



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

4 July 2013

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0520-13

Thank you for your email of 3 June 2013 in which you asked:

“I would like a list and detailed breakdown of government expenditures which have been reclassified as Official Development Assistance (ODA) since the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, indicating in each case how much money is involved, what it is for, why these expenditures were not previously classified as ODA, and the rationale for re-classification.

If providing this information for the period since 2010 is not feasible within the timeframe I would like to request the same details for at least one year and the maximum period possible.”

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested. I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. This relates to spend by the FCO family, including the British Council.

The majority of UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) is delivered through the Department for International Development (DfID). The FCO delivers about 3% of UK ODA. DfID is also responsible for overall policy on reporting ODA spend and for collating and submitting the UK's annual ODA returns to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The FCO contributes to the UK's aid programme in a number of ways:

- The FCO funds a large number of projects in developing countries through its Strategic and Bilateral Programme Funds that support a range of the UK government's international goals. Where those projects meet OECD criteria to be reported as ODA, we include them in our ODA reporting.
- In line with the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Statistical Reporting Directives (which can be found [here](#)), the FCO reports as ODA the costs of the work it does to support the aid programme overseas ('aid related frontline diplomacy').
- The FCO supports the British Council through grant-in-aid funding. The Official Development Assistance (ODA) elements of this funding go to support a range of initiatives including building the capacity and quality of English language teaching, supporting education systems, and using cultural exchange to improve economic welfare.

- The FCO makes core contributions to the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Small States office. A proportion of these contributions are eligible to be reported as ODA in line with Annex 2 of the DAC Statistical Reporting Directives.

The FCO is committed to transparency about where and how we deliver ODA and implementation of the International Aid Transparency Initiative. Under section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you. The information you requested on FCO ODA spend is available on the [Gov.uk website](#) and is included in figures available on the [Data.gov.uk website](#) and the [DfID website](#) as-was (it is now hosted on the National Archives, since government websites transferred to Gov.uk). The Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) has also recently conducted a [review of FCO and British Council ODA spend](#). Hyperlinks to the data quoted above are embedded in the relevant text for ease of reference.

You asked for details of any areas of spend the FCO has reclassified as ODA since the Spending Review in 2010 (also known as “SR10”). The OECD DAC sets the definitions and classifications for reporting on aid financing internationally, including ODA. The FCO is committed to ensuring we report accurately any areas of our spend which meet OECD guidelines to be reported as ODA.

As part of their report published last month, the ICAI assessed FCO systems for reporting on its ODA expenditure and concluded that they were satisfied that our systems were “comprehensive” and provided a “high level of confidence that FCO ODA reports meet OECD rules”.

Since SR10 we have made three changes in the methodology the FCO and British Council use to capture spend as ODA. These are as follows:

Changes to Reporting of FCO aid related frontline diplomacy

Working with the OECD and DfID, we have improved our systems for reporting aid related frontline diplomacy. This has increased our reporting in this area. The DAC Statistical Directives include provision for donors to report the costs of the work their diplomatic missions do to support the aid programme overseas. In 2011 we agreed with the OECD and DfID a more accurate system for capturing our activity in this area. Prior to 2011, our activity in this area was calculated as a flat rate percentage of FCO programme flows; the new methodology draws on the FCO’s activity recording system and includes work the FCO does to support the whole UK aid programme. Prior to the changes (2010/11), we reported £3.1m of activity under this heading. In 2011/12, under the new methodology, we reported £77.2m of aid related frontline diplomacy. Detail on this change was included in DfID’s press release on 2012 provisional ODA figures.

Changes to reporting of Multilateral ODA

From time to time, the OECD DAC change their guidelines on reporting of core contributions to international organisations. This sometimes has an impact on FCO ODA reporting. In

2011, the OECD DAC agreed that donors should start to report 74% of their core contributions to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In 2011/12 this change increased our ODA reporting by £2.5m. Last month, the OECD agreed changes to the coefficient to be applied to contributions to the UN regular budget. Subject to verification by DfID, we expect this change to increase our ODA reporting by £5.6m.

Changes to British Council ODA reporting

In 2013 the British Council worked with DfID to develop a new system to capture the costs of UK based staff whose work is integral to the delivery of ODA projects. OECD DAC guidelines permit inclusion of these costs in ODA reporting. Subject to DfID's verification of the FCO family's 2012 ODA return these will be included in ODA reporting for the British Council's ODA return for 2012. When developing the new system, the British Council estimated that the changes would result in £2.4m additional ODA reporting (out of a total of £93.8m British Council ODA spend in 2012-13).