

International Development  
Committee

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# UK Aid and Development Assistance in a Fracturing World: Strengthening Resilience and Cooperation

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Eleventh Report of Session 2024–26 HC  
1835

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# International Development Committee

The International Development Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to scrutinise the work of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office in respect of aid policy, and the expenditure of Official Development Assistance across UK government departments.

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## Publication

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# Summary

Despite reductions in Official Development Assistance (ODA), the UK still has potential to contribute toward a stable, prosperous and resilient world. Carefully deployed UK ODA can act as a preventative measure—spending money now to prevent the need for greater expenditure and risks to the UK in the future. In a fracturing global order, ODA spending can demonstrate to the UK’s partners that it is committed to their development goals, and to mutually beneficial objectives.

The UK’s development and relief approach is too important to get wrong. Whilst we are pleased that the Government is engaging constructively with the realities of an increasingly unpredictable global situation, we are yet to see its workings on many of the priorities it has made. These decisions will have an impact on hundreds of thousands of lives.

The Government’s “four essential shifts” in its development partnership involve shifting from the role of donor to investor, from service delivery to systems support, from providing grants to expertise, and from prioritising international intervention to local leadership. The Government needs to present its evidence base for these shifts. It needs to show how these shifts interact with each other, and with the increased focus on the UK’s multilateral mechanisms for delivering ODA. The Government should further

explain how it will ensure that poverty alleviation is prioritised and tracked across its ODA programming. Lastly, the Government should more clearly explain how it will continue to engage with the UK Non Governmental Organisations and private consultancy sectors, including on how to rebuild public support for development.

In the policy paper attached to this report, we draw on the overwhelming breadth and depth of evidence received by this inquiry, and others the Committee has conducted during this Parliament. This paper seeks to convert the Government's ambitions into policy to alleviate poverty. We outline the strategic necessity of aid and continued commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. It is vital that, as the UK Government rethinks aid policy in a very different global setting, no-one is left behind and that, in particular, women are put front and centre of the decision-making processes.

Successfully reorientating UK bilateral programming around the "four essential shifts" will require cultural and process changes within Government departments delivering ODA. The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, in particular, will need to invest in staffing and systems to achieve this transition. We explore some of the policy and programme challenges presented by the "four essential shifts" and make recommendations for their implementation.

Our policy paper assesses the role of International NGOs (INGOs), highlighting the opportunities for strategic collaboration between the sector and the

Government. The paper proposes a model for the UK's development partnerships which makes use of the range of tools the UK has available to meet the priorities of partner countries and civil society.

Successive Governments, and the development sector, have failed to communicate the purpose and benefits of ODA effectively with the UK public. A lot of work needs to be done to regain public trust and rebuild the case for ODA. We recommend that the Government adopt a fifth essential shift, *From unfamiliarity to understanding*, in terms of its communication around the breadth of UK aid activities. In its communication, it should pay significant attention to the mutual benefits of UK ODA to the UK and its development partners, focussing on ODA programming as a preventative tool. We also propose a Global Education Programme, helping a new generation understand the importance of overseas assistance, the mutual benefits of progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, and inspiring citizen action.

Finally, our policy paper looks at the way ODA is accounted for as it is directed through the various channels and mechanisms. We recommend sustained, not diminished, scrutiny—particularly in the case of multilateral spending. We advocate for reform of multilateral bodies that sees the voices of the UK's developing country partners made central to the decision-making process. We re-emphasise the role of Parliament and the Independent Commission on Aid Impact as critical accountability mechanisms for the spending and impact of UK ODA.

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# Introduction

1. As we stated in our interim report, “Future of UK aid and development assistance”, we are supportive of the Government’s ambition to wrestle with the existential questions regarding the future of aid and development assistance.<sup>1</sup> We undertook this inquiry to broaden the conversation on the future of UK ODA spend to the relief and development sector, civil society in the UK and overseas, academia, business, and the general public.
2. Over the past 18 months of this Parliament, we have heard from inspirational community leaders and grassroots development workers; leading academics; cutting-edge NGOs; businesses and investors; and courageous volunteers. Our report draws on all these voices as well as the 198 written responses to this inquiry. We thank all those who contributed for their valuable insights.
3. This report will start by identifying the gaps in the rationale and strategy presented to us by the Government. It will also highlight areas where we are still lacking important information around the implementation of policy. Drawing on the evidence we have received, we will go on to present a policy paper

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1 Ninth report of Session 2024–26, Future of UK aid and development assistance: interim report, HC 1330

for how the Government should be calibrating its approach to poverty alleviation within the priorities it has laid out.

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# 1 Towards a coherent strategy: filling in the gaps

## Box 1: The Government Vision for Aid

Minister of State (International Development and Africa), Baroness Chapman, told us that “alleviating poverty” remains the main purpose of ODA spending.<sup>2</sup>

The Government has outlined its priorities for its Official Development Assistance programme spend.<sup>3</sup> These are:

- **Humanitarian**—supporting those in crisis—from Ukraine to Gaza and Sudan, while building resilience to future shocks.
- **Health**—strengthening global health security and investing in multilateral funds like Gavi and the Global Fund to fight disease.
- **Climate and nature**—tackling climate change and restoring nature.

However, it emphasises that just because an area is not prioritised for ODA programme spending, it does not mean “less action” by the Government. It

2 Q117

3 Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (UKA0196)

gives examples of how it will use other levers, such as technical expertise and diplomacy, to continue to “maximise impact” in other areas.

The Government is prioritising investment in multilateral organisations—using the influence it gives the UK to drive reform. It perceives “economic development” as “underpinning” the changes it wishes to see in its priority areas. It has listed four economic development partners.

The Government will establish eight Communities of Expertise which will gather UK-based experts to support development partners in-line with portfolio strategies submitted by diplomatic missions. Communities of Expertise will have access to resources to enable the deployment of that expertise. This, the Government argues, will enable a more tailored and effective approach in-line with partner priorities.<sup>4</sup>

Lastly, the Government has explained that its country development partnerships, and multilateral relationships, will be transformed through “four essential shifts”:

- **From donor to investor:** partnering with countries to unlock growth, jobs and trade through innovative finance and private sector investment.
- **From service delivery to system support:** helping countries build their own education, health and economic systems, so they can thrive without aid.

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4 See Q247-Q251 [Yvette Cooper and Baroness Chapman]

- **From grants to expertise:** leveraging UK strengths, like UK universities, the City of London, the Met Office, HMRC, education, health and tech sectors.
- **From international intervention to local leadership:** working increasingly in partnership with local actors rather than through internationally driven interventions.

4. In a reality where ODA is being reduced to 0.3% of Gross National Income (GNI), and significant cuts need to be made to achieve this, the Government will inevitably have to make difficult trade-offs.<sup>5</sup> It is helpful that the Government priorities have been laid out for Parliament and the UK public. However, there is no clearly articulated theory of change; limited coherence across the strategy; and, crucially, no detail on how “poverty alleviation” will be prioritised across the range of activities the Government has outlined. There is also little detail on the level of flexibility within the model for the diverse nature of UK partners, whether they be multilateral, bilateral or private sector. Lastly, there does not appear to be a path back for ODA to 0.7% or even 0.5% of GNI, raising the question of whether or not this is a genuine intention.<sup>6</sup>

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5 For more information see House of Commons Library, Insight: UK to reduce aid to 0.3% of gross national income from 2027, 28 February 2025

6 Q71 [Gideon Rabinowitz]

# “Partnership not paternalism” and the “four essential shifts”

5. The essential shifts (see Box 1) are not new areas of work for the FCDO. Many have been part of the UK Government’s toolbox for decades and were reiterated in the White Paper published by the previous Government.<sup>7</sup> The Government has said that these shifts would have needed to have been made regardless of the reduction to 0.3% of GNI. What is significant are the ways of working that are being de-prioritised in response, and the lack of evidence shared on how these shifts represent value for money.

## From donor to investor

6. The rationale the Government has given for the shifts lies chiefly in what it says are responses from its international partners—particularly what it heard during the consultation for the Government’s Approach to Africa.<sup>8</sup> Contributors to this inquiry, however, highlighted a selective presentation by the Government of its findings. Specifically, there is a lack of clarity over the extent to which governmental development partners want a shift of funding from ODA support to financial investment.<sup>9</sup>

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7 See, for example FCDO, International development in a contested world: ending extreme poverty and tackling climate change, A White Paper on International Development, November 2023, Pp 26–27

8 See, for example, Oral evidence taken on 16 July 2025, Q2 [David Lammy]

9 Bond (UKA0177)

7. The FCDO also offers a lack of detail over how it will ensure that the investment achieves its ambitions for alleviating poverty—especially its commitment to leave no one behind. Contributors to this inquiry emphasised the need for an evidence-based approach to investment, increased transparency, and coordination across departments and instruments, to ensure the benefits of this approach are maximised.<sup>10</sup>

### Economic growth supported by British International Investment and Growth and Investment Partnerships

8. The Government envisages that Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), particularly British Investment International (BII), will be central to achieving this shift.<sup>11</sup> We agree that BII fulfils an important role in the UK's contribution to alleviating poverty with mutual benefits for the UK.<sup>12</sup> However, some experts do not believe a strong enough case has been made for the level of emphasis placed on the role of BII.<sup>13</sup> There has been criticism around the lack of evidence on how this mechanism, which has received £880 million ODA

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10 See, for example, Gender and Development Network (UKA0005) (UKA0095) para 1; Sightsavers (UKA0096) para 7; Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) (UKA0212)

11 See, for example, Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (UKA0196)

12 6th report - The FCDO's Approach to Displaced People para 87

13 Bond (UKA0177); see also TLG Capital (UKA0181) which notes the lack of publicly disclosed data on Africa-specific annualised returns, realised versus unrealised profit and loss, default rates, or commercial capital mobilisation.

in the year 2024/25,<sup>14</sup> ensures that investments are tangibly benefitting the most marginalised.<sup>15</sup> However, steps have been taken in recent years to increase the transparency of its portfolio investments.

9. There is a lack of clarity over how BII's investment strategies align with the development priorities identified with the UK's partners. The Committee has seen variable evidence of coordination between BII and FCDO missions in-country in terms of investment decisions. Concerns have been raised surrounding the appetite of DFIs, particularly if a greater proportion of their funding originates from private sources, to invest in fragile countries.<sup>16</sup> We continue to maintain that, in order to reassure Parliament that the necessary Government oversight is taking place, it is important that the FCDO has a seat on the board of BII.<sup>17</sup>
10. In its evidence, the Government described the Growth and Investment Partnerships (GIPs) it is launching with the "Global South to support long-term growth, security and stability".<sup>18</sup> GIPs have been launched in South Africa, Indonesia, Tanzania and Uganda. At

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14 House of Commons Library, British International Investment: Aid and investment, Research Briefing 9560, 7 November 2025, p12

15 See, for example, concerns raised by Oxfam GB (UKA0078) around the transparency of BII; ActionAid UK (UKA0099)

16 See, for example, Mercy Corps (UKA0049); Ecorys UK Limited (UKA0123) question 4;

17 The predecessor Committee made this recommendation in its report on BII. International Development Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2022–23, Investment for development: The UK's strategy towards Development Finance Institutions, HC 884, para 28

18 Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (UKA0196)

least three of these are not generally considered to be Fragile or Conflict Affected States and at least one could be considered a middle-income country. Two of them are G20 countries, which the Foreign Secretary told Parliament would not be receiving ODA going forward.<sup>19</sup> It would be useful to know the rationale for the choice of counties in this case.

## From service delivery to system support

- 11.** The shift from *service delivery to system support* opens significant opportunities for the UK to tackle some of the systemic failings, in the UK and in lower-income countries, that represent barriers to development.<sup>20</sup> However, the detail shared with Parliament does not provide reassurance that the Government has considered the interaction between this shift and the others. For example, an increased focus on finance with a partner, without addressing corrupt systems under UK jurisdiction or in-country, puts that investment at risk. The Department fails to adequately explain how the UK will support partners in a fragile or failed state, unable to deliver services itself—something we heard is important for increasing resilience.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, there is little explanation about

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19 FCDO, Oral statement to Parliament: Foreign Secretary statement on International Development, 19 March

20 See, for example, Coalition for Global Prosperity (UKA0076); International Organization for Migration (UKA0083) para 7; BDO LLP (UKA0114) point 2

21 University of Glasgow (UKA0154) para 6

how the fourth shift around local leadership will apply to enhancing the capacity of communities to work with their governments and hold them to account.<sup>22</sup>

## From grants to expertise

- 12.** Of the four shifts, *from grants to expertise* may be the most difficult to get right. The FCDO has rightly identified the potential opportunities but paid little or no attention to the potential pitfalls. The Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) highlighted a lack of data on the effectiveness of technical assistance.<sup>23</sup> The Center for Global Development explained further:

This approach is not new, and it is unclear why it should be privileged. Indeed, large scale technical assistance has been highlighted as one of the worst practices in foreign aid [ ... ].<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps most concerning was the lack of explicit reference to the opportunities for technical assistance to flow both ways, the role of in-country expertise, and the role of facilitating technical skills sharing between lower-income countries.<sup>25</sup> Social entrepreneur, Chido Govera, gave us examples of technical skills-sharing involving diaspora, local organisations, local

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22 The Movement for Community-Led Development (UKA0175) section 1

23 ICAI (UKA0212)

24 Center for Global Development (UKA0157)

25 See, for example, Mr John Lowrie (Retired Human Rights and Development Worker at Nomad RSI) (UKA0001); Systemic Innovation Ltd (UKA0009) section 3, para 2; Humanitarian Finance Forum (UKA0164); The Movement for Community-Led Development (UKA0175)

governments and research institutes in higher-income countries.<sup>26</sup> A narrow focus on simply exporting UK expertise is likely to promote a paternalistic image of the UK and achieve little lasting change. As with the other shifts, it is not clear how flexible the FCDO will be to adjust in line with partners' priorities.<sup>27</sup>

- 13.** We understand from the Equalities Impact Assessment, shared in March 2026, that Centrally Managed Programmes will be reduced by approximately 42%.<sup>28</sup> It is our understanding that the new Communities of Expertise will have some funding available to them but that this will be primarily targeted at providing UK expertise in line with the portfolio strategies of FCDO missions.<sup>29</sup> Whist the Foreign Secretary provided reassurance that there would be ministerial oversight of the larger portfolios, it is not clear to us what structures will ensure coherency and quality across the breadth of development activity.<sup>30</sup>

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26 Q203

27 Center for Global Development (UKA0157) section 3

28 FCDO, Impact assessment: FCDO multi-year Official Development Assistance programme allocations 2026–2027 to 2028–2029: equality impact assessment, gov.uk, 19 March 2026

29 Q246–Q247 [Yvette Cooper]

30 Q251 [Yvette Cooper]

## From international intervention to local leadership

14. The shift *from international intervention to local leadership* is welcome. The response to our interim report goes some way to clarifying that local leadership does involve civil society as well as governments. However, these definitions remain vague. We have seen no defined development targets for this as a delivery mechanism or as a way of working.
15. Support of each of the above groups will require a re-think of the way the FCDO approaches its in-house expertise, grant-making processes and oversight, as well as monitoring and evaluation.<sup>31</sup> It is also important to understand the approach of the FCDO in cases where partners have limited governance capacity. For example, the Department needs to carefully understand the risks of circumventing the capacity building stage of the partnership-building process, such as the shift of responsibility to external implementers.<sup>32</sup>

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31 See, for example, SIDCN (UKA0091) question 1

32 As described by the University of Glasgow (UKA0154) para 5; see also, Byron Hyde (Academic at Bangor University) (UKA0171)

# Multilateral relationships

- 16.** The Government says it believes programme spending through multilateral mechanisms provides the most impact for each pound spent versus bilateral programming.<sup>33</sup> Advantages to multilateral funding cited by the Government include:
- to maintain viability of the multilateral system by keeping a critical mass of support and leading by example;<sup>34</sup>
  - wide geographical spread, good expertise, good relationships;<sup>35</sup>
  - large contributions and “excellent” teams, the ability to gain influence in reform processes;<sup>36</sup>
  - multilaterals are able to “leverage” greater levels of funding for each pound of UK contribution.<sup>37</sup>
- 17.** As outlined in our interim report, we are unsure how the Government has made the choices it has regarding which multilateral mechanisms to support and how it will communicate them. The Foreign Secretary sought to reassure us that a “partial review” had been carried out, and Baroness Chapman explained that multilateral funding commitments came with

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33 Q114 [Baroness Chapman]

34 Q114 [Baroness Chapman]

35 Q114 [Baroness Chapman]

36 Q114 [Baroness Chapman]; Q11 [Nick Dyer]

37 Q114 [Baroness Chapman]; Q9 [Sir Oliver Robbins]

expectations upon which future funding would be contingent.<sup>38</sup> However, neither of these activities are public.

18. We were reassured by the correspondence from Minister Chapman following our evidence session with her, confirming that there is indeed an “evidence driven communication plan”.<sup>39</sup> However, greater detail on the opportunities for other stakeholders to participate in this plan is needed.
19. Closely linked to this is the level of transparency of funding through multilateral mechanisms. A number of contributors to our inquiry called for the UK to push for greater transparency from multilateral organisations.<sup>40</sup> Transparency will be crucial to highlight how, within the Government’s decision to reduce overall levels of ODA, effective ‘multiplier effect’ investments can still be delivered at scale. This is especially the case with initiatives such as GAVI, The Global Fund, and Child Nutrition Fund, which time and again have demonstrated effectiveness. Without a clear indication of the impact that UK contributions make through multilaterals, the ability to communicate value for money to key stakeholders is limited.<sup>41</sup> This is particularly important in the face of criticism that the operating costs for multilateral

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38 Q271 [Yvette Cooper] and Q272 [Baroness Chapman]

39 Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (UKA0217)

40 See, for example, Oxford Policy Management (UKA0160); Christian Aid (UKA0026) on UN reform; Restless Development (UKA0041); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (UKA0206); Results UK (UKA0050) Q4

41 Oxford Policy Management (UKA0160)

organisations are higher than other delivery options including International NGOs (INGOs) and local civil society organisations.<sup>42</sup>

- 20.** Comments by Baroness Chapman compound our concerns that the process of structural changes within the FCDO leaves teams managing multilateral relationships vulnerable to cuts.<sup>43</sup> If the FCDO is to both “retain” and “increase” the expertise needed to influence multilateral reform, synchronising is needed between the FCDO2030 skills audit and the skills requirement to manage this multi-billion-pound portfolio.

## The involvement of private contractors and International NGOs

- 21.** There has been limited attention paid to the role of INGOs and private contractors in the plans that the Government has released. For example, the only mention of the UK’s INGO sector in the course of the Foreign Minister’s statement was regarding two specific mine clearing charities.<sup>44</sup> Clarity is urgently needed on how the FCDO will engage with these stakeholders as there are important implications for

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42 Oxford Policy Management (UKA0160)

43 Q267

44 FCDO, Press release: Foreign Secretary sets out new innovative development reforms, gov.uk, 19 March 2026

value for money, for rebuilding the public case for international aid, and the ecosystem that supports other ODA-funded activities.

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## 2 Towards clarity

**22.** The Government has described the changes it is making to the UK's approach to aid and development assistance as a “reset” and its approach as “modern”.<sup>45</sup> The limited information shared with us on this approach contains the components for a transformative and empowering approach to many of the challenges faced by the UK's partners. However, the level of detail on how various priorities and approaches will work together for a coherent policy, and the evidence base for the decisions that have been made, is woefully inadequate. This stifles effective and essential scrutiny. It leaves partners and the public uncertain as to what to expect from the Government.

**23.** We echo ICAI's recommendation that:

The UK should put in place a strategic, evidence-based, comprehensive and transparent approach to the allocation of ODA budgets across government departments, based on a viable framework for achieving long-term value for money.<sup>46</sup>

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45 Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (UKA0196)

46 ICAI, Report: Management of the official development assistance spending target, 12 March 2026, Recommendation 1

## **24. CONCLUSION**

In the coming months we expect to see much greater transparency from the Government over the evidence base for its newly articulated approach to international relief and development and the tangible impact it expects this to have. We anticipate more information on how it intends to communicate both the approach and its results, and how the various components will be brought together to form a coherent policy.

## **25. RECOMMENDATION**

In its response to this report, we request the Government provides more detail on its approach in areas where this is sorely lacking, and clarify its own policy position. This will serve to reassure Parliament, the sector, and the public that the policy announcements made to date are part of a coherent approach to ODA programming and work as part of a clear theory of change. Specifically, the Government must:

- a.** Outline the evidence base for the “four essential shifts” and how this will be used to evaluate their success. A clear qualitative and quantitative description of what success looks like is required and over what time scale. It should also include a model for how development partnerships are envisaged to operate with clearly defined roles for FCDO missions, external stakeholders and departmental support.

- b.** Provide a description of its approach to engaging with multilaterals with an evidence base for the choices of which organisations and mechanisms it will invest in, prioritising institutions with a proven track record of delivery. This should be accompanied by a measurable and time-bound plan for reform and a detailed approach for how alignment with UK priorities will be achieved.
- c.** Set out an account of the risk and impact assessment exercises, beyond the Equalities Risk Assessment, that the Department has undertaken around the reductions and reprioritising of ODA. This should include details of the measures taken to mitigate risks, including: discussions with other ODA-delivering countries; communication with bilateral development partners; and intentional efforts to ensure the UK's multilateral contributions fill the gaps left by the reprioritising of bilateral ODA.
- d.** Present a clear strategy for how the Government will engage with civil society in the UK around development challenges. Specifically, how the Government will work to ensure the energy and resources of diaspora groups and UK-based NGOs complement its own priorities for the spending of ODA.

## **26. CONCLUSION**

From the evidence we have received, and applying it to what we know of the Government's approach, we have prepared a document to convert the Government's ambitions into a policy to alleviate poverty. This outlines some of the key considerations that will need to be borne in mind as the Government's aspirations are translated into practical policies.

## **27. RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that the Government considers Appendix 1 as a working policy document for its approach to aid and development. In its response, we request that the Government indicates where it agrees or disagrees with the Committee's policy paper and why.

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# Conclusions and recommendations

## Towards clarity

1. In the coming months we expect to see much greater transparency from the Government over the evidence base for its newly articulated approach to international relief and development and the tangible impact it expects this to have. We anticipate more information on how it intends to communicate both the approach and its results, and how the various components will be brought together to form a coherent policy. (Conclusion, Paragraph 24)
2. In its response to this report, we request the Government provides more detail on its approach in areas where this is sorely lacking, and clarify its own policy position. This will serve to reassure Parliament, the sector, and the public that the policy announcements made to date are part of a coherent approach to ODA programming and work as part of a clear theory of change. Specifically, the Government must:
  - a. Outline the evidence base for the “four essential shifts” and how this will be used to evaluate their success. A clear qualitative and quantitative description of what success looks like is required

and over what time scale. It should also include a model for how development partnerships are envisaged to operate with clearly defined roles for FCDO missions, external stakeholders and departmental support.

- b.** Provide a description of its approach to engaging with multilaterals with an evidence base for the choices of which organisations and mechanisms it will invest in, prioritising institutions with a proven track record of delivery. This should be accompanied by a measurable and time-bound plan for reform and a detailed approach for how alignment with UK priorities will be achieved.
- c.** Set out an account of the risk and impact assessment exercises, beyond the Equalities Risk Assessment, that the Department has undertaken around the reductions and reprioritising of ODA. This should include details of the measures taken to mitigate risks, including: discussions with other ODA-delivering countries; communication with bilateral development partners; and intentional efforts to ensure the UK's multilateral contributions fill the gaps left by the reprioritising of bilateral ODA.
- d.** Present a clear strategy for how the Government will engage with civil society in the UK around development challenges. Specifically, how the Government will work to ensure the energy and resources of diaspora

groups and UK-based NGOs complement its own priorities for the spending of ODA.  
(Recommendation, Paragraph 25)

3. From the evidence we have received, and applying it to what we know of the Government's approach, we have prepared a document to convert the Government's ambitions into a policy to alleviate poverty. This outlines some of the key considerations that will need to be borne in mind as the Government's aspirations are translated into practical policies.  
(Conclusion, Paragraph 26)
4. We recommend that the Government considers Appendix 1 as a working policy document for its approach to aid and development. In its response, we request that the Government indicates where it agrees or disagrees with the Committee's policy paper and why. (Recommendation, Paragraph 27)

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# Appendix 1: A Working Policy Paper for the Future of UK Aid and Development Assistance

## A strategic necessity: the place for development assistance in a fracturing world

1. The world is experiencing increasing numbers of humanitarian crises and protracted conflicts. International consensus on the Rules-Based International Order and International Humanitarian Law is fracturing. Countries that do not share the UK's values are seeking to undermine its influence amongst long-term friends and partners. In this world, aid and development assistance is of huge strategic value to the UK—a safer world is a safer Britain. Building resilience in fragile states and ecosystems

improves the quality of life of today's extreme poor. It contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals and lays the foundations of a stable and prosperous world.<sup>47</sup> Critically, the spending of the UK's Official Development Assistance is preventative—by investing in the capacity of its partners now, greater domestic and international costs (financial and otherwise) in the future are saved.

- 2.** Development assistance, within the provisions of the International Development Act 2002 and other international commitments,<sup>48</sup> supports the progress of future allies and trading partners.<sup>49</sup> It enables the Government to be more forward-looking and agile in an unpredictable world, drawing on the relationships and data generated through development partnerships and humanitarian relief.<sup>50</sup> It has the potential to improve the UK's standing, whilst promoting values that the UK holds in high esteem.<sup>51</sup>

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47 See, for example, SIDA - Scotland's International Development Alliance (UKA0032); Restless Development (UKA0041); Plan International UK (UKA0074); Oxfam GB (UKA0078)

48 Some key agreements include the Bridgetown Agenda, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework for 2030 and 2050, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

49 On the strategic benefits see Foreign Policy Centre (UKA0209) para 17

50 See, for example, Coalition for Global Prosperity (UKA0076); Kivu International (UKA0108) paras 3–4; Dr Daniel Cash (Associate Professor at Aston University) (UKA0004)

51 See, for example, International Rescue Committee (UKA0117); IFES (UKA0025); Global Public Investment Network (UKA0092). For more on the discussion around defining British values see Foreign Policy Centre (UKA0209) para 16–17

It enables the kind of collaboration needed to prevent risks to the UK's national security, such as the collapse of critical ecosystems, health threats and food insecurity.<sup>52</sup>

- 3. Using ODA for in-country refugee costs is the antithesis of this proactive and strategic approach to aid. Whilst it is important the refugees in the UK continue to be supported, it must be the priority of the Government to de-classify these costs as ODA. The money the Government allocates to ODA should be used to provide assistance overseas.<sup>53</sup> Safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that this situation cannot be repeated in the future.**
- 4.** Focussing on global health, women and girls, and climate and nature recognises the strategic importance of these issues to UK interests. However, it should be acknowledged that progress toward other Sustainable Development Goals, whether they be related to education, food systems, water and

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52 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security: a national security assessment, gov.uk, 2 February 2026. See, for example, Dr Dilek Celebi (Lecturer at Bingol University) (UKA0039) q3; Coalition for Global Prosperity (UKA0076); Eleanor Crook Foundation (UKA0087); Chatham House, UK in the World programme (UKA0168) para 2. See also recommendations in 3rd Report - The Government's efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger para 34

53 7th Report – Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance C&R paras 12–15; ICAI, Report: Management of the official development assistance spending target, 12 March 2026

sanitation, governance, or others, is interconnected.<sup>54</sup> Progress in one will be dependent on progress in the others. Policy, programming and partnerships should be holistic—recognising these relationships in their design—if they are to be truly preventative of future instability.<sup>55</sup>

5. It is inevitable that, with the reduction of ODA to 0.3% of GNI, some of these interconnected issues will receive less or no programme funding from the UK Government. This poses a risk to the effectiveness of work on the issues still receiving UK support. The Government needs to be deliberate about using its diplomatic convening power to coordinate funding from other public and private sources, as well as from its allies, to ensure continued investment in areas it has deprioritised.

## The strategic role of the UK's overseas network

6. Badly designed and delivered development and humanitarian assistance is bad for the UK. It carries risks to those it is designed to serve and reputational risk to the UK Government.<sup>56</sup> Missions must, therefore,

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54 3rd Report - The Government's efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger para 8

55 See, for example, The Downforce Trust (UKA0079) Summary; Dr Irene Morlino (Visiting Fellow in International Relations at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)) section 6; 6th report - The FCDO's Approach to Displaced People paras 8–9

56 Professor Martin Scott (Professor of Media and Global Development at University of East Anglia, School of Global Development) (UKA0013) para 2.0; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) UK

have access to in-house expertise both on the ground and through a centralised mechanism.<sup>57</sup> This needs to be thematic and geographic, in terms of a localised understanding of the context.<sup>58</sup> Local staff are critical for achieving effective projects that represent value for money.

7. Development assistance can be particularly effective in contexts where the UK has strong convening power and a strong diplomatic relationship with the governments it engages with.<sup>59</sup> UK diplomatic missions must, therefore, have the autonomy needed to design programmes and spend ODA within the Government's wider policy framework. This will enable diplomatic missions to ensure development assistance delivers the most benefit to the extreme poor in its host country. It will help ensure that programming and diplomacy serve the shared interests of both the UK and its partner societies and governments.<sup>60</sup>
8. To enable transformational partnerships, the preference in bilateral funding must lean towards interventions designed and delivered by the FCDO in-country. Missions must have the structures and independence to approve programmes administered centrally (whether Centrally Managed Programmes

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(UKA0150) paras 4.4 and 4.5

57 See, for example, Hleb Buziuk (Independent policy researcher and human-rights advocate at FairGo CIC) (UKA0038) para 5.7.; Action for Sustainable Development (UKA0029)

58 Restless Development (UKA0041); Results UK (UKA0050) q2

59 See, for example, Chatham House, UK in the World programme (UKA0168) para 2.c.; Adam Smith International (UKA0207) q6

60 Ecorys UK Limited (UKA0123) q1

(CMP) or by Communities of Expertise) based on locally identified strategic priorities and understanding of the local development context. Missions must also have the freedom and expertise to assess the impact of such programmes. This requires careful staff planning to mitigate proposed 42% cuts to Centrally Managed Programmes as well as intentional communication between personnel in-country and the central programme managers.<sup>61</sup>

9. Where missions across a region or thematic area have identified shared opportunities and solutions, collaboration should be encouraged. This should be both through the availability of funding and of shared expertise, whether in the region or in the UK.

## Leaving no-one behind

10. Upholding the rights of marginalised groups, as well as realising the potential of women and girls in both achieving societal resilience and development, should remain a strategic priority for the Government.<sup>62</sup> The rights of women and girls are being contested and weaponised against civil society.<sup>63</sup> So called anti-rights rhetoric is also being used to undermine the

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61 See 3rd Report - The Government's efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger para 54, 85.e.

62 For examples of strategic benefits of focussing on women and girls see World Vision UK (UKA0188) paras 19–20. See also 6th report - The FCDO's Approach to Displaced People paras 14–15

63 Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (UKA0055); Plan International UK (UKA0074); CARE International UK (UKA0165)

UK's reputation by its adversaries.<sup>64</sup> Empowerment needs to be at the core of the Government's theory of change.<sup>65</sup> Focus on these groups is integral to the solving of proximate development challenges, and preventing the drivers of instability in the future.

11. To counter roll-back of rights, the FCDO must have the expertise and resources to empower marginalised groups in decision-making forums, as well the ability to equip them in their efforts to bring about lasting change in their communities.<sup>66</sup> The Government should communicate to the UK public in a way that links the importance of empowering women and girls within a context of traditional development priorities (such as WASH and education).<sup>67</sup>
12. In addition, progress on the inclusion of disabled people and older people in development programming and discourse is at risk of regressing as sensitive and specific funding is being sidelined.<sup>68</sup> The UK needs to ensure that all of its programming and diplomatic activities are sensitive to the needs of disabled people and older people. It should look for

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64 See, for example, Foreign Affairs Committee, Tenth Report of Session 2022–23, *Countries at crossroads: UK engagement in Central Asia*, HC1158, para 48

65 See, for example, Plan International UK (UKA0074); Eleanor Crook Foundation (UKA0087)

66 See, for example, CARE International UK (UKA0165); GADN Humanitarian Working Group (UKA0186)

67 See, for example, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (UKA0053)

68 See, for example, Age International (UKA0080) para 6; CBM UK (Global Disability Inclusion) (UKA0063) para A.a.i.; BOND Disability and Development Group (UKA0187) para 1.2

opportunities to amplify these voices, as well as those of other marginalised groups, including LGBTQI+ communities.<sup>69</sup>

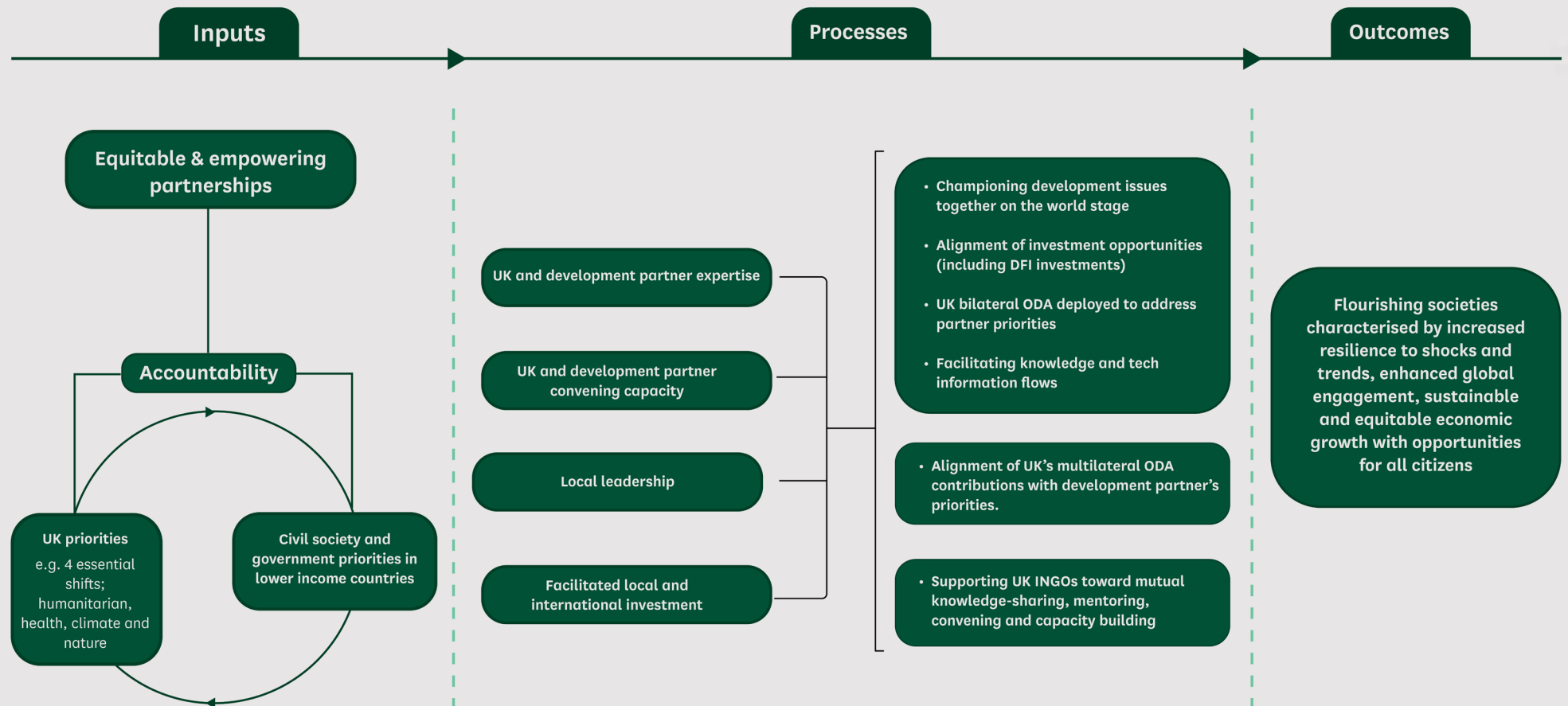
## **A blueprint for strategic engagement: opportunities within the “four essential shifts”**

- 13.** Fundamentally, we do not disagree with any of the “four essential shifts” and have made recommendations for their implementation below. However, the Government has a difficult line to walk to maintain its commitment to work in genuine partnership with lower-income countries, whilst providing support to systems and technical assistance.
- 14.** Figure 1 suggests a model for partnership agreements that utilises the combined tools available to the UK Government to work together on mutually significant development challenges.

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69 On older people, see for example Age International (UKA0080); on disability, see for example BOND Disability and Development Group (UKA0187)

# Model for the UK's bilateral development partnerships



## From donor to investor

- 15.** Economic growth that creates transformative employment opportunities is a priority for the UK Government and its development partners.<sup>70</sup> As laid out in plans such as the Bridgetown Agenda, there is potential for the mobilisation of private sector finance to support investment in infrastructure and services that will enhance the lives of the extreme poor.<sup>71</sup> It is vital that the Government remains responsive to the concerns of all stakeholders who have a part to play in this process, including emerging market investment firms, development finance institutions, multilateral development banks, civil society and inter-governmental partners.<sup>72</sup>
- 16.** Complacency in assuming that this approach is without limitations should be guarded against. Action must be taken to mitigate and address the most important challenges, which include:
- a.** UK tax regimes have not always incentivised investment in emerging markets. The Government will need to provide the necessary incentives for private sector investors to operate effectively in this space, legislating where

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70 Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (UKA0196); London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (UKA0010) conclusion; International Organization for Migration (UKA0083) para 5

71 See, for example, Palladium (UKA0193); Humanitarian Finance Forum (UKA0164)

72 See, for example, GADN (UKA0095); Results UK (UKA0050) q1; JAGANNATH GROWERS (UKA0064); GSK (and ViiV Healthcare) (UKA0103)

necessary.<sup>73</sup> Closely linked to this, more needs to be done to catalyse local investment both for commercial return and encourage corporate social responsibility.<sup>74</sup>

- b.** Local investment ecosystems are not always attractive to investors. The UK may have opportunities to support the development of local investment ecosystems—this will be important for the attraction of further investment.<sup>75</sup>
- c.** There is a risk that a plethora of UK-supported investment initiatives will emerge in a given country, resulting in duplication and the crowding out of local investors. To mitigate against this, and in the interests of greater strategic alignment, the Government should propose measures to allow the FCDO a seat on the Board of BII. In addition, wherever possible, collaboration with local commercial actors needs to be prioritised.<sup>76</sup> UK investment, whether through DFIs, development banks, or other mechanisms must avoid establishing costly parallel structures which are less likely to capture the local relationships required for success.<sup>77</sup> Country-level investment boards

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73 See, for example, Center for Global Development (UKA0157); AgDevCo Ltd (UKA0067)

74 See, for example, Ultra Philanthropy (UKA0066); Plan International UK (UKA0074); Mr David Radford (UKA0195)

75 See for example, Global Partners Governance (UKA0208) section 1

76 ODI Global (UKA0185)

77 See, for example, Ecorys UK Limited (UKA0123) q4

ought to be established to help coordinate the various investment activities supported by the Government—ensuring development objectives are integrated.<sup>78</sup> As part of this approach, attention should be paid to rationalise and refocus the glut of financial engagements the Government is engaged with.<sup>79</sup>

- d. Not all investments have an automatic “trickle down” impact to the extreme poor and most vulnerable groups in society.<sup>80</sup> Other forms of programming, such as work with civil society, needs to be synchronised with higher-level investment to avoid groups being left behind. This requires funding.<sup>81</sup>
- e. There is not always a developed pipeline of “bankable” projects. Careful consideration is needed around how the Government will support the development of such a pipeline.<sup>82</sup> This should include consideration of how valuable programmes, such as Manufacturing Africa, interact with other ODA-supported initiatives,

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78 Systemic Innovation Ltd (UKA0009) section 6

79 Dr Jim Ackers (UKA0213)

80 See, for example, ActionAid UK (UKA0099) q7

81 Sightsavers (UKA0096) underlines the importance of underpinning investments with core principles to promote equitable practices; Dr Megha Kashyap (Research Fellow at London South Bank University); Ipsita Divedi (Researcher at Freelance) (UKA0005)

82 Adam Smith International (UKA0207) q7

such as BII.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, it must continue to support reform within the legal and legislative frameworks of its partner countries, improving attractiveness of the investment environment and reducing risks.<sup>84</sup>

- f.** Far too much money leaves developing countries each year through illicit means.<sup>85</sup> The Government must be ruthless in its efforts to end illicit finance practices, in the UK Crown Dependencies, Overseas Territories and elsewhere, that undermine its attempts to support equitable development through investment—this requires targeted programming and political will.<sup>86</sup> Where investments are misappropriated, the Government ought to pursue their recovery—or be ready to explain to the public why recovery was not possible.<sup>87</sup>
- g.** There is a risk that a larger proportion of funds and attention will be diverted to relatively stable middle-income countries given their capacity to

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83 TLG Capital (UKA0181) section 5; For evidence relating to Manufacturing Africa see Loop Pet Food (UKA0109); JAGANNATH GROWERS (UKA0064); ASSET GREEN LTD (UKA0140); BDO LLP (UKA0114)

84 Systemic Innovation Ltd (UKA0009) section 6

85 Q81 [Professor Mawdsley]

86 See, for example, GADN (UKA0095) para 1 and 2; SIDA (UKA0032) recommended a Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights to curb illicit finance flows; Mike Buckley (UKA0182) para 7.2

87 Q212 [Luke Tryl]

manage such arrangements.<sup>88</sup> For development finance to be universally effective and just, it cannot simply be directed to the UK's would-be friends or trading partners.<sup>89</sup> The Government should be aware of this risk, putting in place “guard rails” that ensure ODA-enabled finance is prioritised to fragile states and in the interests of the extreme poor.<sup>90</sup>

## From service delivery to systems support

- 17.** We agree with the sentiment behind the shift from service delivery to systems support. However, as mentioned above, the efforts to improve the strategic impact of UK ODA must not be at the expense of the extreme poor.

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88 See, for example, Dr Melita Lazell (Associate Professor in Political Economy and Development at University of Portsmouth) and Dr Ivica Petrikova (Associate Professor in International Relations at Royal Holloway, University of London) (UKA0139) section 2

89 Mercy Corps (UKA0049) emphasise the importance of pre-emptive investment in fragile contexts but warn of the dangers of debt “recovery traps”.

90 ICAI (UKA0212) suggested that there is “little evidence poorer and more vulnerable groups are benefiting directly” from the UK’s bilateral development finance investment approach. Christian Aid (UKA0026, para 5) examines the ineffectiveness of DFIs at reaching climate vulnerable communities; Ecorys UK Limited (UKA0123)

- 18.** There are many reforms to national and international conventions that would improve the fiscal conditions for the world's poorest governments. Specifically, the Government should consider:
- a.** Supporting conventions to create a framework for fairer international tax rules;<sup>91</sup>
  - b.** Actively seeking opportunities to improve the national revenue capacities of its partner countries;<sup>92</sup>
  - c.** Championing changes to the Common Framework for Debt Treatments, a mechanism for supporting lower-income countries with debt restructurings.<sup>93</sup> This should be accompanied by associated strengthening of UK legislation and multilateral mechanisms to operationalise the changes.<sup>94</sup>

## From grants to expertise

- 19.** The UK has invaluable resources in terms of its expertise. This expertise, where sensitively applied, can effectively support development processes

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91 See, for example, Christian Aid (UKA0026) para 7; SIDA (UKA0032); Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (UKA0068); Plan International UK (UKA0074)

92 See, for example, International Centre for Tax and Development (UKA0030); IDS (UKA0068)

93 Club de Paris, The G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the DSSI, [On-line] Accessed 13 March 2026

94 For details of proposed changes see Debt Justice (UKA0051) para 23. a). See also Christian Aid (UKA0026) para 21; Bond (UKA0177)

amongst partners.<sup>95</sup> Much of it is held in diaspora communities working, for example, in the NHS and academia.<sup>96</sup> As an aspiring leader in the Artificial Intelligence and tech sphere, the UK has much to offer in terms of supporting the equitable development and use of new technologies in partner countries—maximising the opportunities and minimising the risks.<sup>97</sup> There is potential for the sharing of such expertise with development partners, whether governmental or non-governmental. Over the next six months, the Government should consult on how to engage UK skills and tech understanding in the development space, and publish a strategy for how it will enable such leverage to happen.<sup>98</sup>

- 20.** There is tremendous potential for UK research and development (R&D) institutions to be at the heart of innovative solutions to tackle global poverty and

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95 See, for example, Professor Diana Miltin (Professor of Global Urbanism at The University of Manchester) (UKA0007)

96 See, for example, Dr Jennifer Melvin (Guest Teacher in International Development at Department of International Development, London School of Economics) (UKA0192); Dr Julia Wright (Associate Professor at Coventry University) (UKA0085) para 4; Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (ACAA) (UKA0125); Muslim Charities Forum (UKA0179); Unlimit Health, UK Coalition against NTDs (UKA0183)

97 See, for example, Dr Paul Richard Kelly (Associate Professor / Lecturer in Organisation Studies at University of Essex) (UKA0052) para 2.3 and 3.3; GSK (and ViiV Healthcare) (UKA0103) para 2.b.

98 For more specifics on component and design processes see Dr Jennifer Melvin (UKA0192)

prevent threats to UK and global stability.<sup>99</sup> Research should be directed by the UK's specific areas of specialism and the expressed needs of development partners.<sup>100</sup> Research programmes should be carried out in partnership with institutions in development partner countries in the spirit of mutual learning and cooperation.<sup>101</sup> A cross-Government approach to catalysing research and development will be needed. This must incorporate the leveraging of private and public financial investment.<sup>102</sup> It will also need to focus on non-financial incentives for the growth of the R&D sector.<sup>103</sup>

- 21.** The exchange of such technical skills sharing must be approached with humility, understanding that there is a wealth of innovation and excellence amongst the UK's development partners that it could also learn

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99 See, for example, IDS (UKA0068) paras 1.3.4–1.3.5; Impact Global Health (UKA0128) “Key takeaways”. See also 3rd Report - The Government's efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger paras 74–75

100 See, for example, Global Cooperation / Kooperation Global (UKA0149) para 11

101 See, for example, Wellcome Trust (UKA0069); The Open University (UKA0162) paras 3.2–3.3; 7th Report – Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance C&R para 27 and 28

102 For the role of philanthropic organisations see Eleanor Crook Foundation (UKA0087), The One Foundation (UKA0122) and UNDP (UKA0206). Where philanthropy is engaged Hleb Buziuk (UKA0038) and Dr Megha Kashyap and Ipsita Divedi (UKA0005) make recommendations around ethical and due diligence guidelines.

103 GSK (and ViiV Healthcare) (UKA0103) para 5.c.

from.<sup>104</sup> Partnerships must be mutually supportive and co-designed and there should be guard-rails, in the form of guidance and criteria, within which FCDO missions can work. Such programmes have been shown to work best when there have been appropriate intermediary advisors within the FCDO who can provide the linkage between UK institutions and partners in lower-income countries.<sup>105</sup> In this regard, a proper staffing plan is required from the FCDO to protect valuable in-house expertise—such as, for example, the East Kilbride office—from the 42% cuts facing Centrally Managed Programmes.

## From international intervention to local provision

It is not enough to just give funding to people. We need to be able to help design the way that funding is disseminated, because we know best what our communities need and how that should be disseminated. *Young feminist activist, Sapphire Alexander, Trinidad and Tobago*<sup>106</sup>

- 22.** Given the new reality the UK Government operates in, a diminished donor in a world of diminishing ODA, it is time locally-led action is prioritised as the

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104 Hleb Buziuk (UKA0038); Dr Liliane Binego and Dr Julia Wright (UKA0085); Oxford Policy Management (UKA0160)

105 ICAI (UKA0212)

106 Young feminist activist, Sapphire Alexander, from Trinidad and Tobago Q198

primary means of grassroots poverty alleviation.<sup>107</sup>

The ambition should apply to UK partnerships with civil society, governments, diaspora groups and local businesses. It must also occupy an elevated position in the delivery of humanitarian relief. However, to ensure locally-led action is appropriately prioritised, the FCDO should ensure that a workable definition of a “local actor” is in place and that planned staffing cuts do not imperil its ability to identify local capacity on the ground. Ultimately, the Government needs to trust the wisdom and commitment of local leadership.<sup>108</sup>

- 23.** A cultural shift will be needed within the FCDO—a shift which sees innovative approaches applied to the questions of due diligence and accountability.<sup>109</sup> It will require, in some situations, an increased appetite to support higher-risk projects and civil society initiatives.<sup>110</sup> There will need to be a concerted effort to empower UK Government officials on the ground to work with local organisations to ensure expectations

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107 See Start Network (UKA0147) para 9 and Bond (UKA0177) for benefits of locally led humanitarian actions. See also, 7th Report – Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO’s Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance C&R paras 20–22; 3rd Report - The Government’s efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger para 60

108 Q201 [Finnin Ali]

109 See, for example, Hleb Buziuk (UKA0038) para 5.2. In its report on value for money the Committee said: “Whilst we recognise and agree that MEL is vital for ensuring VfM, this should not be at the expense of using local organisations.” 7th Report – Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO’s Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance C&R paras 32–33

110 See, for example, Concern Worldwide UK (UKA0027) para 14

on both sides are realistic and achievable.<sup>111</sup> Built into these relationships should be a strong emphasis on supporting self-reliance of local NGOs and preventing, rather than creating, dependency.<sup>112</sup> This will require participatory funding application processes which provide predictable long-term funding, enabling the building of institutions. This funding needs to be flexible and include support for the core costs of local organisations.<sup>113</sup>

- 24.** Creating effective mutually-beneficial partnerships, where the UK listens and responds to its partners, will require engagement platforms, re-design of grant management systems, and appropriate feedback mechanisms.<sup>114</sup> Resulting structures will need, where possible, to build in the tracking of activities of other donors, partner Governments and INGOs to avoid confusing messages and duplication.<sup>115</sup> Such tracking is possible by helping local organisations establish relationships with these stakeholders and enabling reform of existing coordination mechanisms. These should not be imposed upon partners but instead led by them with UK Government support.

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111 See, for example, Action for Sustainable Development (UKA0029) para 5; Hleb Buziuk (UKA0038) para 5.7; Plan International UK (UKA0074); CAFOD (UKA0174)

112 Mr David Radford (UKA0195); Q197 [Chido Govera]

113 See, for example, Q199 [Sapphire Alexander]

114 See, for example, Catalyst Now (UKA0014) para 4.2.; Christian Aid (UKA0026) para 2; Dr Dilek Celebi (UKA0039) q2; Small International Development Charities Network (SIDCN) (UKA0091) recommendation 6; Ecorys UK Limited (UKA0123); CARE International UK (UKA0165) section 2

115 Q197 and Q203 [Chido Govera]

- 25.** Diaspora groups in the UK are often well connected to locally-led action in partner countries: raising funding, providing volunteers, and acting as advocates. There are opportunities for the Government to work with these groups to inform UK partnerships and supplement ODA funding.<sup>116</sup> There should be a clear approach from the Government to mapping the activities of these groups and engaging with them around locally led engagement from the Government.<sup>117</sup>
- 26.** Adopting this trajectory will require investment in staff and resourcing for local NGOs that goes beyond costs related to specific interventions. Beyond ODA grants, the UK Government should seek to create, or gain access to, platforms for local partners to speak and be listened to. This investment will pay off in terms of value for money and creating sustainable change. To this end, local civil society voices must be at the heart of the UK's international conference on development in May 2026.<sup>118</sup> This conference is an opportunity to launch the development of a local leadership strategy across Government departments to centre local and diaspora insights in its relief and development activities.<sup>119</sup>

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116 See, for example, ACAA (UKA0125)

117 For specific guidance on such a strategy see Dr Jennifer Melvin (UKA0192)

118 CAFOD (UKA0174)

119 Bond (UKA0177)

## Local leadership in crisis contexts

[ ... ] in countries like Nigeria crises are no longer temporary; they are recurrent and overlapping. Relief is essential, but when it is not connected to longer-term systems like livelihood, local markets, skills, employment, nutrition and overall health, communities will remain vulnerable. *Youth activist and mobiliser, Finian Ali from Nigeria*<sup>120</sup>

- 27.** We acknowledge that for many local organisations there is no distinction between humanitarian need and ongoing development within the communities they serve.<sup>121</sup> The Government would do well to learn lessons from this reality when designing funding mechanisms for crises and enabling the building of resilience to prevent them.<sup>122</sup>
- 28.** When responding to crises, local government, NGOs and civil society groups should be prioritised as the responders of preference.<sup>123</sup> They should also lead in the design of responses.<sup>124</sup> In some situations, this may mean the direct support of local NGOs by the FCDO; in others it may mean engaging intermediaries such as multilaterals, international NGOs, and

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120 Youth activists and mobiliser, Finian Ali from Nigeria Q200

121 See, for example, Q198 and Q199 [Sapphire Alexander]; Q203 [Chido Govera]

122 See, for example, IDS (UKA0068) 1.3.2.; for specific action points see Dr Irene Morlino (UKA0097) section 4; Humanitarian Learning Centre (HLC), Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (UKA0098)

123 See, for example, Start Network (UKA0147) para 4.b.; International Committee of the Red Cross ICRC (UKA0189) para 13.a.

124 The Movement for Community-Led Development (UKA0175) section 2

private contractors.<sup>125</sup> The FCDO needs to ensure that those who are delivering UK ODA have the resources required for security risk management and trauma related support, in line with the recommendations made by the Committee's fifth report of the 2024–2025 session, on upholding International Humanitarian Law.<sup>126</sup> The continued championing of International Humanitarian Law by the UK in multilateral forums is essential for keeping humanitarians, and those they serve, safe.<sup>127</sup>

- 29.** However, in these situations, it is vital that the UK works with local NGOs to maximise their voices in every decision-making forum, empowering them to shape the interventions.<sup>128</sup> Involvement of intermediaries should be kept on the terms of the local partner and steps should be taken to ensure these are empowering relationships—not ones that perpetuate structural inequalities, such as funding routes that rely on personal relationships, or vastly inequitable administration costs.<sup>129</sup>

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125 See, for example, RINGO Project (UKA0017); The Share Trust (UKA0211)

126 5th Report - Protection not permission: The UK's role in upholding international humanitarian law and supporting the safe delivery of humanitarian aid C&R paras 33–51

127 See 5th Report - Protection not permission: The UK's role in upholding international humanitarian law and supporting the safe delivery of humanitarian aid C&R 1–32. See also, ICRC (UKA0189)

128 ICRC (UKA0189) para 10

129 For specific recommendations on how to incentivise intermediaries toward empowering relationships see The Share Trust (UKA0211). See also, Dr Hamid Foroughi, Miss Waris (UKA0130) section 1;

30. The UK will need to use its leverage as a donor, and as UN Security Council pen-holder where relevant, to upturn the existing structures.<sup>130</sup> In the absence of USAID, the UK can lead in this area—using its convening power within the UN to ensure that the current Humanitarian Reset places the priorities of actors from the countries and regions facing crisis at the heart of its decision-making processes.<sup>131</sup> Specifically, the significant changes in US policy priorities require much greater coordination among other countries and a great focus on engaging philanthropies. Further, the UK Government has to make its voice heard when it comes to initiatives contrary to its positions.

## Partnership over paternalism

31. We agree with the philosophy of *partnership over paternalism*. However, when applied to partnership with governments, expectations are variable. When there are strong and equal partnerships with a national government which is already taking a strategic approach to development, systems strengthening and technical assistance can be hugely impactful and equitable. However, these preconditions do not exist in every situation where there is a need for development assistance.<sup>132</sup>

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South West International Development Network (UKA0201) para 2.2; Dr Megha Kashyap and Ipsita Divedi (UKA0005) q2

130 Foreign Policy Centre (UKA0209) para 7

131 See, for example, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (UKA0053) section 3

132 See, for example, University of Glasgow (UKA0154) para 5; Q90 [Anna Schuesterl]

- 32.** The FCDO needs to make sure that it has the skills and resources to adapt its partnership models and modes of delivery to accommodate the conditions in fragile and conflict affected states.<sup>133</sup> To address the needs of the extreme poor and tackle the root causes of irregular migration, the FCDO will need the capability to adjust to the conditions on the ground.
- 33.** Greater effort will need to be made to align bilateral and multilateral instruments toward the partnership objectives wherever possible.<sup>134</sup> This will support greater efficiencies and activities focussed on local results. Part of solving the problem of misalignment should see the UK Government using its influence to create systems with multilateral organisations that maximise data sharing, align multilateral and bilateral mechanisms through shared compacts, and ensure that the voices of its partners are listened to.<sup>135</sup>
- 34.** A broad view of partnership needs to be maintained; one that has the flexibility to include the vision of civil society and working through other meaningful partnerships such as those established through NGOs—both national and international. The Government needs to clearly communicate the objectives of its partnerships to other would-be stakeholders. It is vital that INGOs, the business sector, civil society, diaspora groups and other public

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133 Q75 [Freddie Carver]

134 Systemic Innovation Ltd (UKA0009) section 5

135 Systemic Innovation Ltd (UKA0009) section 5 recs 1–3; see also Kivu International (UKA0108)

sector bodies know exactly what the UK Government is hoping to achieve and where it might align its objectives with them.

- 35.** Finally, UK partnership with other ODA-delivering countries should be enhanced. We are witnessing a reduction in ODA across a range of countries, and an increase in other forms of development assistance by economic and ideological competitors. Achieving maximum value for money for both recipients of ODA and the UK taxpayer will require coordination to avoid gaps or duplication.

## **Learning, developing and equipping: collaboration with the UK International Development Sector**

- 36.** The country should be proud of the UK international development and humanitarian response sector, which represents some of the best UK values. This sector has decades' worth of experience building trust with, and mobilising support for, the most vulnerable around the world.<sup>136</sup> It has an in-depth understanding of what works.<sup>137</sup> UK academic institutions have been instrumental in developing technologies and approaches which have changed the lives of millions

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136 See, for example, CBM UK (Global Disability Inclusion) (UKA0063) para 8

137 Wildlife Conservation Society (UKA0132) para 2; Adam Smith International (UKA0207) q2

of people and prevented the suffering of millions more. UK NGOs have mobilised billions of pounds to support those facing grinding poverty and crisis, mobilising community and faith groups as well as driving higher standards in delivery. These actors, working with their local counterparts, have improved the quality of the aid and development assistance delivered. The sector employs thousands of people both in this country and overseas and has historically had a symbiotic relationship with the UK Government.

- 37.** The sector, whilst recognising its responsibility to reform the way it operates and the premises upon which it works, has the motivation and experience to support the Government in its efforts. **The Government needs to view INGOs as “strategic collaborators”—adopting a long-term partnership model which focusses on the preventative nature of ODA.**<sup>138</sup> It is vital that the Government listens to the wealth of experience from the sector as it rethinks how it spends its ODA through a formal dialogue platform.<sup>139</sup> This collaboration should be invested in regardless of whether INGOs are delivering UK ODA.
- 38.** There are opportunities for the UK INGO sector to research and advocate on structural barriers to poverty alleviation and drivers of conflict.<sup>140</sup> These activities should be supported by the Government and incorporated into its own activities on given issues.

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138 See Plan International UK (UKA0074); Muslim Charities Forum (UKA0179); Action for Global Health (UKA0199)

139 Restless Development (UKA0041)

140 See, for example, Dr Megha Kashyap and Ipsita Divedi (UKA0005) q.4.

UK-based NGOs also have the local public profile to contribute significantly to building the UK public's trust in aid as a concept.<sup>141</sup>

- 39.** However, mishandling of this relationship would be a strategic misstep. Sudden changes to the use of NGOs for service delivery by the Government could precipitate an exodus of highly experienced and passionate people, or the potential for needless redundancies. This represents a false economy as far as ODA is concerned.

## **Restoring understanding and trust: communicating with the public on UK ODA**

- 40.** Successive Governments, as well as the UK international development and relief sector, have failed to effectively communicate the impact of UK aid to the wider UK public.<sup>142</sup> Beyond the tangible benefits to those living in poverty, there has been a failure to communicate the myriad benefits of UK aid to the British taxpayer, as well as the relatively small proportion of the budget it absorbs.<sup>143</sup> This has to change. We have heard time and time again of the

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141 See, for example, RINGO Project (UKA0017); SIDA (UKA0032); GSK (and ViiV Healthcare) (UKA0103) para 2.b.i.

142 See, for example, Q215 [Luke Tryl]; Q85 [Gideon Rabinowitz]

143 See, for example, Systemic Innovation Ltd (UKA0009) section 4; Jamie Holliday, Louie Parker, Isaac Blackburn, Henrik Hansen (Students at Edge Hill University) (UKA0012); Professor Martin Scott (UKA0013) section 2.0.; Q211 [Jennifer Hudson]

impact that UK ODA has on both the stability of other countries and the perception other countries have of the UK—both these things translate into benefits for UK citizens which must be effectively communicated.<sup>144</sup>

41. A fifth, additional, “essential shift” is required as the Government considers the nature of its development partnerships:

*From unfamiliarity to understanding; working with schools, civil society, as well as businesses, both in the UK and in partner countries, to raise awareness of the tangible mutual benefits of UK aid and development policy.*

42. Its approach should focus not only on how the values of British generosity represented in ODA have facilitated the relief from poverty of millions of people; but, critically, it should also focus on the contribution ODA has made to further mutually beneficial interests.<sup>145</sup> **ODA should be reframed as a “preventative tool”: how action now will prevent greater costs and threats later.**<sup>146</sup> Communication needs to feature compelling, tangible and evidence-

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144 See, for example, Q218 [Jennifer Hudson]

145 Development Engagement Lab (UKA0018) recommendation 1.  
See also, Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) (UKA0022);  
The Downforce Trust (UKA0079); M&C Saatchi World Services  
(UKA0111); More in Common (UKA0170); Q210 [Luke Tryl]

146 Engaging Climate Ltd (UKA0200)

based narratives of sustainable change. This should start with stories of impact at the individual level and extrapolate these benefits out to the global level.<sup>147</sup>

- 43.** Communicating the impact of ODA should be carried out collaboratively with civil society, including diaspora groups, and the media.<sup>148</sup> It should avoid the condescension of partners where the ODA is being spent.<sup>149</sup> It needs to be focussed on commanding the confidence of the public in terms of how the Government is spending its money and on what.<sup>150</sup> The Government should recognise that there is a multiplicity of interest groups and, where possible, it should tailor publicity to the interests of various segments of UK society.<sup>151</sup>
- 44.** The Government's shifts in the way it conducts its bilateral partnerships, its prioritising of multilateral spending, and the decisions it makes on thematic and geographical focus, are likely to challenge many people's understandings of Government-

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147 See, for example, International Organization for Migration (UKA0083) para 15; STOPAIDS, Equal International, Salamander Trust, Frontline AIDS, AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) UK (UKA0194)

148 Q215 and Q224 [Bel Trew]; Q223 and Q226 [Luke Tryl]

149 Professor Martin Scott (UKA0013) recommends a "ethical communications guidelines" to support its communication strategy. See also, Mosaic Middle East and Papua Partners (UKA0015) section 2 recommendations; Restless Development (UKA0041) question 4; Results UK (UKA0050) question 3; Dr James Copestake (Professor of International Development at University of Bath) (UKA0094) para 15

150 See, for example, Plan International UK (UKA0074)

151 Dr Liliane Binego and Dr Julia Wright (UKA0085) recommend the use of participatory media. See also Tearfund (UKA0159) 4.b.

funded aid. The efficiency and effectiveness of, for example, the “four essential shifts”, will need to be carefully communicated to the public.<sup>152</sup> All delivery mechanisms of UK ODA need to be part of this joint endeavour. Whether DFIs like BII, multilateral development banks, multilateral agencies, private contractors or INGOs—there has been a deficit of engagement that can be reversed with sustained and collaborative action.<sup>153</sup> The Government is well placed to convene and coordinate such efforts.

- 45.** Finally, the Government should work with INGOs and civil society to support schools with Global Citizenship resources and formal curriculum guidance.<sup>154</sup> This would have the aim of helping a new generation understand the importance of overseas assistance, the mutual benefits of progress toward the SDGs, and inspiring citizen action. Combining this with mutual exchange learning visits between young people in UK and in partner countries would aid in instilling this understanding.<sup>155</sup>

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152 See, for example, Engaging Climate Ltd (UKA0200)

153 See, for example, RINGO Project (UKA0017); Professor Douglas Bourn (Professor of Development Education at University College London- Development Education Research Centre) (UKA0090)

154 See, for example, Send My Friend to School (UKA0218); Development Education Research Centre, University College London (UKA0219); and Bond (UKA0177)

155 Q225 [Jennifer Hudson]

# Delivering for all: ensuring the money is well spent

- 46.** Collaboration and transparency need to be foundational principles for a cross-Government approach to its international assistance whether initiated by, for example: BII, FCDO, or any Government department.
- 47.** It is vital that every pound of UK ODA achieves the maximum value for the world's extreme poor. To this end, the FCDO should be equipped to assess what works. It should also take advantages of mechanisms that use UK ODA to leverage more cash to meet development challenges.<sup>156</sup> Interventions with little or no tangible impact should not continue to receive funds.<sup>157</sup> However, for the FCDO to remain an innovator in aid and development approaches, it is vital that a proportion of ODA carries a greater level of agility and risk.<sup>158</sup> This is likely to remain important given the proportion of the extreme poor living in fragile and conflict affected states. These calculations, and evidence of lessons learnt, must be clearly communicated to the UK public.<sup>159</sup>

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156 These are sometimes referred to as “best buys” or “smart buys”. See, for example, Lorenzo Fong Ponce (Senior Program Manager at Amazon) (UKA0100); Habiba Banu (Director at Spiro) (UKA0115); Dr Melita Lazell and Dr Ivica Petrikova (UKA0139) para 1

157 See, for example, Aidan Alexander (Entrepreneur at FarmKind) (UKA0107); Dr Gillian McKay (UKA0112) para 12–14

158 Dr Megha Kashyap and Ipsita Divedi (UKA0005)

159 Development Engagement Lab (UKA0018) recommendation 2

48. The Government must be clear-eyed that its “four essential shifts”, and aspirations of reform within the multilateral system, require two things: influence and expertise. Both require money that is well targeted and accountable. Having the necessary levels of “buy-in” to the system and the quality of in-house staff to retain the UK’s influence as a thought leader is critical to achieving the cost-effectiveness implicit in the reduction to 0.3%.<sup>160</sup>

## Multilateral organisations and development banks

There are undoubtedly opportunities for saving money, and that is clear—the systems we have at the moment are not efficient—but if you do not have the capacity to do it well, to hold the various parts of the system to account and to join up those conversations, you are going to struggle to achieve those goals. Sadly, what you are going to end up with is what has been described as a smaller, meaner humanitarian system, rather than something more effective.

*Director Humanitarian Policy Group, Freddie Carver, ODI Global*<sup>161</sup>

49. Ensuring UK ODA is well spent, with adequate accountability mechanisms and limitations on overheads, is vital for ensuring maximum impact. We applaud the efforts that development finance

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160 See, for example, Results UK (UKA0050); Q70 [Gideon Rabinowitz]; Q93 [Freddie Carver]

161 Q93 [Freddie Carver]

institutions, multilateral organisations, and multilateral development banks have made to improve their accountability as well as their impact models.<sup>162</sup> However, there is much further to go and more for the UK Government to do to drive change.<sup>163</sup> Reforms to improve the impact and accountability of multilateral institutions will not happen overnight and the UK Government should take a leading role in proposing reforms to these institutions, especially given the increased importance they will have within the Government’s new ODA allocations. Whilst comparing development interventions on a like-for-like basis is incredibly challenging, if the Government’s primary purpose is as stated—the “alleviation of poverty”—the FCDO should have, at least to some degree, the ability to compare the effectiveness of each intervention towards this goal for every pound spent.<sup>164</sup> Currently, the transparent comparability of different interventions is extremely limited.

- 50.** There will always be a balance to be struck between the proportion of bilateral funding available at embassy level and that which is channelled through multilateral institutions. A multilateral aid review would be a valuable exercise in ensuring decisions around funding are being made based on the best information and in a way that aligns with the strategic

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162 See, for example, Mike Buckley (UKA0182)

163 Bond (UKA0177)

164 See, for example, Q239 [Yvette Cooper] and Q171 [Baroness Chapman]

aims agreed with local development partners.<sup>165</sup>

It would help in understanding where duplication is taking place and reform is needed. Making this available to Parliament and the public would increase transparency.

**51.** There is much work to be done to increase the voice and decision-making power of lower-income countries (both governments and civil society) in multilateral agencies and development banks.<sup>166</sup> Part of this involves increasing the World Bank's engagement with civil society organisations, allowing the Bank to remain engaged in fragile and crisis settings.<sup>167</sup>

**52.** Of particular concern is the lack of information available for scrutiny of the multilateral institutions delivering significant amounts of UK ODA. These institutions have the potential to provide excellent value for money. However, there is significant scope to quantify this and to better trace how UK ODA is being spent.

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165 For an explanation and recommendations around alignment see Systemic Innovation Ltd (UKA0009) section 5. See also 7th Report – Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance C&R para 19

166 See, for example, Matteo Cianforlini (PhD Candidate at University of Bologna) (UKA0003); Christian Aid (UKA0026) paras 24–25; Concern Worldwide UK (UKA0027) para 13.b.; Restless Development (UKA0041)

167 See, International Rescue Committee (UKA0117) section 3 ICRC (UKA0189) paras 17–18; Humanitarian Learning Centre (HLC), Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (UKA0098)

53. Specifically, reform is needed to ensure greater transparency of the World Bank’s activities to allow for clear communication by the Government to its development partners and to the UK public. Multilateral organisations, including the World Bank, need to be as accountable to the UK Government, scrutiny bodies and civil society as bilateral programmes. The Government and its multilateral partners need coherent plans to communicate, via Parliament, the media and the diplomatic service, the results of the UK’s investment on the areas of mutual interest.
54. Finally, reform is needed in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Debt Sustainability Framework for lower-income countries in considering environmental and social impacts of increasing debt.<sup>168</sup> The Government can build on the innovative work it has contributed to at the Finance for Development Conference in Brazil. This included commitments on debt, private capital mobilisation, and reform of aid architecture.<sup>169</sup> As highlighted in our third report, “The Government’s efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger”, debt suspension clauses (also known as *Pause Clauses*) should be explored for low-income countries at high risk of backsliding on food security and nutrition.<sup>170</sup>

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168 See for example, The United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) (UKA0021) para 4.1

169 FCDO, A new chapter in how we finance development: Baroness Chapman statement, gov.uk, 2 July 2025

170 3rd Report - The Government’s efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger para 69

## Use of contractors

- 55.** In the architecture that emerges from the Government's reductions to ODA and resourcing of the FCDO, the use of private contractors to deliver programming needs to be carefully considered.<sup>171</sup> There are examples of where contractors have delivered impactful programmes which represent value for money and meaningfully involve local actors.<sup>172</sup> However, more could be done to improve transparency, particularly in the tendering processes.<sup>173</sup> Assessing the cost-effectiveness of this approach, particularly in light of the desire to prioritise local leadership of the development process, needs to be part of the Department's planning exercises.<sup>174</sup> Careful attention to the capacities of the FCDO staff needed to manage contracts will also be required.

## Measuring impact

- 56.** The portfolio of programming and activity, as shaped by the Government's ODA priorities, will be delivered by both traditional and non-traditional delivery partners. It is important that no ODA delivery partners (public or private) are left to purely self-evaluate. A

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171 See, for example, Restless Development (UKA0041) question 2

172 British Expertise International (UKA0146)

173 7th Report – Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance paras 87–91

174 Aidan Alexander (UKA0107) section 2; CBM UK (Global Disability Inclusion) (UKA0063) recommendation C; Center for Global Development (UKA0157) question 3

partner-led approach will require that there is mutual accountability along the chain, and this too needs to be integrated into the Department's approach to monitoring and evaluation.<sup>175</sup>

- 57.** Whilst there are aspects of the “four essential shifts” which lend themselves to quantitative impact measurement, the reality is that qualitative assessment will be an important aspect to judging value for money, sustainability, and effectiveness. The FCDO will need to devote considerable resources to developing approaches that will map the results of what could be an increasingly diverse portfolio of development assistance and activity.<sup>176</sup> Updated guidance to staff and partners will be required in line with our report, “Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance”.<sup>177</sup>
- 58.** The existence, and adequate resourcing, of the Independent Commission on Aid Impact sends a powerful message to all stakeholders that the UK

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175 7th Report – Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance paras 103–104

176 See, for example, Oxfam GB (UKA0078); SIDCN (UKA0091) section 1; Palladium (UKA0193); 7th Report – Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance C&R paras 2–3

177 International Development Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2024–25, Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance, HC 422 para 17 and 19

takes transparency and value for money seriously.<sup>178</sup> Its ability to perform its role must be protected. The Government needs to consider carefully how it will deploy the added value of ICAI, the National Audit Office and the International Development Committee in its messaging to the public that:

- a. the Government responds effectively when programmes are not performing, open to corruption, demonstrating waste or inefficiency;
- b. the majority of UK ODA programming is achieving its objectives and is money well spent.<sup>179</sup>

## Planning for a return to 0.7% GNI

- 59.** The Government is legally obliged to work toward a return to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA. Whilst this remains a legal obligation, it is incumbent upon the Government to retain a focus on the scalability of its ODA programmes and approaches, particularly regarding humanitarian response. It would be shortsighted to lose the capability to deliver a 0.7% funded programme in the years until spending returns to that level.

## Working with Parliament

- 60.** Parliamentary scrutiny must be seen as a core component to the Government's commitment to transparency and accountability. The UK is party to

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178 See, for example, Global Cooperation (UKA0149); SIDA (UKA0032); UNDP (UKA0206); Adam Smith International (UKA0207)

179 Q221 [Jennifer Hudson]

a number of international standards and conventions that put particular stipulations on the way ODA is spent and the way in which it is delivered. To maintain the UK's position as a leader in driving forward the Sustainable Development Goals, responding to crises and shaping the international development agenda, these conventions must be upheld regardless of the aid budget. It is important that elected Members of Parliament are able to scrutinise this spending on behalf of the electorate, rather than leaving it solely in the hands of appointed officials.<sup>180</sup>

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180 See, for example, Global Cooperation (UKA0149); SIDA (UKA0032); UNDP (UKA0206)

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# Formal minutes

**Tuesday 21 April 2026**

## **Members present:**

Sarah Champion, in the Chair

Janet Daby

Monica Harding

Brian Mathew

David Mundell

David Taylor

## **UK Aid and Development Assistance in a Fracturing World: Strengthening Resilience and Cooperation**

Draft Report (*UK Aid and Development Assistance in a Fracturing World: Strengthening Resilience and Cooperation*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 27 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Eleventh Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

## **Adjournment**

[Adjourned till Tuesday 28 April at 1.00 p.m.]

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# Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

## Tuesday 25 November 2025

**Martin John**, National Officer, Public and Commercial Services (PCS) trade union; **Lois Austin**, FCDO Group Secretary, Public and Commercial Services (PCS) trade union Q1–68

**Professor Emma Mawdsley**, Professor of Geography and Development Studies, University of Cambridge; **Gideon Rabinowitz**, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Bond; **Freddie Carver**, Director, Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI Global; **Ms Anna Schuesterl**, Director of Communications, ODI Global Q69–99

## Tuesday 20 January 2026

**The Rt Hon. the Baroness Chapman of Darlington**, Minister of State for International Development and Africa, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; **Melinda Bohannon**, Director General, Humanitarian and Development, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Q100–193

## Tuesday 27 January 2026

**Sapphire Alexander**, Founder, Caribbean Feminist (Trinidad and Tobago); **Chido Govera**, Founder, Future of Hope Foundation (Zimbabwe); **Finian Ali**, Youth Coordinator, Scaling Up Nutrition Network (Nigeria)  
Q194–208

**Bel Trew**, Chief International Correspondent, The Independent; **Luke Tryl**, Executive Director, UK, More in Common; **Jennifer Hudson**, Director, Development Engagement Lab  
Q209–233

## Tuesday 24 March 2026

**Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP**, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; **The Rt Hon. the Baroness Chapman of Darlington**, Minister of State for International Development and Africa, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; **Nick Dyer**, Second Permanent Under-Secretary, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; **Melinda Bohannon**, Director General, Global Issues, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office  
Q234–322

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# Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

UKA numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

|    |                                                  |         |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1  | Asset Green Ltd                                  | UKA0140 |
| 2  | Access to Medicines Initiative                   | UKA0105 |
| 3  | Ackers, Dr Jim (Submitter)                       | UKA0213 |
| 4  | Action Against Hunger UK                         | UKA0184 |
| 5  | Action Through Enterprise                        | UKA0215 |
| 6  | Action for Global Health                         | UKA0199 |
| 7  | Action for Sustainable Development               | UKA0029 |
| 8  | ActionAid UK                                     | UKA0099 |
| 9  | Adam Smith International                         | UKA0207 |
| 10 | Adams, Grace (CEO, Effective Altruism Australia) | UKA0061 |
| 11 | Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (ACAA) | UKA0125 |
| 12 | AgDevCo Ltd                                      | UKA0067 |
| 13 | Age International                                | UKA0080 |
| 14 | Alexander, Aidan (Entrepreneur, FarmKind)        | UKA0107 |

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|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 15 | Alliance for Reducing Antimicrobial Resistance                                                                                  | UKA0180 |
| 16 | Ambitious Impact                                                                                                                | UKA0163 |
| 17 | Arvidsson, Judit (Student , Durham University)                                                                                  | UKA0104 |
| 18 | Association for Development and Diplomacy                                                                                       | UKA0216 |
| 19 | Automation Builders Club                                                                                                        | UKA0158 |
| 20 | BBC Media Action                                                                                                                | UKA0167 |
| 21 | BDO LLP                                                                                                                         | UKA0114 |
| 22 | Bond Disability and Development Group                                                                                           | UKA0187 |
| 23 | BURN Manufacturing                                                                                                              | UKA0191 |
| 24 | Banu, Habiba (Director, Spiro)                                                                                                  | UKA0115 |
| 25 | Binego, Dr Liliane (Researcher, Coventry University); and Wright, Dr Julia (Associate Professor, Coventry University)           | UKA0085 |
| 26 | Blue Ventures Conservation                                                                                                      | UKA0190 |
| 27 | Bond                                                                                                                            | UKA0177 |
| 28 | Bourn, Professor Douglas (Professor of Development Education, University College London- Development Education Research Centre) | UKA0090 |
| 29 | British Expertise International                                                                                                 | UKA0146 |
| 30 | Buckley, Mike                                                                                                                   | UKA0182 |
| 31 | Burma Campaign UK                                                                                                               | UKA0135 |

|    |                                                                                                                                                       |         |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 32 | Buziuk, Hleb (Independent policy researcher and human-rights advocate, FairGo CIC)                                                                    | UKA0038 |
| 33 | CAFOD                                                                                                                                                 | UKA0174 |
| 34 | CARE International UK                                                                                                                                 | UKA0165 |
| 35 | CBM UK (Global Disability Inclusion)                                                                                                                  | UKA0063 |
| 36 | CGIAR                                                                                                                                                 | UKA0129 |
| 37 | Caplan, Theo                                                                                                                                          | UKA0131 |
| 38 | Cash, Dr Daniel (Associate Professor, Aston University)                                                                                               | UKA0004 |
| 39 | Catalyst Now                                                                                                                                          | UKA0014 |
| 40 | Celebi, Dr Dilek (Lecturer, Bingol University)                                                                                                        | UKA0039 |
| 41 | Center for Global Development                                                                                                                         | UKA0157 |
| 42 | Chaikovska, Miss Alla (Student, University of Bath); Singh, Miss Ayda (Student, University of Bath); and Amey, Mr Harri (Student, University of Bath) | UKA0173 |
| 43 | Chatham House, UK in the World programme                                                                                                              | UKA0168 |
| 44 | Chatterton, Mr Brian (Farmer, Podere valle Pulcini)                                                                                                   | UKA0073 |
| 45 | Christian Aid                                                                                                                                         | UKA0026 |
| 46 | Cianforlini, Matteo (PhD Candidate, University of Bologna)                                                                                            | UKA0003 |
| 47 | Coalition for Global Prosperity                                                                                                                       | UKA0076 |
| 48 | Concern Worldwide UK                                                                                                                                  | UKA0027 |

- 49 Conservation International UK;  
Campaign for Nature; Fauna & Flora;  
RSPB; The Nature Conservancy; WWF-  
UK; and Zoological Society of London  
(ZSL) UKA0036
- 50 Copestake, Dr James (Professor of  
International Development, University of  
Bath) UKA0094
- 51 Daniels, Thomas (Co-Executive Director,  
LABRI) UKA0088
- 52 Danish Refugee Council UKA0126
- 53 Deaf Child Worldwide UKA0020
- 54 Debt Justice UKA0051
- 55 Demeshko, Anastassia (Tom Drake,  
Senior Policy Analyst, Global Health  
Policy Programme, Center for Global  
Development (now Health Economics  
Lead at the Wellcome Trust), Anastassia  
Demeshko, Research Assistant, Global  
Health Policy Programme, Center for  
Global Development & Pete Baker,  
Deputy Director & Policy Fellow, Global  
Health Policy Programme, Center for  
Global Development) UKA0166
- 56 Development Education Research  
Centre, University College London UKA0219
- 57 Development Engagement Lab UKA0018
- 58 Dixon, Miss Lisa (Medical Student,  
University of Cambridge) UKA0043

|    |                                                                                                                                                                     |         |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 59 | Drummond, Brian (Researcher, Independent)                                                                                                                           | UKA0035 |
| 60 | Ecorys UK Limited                                                                                                                                                   | UKA0123 |
| 61 | Eleanor Crook Foundation                                                                                                                                            | UKA0087 |
| 62 | Elevate Philanthropy                                                                                                                                                | UKA0044 |
| 63 | Engaging Climate Ltd                                                                                                                                                | UKA0200 |
| 64 | Environmental Investigation Agency                                                                                                                                  | UKA0151 |
| 65 | FSD Africa                                                                                                                                                          | UKA0169 |
| 66 | Fairtrade Foundation                                                                                                                                                | UKA0023 |
| 67 | Fazlan, Umar (AI Safety Officer, Effective Altruism Manchester)                                                                                                     | UKA0062 |
| 68 | Field, Mr Arthur                                                                                                                                                    | UKA0047 |
| 69 | Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office                                                                                                                           | UKA0196 |
| 70 | Foreign Policy Centre                                                                                                                                               | UKA0209 |
| 71 | Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office                                                                                                                          | UKA0217 |
| 72 | Foroughi, Dr Hamid (Associate Professor of Responsible Management, University of Warwick); and Mahad, Miss Waris (former research assistant, University of Warwick) | UKA0130 |
| 73 | GADN Humanitarian Working Group                                                                                                                                     | UKA0186 |
| 74 | GSK and ViiV Healthcare                                                                                                                                             | UKA0103 |
| 75 | Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance                                                                                                                                          | UKA0155 |
| 76 | Gender and Development Network (GADN)                                                                                                                               | UKA0095 |

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|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 77 | Ghosal, Professor Sayantan (Adam Smith Chair in Political Economy , University of Glasgow)                                                                                                           | UKA0137 |
| 78 | Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GHAP)                                                                                                                                                       | UKA0204 |
| 79 | Global Cooperation / Kooperation Global                                                                                                                                                              | UKA0149 |
| 80 | Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)                                                                                                                                                            | UKA0142 |
| 81 | Global Greengrants Fund UK                                                                                                                                                                           | UKA0153 |
| 82 | Global Partners Governance                                                                                                                                                                           | UKA0208 |
| 83 | Global Public Investment Network                                                                                                                                                                     | UKA0092 |
| 84 | Goodman, Matthew                                                                                                                                                                                     | UKA0057 |
| 85 | Humanitarian Finance Forum                                                                                                                                                                           | UKA0164 |
| 86 | Humanitarian Learning Centre (HLC),<br>Institute of Development Studies (IDS)                                                                                                                        | UKA0098 |
| 87 | Hyde, Byron (Academic, Bangor University)                                                                                                                                                            | UKA0171 |
| 88 | Holliday, Jamie (Student, Edge Hill University); Parker, Louie (Student, Edge Hill University); Blackburn, Isaac (Student, Edge Hill University); and Hansen, Henrik (Student, Edge Hill University) | UKA0012 |
| 89 | IFES                                                                                                                                                                                                 | UKA0025 |
| 90 | Impact Global Health                                                                                                                                                                                 | UKA0128 |
| 91 | Independent Commission for Aid Impact                                                                                                                                                                | UKA0212 |

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| 92  | Institute of Development Studies                                                                                           | UKA0068 |
| 93  | International Centre for Tax and Development                                                                               | UKA0030 |
| 94  | International Committee of the Red Cross ICRC                                                                              | UKA0189 |
| 95  | International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)                                                                               | UKA0089 |
| 96  | International Organization for Migration                                                                                   | UKA0083 |
| 97  | International Planned Parenthood Federation                                                                                | UKA0141 |
| 98  | International Rescue Committee                                                                                             | UKA0117 |
| 99  | Jacobstein, Mr. David; and Guerzovich, Dr. Florencia                                                                       | UKA0106 |
| 100 | Jagannath Growers                                                                                                          | UKA0064 |
| 101 | Jain, Mr Vikram (Student, University College London)                                                                       | UKA0070 |
| 102 | Juma, Mr Lawrence (Head of Program Design & Organizational Scaling, Oxygen Access Project)                                 | UKA0120 |
| 103 | Kashyap, Dr Megha (Decolonising Research Fellow, London South Bank University); and Divedi, Ipsita (Researcher, Freelance) | UKA0005 |
| 104 | Kelly, Dr Paul Richard (Associate Proessor / Lecturer in Organisation Studies, University of Essex)                        | UKA0052 |

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| 105 Kim, Dr Youngmi (Senior Lecturer, University of Edinburgh); Fumagalli, Dr Matteo (Senior Lecturer, University of St Andrews); Ko Ko, Mr Aung (Executive Director, Mosaic Myanmar); and Thalay Pay, Ms Naw Grace (Programme Assistant, Mosaic Myanmar) | UKA0178 |
| 106 Kivu International                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | UKA0108 |
| 107 Langsikt - Centre for Long-Term Policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                | UKA0203 |
| 108 Lazell, Dr Melita (Associate Professor in Political Economy and Development, University of Portsmouth); and Petrikova, Dr Ivica (Associate Professor in International Relations, Royal Holloway, University of London)                                | UKA0139 |
| 109 Leonard, Alycia (Senior Research Associate, University of Oxford); Sánchez-Lopez, Miguel (Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Oxford); and Hirmer, Stephanie (Associate Professor, University of Oxford)                                           | UKA0101 |
| 110 Li, Dr Jie Sheng                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | UKA0002 |
| 111 Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | UKA0210 |
| 112 London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine                                                                                                                                                                                                        | UKA0010 |
| 113 Long, Dr Graham (Senior Lecturer, Newcastle University)                                                                                                                                                                                               | UKA0033 |
| 114 Loop Pet Food                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | UKA0109 |

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| 115 | Lowrie, Mr John (Retired Human Rights and Development Worker, Nomad RSI (my last NGO))                                                | UKA0001 |
| 116 | M&C Saatchi World Services                                                                                                            | UKA0111 |
| 117 | MIFUMI                                                                                                                                | UKA0113 |
| 118 | Maestral International                                                                                                                | UKA0172 |
| 119 | Malaria No More UK                                                                                                                    | UKA0081 |
| 120 | Mattock, Nathan (Automation Engineer, London Based Startup)                                                                           | UKA0058 |
| 121 | McArdle, Dr Scarlett (Assistant Professor in Law, University of Nottingham)                                                           | UKA0143 |
| 122 | McKay, Dr Gillian                                                                                                                     | UKA0112 |
| 123 | Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV)                                                                                                   | UKA0022 |
| 124 | Melvin, Dr Jennifer (Guest Teacher in International Development, Department of International Development, London School of Economics) | UKA0192 |
| 125 | Mercy Corps                                                                                                                           | UKA0049 |
| 126 | Miltin, Professor Diana (Professor of Global Urbanism, The University of Manchester)                                                  | UKA0007 |
| 127 | More in Common                                                                                                                        | UKA0170 |
| 128 | Morlino, Dr Irene (Visiting Fellow in International Relations , London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE))               | UKA0097 |
| 129 | Mosaic Middle East and Papua Partners                                                                                                 | UKA0015 |

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| 130 Muslim Charities Forum                                                                                                               | UKA0179 |
| 131 MÈdecins Sans FrontiÈres                                                                                                             | UKA0011 |
| 132 NGO Forest Coalition                                                                                                                 | UKA0214 |
| 133 NIHR Global Surgery Unit                                                                                                             | UKA0144 |
| 134 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) UK                                                                                                   | UKA0150 |
| 135 ODI Global                                                                                                                           | UKA0185 |
| 136 O'Reilly, Dr Kathleen M, (Associate Professor , LSHTM)                                                                               | UKA0024 |
| 137 Oxfam GB                                                                                                                             | UKA0078 |
| 138 Oxford Policy Management                                                                                                             | UKA0160 |
| 139 PEAS (Promoting Equality in African Schools)                                                                                         | UKA0054 |
| 140 Palladium                                                                                                                            | UKA0193 |
| 141 Pawar, Mr Akshaj (Student, University of Durham)                                                                                     | UKA0048 |
| 142 Peace Direct                                                                                                                         | UKA0124 |
| 143 Peck, Dr. Sarah (Assistant Professor, Northumbria University); and Baillie Smith, Professor Matt (Professor, Northumbria University) | UKA0119 |
| 144 Pender, Hugh                                                                                                                         | UKA0145 |
| 145 Plan International UK                                                                                                                | UKA0074 |
| 146 Ponce, Lorenzo Fong (Senior Program Manager, Amazon)                                                                                 | UKA0100 |
| 147 Publish What You Fund                                                                                                                | UKA0065 |
| 148 RINGO Project                                                                                                                        | UKA0017 |
| 149 Radford, Mr David                                                                                                                    | UKA0195 |

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| 150 Restless Development                                                                                                          | UKA0041 |
| 151 Results UK                                                                                                                    | UKA0050 |
| 152 Rethink Charity Foundation                                                                                                    | UKA0045 |
| 153 Rights Lab, University of Nottingham                                                                                          | UKA0037 |
| 154 Riley, Shepard (President, Effective Altruism Manchester)                                                                     | UKA0056 |
| 155 Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists                                                                             | UKA0055 |
| 156 SAMANU                                                                                                                        | UKA0138 |
| 157 SIDA - Scotland's International Development Alliance                                                                          | UKA0032 |
| 158 STOPAIDS; Equal International; Salamander Trust; Frontline AIDS; and AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) UK                      | UKA0194 |
| 159 Safeguarding Leads Network; and British Expertise                                                                             | UKA0072 |
| 160 Save the Children                                                                                                             | UKA0205 |
| 161 Scott, Professor Martin (Professor of Media and Global Development , University of East Anglia, School of Global Development) | UKA0013 |
| 162 Scottis                                                                                                                       | UKA0198 |
| 163 Send My Friend to School                                                                                                      | UKA0218 |
| 164 Send My Friend to School; and Results UK                                                                                      | UKA0176 |
| 165 Sightsavers                                                                                                                   | UKA0096 |
| 166 Simpson, Elizabeth                                                                                                            | UKA0060 |

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| 167 Small International Development Charities Network     | UKA0091 |
| 168 South West International Development Network          | UKA0201 |
| 169 Start Network                                         | UKA0147 |
| 170 Systemic Innovation Ltd                               | UKA0009 |
| 171 TLG Capital                                           | UKA0181 |
| 172 Tarr, Mr Joseph                                       | UKA0046 |
| 173 Tearfund                                              | UKA0159 |
| 174 The Co-operative Group                                | UKA0134 |
| 175 The Downforce Trust                                   | UKA0079 |
| 176 The HALO Trust                                        | UKA0110 |
| 177 The Independent                                       | UKA0084 |
| 178 The Leprosy Mission Great Britain; and LEPRA          | UKA0156 |
| 179 The Movement for Community-Led Development            | UKA0175 |
| 180 The ONE Campaign                                      | UKA0136 |
| 181 The One Foundation                                    | UKA0122 |
| 182 The Open University                                   | UKA0162 |
| 183 The Share Trust                                       | UKA0211 |
| 184 The United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK)   | UKA0021 |
| 185 Transform Trade                                       | UKA0197 |
| 186 Tropical Agriculture Association International (TAAI) | UKA0127 |
| 187 Ultra Philanthropy                                    | UKA0066 |

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| 188 United Against Malnutrition and Hunger<br>(UAMH)                                                                 | UKA0016 |
| 189 United Nations Development Programme<br>(UNDP)                                                                   | UKA0206 |
| 190 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)                                                                           | UKA0053 |
| 191 United Nations World Food Programme                                                                              | UKA0121 |
| 192 University College London - Science,<br>Technology, Engineering and Public<br>Policy (UCL – STEaPP)              | UKA0148 |
| 193 University of Glasgow                                                                                            | UKA0154 |
| 194 Unlimit Health; and UK Coalition against<br>NTDs                                                                 | UKA0183 |
| 195 WaterAid                                                                                                         | UKA0082 |
| 196 Wellcome Trust                                                                                                   | UKA0069 |
| 197 Wibberley, Professor John (Freelance &<br>semi-retired, REALM & SAPD University of<br>Reading & RAU Cirencester) | UKA0075 |
| 198 Wildlife Conservation Society                                                                                    | UKA0132 |
| 199 Windracers Ltd.                                                                                                  | UKA0093 |
| 200 World Vision UK                                                                                                  | UKA0188 |
| 201 Yan, Dr Yifei (Assistant Professor, University of<br>Southampton)                                                | UKA0031 |

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# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

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| 10th   | Peace under pressure: Protecting Women, Peace and Security                                                  | HC 782    |
| 9th    | Future of UK aid and development assistance: interim report                                                 | HC 1330   |
| 8th    | Empowering Development: Energy Access for Communities                                                       | HC 849    |
| 7th    | Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance | HC 422    |
| 6th    | The FCDO's Approach to Displaced People                                                                     | HC 525    |

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| 5th         | Protection not permission:<br>The UK's role in upholding international humanitarian law and supporting the safe delivery of humanitarian aid | HC 526    |
| 4th         | The 'In Development' process                                                                                                                 | HC 333    |
| 3rd         | The Government's efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger                                                                                        | HC 515    |
| 2nd         | Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory                                                                                                | HC 373    |
| 1st         | Appointment of the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact                                                           | HC 448    |
| 9th Special | Future of UK aid and development assistance: interim report: Government Response                                                             | HC 1830   |
| 8th Special | Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance: Government Response             | HC 1669   |
| 7th Special | Empowering Development: Energy Access for Communities: Government response                                                                   | HC 1626   |
| 6th Special | The FCDO's approach to displaced people: Government response                                                                                 | HC 1522   |

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| 5th<br>Special | Protection not permission:<br>The UK's role in upholding<br>international humanitarian<br>law and supporting the safe<br>delivery of humanitarian aid:<br>Government Response | HC 1301   |
| 4th<br>Special | The Government's efforts to<br>achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger:<br>Government Response                                                                                              | HC 923    |
| 3rd<br>Special | Israel and the Occupied<br>Palestinian Territory:<br>Government Response                                                                                                      | HC 797    |
| 2nd<br>Special | The UK Small Island Developing<br>States Strategy: Government<br>Response                                                                                                     | HC 597    |
| 1st<br>Special | FCDO and disability-inclusive<br>development: Government<br>Response                                                                                                          | HC 568    |