



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

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Tom Tugendhat MP  
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

14 June 2021

Dear Tom,

## **IMPACT OF ODA CUTS TO DHSC PROGRAMMES**

Thank you for your letter on 24 May 2021, asking for information on the impact of cuts to the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget on my Department's ODA programming. This letter sets out our response to your questions.

DHSC is uniquely placed, in partnership with FCDO, to draw on the best of global and UK health expertise to tackle global health challenges. DHSC's global health portfolio plays a leading role in tackling current and emerging global health threats, drawing on technical and research expertise, and strong international relationships with key partners.

DHSC's ODA portfolio is fully in line with HMG's Strategic Framework for ODA, and particularly delivers against the priorities on Covid-19 and Global Health Security, and Science, Research and Technology. This ensures we are helping to deliver UK aid better across Government - despite difficult fiscal circumstances - by focusing on issues where the UK holds the right expertise and DHSC has as strong comparative advantage to deliver.

The Department has three main ODA funded programmes, as set out below:

**DHSC's Global Health Research (GHR) programme** was established to support high-quality applied health research for the direct and primary benefit of saving lives and reducing disease and disability in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). These aims are delivered through the Department's world-class commissioning vehicle, the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), both directly through researcher-led and commissioned funding calls and through strategic partnerships with other relevant organisations. The portfolio supports research initiatives which address unmet health needs of LMIC communities, including priorities towards Universal Health Coverage the evolving global burden of diseases and chronic conditions and aims to develop and advance global health research career pathways in LMICs and in the UK.

**DHSC's Global Health Security (GHS) programme** was established to help low- and middle- income countries develop resilient health systems, strengthen compliance with International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) and leadership for health security and preparedness which allows for prevention, detection and response to health threats,

including anti-microbial resistance (AMR) as well as ground breaking early stage research into new vaccines of epidemic potential which especially impact LMIC countries. As demonstrated by COVID-19, how other countries prepare for and respond to global health threats directly impacts on the UK's ability to mitigate these risks domestically.

**DHSC's programme on Framework Convention on Tobacco Control 2030 (FCTC 2030)** was established to support Governments to deliver effective responses to the impact of tobacco consumption as a barrier to sustainable development given the adverse social, economic and environmental impacts of tobacco. This programme is delivered by the World Health Organization FCTC Secretariat, supporting 24 developing countries to implement FCTC measures over five years (FY 2016/17-2021/22).

As a result of the ODA reductions in 20/21 due to falling GNI and a one year Spending Review, the following changes have made to DHSC ODA funded programmes:

- The **GHR programme** settlement reflects a reduction of approximately 50% against the original 2020/21 budget. With this budget settlement we have prioritised ongoing research projects and have had to make tough choices on the scale, scope and ambition of our portfolio (see [NIHR statement](#))
- The **GHS programmes** have had to scale back ambitions this year, but we hope to scale our projects back up once budget pressures have reduced, given the vital importance of global health security to the UK's domestic health security as well as to saving lives in poorer countries.
- The **FCTC programme** has managed using appropriate mitigations to still proceed with expected delivery, however with an extended time period.

We remain in close contact with the relevant authorities in all our partner countries which is essential for managing the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on our programmes as well as budget implications.

The areas which we have had to reduce are being managed carefully under these circumstances, and we are actively seeking to minimise any disruptive impact on recipients of funding, including the researchers and participants in health research in LMIC countries.

Global health is an area of genuine UK leadership including on science. Whilst the recent ODA reductions will temporarily pause our expansion plans, our portfolio will continue to make a difference, including addressing areas of unmet health need for the most vulnerable populations. We are prioritising protecting health security, reducing the risks faced by the world's poorest, whilst having a secondary benefit of helping safeguard UK citizens by enabling the continuation of important projects, such as supporting strengthening compliance with the IHR in ODA-eligible partner countries. This supports LMIC countries in investigating and responding to disease outbreaks and conducting research to improve our response to future epidemics and strengthen health systems to address these.

Due to the pressures of time, we have not undertaken stakeholder consultation with regard to any changes to our programmes, with the exception of jointly-funded activities.

I appreciate the work which the Foreign Affairs Committee is doing in this important area for the UK and the wider world, and both I and my officials are happy to support this agenda wherever possible.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

**MATT HANCOCK**



## Foreign Affairs Committee

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**From the Chair**  
Tom Tugendhat MP

24 May 2021

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Health and Social Protection

Dear Mr Hancock,

Together with the International Development Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee is responsible for scrutiny of Official Development Assistance. In light of the Government's announcement that ODA spending will reduce from 0.7% to 0.5% of GNI, we are writing to all recipient departments to establish the impact of these cuts.

As a recipient of ODA, your department is likely to be in the process of reallocating resources. To date, the detail of the impact on programmes and implementing partners has been limited. Information in the public domain has mostly been provided by estimates from statisticians and statements from stakeholders (such as NGOs and multilateral organisations) who have received confirmation of changes to pre-agreed funding arrangements. It would be very helpful to have clarity on which programmes are continuing, which have been stopped and the reasons behind the decisions.

I am aware of the information the Foreign Secretary has provided to the International Development Committee that announcements for specific countries and programmes will be made through DevTracker as and when they are decided. I am also aware of the information shared regarding the consultation with multilateral and NGO partners which pre-empted the decision-making process.

I write on behalf of the Committee to ask that you provide us with detailed information on which programmes will receive changes to pre-agreed budgets and in which countries. I would like to know:

1. A list of all programmes you have been running under ODA funding and what was the rationale for supporting the programme?
2. A list of the changes made to those programmes including:
  - which programmes will be cancelled altogether,
  - which will be suspended and for how long,
  - which will have activities scaled back, and
  - which will remain unchanged.
3. What are the implications for the recipient community of the reduction in funding?
4. What are the knock-on implications for the UK?

We would like to know details of any consultation pertaining to changes to programme budgets that your department undertook with stakeholders.

It would be helpful to have your response by 13 June and I intend to place your answer in the public domain.

Best wishes,

**TOM TUGENDHAT**