

International Development Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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From Sarah Champion MP, Chair

Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP
Minister of State for Development
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
By e-mail

18 October 2023

International Development White Paper Consultation Submission

Dear Andrew,

The International Development Committee welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the Government's consultation on the future of the UK's international development policy.

In an increasingly unstable world, the UK must have a clear, robust and principled approach to development, working squarely towards the eradication of global poverty. As a leading international aid donor, the UK has a crucial role to play in the provision of:

- humanitarian relief, providing vital assistance in the face of devastating events such as the recent floods in Libya; and
- long-term development assistance, seeking to lift people out of poverty and create a fairer and safer world for all.

Drawing on evidence submitted to the Committee's inquiries in this Parliament, we set out our views on how the UK should direct the future of its development policy. We also call on the UK to enrich its approach by seeking to, at every opportunity and at all times, weave local knowledge and expertise into its development policies and the implementation of those policies.

We discuss both what and where the focus of UK development policy should lie, and how the UK should translate those policy objectives into action. Our responses below are addressed to the areas outlined on the Government's consultation website:

On partnerships (and credibility)

How do partnerships need to change to restore the credibility of international development and the multilateral system and regain the trust of Global South?

What role should the UK play in this and what specifically should we do differently?

What should we do to ensure we are listening better to those most in need?

Meaningful and equitable partnerships between those providing and receiving development assistance are fundamental to achieving development impact. However, the UK Government's inconsistent approach to development over recent years has undermined trust in the relationships that it has held with local partners in lower-income countries, impeding the progress of development outcomes. Predictability of funding is key, a point that is often made by those on the front line.

Successive cuts to UK aid spending have damaged the credibility of the UK as a reliable partner. Evidence submitted to the Committee has painted a picture of programmes suddenly stopped or suspended with little to no notice, and with little to no regard for the communities in which they were working.¹ Trust, often hard-won over successive years, has been broken. The cuts have sent the message that the UK Government simply does not care about the long-term development and wellbeing of the poorest communities around the world. Time is needed to restore this trust. In some cases, this breakdown in trust may be irreparable.

Through this White Paper, the UK Government has the opportunity to fundamentally reassess its approach to development, spring back from this low point and re-establish relationships on a fairer footing for all. After years of devastating cuts, it has been encouraging to recently see evidence of perhaps the green shoots of the Government's new intentions as it makes a start on moving towards restoring raided bilateral budgets for Africa.^{2, 3}

Evidence to the Committee's 'Racism in the Aid Sector' inquiry suggested that high-income countries often assume they have the knowledge and best practice to assist people in lower-income countries.⁴ Local partners are then required to adapt to meet those assumptions. The UK Government should actively work towards building and maintaining equal partnerships which recognise and capitalise on local expertise, from project inception to delivery. This philosophy should be a fundamental cornerstone of all UK aid policy and delivery.

To fully embed this approach, the FCDO should consider practical steps to ensure that local organisations have the opportunity to work in meaningful and equitable partnership with the UK Government and that the voices of communities and those in need are taken into account. This could include:

- Increasing the proportion of funding available for small, local civil society organisations (for example, through the extension of small grants administered directly from FCDO posts overseas) and simplifying the application process.
- Actively seeking out the voices of, and input from, women and marginalised groups.

¹ House of Commons International Development Committee, [The future of UK aid: What we've heard so far during our inquiry into changes to the UK aid budget](#), 1 July 2021

² House of Commons International Development Committee, [Chair comments on FCDO spending announcement](#), 17 July 2023

³ House of Commons International Development Committee, [Correspondence from Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell, Minister for Development and Africa, FCDO](#), 19 July 2023

⁴ House of Commons International Development Committee, [First Report of Session 2022-23, Racism in the aid sector, HC 150, para 18](#)

- Extending funding cycles to enable greater financial certainty for organisations and to better build local capabilities for the longer term. This could include increasing the number of programmes which are funded on a multi-year basis.
- Assessing whether funding applications should always be made in English, especially for small programmes targeted at small, local civil society organisations.
- Reconsidering how the FCDO conceptualises and calculates risk, working with local civil society organisations to ensure effective due diligence is undertaken.

Climate change is one of the most significant threats to achieving global development progress. Addressing the impacts of climate change in the development arena encapsulates the importance of undertaking development interventions informed by local knowledge. Only by listening to communities on the front-line of climate change will development funders be able to meet the challenges of, and respond effectively to, this existential threat. The FCDO should ensure that communities directly impacted by climate change are consulted in the development of programmes affecting them, learning from their perspectives and priorities.

On innovations (and progress in international development)

What are the specific innovative proposals that can accelerate progress in international development?

What initiatives, policies, partnerships, or technologies could result in accelerated progress?

Are there big ideas on which the UK is particularly well placed to play a role?

Over the last few years, the Government has eroded the effectiveness of its international development work as it has presided over a volatile political landscape of changing priorities, reductions to its aid budget and the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Government must now set a clear and consistent vision for its development policy and seek to maximise its role in better supporting global progress towards attainment of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UK Government should adopt the following three cross-cutting, core approaches to its development policy. The Government should:

1) Place women and girls at the heart of all of its development interventions

Evidence to the Committee's inquiries has emphasised the importance of a gender-sensitive approach to development interventions.⁵ Through the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014, UK development interventions already have a legal requirement to consider gender. The Government should take this requirement further and mainstream development interventions that actively place the wellbeing and empowerment of women and girls at the heart of all UK development work and aim to break down structural inequalities that prevent them reaching their potential.

⁵ See, for example: House of Commons International Development Committee, [Oral evidence: Future of UK aid](#), HC 100, 22 March 2022, Q221

2) Pursue a locally-led approach to development

Evidence to the Committee's inquiries has suggested that development interventions are likely to achieve the greatest impact when local communities take a greater role in identifying solutions to problems.⁶ Harnessing local knowledge and experience is crucial to achieving long-lasting impact. The UK should shift power towards local communities, allowing them to take a larger and more significant role in determining how UK aid is spent at a local level.

3) Focus on prevention

Evidence submitted to the Committee, across a breadth of inquiries, suggests that the UK should adopt a prevention-based approach in its development offering.⁷ From tackling diseases through the provision of routine vaccinations, to raising the alarm for potential risks of atrocities when the first indicators arise, prevention is a best-buy. Tackling issues at source is a cheaper and more effective approach than undertaking reactive work. Prevention is most effective when undertaken in partnership with others. Accordingly, the UK should seek to share knowledge and learnings with like-minded partners to assist in its development work.

Evidence to our inquiries has also suggested that action in the following areas could better push forward progress in global development. The Government should:

i) Prioritise tackling extreme poverty: The Covid-19 pandemic set back global progress in tackling extreme poverty. Evidence submitted to the Committee suggested that the most effective method for tackling this set-back is through a combination of implementing cash interventions and supporting local capacity building in order to accelerate change.⁸

ii) Better advocate for the most marginalised: The UK Government should lead on a global 'leave no-one behind' call to action to better advocate for the poorest and most marginalised groups.

iii) Promote a fair approach to debt: Debt remains a major barrier to development for lower income countries. The UK Government should provide an example on the world stage of how it can better lead on debt relief to allow countries to invest in their own development and infrastructure.⁹

iv) Promote renewable energy in lower-income countries: The UK Government should lead on scaling up its investment in renewable energy abroad and end all exemptions for direct and indirect investment in fossil fuel projects abroad through British International Investment (BII) and other channels.¹⁰

⁶ See, for example: House of Commons International Development Committee, [Oral evidence: The philosophy and culture of aid](#), HC 101, 9 November 2021, Q 191

⁷ See, for example: House of Commons International Development Committee, [Oral evidence: The philosophy and culture of aid](#), HC 101, 9 November 2021, Q 197

⁸ House of Commons International Development Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2022-23, [Extreme Poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals](#), HC 147, para 51

⁹ House of Commons International Development Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2022-23, [Debt relief in low-income countries](#), HC 146, Summary

¹⁰ House of Commons International Development Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2022-23, [Investment for Development: The UK's strategy towards Development Finance Institutions](#), HC 884

v) *'Be the world's canary' on raising the alarm on the warning signs of atrocities:* The UK Government should ensure that UK diplomats abroad are getting the resources, training and support that they need to recognize and act on warning signs of atrocities.¹¹

On achieving impact in low- and middle-income countries

What new ideas for development cooperation would make the biggest impact in, or for, low income countries?

What are the best ideas to accelerate progress for middle income countries which still have large numbers of poor people?

Achieving development impact in low- and middle-income countries will require a differentiated approach, understanding their differing drivers of change and roadblocks to progress. No two development settings are completely alike, tailoring solutions to individual settings is essential.

The scale of the development challenge facing low-income countries is significant, and often compounded by the threats of climate change, conflict, and a difficult global economic situation. Fundamentally, the UK Government should spend the majority of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the world's poorest countries, prioritising interventions which help the world's poorest people. Resources should be allocated to prioritise immediate and basic humanitarian need, which form the essential building blocks on which development interventions can thereafter be made.

In low-income countries, the UK Government's development work should prioritise life-saving interventions first, focusing on tackling hunger and improving nutrition, fighting disease, and ensuring access to clean water and adequate sanitation. It should also continue to prioritise the provision of quality education, especially for girls. Interventions should be made on the basis of prevention and resilience (such as preventing conflict and promoting resilience from the impacts of climate change).

The UK Government should set out its priorities of what it will fund. However, through bilateral support, it should ultimately empower local communities to be responsible for greater decision making on how to best undertake projects in their hands.

Development interventions in Middle-Income Countries (MICs) should be targeted at the poorest communities within those countries. MICs are often marked by inequality within their societies, such as exhibiting significant poverty but also growing wealth. Support for delivering SDG 10 (reducing inequality) should be a core pillar of the UK Government's assistance to MICs. The FCDO should continue to seek to understand the drivers of inequality within MICs and encourage work to tackle the root causes of inequality and support the most marginalised as part of its global 'leave no-one behind' agenda.

Different challenges face poor communities in urban settings compared to those in rural settings. The FCDO should combine development research expertise and local knowledge to provide a differentiated approach (such as focussing on agricultural innovations for rural poor communities).

¹¹ House of Commons International Development Committee, Third Report of Session 2022-23, [From Srebrenica to a safer tomorrow: Preventing future mass atrocities around the world](#), HC 149, para 71

As with low-income countries, in MICs, adopting a locally-led approach to undertaking development, likely to achieve the greatest impact in tackling poverty, is critical to maximise development effectiveness.

On Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA financing for development

How can Official Development Assistance (ODA) be most effectively targeted and built upon?

How can non-ODA financing be mobilised to ensure ambitious, innovative, and transformational international development?

The UK's adherence to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD's) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) definition of ODA provides a basic level of quality assurance for UK aid spending. The UK Government should guard against moves to loosen this definition.

But the UK's real strength in the international development arena is derived from its development legislation, which provides focus and direction to the UK's development work. The International Development Act 2002, which places poverty alleviation at the heart of the provision of UK aid, sets a more rigorous standard than that provided by the DAC rules alone. Moreover, the 2014 amendment to that Act, which adds the requirement to have regard for gender equality in the provision of UK aid, provides a useful marker to guide UK aid programmes towards taking a more inclusive approach. The provisions of this legislation maintain quality assurance for UK aid. The UK Government should maintain a steady focus on the provisions of this legislation.

The UK Government, under the terms of the [International Development \(Official Development Assistance Target\) Act 2015](#), is required to spend 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on ODA and if that target is missed (as it has been in recent years), the Government is required to report to the UK Parliament explaining why that target has been missed. The UK Government should return to full compliance with the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015 at the earliest opportunity. Against a backdrop of increasing global need, the urgency of ensuring a minimum of 0.7% of the UK's GNI is spent on work to support the world's poorest people is more pressing than ever.

Work to prevent conflict, promote stability and foster global development are interlinked. The Integrated Review Refresh notes growing global instability, making the urgency of a joined-up approach in tackling these challenges more necessary than ever. Through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), the UK has used blended ODA and non-ODA interventions to undertake this work. As the CSSF transitions to its successor, the Integrated Security Fund, it is important that development remains an integral part of the Fund and is not diluted amongst domestic political priorities. To promote complementarity between ODA and non-ODA funding, the UK Government should ensure that at least 50% of the Integrated Security Fund's activities are ODA-eligible. Furthermore, the UK Government should re-establish the target set in its 2015 Aid Strategy of spending 50% of the UK's total ODA in fragile and conflict affected settings.

A fairer approach to international finance is needed for lower-income countries to continue to progress out of poverty. The UK Government should recognise the impact of current unsustainable debt levels

on the development of lower-income countries and prioritise finding a fair solution through supporting participation in the Common Framework. The Government should consider passing legislation to compel or incentivise the participation of private creditors in the Common Framework and by working with relevant partners, such as the US. China is a significant creditor to lower-income countries, so the UK should engage with China on debt relief both bilaterally and through the Paris Club. The UK should also use its position in multilateral international finance institutions, such as the World Bank and IMF, to encourage board-level discussion on debt cancellation by multilateral international finance institutions. In its own lending, the UK Government should favour grants over concessional loans and concessional loans over normal loans.¹² It should also consider cancelling the small amount of outstanding debt owed to it by debt-distressed countries.

Additionally, the UK Government should re-assess its approach to the use of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), it should extend their reallocation to the poorest countries in the world where possible. The use of SDRs should not count as ODA.

Finally, the FCDO and BII could both leverage benefits from greater collaboration at country office and regional levels. Evidence to the Committee showed the benefits of such collaboration in Nepal. The FCDO should work collaboratively with BII by sharing institutional knowledge and ensuring that BII's investments complement its bilateral programmes. A single country plan of each country where BII operates should outline operational synergies between FCDO and BII staff, identifying where the FCDO's bilateral programmes complement BII's investment activity and finding opportunities for further collaboration.¹³

On combining other expertise to support global development action

How should scientific and technological expertise, private finance and the private sector, trade and investment, civil society networks and diplomacy be engaged to support global development action and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

Effective development requires engagement beyond international donors. A holistic approach, involving all elements of society, is likely to foster the greatest chance of long-lasting impact.

The UK Government should encourage ongoing dialogue between FCDO posts overseas, private sector and civil society representatives to ensure continuous analysis and evaluation of the political, economic and social circumstances in-country. That dialogue should be used to provide a continuous feedback loop to better support an iterative and responsive approach to development action.

Evidence submitted to the Committee has noted the positive impact of technology on development interventions, such as the use of tele-medicine systems to diagnose and treat patients with HIV and

¹² House of Commons International Development Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2022-23, [Debt relief in low-income countries](#), HC 146

¹³ House of Commons International Development Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2022-23, [Investment for Development: The UK's strategy towards Development Finance Institutions](#), HC 884, para 34

AIDS during the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁴ The Committee broadly welcomes the Foreign Secretary's recent announcement of the AI for Development programme (in partnership with Canada's International Development Research Centre) to focus on helping developing countries, initially in Africa, build local AI skills and boost innovation and the UK Government's investment in the Complex Risk Analytics Fund (to focus on harnessing the power of AI to help predict conflicts and humanitarian crises, to support an accelerated delivery of the SDGs).¹⁵ Representatives of local and marginalised communities must be involved with the development and implementation of any AI interventions. FCDO posts overseas should also have a key role in deliberating how scientific and technological expertise (including AI) might best help to bolster development outcomes in-country.

Engagement with the private sector, fostering economic growth and creating jobs, is key to securing long-term development. However, this engagement should be underpinned by a commitment to inclusive development for all, with a focus on women and girls and reaching marginalised groups.

Development finance institutions can make a substantive contribution to developing private markets in low- and middle-income countries by pioneering new and emerging industries, promoting positive change through investment activities and stimulating private-sector investment to develop markets. Building partnerships and investing for development is a prominent part of the UK's development offer, with British International Investment (BII), the UK's development finance institution, sitting at the heart of the Government's International Development Strategy. However, BII's policy of defining low-income populations as people living below \$5.50 per day to target its investment activity (as opposed to considerably lower thresholds used by the World Bank) has resulted in a high concentration of its portfolio in middle-income countries, the Committee has concerns that some of those investments are not directly benefiting the world's poorest people. In our recent report considering the operation and work of BII, we recommended that BII should cap the proportion of its portfolio held in middle-income countries at a percentage determined by the Minister for Development to ensure that its investments are focused on reaching the poorest and most marginalised people.¹⁶

The UK Government should encourage further complementarity across Government in departments delivering ODA programmes (for example, through increasing the regularity of meetings of the ODA Board). It should also expand this work to consider alignment with other related areas of international policy, such as trade. Additionally, the FCDO should continue to use mechanisms such as the Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board to embed a joined-up approach to ensure that ODA-funded academic research has maximum impact on the Government's international development activities.

¹⁴ House of Commons International Development Committee, Eight Report of Session 2019-21, [Covid-19 in developing countries: secondary impacts](#), HC 1186, para 30

¹⁵ Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, [UK sets out "AI for Development" vision as UN General Assembly](#), 18 September 2023

¹⁶ House of Commons International Development Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2022-23, [Investment for Development: The UK's strategy towards Development Finance Institutions](#), HC 884, para 57

On Climate and development (combining development areas in the context of Agenda 2030)

How can progress on tackling ending poverty, economic growth, and the challenges of climate change be best brought together, in the context of Agenda 2030 (including building resilience, adaptation, and sustainable growth)?

How can the opportunities be maximised? How can the limits and trade-offs be managed?

Tackling poverty, addressing climate change and promoting economic growth will continue to provide challenges for the international community. The UK Government should seek to identify synergies between development interventions in these areas, pursuing a holistic approach to international development.

Development is non-linear. The UK Government should accept that progress levels across these areas is likely to vary considerably over time, and that setbacks are an inevitable part of the journey. The UK Government should not be afraid to pursue some higher risk development interventions, especially those that pursue integration between tackling climate change and poverty. Success may not always be achieved, but, where it is, the pay-off may be larger than a more conservative intervention might have achieved. The UK Government's position should be that a 'people-led' approach to development should always be the default approach.

The UK Government should seek opportunities to align nature and climate objectives with debt relief frameworks. However, debt-for-nature swaps should be treated with sensitivity and caution. They should be at the right scale, incorporate decision-making processes that include local communities and incorporate mechanisms to support political accountability.¹⁷ The UK Government should contribute, and push other high-income countries to contribute, to meet the international climate financing target of mobilizing jointly \$100bn per year to address the needs of developing countries (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties).¹⁸

The Committee welcomes the Prime Minister's recently pledged \$2 billion to the Green Climate Fund (the largest global fund dedicated to supporting developing countries to reduce global emissions and helping communities adapt to the effects of climate change).¹⁹ The UK Government should ensure that all aid funding commitments are aligned with the commitment of that pledge to help developing countries tackle climate change.

BII holds investments that conflict with the UK Government's policies relating to fossil fuels and there have been few attempts by BII to adapt its legacy investment portfolio to align with the UK Government's stated position on tackling climate change.²⁰ BII's strategy and operations should be consistent with the UK Government's position on tackling climate change – whilst also protecting

¹⁷ House of Commons International Development Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2022-23, [Debt relief in low-income countries](#), HC 146, para 49

¹⁸ House of Commons International Development Committee, Second Report of Session 2021-22, [Global Britain in demand: UK climate action and international development around COP26](#), HC 99

¹⁹ UK Government Press Release, [Prime Minister announces record climate aid commitment as G20 in India concludes](#), 10 September 2023

²⁰ House of Commons International Development Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2022-23, [Investment for Development: The UK's strategy towards Development Finance Institutions](#), HC 884, para 28

taxpayers' interests and ensuring that its investments help the world's poorest people. FCDO should increase its oversight of BII and take a non-voting seat on the BII board²¹ to ensure that BII investments align with the UK's position on tackling climate change.

The UK should underline its commitment to SDG attainment through demonstrating its domestic commitment to the goals. The only Voluntary National Review for the SDGs that the UK Government has undertaken took place in 2019. The Government should lead by example and conduct a follow-up review, to be led by the FCDO, to enable the UK to assess *its* progress towards Agenda 2030.

On multilateral and bilateral action

What are the top priorities for strengthening multilateral effectiveness in international development?

What are the issues and challenges most suited to bilateral cooperation (considering all levers)?

Multilateral and bilateral channels provide different benefits for the delivery of UK aid, adding value in diverse ways. The UK Government should pursue a differentiated approach, identifying those interventions best suited to multilateral, and those best suited to bilateral routes of delivery. It should ensure that aid flows are directed as appropriate, using each mechanism to achieve mutually complementary aims in delivering the UK's development policy.

Multilateral organisations should be a locus primarily for international dialogue and action, representing and acting on the views of communities around the world. In relation to both diplomacy and development, lower income countries should be prominently represented in these fora, and the UK Government should advocate for their further inclusion in dialogue and decision making.

Multilateral development interventions offer particular advantages. They allow the UK Government to pool its resources with those of other states, acting as a force multiplier to tackle complex and large-scale development challenges. Evidence submitted to the Committee has detailed how work undertaken through multilateral instruments, such as the Global Fund²² or UNFPA²³, has provided life changing support to communities around the world. The UK should be consistent in the funding it provides to such multilateral organisations, to enable these organisations to better plan their interventions and thus provide more consistent support for the communities they serve.

Multilateral development interventions also allow the UK Government to help provide vital, lifesaving support in situations where (a) UK-branded support might be diplomatically difficult (such as in

²¹ Ibid

²² See, for example: "Global Fund partnership has turned the tide against infectious diseases, built health systems and saved more than 44 million lives. In countries where the Global Fund invests, AIDS related deaths have dropped by 65 per cent, malaria deaths by 45 per cent and TB deaths by 28 per cent since 2002" From: House of Commons International Development Committee, [Written evidence to the Extreme Poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals inquiry from the UK Civil Society Global Fund Working Group](#), SDG00029

²³ See, for example: "The FCDO has funded UNFPA projects...such as the 'Delivering Accelerated Family Planning in Pakistan' (DAFPAK), at a cost of almost £90 million. Estimates suggest that this project will result in 2,300 fewer maternal deaths, 3.1 million fewer unintended pregnancies and nearly 1 million fewer unsafe abortions over the project's lifetime." From: House of Commons International Development Committee, [Written evidence to the UK aid to Pakistan inquiry from UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund](#), PAK0006

Afghanistan) and/or (b) drawing on multilateral-administered support is the quickest and easiest method of providing aid when responding to sudden-onset crises (such as through the use of the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in response to the floods in Libya).

Access to finance remains a key barrier for many low-income states. At multilateral level, the UK Government should advocate for a fairer approach to international finance, especially for countries vulnerable to climate shocks. The UK should also be leading the international conversation on debt relief.

Bilateral interventions remain an important means for the UK Government to provide targeted and tailored support to lower income communities around the world. The UK Government should use bilateral support to deliver against its stated development objectives and place decisions about the final means of delivery for projects in the hands of local communities. A core element of this bilateral support should be the continued offer of small grants, targeted at local organisations. The thematic priorities for these grants should be determined in-country by FCDO posts overseas.

The UK Government should also use bilateral interventions where it has a comparative advantage or expertise compared to other funders. For example, evidence submitted to the Committee's inquiry into sexual and reproductive health highlighted the specific benefits accrued from the UK Government's support for the provision of safe abortion services.²⁴

Furthermore, the UK Government should seek to leverage maximum impact from bilateral interventions by identifying where complementarity can be found between different bilateral donors working in the same development setting.

An additional point – on transparency

Transparency is important so that the UK taxpayer has assurance about how, where, and why the UK's ODA is being spent. The FCDO dropped out of the 'Very Good' category in the Aid Transparency Index (the aid watchdog's index) in 2022.²⁵ BII was ranked at position number 12 (out of 21 rankings) in the DFI Transparency Index 2023.²⁶ The UK should do better. The Government should be more open about its ODA decision making and allocations, so that the Committee and others are better able to scrutinise it. Furthermore, BII should likewise be more open. The UK has been an advocate for greater debt transparency and should continue to lead by example and encourage greater transparency at the G7, G20 and among international finance institutions. Such information should also always be released in a predictable and timely manner.

There have been some recent signs of notable improvement in transparency, such as the proactive release by the FCDO to the Committee of its most recent Equality Impact Assessment on its ODA

²⁴ House of Commons International Development Committee, [Written evidence to the FCDO's approach to sexual and reproductive health inquiry from MSI Reproductive Choices](#), SRH0016

²⁵ House of Commons International Development Committee, [Aid transparency drop "unacceptable" – Sarah Champion MP](#), 13 July 2022

²⁶ Publish What You Fund, [DFI Transparency Index 2023](#) (January 2023), p 16

allocations for the period 2023-24²⁷ (compared to the withholding of that information in 2022), however information can be difficult to find in the FCDO's Development Tracker web service and answers to Parliamentary Questions can sometimes be obstructive.

My Committee looks forward to continuing to engage with you on the points above.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S', on a light blue background.

Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the Committee

²⁷ House of Commons International Development Committee, [Correspondence from Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell, Minister for Development and Africa, FCDO](#), 19 July 2023