



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“In the current financial climate, we have a particular duty to show that we are achieving value for every pound of taxpayers’ money that we spend on development. Results, transparency and accountability will be our watchwords and will guide everything we do.” The Secretary of State for International Development

Continuous Improvement

“Continuous Improvement” is a rigorous ongoing effort to improve everything we do: from improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the projects we support to reduce poverty, the institutions we finance and the support we give to our staff working all over the world. For DFID it is primarily about embracing a new way of thinking and working. The central objective is to shift to a culture in which staff are encouraged and empowered to challenge constructively the way we do things. The DFID Vision 2015 aims to make this shift. At its heart, we believe every staff member should feel confident in asking their manager, “is this an effective use of resources?”, or “is this the right way to do that?” or “what can we learn from others?” We have encouraged every one of our leaders to embrace this constructive challenge to our established practices.

What we need to deliver by 2015

DFID’s 2012 Business Plan sets out the programme of work the Department plans to carry out over the next three years to deliver the Coalition Government’s priorities. The Business Plan reinforces the Coalition Government’s focus on supporting the private sector and good governance through actions that support open societies, open government and markets for development. The Business Plan also reflects the strong focus placed by DFID Ministers on implementation, results, learning from what works and what does not and strong accountability, with the goal of reducing poverty in the poorest places and supporting achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).



The Business Plan's six priorities are:

- I. **Honour international commitments** – Honour the UK's international commitments and support actions to achieve the Millennium Development Goals
- II. **Drive transparency, value for money and open government** – Make British aid more effective by improving transparency, openness and value for money
- III. **Boost wealth creation** – Make British international development policy more focused on boosting economic growth and wealth creation
- IV. **Strengthen governance and security in fragile and conflict-affected countries and make UK humanitarian response more effective** – Improve the coherence and performance of British international development policy in fragile and conflict-affected countries
- V. **Lead international action to improve the lives of girls and women** – Empower girls and women so that their lives are significantly improved and sustainably transformed through better education, greater choice on family planning and preventing violence against them
- VI. **Combat climate change** – Drive urgent action to tackle climate change, and support adaptation and low carbon growth in developing countries

The full work programme that these priorities capture is set out in more detail in the Business Plan¹ and in the corresponding annexes.²

The context

The world is evolving quickly. We need to adapt and continuously learn and improve if we are to be able to meet the challenges posed by a different development environment and economic outlook, as well as new patterns of poverty. We have strong foundations to build on. Our priority remains the transformation of the lives of people living in poor and fragile states by working with partner governments. We will continue to be guided by the

¹ www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/DFIDbusiness-plan2012.pdf

² www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/DFIDbusiness-plan-annexes2012%20.pdf



Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the International Development Acts (2002 & 2006).

Organisational vision – DFID 2015: Effective, Influential & Inspiring

If we are to be successful and deliver the Ministerial priorities, we will need to demonstrate our comparative advantage in international development. Demonstrating and maintaining our comparative advantage will mean that we need to continuously learn and improve. We have also set out five areas that this new approach will need to:

1. **Provide strong leadership:** support staff through the difficult changes ahead, invest in new skills and foster a culture of continuous improvement where staff are encouraged to challenge established ways of working and learn.
2. **Deliver at scale:** achieve transformational results as set out in the Business Plan and operational plans, manage our pipeline of programmes effectively and shift resources to the frontline.
3. **Improve impact and drive value for money:** constantly strive to get more results for our money, use evidence systematically and learn from evaluation.
4. **Build support for our work:** work better in Whitehall, communicate clearly with the public and increase transparency.
5. **Look to the future:** understand trends, respond to new and emerging challenges and influence new partners differently.

This vision has an annual workplan associated with it which is captured in the regular monitoring of the Business Plan, operational plans and quarterly information for the Management Board.



The Capability Review

The recent Capability Review³ tested our fitness to meet the challenges set out in the Business Plan and “Changing lives, delivering results” and see whether our Vision remain relevant.

It concluded that the Department remained a leader amongst donors, with highly engaged and professional staff; had responded rapidly to new ministerial priorities and put stronger processes in place to manage its resources. It did, however, note that DFID needed to strengthen leadership and management skills further and make them more consistent across the organisation. The Department needs to make more progress on the new policy areas of private sector and climate change. It can still do better on the "Value for Money" agenda, which is not yet fully embedded in the DNA of the organisation, through improved programme monitoring and by imposing more rigour on partner organisations.

Implementation Plan

The Capability Action Plan sets out a clear and timebound plan for continuous improvement. It focuses on actions to improve, with an particular focus on improving leadership skills and increasing our private sector, climate change and financial capability. At the heart of this is our financial improvement plan – “Finance for All”⁴ – which sets out what actions we will take to achieve value for money and show that we get 100 pence of value for every pound the taxpayer provides.

Department for International Development
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³ <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/DFID-Capability-Action-Plan-2012.pdf>
⁴ <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/finance-imp-plan.pdf>