



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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11 August 2015

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0702-15

Thank you for your email of 15 July asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

'Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to ask about the assistance programme the FCO will provide to Bahrain in 2015/16. This is in reference to the same assistance which in 13 July 2015, Mr Tobias Ellwood MP stated will cost £2.1 million in 2015/16.

Please could you inform me of:

- 1) The full breakdown of the budget including:
 - a) The areas of assistance in which the money is being spent,*
 - b) The organisations employed by the FCO for its 2015/16 assistance programme and the amount they will receive, and*
 - c) The names and positions of Bahraini officials that will be taking part in the FCO training programmes.**
- 2) How, when and by whom will the assistance programme be independently assessed and evaluated'*

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

The UK has been providing a range of technical, practical assistance to the Government of Bahrain since 2012. The range of assistance supports the Government of Bahrain's implementation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry and UN Universal Periodic Review recommendations.

Of the £2.1million Gulf programme funds made available for Bahrain in FY2015-2016, around £2 million will go towards our reform assistance programme. All our work with the Bahrainis supports strengthening the rule of law, social reconciliation and governance and includes:

- Capacity-building support to the Ombudsman's Office through Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas (NI-CO) to increase accountability;
- UK-based training to the Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission through Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP);
- Supporting local NGOs and youth societies to promote freedom of expression through the Causeway Institute for Peace-building and Conflict Resolution;
- Reforming the youth justice system through Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas (NI-CO).
- Supporting justice reform through improvements in the court administration system through National School of Government International (NSGI).
- Improving the effectiveness of the Reform and Rehabilitation system in Bahrain through Northern Ireland Co-operation Overseas (NI-CO).
- Improving NGO governance structures and increasing civil society engagement on policy making and legislation-drafting through the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

It is standard practice to evaluate all FCO programmes and project work. The outcome of the evaluation is used to inform and improve any future assistance that we provide. Programmes are monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure that they are on track for delivery. The FCO provides updates on its programme work through the annual FCO Human Rights report, in which Bahrain is a case study. There is no plan at present to publish standalone assessments of the Bahrain programme.

In your request, you asked for the final figure and breakdown of the budget for our Bahrain programme. This information has been withheld under Section 43 (2) of the FOIA, which relates to commercial interests. The use of this exemption was carefully considered. The factors in favour of disclosure of this information, including the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability, were carefully weighed against the need to allow commercial organisations the space to conduct their lawful business competitively and without fear of disclosure of sensitive commercial information. Failure to protect such commercially sensitive information would limit the sources of information and interlocutors available to the FCO. In this instance it could impact the FCO's ability to deliver its assistance programme in Bahrain if project implementers felt that commercially sensitive information regarding their work could be released into the public domain. For these reasons we have concluded that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in its release.

Finally, you also asked for the names and positions of Bahraini officials who will be taking part in the FCO training programmes. The information that you are requesting, is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the FOIA apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, section 40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on gov.uk in the

[FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

Yours sincerely,

Gulf Team



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.