.

The HO has a corporate filing system where it has all the reports and learning available to staff. It also saves summaries of reports and findings. To improve capabilities, the HO plans to create a bespoke project management plan, with the aim to help staff to better manage ODA spend. There is a planned process for learning to be gathered on a monthly or quarterly basis, but not all programmes produce an annual review. There are also inconsistencies in how programmes reflect and review learning.

The HO is building its capacity and capability to spend ODA. In early 2019, it requested DFID's support to evaluate its capability to manage effective ODA spend in the following focus areas: accurate financial reporting; deviation from the primary purpose of ODA at project level; and capability in general. The department has also made commitments on transparency, indicating its willingness to capture its 6-8 activities in AidStream. However, it lacks the technical knowledge to do this easily. DFID provided a half-day session in 2019 to address this issue.

Cross-government sharing and learning:

- The HO consults with other government departments on the Modern Slavery programme; government departments at posts take part in scoping visits and are consulted on programme scoping. Scoping visits are often led by the Stabilisation Unit which produces a report with programme recommendations subject to further consultation across government.
- The department delivers non-ODA programmes on behalf of FCO and CSSF. It also works with the police and intelligence agencies. It was noted that learning from this work is used in ODA programming.
- The Modern Slavery Innovation Fund is supporting Delta 8.7, the global online knowledge platform of Alliance 8.7. This is an international alliance to end modern slavery by 2030. The platform aims to accelerate understanding of what works and use creative data visualisation and direct outreach in a range of languages to encourage policy actors around the globe to act on that understanding.

Ministry of Defence

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Low-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has spent £16 million on ODA between 2016-2018
- ODA spend on defence education, health – vaccines, humanitarian, disaster response, refugee costs, retraining civilians, UK Hydrographic Office
- Staff managing ODA: 2-3 staff across the department partially manage ODA.

Summary: The MoD ODA spend is small, representing 0.01% of the total defence budget, and less than 0.1% of total UK ODA spend. With limited ODA-related activity, there is also limited evidence of ongoing learning. However, there appears to be significant learning and influence brought across from non-ODA activities. The MoD does not manage ODA spend as a single portfolio of activity, and it does not have a specific process for planning, delivering or monitoring ODA. However, it has to be noted that all personnel use military doctrine and continuous review of operations as a part of any military operation and humanitarian response.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Cross-Whitehall Senior ODA Officials Group (SOG)
- ODA Comms Group
- Meetings on NSS/DFID ODA Review
- CSSF Programme Management & finance meetings
- ODA Reform / Modernisation meetings (informal)
- MoD collaborates with other departments (including FCO, DFID, DEFRA and BEIS) on delivery of specific ODA programmes both formally and informally
- MoD engages regularly in a range of meetings with other departments, particularly FCO, DFID and the Joint Funds Unit, which touch on specific aspects of ODA programmes, in particular:
  - DG and DD-level Boards dealing with Defence Engagement strategy, involving a range of interested departments
  - DG and DD-level coordination meetings with DFID.

Key insights: The MoD's ODA spend is not managed as a single portfolio of activity. There is no specific process for planning, delivering or monitoring ODA and no position or group with a learning oversight role for the £5 million ODA budget, though expenditure and budget is monitored. Much of the MoD's ODA spend is reactive, such as its humanitarian assistance or disaster relief work in support of DFID. For example, other activities include work on Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping.

The MoD has some ODA-eligible activities through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF - eg, education and training, demining work, security sector reform). This funding changes every year and CSSF staff determine the ODA eligibility.

The ODA elements of international defence education and training represent less than 5% of the MoD's total international defence education and training. Assistance involves a mixture of international participants joining courses run in the UK primarily for UK personnel, and courses delivered overseas to host nation (or regional) audiences. There is an evidence that courses are reviewed in accordance with the Defence Systems Approach to Training (DSAT). The process involves a combination of course evaluation, inspection and audit.

Meeting minutes are stored and shared on the MoD site. There are no overall ODA-specific targets that focus on value for money (VfM) and no overall platform setting out milestones and reporting on results specific to each ODA activity. Monthly reports on ODA spending are sent to DFID which conducts a quality check and keeps an overview over the MoD's total ODA spend. The MoD refers to DFID with questions on ODA eligibility and reporting guidance when necessary.

The MoD is using expertise from its non-ODA activities in a way that could also support other departments'/funds' learning – particularly the FCO and the CSSF. The MoD often integrates ODA and non-ODA spend. For example, during the major and unexpected humanitarian disaster caused by hurricanes in 2018, the MoD spent around £50 million on disaster assistance and hurricane relief – only a small proportion of which was ODA.

Within the MoD, all activities, objectives and structures are regularly reviewed. It is standard practice to carry out after-action reviews to assess whether activities are meeting objectives and to reflect on how to improve or change the programme. The MoD personnel use military doctrine and continuous review of operations as a part of any military operation, and the same approach is applied to the MoD's humanitarian assistance work.

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Low-level spender, scaling-up
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has spent £550,438 on ODA between 2016-2018
- ODA spend for scaling-up (administrative) costs and seed funding £4.5 million through DFID's 'Strategic Partnership with UK Office for National Statistics' programme
- In addition, the ONS has funding from the World Bank and the IMF
- Staff managing ODA: 6, Overseas staff leading strategic partnerships: 4, Technical support dedicated to ODA: 6 FTE.

Office for National Statistics

Summary: The ONS's ODA work focuses on peer-to-peer learning and appears to be benefitting from agile management and learning. The ONS's initial bid for £200,000 from the ODA budget in 2016 increased to £300,000 in 2017. ODA spend has been sufficient to provide seed funding but not enough to fund any programme delivery. The department has developed a business case with DFID for £4.5 million over 3 years. The Strategic Partnership with UK Office for National Statistics Programme builds on the ONS's current international development work. This is helping to build its own capacity to scale up the technical assistance they provide to developing countries prior to the next spending review when they will bid for its own additional ODA funding. There is good evidence of the ONS sharing learning with other government departments. The ONS (like DIT) is engaging with DFID on building capacity and sharing learning during the scaling-up phase - before planned increase in its ODA spend.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Communities of practice across Whitehall under Government Partnerships International (GPI) including: learning on peer-to-peer partnerships; Working with DFID, HMRC, BEIS and others to learn about best practices; setting up effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems; training staff in political economy analysis; and sharing lessons on a whole range of topics
- The ONS works closely with FCO at country level. For example, FCO provides support on country engagement and ONS staff safety since all of ONS's overseas staff are seconded to FCO
- The ONS is learning from HMRC, which is in the second year of developing its programme on structuring teams and managing programmes
- Engagements with national statistics offices from OECD countries and all European NSIs. Further, ONS has close relations with Sweden, Denmark, Canada, the US Census bureau, China, South Korea and Australia
- Learning from DFID's statistics building programmes and attending forums eg, on how to spend ODA.

Key insights: DFID is supporting the ONS with a new £4.5 million programme. The Strategic Partnership with UK Office for National Statistics programme builds on the ONS's current international development work. This is helping to build its own capacity to scale up the technical assistance provided to developing countries before bidding for its own ODA funding. The aim of this programme is to build partnerships within developing countries (currently Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda) and the African Centre for Statistics, to improve its in-country statistical capacities and capabilities. Examples of work include: Strategic leadership for statistics offices (training and mentoring support); Data Interoperability; Improving Quality Frameworks and providing technical support for Data Research and Capability. Alongside the four partnerships, the ONS has also developed a short-term flexible support component which has provided support to DFID and wider statistical capacity-building initiatives.

The Strategic Partnership with UK Office for National Statistics programme has Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems in place. The programme has a Theory of Change and Result Framework in place which includes monitoring outputs, outcomes, indicators, milestones and targets for all of its components. The ONS produces detailed quarterly reports for DFID outlining progress and explaining where progress may be off track. The ONS is planning to conduct a review on the effectiveness of its approach and work, rather than focusing on whether the outputs have been successfully achieved or not.

The ONS's peer-to-peer approach is its preferred method of delivering support for developing country partners rather than providing consultants. It was noted that the ONS staff learn about working in a resource-constrained environment. This agile approach seems to be providing value for money by building support on actual needs.

The ONS is taking advantage of its technical expertise by drawing on its wider pool of non-ODA staff. Experiential learning from overseas appears to be informing its perspective and approach and becoming embedded in the ONS culture. It was noted that experts share experiences with colleagues upon its return. This includes through blogging.

The ONS is planning to allocate some ODA funding to particular non-ODA business areas within the ONS office in exchange for staff days and expertise. At present, the ONS is accessing this internal non-ODA resource at no cost.

There is evidence that the ONS and DFID are working closely at country and central level. Learning is shared both ways, for example while DFID is learning from the ONS's projects in developing countries, the ONS is learning from DFID's expertise in statistical capacity building and its international linkages. The ONS is working together with Government Partnerships International (GPI) to train staff in developing peer-to-peer partnerships in country, eg, in Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana. The ONS has gained an international perspective from a cross-Whitehall community of practice, including DFID, and other organisations such as Paris 21 (a consortium focused on supporting development statistics). Learning is also shared by working with other national and international statistics organisations (eg, OECD countries' national statistics offices and all European NSIs).

HM Government

Prosperity Fund

Key facts/details of ODA spend and resources:

- Size and nature of ODA spend: Mid-level spender, mixed portfolio/programme
- The Prosperity Fund (PF) operates with an ODA budget of £1.2 billion between 2016-2023 (extended by two years and reduced by £100,000 after ICAI's rapid review in 2017)
- Staff managing ODA: Managed by 204.54 FTE funded administrative staff (figure based on 2018-19 audit)
- A cross-government mostly ODA fund, managed under the authority of the National Security Council, with a primary purpose to promote economic reform and growth in developing countries, while creating opportunities for international and UK business. Any government department can bid for Prosperity Fund resources (£33m of the Fund is non-ODA).

Summary: The PF has made substantial improvements in its learning processes. The ICAI review of PF (2017) highlighted serious shortcomings in the management of the then newly created fund. Since then, the Fund has made considerable progress in putting in place the necessary systems and processes to ensure value for money and compliance with ODA rules. These changes are relatively new, and it is too early to assess how well they will be implemented and whether they will lead to stronger programming. However, the Prosperity Fund's new MEL strategy is well developed with strong emphasis on organisational learning and adaptive programme management. Furthermore, there is good evidence that the Prosperity Fund's Learning Portal is also being used by other government departments. The sharing of learning is increasing through communities of interest and thematic groups.

Working groups and other cross-government engagements:

- Cross-government Ministerial ODA Board
- National Security Council sub-committee
- Cross-Whitehall Senior ODA Officials Group (SOG)
- Cross-government Portfolio Board
- Communities of Interest and thematic working groups
- The Cross-government Evaluating ODA group
- Transparency Working Group
- DFID Evaluation Cadre.

MEL outsourcing details: The Prosperity Fund has two MEL contracts: Monitoring & Reporting (MR), worth £12.77 m outsourced to PA Consulting in a consortium with the Economist Intelligence Unit; and Evaluation & Learning (EL), worth £23.96 m outsourced to WYG International in a consortium with LTS and Integrity.

Key insights: The Prosperity Fund has made considerable improvements to its learning capacity. It has developed results indicators and associated systems for measuring results and learning from experience. The Fund now has 15 KPIs covering its strategic objectives. There is good evidence of the Prosperity Fund team proactively learning from other government departments, for example consulting the ICF team during the development of its KPIs. The Fund's Theory of Change is updated annually and two MEL providers have been contracted, one for Monitoring and Reporting and one for Evaluation and Learning. A new MREL strategy was developed in 2018, which emphasises organisational learning and adaptive programme management. This strategy seems appropriate, but is early in its implementation.

The Prosperity Fund is increasing the production of learning and sharing this learning within the Fund. For example:

- bespoke learning activities are delivered by the Fund's Evaluation and Learning (E&L) team, eg, a two-day learning workshop in Delhi for the India country programme team and the UK-India Green Growth Equity Fund programme team on programme evaluation process, annual reviews, learning portal use and use of Gender & Inclusion (G&I) scorecards
- an additional five thematic studies were commissioned to enhance learning, eg, on issues of data quality; anti-corruption; mapping of E&L stakeholders
- the E&L team carried out an initial review of nine business cases and associated programme documents to investigate how programmes planned to approach G&I issues. Findings were shared at an internal learning event. To enhance G&I capacity and systems at programme level the initial review is being extended to cover all programmes
- most of the material for learning at programme and portfolio level is to be generated by delivering four different types of evaluations: individual programme evaluations; family evaluations; cross-Fund thematic studies, and the overall Fund evaluation.

System vs Function: the Prosperity Fund has developed ambitious plans for Monitoring, Research, Evaluation and Learning (MREL):

- Prospero is a web-based platform that supports monitoring and reporting across the Fund. Prospero is the key repository of Prosperity Fund data for monitoring and reporting purposes and is available to registered Prosperity Fund stakeholders
- the Prosperity Fund's Learning Platform went live formally at the end of October 2018. This platform is used by the Fund's stakeholders in many ways. It offers networking spaces; provides learning forums and pop-ups; contains a library of evaluation reports and thematic guidance; and lists events and opportunities.

There is a good evidence of learning shared with other government departments. For example:

- it has put in place a Prosperity Framework for its procurement process. This can be used by all government departments
- DFID's Evaluation Quality Assurance and Learning Service (EQUALS) was used much more by the Prosperity Fund than by any other department or fund
- the Fund is developing Communities of Interest, emerging around stakeholder interests. It is hoped that the Communities of Interest will evolve into Communities of Practice, on issues such as anti-corruption, trade, the financial Sector, Future Cities, etc., but this evolution is not being forced. Champions groups are also being set up eg, for gender and inclusion and secondary benefits.
- the learning platform is available to other government departments. By March 2019, the platform had 478 user profiles - 416 of these were associated with government email addresses, of which 310 were FCO, 44 DFID and 62 from other government departments.

Independent Commission for Aid Impact

This document can be downloaded from www.icai.independent.gov.uk.
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