

Written evidence from the British Council (UKA0013)

Beyond Aid: The UK's Strategic Engagement in Africa inquiry

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1. Summary

1.1 The British Council works with UK Government to ensure the UK's presence in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is reflecting the demands of the region while bringing value to the UK. The UK's exit from the European Union means that the UK's relationships in the region are now more important than ever. A renewed approach is crucial. The relationship should be one based on mutuality and partnerships as opposed to one based on aid.

1.2 The British Council works on a people to people basis and seeks new narratives and a change of perspectives of the UK in SSA and SSA in the UK. The British Council's strategy, closely aligned with that of HMG, puts young people at its heart. Activities are based on market intelligence and focus on creating opportunities and contributing to tackling the unemployment challenge so that young people are able to fulfil their potential.

1.3 British Council's longevity in SSA makes it a well-known and trusted partner in the fields of culture, education and language learning. It is this that contributes to the UK's soft power, influence in the region and helps form a basis for diplomatic and trade relationships in the future.

2. British Council

2.1 The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. This enhances the security, prosperity and influence of the UK and, in so doing, helps make the world a better, safer place.

3. British Council in Sub-Saharan Africa



British Council offices in Sub-Saharan Africa
Population by country

1. Botswana	2.3m	6. Mauritius	1.3m	11. Senegal	15.9m	16. Tanzania	57.3m
2. Ethiopia	105m	7. Mozambique	29.7m	12. Sierra Leone	7.6m	17. Uganda	42.9m
3. Ghana	28.8m	8. Namibia	2.5m	13. South Africa	56.7m	18. Zambia	17.1m
4. Kenya	49.7m	9. Nigeria	190.9m	14. South Sudan	12.6m	19. Zimbabwe	16.5m
5. Malawi	18.6m	10. Rwanda	12.2m	15. Sudan	39.5m		

3.1 British Council has offices in 19 countries across SSA: Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Its work is not constrained by country borders and it creates opportunities and builds connections across the continent. Since launching its strategy, it is increasing reach and impact in new African countries through partnerships, digital and flexible business models. This means that it will also have impact in countries where there are no offices such as Angola, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, DRC, Eritrea, Gabon, Guinea, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

Image 1: British Council offices in Sub-Saharan Africa

3.2 British Council's sectoral focus aims to provide young Africans with opportunities to fulfil their potential, whilst at the same time facilitating more profound and meaningful engagement with counterparts in the UK through:

- (1) English
- (2) Skills and enterprise,
- (3) Strengthening civil society and communities
- (4) International examinations and qualifications
- (5) Higher education and science

4. How effective is the 'New approach to Sub-Saharan Africa?' Is it clear what this approach is trying to achieve? Is it an effective means of delivering UK influence in the continent?

4.1 Her Majesty's Government (HMG) and British Council's approach to Sub-Saharan Africa is based on research and market intelligence in the region. HMG has identified five key areas in its new strategic approach: (1) prosperity, (2) security and stability, (3) the Sahel, (4) demographic transition and (5) climate change and resource management. These areas aim to promote mutual prosperity, contribute to tackling instability, and position the UK as a partner of choice where it can make strong contributions that match African priorities. This new strategic approach is reinforcing the importance to the UK of Africa's long-term success, ensuring it is built on modern, innovative and mutual partnerships across a range of sectors. This transition comes at a time when the UK is seeking new economic, political and security relationships and new allies in multilateral fora. Africa matters greatly to the UK, as demonstrated by the PM's visit in August 2018, speech in Cape Town and the Foreign Secretary's visit in April 2019.

4.2 British Council believes that trust is built through soft power, and more specifically, cultural cooperation and exchange pave the way for strong long-lasting influence in a region. Engagement with education, culture and civil society sectors engenders trust, which provides the basis and attraction for future generations to do trade, business and study in the UK¹. People who trust the UK are roughly twice as likely to want to engage with the UK in future. 15% of people who said they trusted the UK said they intended to do business or trade with the UK, compared to only 8% who said they distrusted the UK. 21% of people who said they trusted the UK said they intended to study in the UK, compared to 12% who said they distrust the UK².

4.3 It is crucial to look at the demands of the region when establishing areas for cultural cooperation. The British Council polled 11,000 young Africans and found the potential benefits of SSA's growing youth population are unrealised; two thirds of non-student youth are unemployed, discouraged, or vulnerably employed. Even when jobs are available, youth often do not have the skills required by employers, despite gains in education access over the past several decades. Women are particularly impacted, often facing greater barriers to accessing opportunities and earning equal pay. Young Africans do not necessarily look to the UK as a long-term trusted partner.

4.4 British Council therefore endorses and aligns with the focus of HMG's five key areas, which are built around shared interests and contribute to addressing the challenges and opportunities of such a diverse region. British Council encourages the UK to continue to increase its presence and establish links between the UK and the region, especially in the arts, education and civil society sectors.

¹ British Council, *Value of Trust* (2018) Available online at: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/the_value_of_trust.pdf

² British Council, *Value of Trust* (2018)

5. How effectively do different UK Government departments work together to achieve UK ambitions in Africa

5.1 British Council retains an Arms' Length Body status but ensures alignment of purpose with Departments such as the FCO, DFID and DIT. As part of the British Council's Tailored Review, it was agreed that British Council should participate in HMG's integrated business planning. The FCO and British Council are working together to ensure this happens, especially as part of its overseas missions. The British Council fed into the new strategic approach and there is clear alignment between its own strategy and that of HMG's, ensuring they are mutually supportive.

5.2 As part of the new strategic approach, British Council's vision and strategy fits closely with three of HMG's five key areas. Its focus on creative industries and professional development fits under 'prosperity'; youth engagement and participation, responding to high youth unemployment fits under 'security and stability'; and expansion of English language teaching in education systems in non-Anglophone Africa fits under 'The Sahel'. Examples of the British Council using soft power assets to work with Government departments are given below:

Case Study 1: Creative Enterprise Support Programme

The creative industries are recognised as sources of innovation, economic growth, personal wellbeing and community cohesion. They are part of a £2,250 billion global market and one of the world's fastest growing sectors. Africa's creative industries are diverse in structure and output, and it is acknowledged that the sector can improve the livelihoods of young Africans, but lacks a platform to provide sustainable, long-term funding and infrastructure. UK investment in this area responds to the demands and contributes to changing the narrative of countries in SSA for those in the UK.

The Creative Enterprise Support Programme in Lagos in 2019 responds to a growing sector in Nigeria. The programme shares UK expertise in two subsectors of the industry: fashion and film, in order to support capacity development and partnership. It stimulates UK-Nigeria Hub links in fashion and film by connecting individuals and institutions to share, learn and collaborate. This enables skills development leading to more professional opportunities for Nigerian entrepreneurs and partnerships and value for the UK. The programme helps change perceptions, positively on both sides by showcasing Nigerian talent and promoting the UK as a positive collaborator.

Over 11 weeks, 3,000 entrepreneurs applied for intensive courses, with 108 selected and 50 of these moving on to the incubation stage and attending a pitching event with grant award winners. Forty hub managers were trained, with two study tours to the UK in Fashion and Film for 12 Hub Managers. A People's Choice Award allowed the entrepreneur with the most public votes to win a study trip to the UK. Unsuccessful applicants are also being tracked.

Positive sentiment scores from participants of 91%, with the rest being neutral sentiment scores, is well above the industry benchmark. The programme reached 1.8million people online, through a bespoke website and social media, with a positive story of Nigerian and UK collaboration. More women than men participated, with the audience mainly being young entrepreneurs who have had a short-term engagement in the sector so are in the early stages of their career.

Due to the success of this project, it is being rolled out Abuja, Kano and Owerri in Nigeria and Nairobi in Kenya.

Case Study 2: English Connects in non-Anglophone Countries

The English language is one of the UK's strongest soft power assets. Demand for better English teaching is high, with governments in non-Anglophone Africa aware that improving the English language skills of their current and future workforce supports development objectives, inward investment, economic and social connections, increasing the economic attainment of individuals by up to 34%. It also caters for basic skills needed by British companies when investing in Africa. In addition, it creates a virtuous circle of UK influence, enhancing bilateral collaboration and people-to-people links.

English Connects is an innovative, multi-stranded programme aiming to connect the UK to African youth and the future generation of leaders through English.

The programme seeks to improve the quality of English language learning and teaching and to facilitate enhanced digital literacy, particularly in non-English speaking African countries. Over time this will contribute to creating greater opportunities for young people to fulfil their potential while improving their employability, resilience and networks.

Funded by the British Council and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and coordinated and managed by the British Council, the programme connects a wide range of UK English Language Teaching (ELT) providers and educational technology agencies with countries in Africa. It aims to showcase UK expertise, creativity and innovation in education and to build trust and new partnerships.

The pilot phase ran from January 2019 to March 2019 in three francophone countries; Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. The aim of the pilot was to trial the efficiency and impact of 11 project interventions across three programme strands, to learn lessons about what works in the region and individual countries and to chart a path towards a larger scale regional English programme over the longer term. The programme helped 670,000 young people access free English resources and provided training to 189 teacher educators who influence the professional practice of more than 7,000 English teachers at almost every secondary school across Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. The pilot is now being rolled out digitally to Cameroon, Djibouti, Angola, Gabon, Niger, Guinea, DRC.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has embassies in each pilot country, but the British Council has an office in only one; Senegal. One practical aim of the pilot was to test the challenges of implementing an ambitious programme centred on English in countries without a British Council presence. This challenge is particularly acute in Mali because of the restrictions on movement which security concerns impose on any UK nationals and employees working in the country.

6. Which countries outside of Africa are most influential in the continent? How do they achieve their influence? Should the UK be learning from these countries approach or trying to counter it?

6.1 The UK is not alone in seeking to build partnerships in Africa, whether this be diplomatic, trade or people to people links. British exports to Africa have slumped in recent years while other European countries, like Germany and Spain, have seen trade grow. Of course, Africa is too big and complex to be viewed simply through the lens of business.

6.2 In the education sector, China is keeping up with the needs of the region by making a substantial investment. It is providing scholarships and exchanges for African Students. Launched in 2012, the African Talents Program³ trained an estimated 30,000 African

professionals in China between 2013 and 2015, with a further 18,000 African trainees benefiting from full scholarships to study at Chinese universities under the arrangement⁴. Thousands of African students have also studied under the Indian Council of Cultural Relations and the CV Raman scholarship schemes too. Since 2008, the council has awarded 900 scholarships to African students annually. Germany's investment in scholarships and outward student mobility is giving it an edge in growing its appeal in high-growth export markets in Africa⁵. Following UK departure from the EU, British Council sees educational collaboration and partnership in SSA as important to ensuring the UK remains relevant and an attractive destination for study, business and trade to young Africans.

6.3 Other countries are also investing in their cultural relations institutions. China's Confucius Institutes grew in SSA from 13 to 29 between 2013 and 2018, with France retaining 37 throughout this period⁶. Brazil has also a renewed interest in the region with increased broadcasting to the Lusophone world⁷. It is also important to remember collaborative programmes funded by the EU in the region that could be lost as a result of Brexit.

6.4 The British Council is well placed to ascertain the aims and needs of the younger generations in SSA. It believes that the UK can still be influential by continuing to build upon its trusted relationships on the ground and utilising its expertise in this area.

7. How realistic are the UK's ambitions, as defined in their 'New approach to Sub-Saharan Africa, and the reality of the UK's engagement on the ground?'

7.1 The British Council has recognised that there has been a historic underinvestment in the region so has begun to redress this through increasing funding year on year, going from £16m in 2016/17, to £24m in 2019/20. This is supported by presence on the ground [*Image 1*]. There is increased demand in the region and a desire for mutual partnerships. By expanding presence, delivering programmes with partners and being more agile to changes, the new approach can be achieved.

7.2 With this renewed impetus, by 2030 the British Council is projected to reach 788 million young people, up from 627 million this year. They will reach 224 million people in countries they have not traditionally had a presence in, and 75 million will be in The Sahel region.

7.3 HMG's footprint has also increased by a third with five new missions opening, two of which are in the Sahel, in line with the government's approach. However, the UK's engagement with Africa must be long term and will depend on UK government agencies, ministerial prioritisation, long-term commitment and expertise. There are opportunities for the UK to respond quickly to the demands for English in non-Anglophone African countries, driven by the desire to do business with the English-speaking world. Also, as a significant middle class emerges across the continent, the UK must also respond to a growing appetite for a diversified offering. The focus therefore should be on understanding people and adapting to the needs of the growing population. The UK should work with key African partners who can help prioritise the needs of the next generation of UK and African businesses across African countries.

³ CGTN (27 August 2018) Available online at: https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d674d34557a4e79457a6333566d54/share_p.html [Accessed 30 August 2018]

⁴ British Council (2018), *Soft Power Superpowers*, Available online at: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/j119_thought_leadership_global_trends_in_soft_power_web.pdf

⁵ British Council (2018), *Soft power superpowers*,

⁶ British Council (2018), *Soft Power Superpowers*

⁷ British Council (2018), *Soft Power Superpowers*

8. In countries such as Sudan and Zimbabwe, has the UK done enough to support and promote democratic transitions of government? What more could it do to assist? How can we build longer term partnerships?

8.1 British Council research states that “other states have been willing to give credence to the UK’s point of view, to listen to and even follow the UK’s lead on key global challenges because it is trusted and recognised as a leading proponent of the rules-based international system”⁸. It is this longevity in the region that places the British Council in a good position to work with countries such as Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Case Study 3: Sudan Stability and Growth Programme

Deeper partnerships in Sudan have recently developed, focusing on promoting and cultivating the capacity and capability of civil society, youth and media institutions/individuals in order to play more constructive roles in social and political change. The DFID-funded Kullana Liltanmia Programme (KLP) in 2014-2018 helped civil society lead the processes of governance reform and lay foundations for productive and sustainable citizen-state engagement. KLP reached 58,371 people to have a choice and influence over their own development and hold decision-makers to account and supported over 25 Sudanese civil society partners to acquire new skills in fiduciary management, leadership, governance and contextual analysis. The individuals and institutions trained by the British Council have been at the heart of the leadership of the social movement that has led to a significant transition from authoritarianism to democracy and pluralism.

The British Council Sudan is now running the Strategic Support Unit (SSU) programme, a component of DFID’s Sudan Stability and Growth Programme (SSGP), which is geared to supporting the transition process in Sudan. The SSU has identified two areas, running in parallel, in which the British Council and DFID can make a difference: a) directly and indirectly contributing to (or influencing) the policy frameworks for the transitional period, and b) help creating the institutions and mechanisms which monitor the transition and

9. Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 The new strategic approach is and will be successful in reengaging with the continent. The British Council supports this approach and has based its regional strategy on the key findings of British Council and Foreign Office insights. The British Council encourages a new relationship based on equal partnership, reciprocity and one that addresses new and future prospects for both the region and the UK.

9.2 Further prioritising of English teaching, education and cultural relations in the region should be considered as a basis for future trust and mutual relationships, focusing on the needs and aims of future generations.

9.3 Other countries outside of SSA are increasing their influence and the UK must utilise its strengths in education, culture and expertise in the English language to remain relevant.

9.4 The British Council believes that mutuality and longevity are paramount. So, while development aid remains an important intervention in SSA, it welcomes the re-positioning of the relationship with countries in the continent: developing a long-term strategic approach that is based on partnership for mutual benefit.

⁸ British Council (2018), *Soft Power Superpowers*

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