

International Development Committee

House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

8 May 2020

Dear Ms Champion MP,

Inquiry Evidence: Effectiveness of UK Aid

The HALO Trust welcomes this inquiry and is pleased to provide evidence.

The attached evidence highlights the UK's reputation as a global leader in international humanitarian and development assistance, particularly through Britain's international NGOs. It also includes a series of recommendations of measures that could further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of UK aid. HALO considers the Integrated Review a key opportunity to apply these recommendations.

HALO's evidence draws on the organisation's expertise as a unique international NGO sitting at the confluence of security, development and humanitarian work. It also reflects our status as a key DFID partner, having delivered work with Her Majesty's Government in 15 countries over the past 32 years.

HALO is committed to ensuring that the UK remains a global humanitarian and demining centre of excellence. We remain equally committed to supporting Global Britain as an influential force for good in the world, particularly against a backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and its inevitable impact on conflict, humanitarian crises and socio-economic development.

We look forward to working with the Committee in this inquiry and its broader work.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Loughran
Senior Policy & Advocacy Advisor



Camille Wallen
Director of Strategy

**International Development Committee
Inquiry Evidence: Effectiveness of UK Aid
Submitted by The HALO Trust**

1. Introduction

1.1. The HALO Trust (HALO) values the opportunity to contribute to the International Development Committee (IDC) inquiry into the effectiveness of UK aid as part of the Integrated Review process. The following evidence to the inquiry focusses on UK leadership in humanitarian and development work, the role of DFID and the UK's excellence in clearance of landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

1.2. HALO's evidence to this inquiry identifies the benefits of continued funding to mine action as well as the need for greater focus on addressing the causes and conflict. It highlights a strategic gap in the UK's use of Official Development Assistance (ODA) relating to weapons control, and proposes a new strategic approach to rectify it. This should be addressed through the Integrated Review.

1.3. Meanwhile, this evidence also highlights the need for DFID to urgently match its support for COVID-19 vaccine development with support to front-line humanitarian response overseas. This would address a critical gap in support to British NGOs, whose capacity is underutilised and underfunded. Doing so is in the moral and national interest and would deliver on the government's commitment to leadership in global COVID-19 response.

2. The HALO Trust

2.1. HALO's mission is to protect lives and restore livelihoods of people affected by conflict. Founded in the UK in 1988, HALO is a world leader in humanitarian mine action as well as weapons control. It is the UK's eighth largest international NGO, with 8,500 staff in 25 countries and territories around the world.

2.2. HALO is committed to reducing human suffering caused by former conflict and armed violence, while working proactively to address the causes and consequences of instability, conflict and crises that entrench poverty and inequality. HALO's work and approach places it at the nexus of global humanitarian, development and security concerns, making its expertise and experience relevant to the work of the IDC and the scope of this inquiry.

2.3. HALO is a key partner of Her Majesty's government through projects under the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), and the multi-year Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP) led by the Department for International Development (DFID). HALO has played a pivotal role in the administration and implementation of both GMAP1 (2014-2018) and GMAP2 (2018-2021). Since 2018 alone, GMAP has funded HALO and other NGOs to clear 25 square miles of landmine contamination, the equivalent of 638 Wembley stadiums across 11 countries. It has helped 460 million people to live safely until landmine contamination can be cleared.

2.4. As well as being a global leader in mine action, HALO has a solid track record of applying its expertise and capability to emergency response in the face of protracted and sudden onset emergencies. In 2004, HALO redirected landmine clearance capacity to humanitarian response when a tsunami decimated Sri Lanka's coastline communities. Now, HALO has proactively applied its knowledge, capacity and expertise to respond to the COVID-19 epidemic.

2.5. HALO is providing logistical support to front line medical efforts, providing ambulances and transporting vital supplies, improving water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and raising awareness about COVID-19 in rural communities. This reflects HALO's agility in pivoting its expertise, capacity and capabilities to respond to human suffering. As a proactive humanitarian organisation, HALO is preparing to support the response to the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on the lives and livelihoods of those affected by conflict.

3. Key Recommendations

3.1. HALO makes the following key recommendations:

- i. **The government must maintain its commitment to spend of 0.7% of Gross National Income on Official Development Assistance (ODA), with a greater proportion of it allocated to addressing the causes and consequences of conflict.**

This is consistent with the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015. It will safeguard the UK's substantial contribution to global poverty reduction and sustainable development, while also addressing the underlying causes of conflict and violence. It also reflects British values and a Global Britain that remains an influential force for good in the world.

- ii. **The government must remain transparent and accountable to the UK public and Parliament in UK ODA expenditure.**

Meeting the 0.7% target is a demonstration of British leadership but also requires high levels of transparency, accountability and demonstration of value for money to the British taxpayer. The government should continue its constructive engagement with the IDC and the Independent Commission for Aid Impact Sub-Committee (ICAI), across the full range of ODA expenditure.

- iii. **The government should continue its support to the Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP), which is a demonstration of British leadership and values while attracting widespread support among the UK public.**

The government should use the model of NGO partnerships that underpins the GMAP as a model for further assistance. It should reduce inefficient bureaucracy and transaction overheads associated with channelling UK ODA for mine action through the United Nations Mine Action Service.

- iv. **The government should urgently review its funding strategy to the global COVID-19 response and play a greater role in leading coalitions to address its global health, economic and socio-economic development impacts.**

The UK should match its leadership in funding global vaccine development with funding for front line global response to the primary and secondary impacts of COVID-19. It should make greater use of British NGOs with existing capability and release greater levels of funding for their deployment.

- v. **The government should develop a new Global Weapons Reduction Programme to complement GMAP through a regional, multi-year collaborative approach to combatting weapons proliferation and its impact.**

This will close a significant gap in the UK's development assistance to mitigate the impact of weapons as a primary driver of humanitarian suffering and poverty. It would also make greater use of the expertise and capability of leading British NGOs.

- vi. **The inquiry should recommend that DFID broaden the scope of current mechanisms for consultation with the UK's international NGOs in order to enhance the efficiency of UK ODA.**

The UK is a centre of excellence in humanitarian, development and demining work. Current strategic consultation mechanisms are limited in scope and stakeholders, and do not therefore draw on the full range of British expertise.

- vii. **The inquiry should recommend greater strategic and cross-government coordination in the use of ODA expenditure, while putting in place measures to ensure principled aid delivery.**

UK aid should be prioritised and driven by humanitarian and development need, however there is scope for more joined-up strategic planning across government. The government should draw on the successes of the 'fusion approach' in order to enhance effectiveness in ODA expenditure for the world's poor and conflict affected communities.

4. ODA & UK National Interest

4.1. The UK's commitment to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on ODA demonstrates British leadership and reflects the UK's substantial contribution to global poverty reduction and sustainable development. It is consistent with the UK's multilateral commitments and has played a key role in alleviating poverty, while also strengthening the resilience of those affected by violence and conflict.

4.2. DFID and the broader government has played a key role in priority issues and initiatives in poverty reduction and human rights. This includes combatting climate change, protecting biodiversity, ensuring media freedom and strengthening equity for women and girls, particularly through commitments to girls' education. The UK is also a consistent leader in humanitarian mine action through GMAP (see further below).

4.3. Combatting poverty is in line with British values and is in the moral and national interest. As well as alleviating poverty among the world's poorest communities, ODA can play a key role in addressing the drivers of conflict, instability and fragility. This is particularly the case when humanitarian crises increasingly take place amid protracted conflict which is now frequently waged in urban areas and involving non-state armed groups.

5. Department for International Development & UK Leadership

5.1. DFID has a strong global reputation for its expertise and transparency in channelling ODA to tackle extreme poverty and insecurity. It has an equally strong global reputation for programming independent, accountable and knowledge-driven aid with expert NGOs. Many of these, including HALO, are headquartered in the UK.

5.2. DFID should be commended for its commitment to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), as well as for its cooperation with the IDC and the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI). DFID's work and expenditure should remain transparent and accountable to the UK public and parliament. There is need for greater scrutiny over the effectiveness of channelling UK ODA through UN bodies, particularly in cases where UK funding is subsequently sub-contracted to NGOs. Such scrutiny is essential to ensure the integrity, efficiency and effectiveness UK ODA expenditure.

5.3. The UK is a centre of excellence in development and humanitarian issues. It is home to some of the world's leading academic and policy institutes, as well as international NGOs. DFID has a strong track record of consultation with NGOs. It should, however, broaden and diversify the NGOs and perspectives on which it draws for strategic policy and programming guidance. This will enable the government to make better use of the full range of British expertise at its disposal, and increase the effectiveness of UK aid.

5.4. The UK, led by DFID, has made substantial contributions to global appeals on COVID-19, totalling approximately £750 million. It is one of the leading donors to the global effort to develop a COVID-19 vaccine. DFID has, however, been slow to match vaccination support with funding and programming to global front-line response. A recent Rapid Release Fund for humanitarian NGO COVID-19 response amounted to less than 3% of the UK's global funding to COVID-19. Out of 92 proposals submitted to DFID by NGOs, only seven were funded. This demonstrates clearly that there is underutilised and underfunded British capacity.

5.5. DFID should match its support to vaccination development with funds to NGOs on the front line. This is essential to prevent further waves of COVID-19, including in the UK. It is also necessary to prevent secondary public health, socio-economic development and macro-economic economic impacts of COVID-19. Failure to fund and programme an agile front-line response risks undoing the impact of previous UK ODA. It also risks exacerbating violence, including against women and girls, as well as exacerbating conflict and environmental harm.

6. The UK Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP)

6.1. The UK has become a leading donor to clearance of landmines and unexploded ordnance through the multi-year GMAP led by DFID. GMAP has supported HALO and the Mines Advisory Group (MAG, also a UK-based NGO) to take a leading global role in clearance of landmines, explosive ordnance and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This is an area of UK excellence that the government should strengthen in support of poverty reduction and stabilisation.

6.2. The GMAP model returns a high level of measurable impact for UK ODA spending, with its multi-year programming enhancing effectiveness. GMAP's funding to British NGOs has a clear and tangible impact on conflict-affected communities as well as the 60 million people still living with the unacceptable fear and risk of landmines. In addition, mine action provides high levels of skilled employment in conflict affected and marginalised communities.

6.3. The UK should continue to prioritise funding for mine action, drawing on the expertise of – and partnership between – leading British NGOs. It should ensure a balance between support to long-standing landmine contamination as well as emergency support to clearance of explosive ordnance and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) resulting from new conflict, especially in urban areas. This balance will ensure that UK support to mine action supports poverty reduction as well as emergency humanitarian response programming and safe delivery of wider UK aid.

6.4. Mine action is most effective when it is delivered by expert NGOs. However, one third of the UK's mine action support is channelled through the UN Mine Action Service. In the majority of cases it is then reprogrammed to NGOs and commercial organisations to deliver operational demining programmes. This brings additional and unnecessary transaction and administration costs, reducing the efficiency of UK ODA. Further, mine action funding channelled through the UN is measured against a different and less rigorous set of results, reducing public accountability of UK aid. DFID should review the added value of funding mine action through the UN Mine Action Service and align reporting and accountability requirements.

7. Global Weapons Reduction

7.1. Practical measures to enhance weapons control and reduce armed violence overseas have been neglected in the government's strategic planning. There is significant scope for the UK to play a greater role in addressing weapons proliferation as a key driver and consequence of conflict and insecurity. The importance of this issue as a strategic priority will only be heightened by the impact of climate change and the secondary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The inquiry should recommend the establishment of a new Global Weapons Reduction Programme to complement the GMAP. Doing so will also enhance the effectiveness of wider ODA-funded activity.

7.2. A new Global Weapons Reduction Programme should be directed to address the underlying causes and consequences of conflict to abate further societal escalation of violence, and reduce the need for greater humanitarian and development intervention. This inquiry and the integrated review process is a key opportunity to highlight and bolster UK strategy to address global weapons control.

8. Cross-Governmental Coordination & Expert Consultation

8.1. The UK's Fusion Strategy has contributed significantly to enhancing cross-government collaboration. However, government efforts to address the causes and consequences of conflict, armed violence and instability overseas still too often remain siloed. There is scope for greater strategic coordination between development, diplomacy and defence while maintaining the independence of aid delivery. The need for enhanced fusion in strategies will only be heightened by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the UK's commitment to leadership in the global response.

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8.2. The UK has a unique range of humanitarian, military and commercial organisations capable of delivering results in support of Global Britain. A future-focussed Global Britain strategy needs to include mechanisms to harness the combined UK expertise held in government, the commercial sector and non-governmental organisations.

8.3. The inquiry should recommend new and enhanced mechanisms for DFID to draw on and support the full range of UK expertise, to be established through the Integrated Review. This will increase the effectiveness of UK ODA while also ensuring that a Global Britain remains an influential force for good in the world.

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