

CARE International UK Written submission to the International Development Committee on the impact of the UK Aid cuts

29th May

Introduction and summary

1. CARE International UK is part of the global CARE confederation which has been working to defend dignity, fight poverty and to provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance to people in need for over 75 years. CARE currently works in 104 countries. Our programmes and our policy work tackle the systemic causes of poverty so that people can gain the power to change their own lives. We place special focus on empowering women and girls.
2. UK Aid budget cuts have been deep, indiscriminate, and very damaging. The government has not prioritised aid that will save lives, and has not explained how it made its decisions. As a result, people are likely to die as a direct result of these cuts. Women and girls are being disproportionately impacted. This submission compliments a joint submission CARE International UK has submitted which outlines the impact on gender equality, and discusses additional concerns we have about the process and further evidence of the impact on CARE's programming.

Process

3. We are extremely troubled and concerned by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact's report into the manner in which cuts were made in order to reduce the budget in line with the expected fall in GNI last year.¹ Particularly that decisions were made without sufficient time to assess or consider their impact, with inconsistent criteria applied, and that deeper cuts were made on incorrect assumptions about GNI in 2020.
4. Overall there has been a complete lack of transparency about the process through which decisions are being made, and what their expected impact will be. This has created a very difficult environment to plan and budget, which has the greatest impact on the people involved in our programmes, but also CARE country offices and civil society partners around the world.
5. There is also no transparency about how future budget allocations will be made. The Government's stated aim to reinstate the 0.7% target "when fiscal circumstances allow" is not accompanied with any explanation of how they would make that judgement.
6. In 2020, the Government made deeper cuts than were necessary as GNI was predicted to be lower than it turned out to be. Whilst we advocate for a return to meeting the 0.7% commitment immediately, since GNI forecasts in 2021 remain strong, there is opportunity for the Government to restore some of the cuts it has made whilst not exceeding 0.5% of GNI.

Gender equality

7. CARE International UK has also written a submission jointly with other gender focused INGOs which provides details on the disproportionate impact on women and girls and long-term damage to gender equality efforts. The impact of the aid cuts is falling disproportionately on women and girls. Humanitarian programmes that target gender

¹ Management of the 0.7% ODA spending target in 2020. ICAI, <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/review/management-of-the-0-7-oda-spending-target-in-2020/review-tab/>

equality have been cut at a higher rate than those that do not. An estimated 20 million women and girls will not receive support from UK Aid in the next year, compared to 2019.² Programmes targeting gender equality, including girls' education, which is a stated priority of the FCDO, have seen deep cuts. Girls' education is estimated to be cut by 40%. The budget for UNFPA has been cut by 85%, which they estimate will result in 250,000 additional preventable maternal and new-born deaths and 14.6 million additional unintended pregnancies for women and girls.³

8. The Foreign Secretary has advised the International Development Committee that a central equalities impact assessment was conducted, but to date, there has been no public information provided on this. The Government have indicated that no disproportionate impact on people with protected characteristics was found, however in this submission we present evidence and case studies which illustrate the disproportionate impact on women and girls. The International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014 also requires the Government before providing development or humanitarian assistance to 'have regard to the desirability of providing development (humanitarian) assistance that is likely to contribute to reducing poverty in a way which is likely to contribute to reducing inequality between persons of different gender.' It is not clear how the decisions around the cuts have been assessed or ensured that they also comply with the requirements of this act.

The impact of the cuts to CARE's programmes

9. In total, CARE has seen £7.1m of cuts to signed programmes. However, when comparing FY22 with FY21, we expect a reduction of approximately a third of CARE International UK's income from FCDO, a reduction of about £17m, due to the slow-down in pipeline programmes and lower budgets for new programmes and extensions. The following are examples of programmes that CARE International UK has seen cuts to:
10. **Syria resilience programme:** This programme will have been cut by 70% since 2019. Beneficiary numbers will reduce from 550,000 to fewer than 100,000 leaving hundreds of thousands of people, particularly women and children without the support they need. Food security inside Syria has reached unprecedented levels and these cuts will critically impact those most vulnerable. From January 2022 all funding will end for protection services, GBV services and the closure of community centres. Six protection centres will shut down, and critical protection services to 45,000 Syrians will stop. We will also not be able to support COVID-19 mitigation measures. We will also lose valuable institutional capacity and knowledge built over five years.
11. **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights:** The programme was designed over two years jointly with Marie Stopes, it was cancelled shortly before launch. The programme sought innovative ways to extend SRHR services to hard-to-reach communities in Uganda, Niger and Madagascar.
12. **Investing in Adolescent Girls in Rwanda, CARE International UK and partners:** UK government cancelled funding to an education and life-skills programme supporting adolescents in Rwanda. This four year, £12m project, was due to reach more than 150k girls and 50k boys, including 8000 adolescents with disabilities. A follow-on programme from a pilot that had already proved effective, the programme combined vocational training, access to financing and mentorships with engaging parents, community leaders and government officials to better support adolescent girl's education and needs.
13. **Supporting women's rights organisations respond to Covid-19 in Egypt (CSSF):** This programme was cut shortly before a contract was due to be signed in December 2020. The project was designed to support local women-led organisations to provide gender-based

² See joint submission made on 29th May

³ Liz Ford. ["Devastating for women and girls": UK cuts 85% in aid to UN family planning.](#) *The Guardian*, 29th April 2021.

violence (GBV) services during the pandemic. The budget was £0.4m for 6 months, but with the likelihood of follow-on funding. It is particularly damaging to have lost the opportunity to support women in Egypt facing GBV, as the COVID-19 pandemic has brought on a sharp increase.

14. **Yemen:** Although our current grant has not faced a cut, we do not yet know when follow-on grants will be available, or what size these grants might be. This means there will be a gap in the multi-purpose cash assistance we can provide to **approximately 200,000 Yemenis**, possibly for several months.

Recommendations

1. Restore the ODA budget to 0.7% GNI, by the 2021 Autumn budget at the latest.
2. Publish in full the methodology and results of Equalities Impact Assessments which were carried out.
3. Publish details of how the Government complied with the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014 through the process of making decisions around where cuts would fall.
4. Ensure existing commitments in the UK's Strategic Vision for Gender Equality, and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security are met in full, with sufficient funding.