

News story: GES Career Stories

Danny Quinn – Economic Adviser at DFID

I joined DFID as a Fast Streamer in September 2011, having successfully navigated the awful horrors of first the FSAC and then the EAC (a joke! they aren't that bad – my tip, lots of caffeine and sugar, it's an endurance test as much as anything else). My first assistant economist post was in the Middle East and North Africa Department, which was rapidly expanding in the wake of the Arab Spring. This was very much a case of being in the right place at the right time, I had put DFID down as first choice but hadn't expected to get it as I knew it was very popular. Regardless, I took the opportunity and absolutely loved it. My work in MENAD was remarkably varied, from trips to the region, to cross-government meetings on sanctions to learning how to write a briefing like a good civil servant! Following a great year in MENAD, I held posts in the International Financial Institutions Department and DFID's Quality Assurance Unit. These posts gave me valuable insights into the international development system and the breadth of DFID's work. In 2014 however I finally got the opportunity I had been excited about since the day I joined DFID, the chance to go and work overseas!

I arrived in Sierra Leone in early 2014, nervous, bewildered and excited. Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world and ranks near the bottom of almost every development index out there. Despite these hardships, Sierra Leoneans are some of the warmest, generous and most optimistic people I have ever met. In those first few months I began finding my feet, learning what is expected of an assistant economist in a country office. My main lesson was – there is no hiding! I may have been new blood but was expected to pull my weight, managing programmes, producing analysis on the Sierra Leonean economy and developing relationships with Sierra Leonean Government counterparts. In the summer, the situation changed fundamentally.

The Ebola virus, which had previously been confined to a small area of dense forest in neighbouring Guinea, entered Sierra Leone and began spreading rapidly. Ebola is terrifying, the mortality rate for those who caught it was well over 50% and the associated symptoms were catastrophic to the body. Those early days were full of fear; evacuations of staff and dependants, airlines closing flights, continual rumours of new cases popping up. However, despite this fog of desperation, the response in combatting this deadly virus was truly astonishing and a privilege to see first-hand. UK government departments mobilised and got people on the ground; Public Health England, the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence and DFID. The remarkably brave nurses and doctors who volunteered to work in treatment centres were absolute modern day heroes. Finally, of course, the Sierra Leoneans who formed the bulk of the response, were resolute in the face of daily danger. My job changed almost overnight, as I began working on the systems for paying hazard pay to the Sierra Leoneans working in treatment centres or in burial teams, all of whom were assuming considerable risk.

Thankfully, the threat passed. Following Christmas, the number of new

infections began to wane. On November 7 2015, the World Health Organisation declared the end of the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone. We celebrated with gusto in Freetown but the rehabilitation process in Sierra Leone will continue for many years. I left Sierra Leone in the summer of 2016. There had of course been considerable lows, but I left with many great memories and a feeling of optimism for Sierra Leone. What the experience really demonstrated to me though is just how fragile everything is in the countries where DFID operates. While there may be an outward veneer of normalcy, these countries are remarkably vulnerable to crises, be they related to infectious diseases, climate change or the economy.

Working in DFID gives you the opportunity to address these vulnerabilities, mitigate them where possible and respond where necessary. I can't recommend it highly enough!

Malindi Myers – Economist at Office for National Statistics

When I graduated in economics, I had enjoyed my degree – I wanted to be an economist, and work in economics. In thinking about what I could do with my economics degree, I went to careers service who offered endless brochures and PR events for investment banks, accountancy firms, management consultancies, commercial banks with little information on how I could actually work as an economist!

Frustrated, I decided to do a Masters in Environmental and Natural Resource Economics. Fortunately a friend recommended a junior economist post at the Treasury, which I happily took and spent a couple of years finding my way as an up-start economist monitoring the UK's contributions to the EU Budget.

I was also making in-roads into the British rowing team, so after a year and a half as a junior economist, I took a few months away from work to concentrate on training and qualifying for the World Champs.

I returned to the civil service, to an economics role working on the UK's GDP data submission requirements for the EU (to Eurostat). I then went off to the European Commission on a secondment scheme that the European Commission run for young professionals, initially for six months but it turned into two and a half years! I worked on their global forecast model, coordinating input across country and regional desks. I really enjoyed the international environment, the bright and open minded people that work at the heart of Europe, living in a foreign city and getting myself set up as a 'proper' economist!

I then applied to the GES and passed and came back to a fantastic job at the Treasury, with a great manager who helped me integrate and find my feet. I covered India, Pakistan and other bits of emerging Asia, which was so interesting at a time when globalisation was becoming very much centre stage in economic and political debate. My boss covered China and I covered India in the Treasury global team, so between us we covered about a third of the world's consumers. Gordon Brown, the chancellor at the time, was all over

'globalisation' and we had to supply endless facts and explanations for speeches, notes, etc. for him. Our facts were in the Chancellor's parliamentary speeches, and I was just one year in to my GES career.

I then moved over to cover Japan, the US and Canada – forecasting growth, providing briefing to senior officials and ministers, and analysing economic developments. I was in (professional) heaven! I was discovering my interest and enjoyment of macroeconomics, in the most central economic policy-making department. My assessments, forecasts and country economic data were in the Budget reports, Chancellor's speeches, UK official statements and fed into the UK economic forecast – I felt that my work really counted and mattered, and made a difference.

I am now at the Office for National Statistics, which is a non-ministerial department, independent of political pressure by design. It's at the centre of so much economic policy making, economic assessment, and economic commentary. I've done five posts during nine years in ONS including delivering the ONS's flagship monthly economic analysis article, and now over-seeing the economics profession in the ONS.

I have been working as an economist for most of twenty years, and in the GES for thirteen years. I love it!

[Press release: Colin Allar's response to the recent ofsted inspection of Oakhill STC](#)

Colin Allar's, YJB Chief Executive, response to the recent ofsted inspection of Oakhill STC

Colin Allars, Chief Executive of the YJB said:

"The improvements Oakhill STC has made on academic achievement, resettlement and staffing have been positively recognised by the inspection teams.

"It is clear, though, that more needs to be done to effectively address the levels of violence and other concerns raised in this report.

"We are working with the provider to raise their performance so that the expected standards of service and care are met fully."

Note to editors

Read the report on the [Ofsted website](#)

Press release: Church Commissioner Appointment: Suzanne Avery

The Queen has appointed Suzanne Avery as a Church Commissioner.

The Queen has approved that Suzanne Avery, BA, be appointed a Church Commissioner for three years effective from 2017 in succession to Harry Bimbo Hart, who resigned on 31 December 2016.

Suzanne Avery began her career in corporate banking and quickly moved in to real estate and housing. She worked for NatWest in senior roles culminating in leading the mid-market real estate & construction finance business in 2002.

She was then appointed as head of the RBS Real Estate and Retail Group in 2004 and went on to hold various managing director roles at RBS, including Managing Director of Real Estate Finance Group & Sustainability and was responsible for the REITs, private equity and institutional funds, London Estates and private property companies.

She was chair of the London Real Estate Finance Board and from 2008, a member of the UK Real Estate Management Committee, responsible for strategy, governance and management for the Real Estate Finance Division, a £25 billion portfolio with 400 employees.

Speech: British High Commission in Lusaka celebrates International Women's Day

I am pleased to host this event, here at the British Residence, anticipating this Wednesday's International Women's Day. We are due to hear from our guest speaker, watch a couple of short videos, and hold a short panel discussion. You will then have earned the chance to mingle over some drinks and snacks.

Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, on 27 February addressed an audience of 350 key policy makers at a reception at the Foreign Office in London, ahead of International Women's Day. The UK's chosen theme this year is leadership and empowerment. He announced a new Special Envoy for Gender Equality, Joanna Roper. Joanna will spearhead the UK's efforts to deliver a coherent

international approach to ensuring the rights of women and girls, working closely with Whitehall departments, civil society, academics, and other governments.

The Foreign Secretary spoke of his personal commitment to addressing gender inequality in all its forms. He argued in particular that unequal access to education, itself flowing from gender prejudice and discrimination was a major barrier to women's empowerment. Speaking at the event, the Foreign Secretary said:

The sombre truth is that today 61 million girls between the ages of 6 and 14 do not have the chance to go to school. They have the same right to an education as anyone else – and at least as much potential and ability – but too many girls in too many countries endure the supreme injustice of being denied the opportunity to attend school.

If you want to increase prosperity; stabilise population growth; improve child nutrition; and reduce child marriage, the single most effective remedy is to ensure that all girls go to school.

I hope that every national leader will wake up to the benefits – and the essential justice – of educating the daughters of their country just as surely as they educate their sons.

Justine Greening, Minister for Women and Equalities, described the continuing efforts to promote gender equality in the UK. We now have record numbers of women in work, and we have more women than ever before on the boards of the UK's top companies. By marrying up the domestic and international aspects, she said, we can showcase UK leadership in this field giving us greater credibility to encourage like-minded partners around the world.

Here in Zambia, it is important to stress that addressing these issues is not only the morally right thing to do. It makes economic sense too. Estimates indicate that up to \$28 trillion could be added to the global economy if women took their equal place in the economy. Addressing inequality is not a "nice to have", or an "add on" to our core work; it is firmly in the UK national interest – and in Zambia's – and so is central to good policy and programming. Empowering women and girls improves peace and stability, good governance, economic growth and poverty reduction.

The relevant Global Goal for Sustainable Development is Goal 5, to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. This contains targets to end harmful practices such as Violence Against Women and Girls, Female Genital Mutilation, and Child and Early Forced Marriage. The UK played an instrumental role in advocating for, and achieving this goal and targets. We are now committed to playing our part in ensuring that the commitments made to the SDGs are delivered upon.

Through UKAid we are backing this aspiration with practical support. For example, in 5 years to March 2016, UKAid:

- Supported 5.3 million girls in primary and lower secondary education;
- Helped to save the lives of 103,000 women in pregnancy and childbirth;
- Improved access to financial services for over 36 million women.

In Zambia, the UK is proud to work in partnership with the government, civil society and business, to support women reach their potential, thrive in business and politics, and take their place as leaders who champion Zambia's development.

We work with the Ministry of Gender to improve women's leadership in politics and the public sector, and to challenge attitudes and behaviours that limit women's development. We also work with the private sector to increase opportunities for women to get decent jobs, to thrive as entrepreneurs with increased access to finance and business know-how.

This collective effort is starting to pay off. The 2016 election saw an increase in the number of women elected as MPs and Councillors, and we are joined this evening by women who have demonstrated leadership in public service, business and voluntary sectors.

Whilst much has been achieved, and tonight is an opportunity for us to come together and celebrate this great progress, there is still much more to be done. Almost half of Zambian women have experienced violence in their lifetime; high rates of child marriage and teenage pregnancy contribute to high dropout levels in secondary education; women are less likely to own land; and they find it harder to get access to finance. When women are able to overcome these barriers, they are still so often met with the message that certain careers are not for them, that their role is in the home, and that they cannot be successful in their ambitions.

The women here this evening are testament to the fact that this is not the case, and serve as great role models for the next generation of girls who will have a vital role to play in securing Zambia's equitable economic development.

Press release: Waste firm AWM fined £125,000 for causing odour pollution

Waste firm Associated Waste Management Ltd has been fined £125,000 for causing odour pollution at its sites in Leeds and Bradford.

The company was sentenced at Leeds Crown Court on 6 March 2017 after previously admitting two environmental offences relating to its waste transfer facilities in Gelderd Road, Leeds and Canal Road, Bradford.

The Environment Agency prosecuted the company following repeated odour

problems that had a detrimental effect on local residents.

Austin Stoton, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court that AWM's Leeds site caused repeated odour problems between June 2012 and October 2013. During this time, Environment Agency officers carried out around 75 odour assessments, and most of them recorded smells that were likely to cause offence to human senses.

In October 2013 the Environment Agency suspended the company's permit for the Leeds facility, preventing it from bringing any more waste onto the site until it had made improvements to its odour management plan. This new plan was approved that month and the permit was reinstated.

In the same year, between March and July, AWM's Bradford site was also the cause of odour issues. These prompted local residents to complain on 49 separate dates.

One resident had complained that the odour was so bad that it had made him feel sick. He also said that if there was a smell present, he couldn't open windows and his family couldn't spend time in the garden. Another resident said at the time that he and his family had found it virtually impossible to have any enjoyment from their garden.

An inspection visit in March 2013 revealed that the company was not closing the shutters on a tipping shed used by bin wagons, which allowed the smell of rotting waste to leave the site.

In July, the Environment Agency served an enforcement notice on the firm that required it to improve its odour management plan for the site. The company's first revision of this document, submitted in August, was rejected as inadequate and it wasn't until October that a new plan was approved.

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency said after the hearing:

Waste sites like those managed by AWM can have a detrimental impact on local communities if they are not managed properly. That's why it is vital that operators adhere to environmental regulations and the conditions on their environmental permits.

In this case, AWM failed to maintain high standards of odour management at its facilities in Leeds and Bradford, and local residents suffered as a result. We hope today's outcome demonstrates that odour pollution is not acceptable and that the Environment Agency will take action against businesses that fail to adhere to permitting rules.

In mitigation, the company told the court that it had relied upon an external company that had approached it regarding odour suppression equipment, which had not worked.

AWM was fined £75,000 for the Leeds offence, and £50,000 for the Bradford offence. It was also ordered to pay £75,000 in legal costs.