

Sarah Champion MP
Chair, International Development Committee
House of Commons
United Kingdom

3 June 2025

**Inquiry: The Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office's
Approach to Value for Money**

Dear Ms. Champion

Unitaid welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the House of Commons International Development Committee on the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office's (FCDO) approach to value for money (VfM).

Established in 2006 by the UK and other founding partners, Unitaid exists to address market failures that prevent access to lifesaving health technologies (diagnostics, therapeutics, and devices) in low- and middle-income countries. Recognizing the need for a long-term approach and strategic risk taking, Unitaid has a 20-year funding agreement with the UK for a value of £790 million that will expire in March 2026. Unitaid delivers strong VfM through creating new markets, accelerating access, and driving sustainable impact in global health.

This submission highlights:

- The UK's strategic role in Unitaid's governance and delivery model.
- How Unitaid aligns with and supports the FCDO's VfM priorities.
- Case studies and outcomes demonstrating Unitaid's cost-effectiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, economy, and equity
- Recommendations to enhance the FCDO's VfM framework through continued support for catalytic and innovative health interventions and alignment with the Lusaka Agenda.

Introduction to the Global Health Architecture and the United Kingdom's Role

The global health architecture and its financing is undergoing a profound transformation. The cumulative impact of constrained fiscal environments, shifting political priorities, and mounting global challenges has significantly altered the scale and structure of official development assistance (ODA). The recent decision by the UK to reduce its ODA allocation to 0.3% of gross national income, alongside other significant cuts across OECD DAC donors including the

exceptional withdrawal of support for major global health initiatives by the United States Administration, mark a pivotal moment for international cooperation and national self-reliance.

Against this backdrop, the imperative to achieve greater value for money is stronger than ever. The United Kingdom must now exercise strategic leadership to ensure that every pound spent delivers maximum health impact, strengthens systems, and accelerates progress toward equitable and sustainable outcomes. The UK's historic influence in shaping the global health architecture — including its foundational role in Unitaid — positions it to work with partners to champion reforms in line with the Lusaka Agenda.

Unitaid was established to address systemic access challenges in global health that meant people in LMIC were unable to access the lifesaving technologies. It focuses on innovations that bring the greatest health impact to underserved populations, particularly women, children, and those living in poverty. With total contributions of £3.2 billion (US\$4.3 billion) since inception, and a portfolio valued at £820 million (US\$1.1 billion) as of December 2024, Unitaid is a key player in health innovation through its approach to creating markets for lifesaving health technologies.

The UK was instrumental in establishing Unitaid and continues to play a pivotal role through funding, governance, and scientific partnerships with UK academia. Unitaid's approach has consistently been guided by principles of value for money, something championed by the UK from its inception.

Over a decade, Unitaid will invest an estimated £250 million in UK-led research consortia, linking the UK to a global network of innovation.

Unitaid's Model for Delivering Value for Money

Over two decades, Unitaid has established a holistic model that removes access barriers across affordability, quality, supply, and adoption. In this way, Unitaid's investments are designed to be catalytic, accelerating scale-up of proven interventions and de-risking innovation for broader adoption by partners such as the Global Fund and Gavi.

In 2024, the FCDO's Annual Review rated Unitaid "A+" overall and "A++" for exceeding expectations in magnitude, speed, and equity of health product scale-up as well as for its groundbreaking work to advance climate-smart health products.

Through its governance and funding model, the FCDO supports Unitaid in aligning efforts with other global health institutions to maximize impact per pound spent.

Effectiveness

- UK investment in Unitaid is a highly cost-effective way to spend ODA. Unitaid offers £46 of health, development and economic gains for every £1 invested.
- Unitaid makes UK and other donor investments into the Global Fund 16 per cent more effective, based on a joint analysis by Global Fund and Unitaid.¹
- Unitaid reaches more than 300 million people each year in more than 100 countries.
- Unitaid supported products will save the global health response more than £6 billion from the improved affordability of medicines and other health technologies by 2030.
- Accelerates the global HIV, TB and malaria response by more than three years.

¹ Global Fund and Unitaid [Analysis](#), 2023

Efficiency

- Unitaid is a hosted partnership of the World Health Organization, which allows it to benefit from shared systems and processes. Unitaid is part of the United Nations, which facilitates collaboration with entities such as UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNDP and others.
- Unitaid is co-located with key partners, including the Global Fund, GAVI, which allows for more rapid deployment and scale up of highly effective health technologies.
- Unitaid established, and remains the primary funder of, the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) to facilitate the voluntary licencing of medical patents for low- and middle-income countries. This increases production and helps to lower prices.
- Over 60 per cent of Unitaid's portfolio seeks to address antimicrobial resistance. This includes efforts to ensure the efficient deployment of existing technologies while investing in the next generation of technologies.
- Unitaid is a key investor in long-acting technologies, including financing the world's first Centre of Excellence for Long-Acting Therapeutics (CELT) at the University of Liverpool.

Economy

- Unitaid's operating expenditure is less than 2 per cent of its overall portfolio value. This nimble structure allows it to move rapidly into promising new areas.
- Unitaid competitive tenders its investments, ensuring that its implementing partners offer the best
- Within the United Nations, Unitaid's governance structure is small and comprehensive, including low-, middle- and high-income countries alongside civil society, non-governmental organization and foundations.

Equity

- FCDO's 2024 Unitaid Annual Review recognized it as having performed beyond expectation (A++) for taking products to scale in terms of magnitude, speed and equity, with 100 per cent of its portfolio meeting equity conditions.
- Unitaid focuses its impact on key populations often overlooked because they, or their governments, lack the economic means, often women, girls, rural, etc.
- Unitaid has created markets for over 100 of the most groundbreaking health products and then worked relentlessly to see them taken to scale worldwide, including:
 - All first-line medicines for HIV, including dolutegravir, the most effective and affordable treatment to date (note: Unitaid is the pioneer in all pediatric formulations)
 - Diagnostic testing machines for TB, which can be adapted to test for other pathogens – including COVID-19
 - HIV self-tests, a critical tool to increase diagnosis and treatment of people with HIV
 - Self-collection kits and easy-to-use thermal ablation devices to detect and treat pre-cancerous cells to prevent cervical cancer
 - Seasonal malaria chemoprevention, a preventative treatment that now protects 49 million children a year

Conclusion and Recommendations

Unitaid provides a proven model for delivering value for money through catalytic investment, innovation, and equity. Unitaid recommends that as the FCDO moves forward it should be:

1. **Advancing Innovation to Save Lives:** The UK should invest in innovative technologies that contribute to establishing sustainable/affordable health systems.
2. **Promoting Equity in Health Outcomes:** The UK should emphasize support for initiatives that prioritize underserved populations and address health disparities.
3. **Facilitating Sustainable, Domestically-Financed Health Services:** The UK should support countries in transitioning to sustainable health systems.
4. **Championing Strategic and Operational Coherence:** The UK should leverage its governance positions within global health initiatives to ensure those functions best delivered multilaterally/minilaterally to promote cost-effectiveness.
5. **Strengthening Integrated Health Care:** FCDO investments should reinforce systems and integrate services targeted at those that need them most.

These recommendations are aligned with the Lusaka Agenda and underscore the UK's strategic role in reshaping the global health architecture. Continued investment in institutions like Unitaid ensures that the UK's development funding remains impactful, equitable, and future-ready.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tenu Avafia', written in a cursive style.

Tenu Avafia
Deputy Executive Director