

International Development Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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From Sarah Champion MP, Chair

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
By email

11 May 2021

Cuts to the UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) Budget

Dear Dominic,

Further to your appearance before the International Development Committee on 22 April, the Committee would welcome some clarification of the ongoing significant changes to the UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget.

I would be grateful for your response to the following questions:

Thematic and geographic areas

The FCDO has set out its 'seven global challenges' as thematic priority areas for UK ODA spending.

- How did you select the seven global challenges as priority areas for UK aid spending? What processes were involved in determining that these areas will constitute priority spending areas?
- The Written Ministerial Statement appears to show very significant cuts to areas designated as priority spending areas, such as approximately 40% to programmes on girls' education against 2019 spending levels. How do these areas constitute priorities if they are subject to such deep cuts?
- On what basis did you decide the geographic allocation of ODA for the 2021/22 financial year?
- Your letter of 21 April sets out percentages for regions but does not provide the overall figure for bilateral spending upon which this is based. Please provide (i) the total spending figure for FCDO administered bilateral ODA and (ii) the regional breakdown of spending.
- Please provide a list of which countries are defined by the FCDO as (i) Africa, (ii) Indo Pacific and (iii) Rest of the World.

ODA budget for 2021-22 and allocations

- The cut in ODA spending appears to be roughly equivalent to the uplift provided for defence spending. How is there sufficient funding available for this increase to the defence budget, but not enough funding to meet existing aid spending targets?
- Will you publish country allocations as and when they are agreed?

- What percentage of the total UK aid budget in 2021-22 will be administered (i) through bilateral means, (ii) through multilateral means.
- For each thematic area detailed in the WMS, please provide a breakdown between spending administered (i) through bilateral means, (ii) through multilateral means.
- What role is HM Treasury taking in overseeing ODA spending outside of the FCDO?
- When will you publish allocations for other Government departments?
- Will you have final sign off for all UK ODA spending to ensure compliance with the International Development Acts (2002 and 2014)?
- Please confirm whether the £30m crisis reserve listed under ‘humanitarian preparedness and response’ is the same as the UK ODA crisis reserve?

Return to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA

The Government has said consistently that the UK will return to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA ‘when fiscal circumstances allow’.

- What work is the FCDO undertaking to track progress towards meeting the 0.5% target this year?
- What criteria are you using to monitor the fiscal situation and determine when circumstances will allow a return to spending 0.7%?
- What assessment have you made of the value for money risks of cutting projects to meet the double reduction of a drop in GNI and the cut to 0.5%, before ramping up spending to return to the 0.7% target?

Ministerial responsibility

In the Committee’s ‘Effectiveness of UK aid’ report, we recommended that the Government should retain the post of Secretary of State for International Development. This position should be cabinet level, with a seat at the NSC.

- Given the complexity of managing the development portfolio, does the Government intend to reinstate the post of Secretary of State for International Development as a cabinet-level and NSC-attending position?

I would be grateful if I could receive your response by 1 June 2021. The Committee intends to publish your response.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the Committee