

UK aid spending

Response to International Development

Committee Inquiry

December 2022

Scotland's International Development Alliance has sought opinion from our 200 strong membership on the questions set as part of this inquiry. Below we have summarised responses that have been received.

About the Alliance

Originally formed to represent and support organisations working in international development, the Alliance has grown to become the membership body in Scotland for everyone committed to creating a fairer world, free from poverty, injustice and environmental threats. Our membership brings together a diverse range of organisations and individuals including NGOs, businesses, academic institutions and public sector bodies that operate in over 100 countries.

Website: (intdevalliance.scot)

What effect the use of the aid budget to support refugees in the UK has had on the delivery and maintenance of UK-funded programmes in low-income countries

A member organisation working in Uganda expressed concern about the indefinite delay of the girls' education programme which was due to start in early 2023. This has been delayed because it has been impossible for the FCDO to allocate budget as it is unaware of how much money is being allocated to support refugees in the UK. As far as we are aware this was the only FCDO grant available in girls' education in Uganda. The recent large FCDO education programme (SESIL) has ended, meaning that there is no current or future FCDO funding for education in Uganda, further reducing FCDO's ability to influence strong education programming globally. This seems in contradiction to the FCDO's public commitment to continue to support funding for women and girls programming as a priority.

Whether spending from the aid budget to support refugees in the UK is an (a) efficient, (b) effective and (c) ethical use of public money

Our members are overwhelmingly concerned about the use of the aid budget to support refugees in the UK. Key points that have been made are:

Efficient and effective use of public money

- Repeated cutting and postponement of overseas aid funding means there is no effective long term planning. Stopping and starting aid funding is inefficient and ineffective and thus not a good use of public money.

Ethical use of public money

- The UK is required by the 1951 Refugee Convention to provide support for refugees in the UK – in this UK Government is a duty-bearer, it is a non-optional obligation on how the state operates to respond to issues and protect the rights of people in its territory. This obligation is distinct from the decision to allocate funds to international development assistance.

These two areas of spend should not be conflated, simply because they support those overseas. This approach is a good indication of a government which is not building policy and budgeting on any rights-based foundation.

- We are seeing a growing recognition of the financial implications of historical responsibility. COP27 saw agreement on the establishment of a Loss & Damage fund: whatever the drawbacks on the details of how this will be structured, it represents a significant step forward in terms of global recognition that historical polluters must take financial responsibility for their past actions. So in a context of increasing understanding of this imperative, the UK, as not only a historical carbon emitter but also as a nation which has benefitted enormously from colonial exploitation, must continue to assist countries which its past actions have harmed.
- The broadening of what the UK Government defines as aid can have a real impact on genuine aid programming. Aid programming in sensitive contexts (preventing violent extremism; vaccinations; maternal and child health in conservative countries) will be viewed with increased scepticism by local communities and governments as motives of UKAid are increasingly open to questioning
- This is a disingenuous use of aid funding which will fail to address the UK Government's stated aims of "projecting the UK as a force for good in the world".
- This is a continuation of a trend for the UK Government to take advantage of loose legal definitions, particularly seen in recent years by the use of the Conflict Stability and Security Fund which can stray into defence and counter-terror programming.