

[\[Withdrawn\] UK international development white paper: call for evidence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

1. Partnerships

- How do partnerships need to change to restore the credibility of international development and the multilateral system and regain the trust of Global South?
- What role should the UK play in this and what specifically should we do differently?
- What should we do to ensure we are listening better to those most in need?

The commitment to the SDGs by ALL members of the United Nations was a collective acknowledgement of the global need for reform. Failure to deliver has increased the pressure for reform. The UK's positive reputation as evidenced in 2018¹ has been undermined by the sudden cuts to aid funding. Such distrust² places the UK in a difficult position to show leadership.

Capital outflows from the world's poorest countries remain substantially bigger than any development grants as highlighted by UNCTAD³. In reality Africa is a net creditor to the rest of the world. Taking action on illicit finance flows and introducing legislation to break the impasse on the global debt crisis, would immediately send a positive signal to global south countries. This could be done by debt cancellation via legislating to force private creditors to participate in global debt relief initiatives⁴.

The UK could regain trust by fulfilling its public commitments to tackling tax havens under its jurisdiction. The UK showed clear leadership on encouraging transparency by hosting the world's first anti-corruption summit in 2016. Action to implement the commitments made then would help restore credibility and release funds for the world's poorest.

Stakeholder meetings held on behalf of the Scottish Government to investigate what a feminist approach to global affairs would entail, highlighted that feminist organisations and movements [have been identified](#) as the most significant drivers of sustainable policy change for women's rights.⁵ More imaginative partnerships, including with feminist networks and local networks of Civil Society organisations, would enable partners to define for themselves the priorities for funding, and avoid priorities being imposed by the donor.⁶ The UK Government could make an important impact by applying some of these principles to future funding.

¹ https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/the_value_of_trust.pdf

² [devex anger at aid cuts on health](#)

³ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/aldcafrica2020_en.pdf

⁴ <https://debtjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/DJ-CAFOD-Parliamentary-Briefing-Legislative-Reform-May-23.pdf>

⁵ <https://justassociates.org/bold-movements-bold-funding-bold-change/>

⁶ [2. Context - Feminist approach to foreign policy - stakeholder engagement workshops: evidence report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Participatory processes require time and effort. NGOs in country have an important role to play, but the UK is also home to many of the world's leading development organisations many of whom have longstanding egalitarian partnerships around the world. The UK Government could both help fund organisations directly and consider funding only those organisations that work in equitable partnerships with civil society organisations around the world. Funding for NGOs could specify that programmes should be administered in country by locally registered independent NGOs, to help encourage a move to local ownership of programming. More equal partnerships can be promoted by requiring locally-registered and led NGOs to input into application and reporting processes on an equal footing with their UK-based partners⁷. Global commitments to local funding should be upheld, and set out in the White Paper as clear targets for delivery. Such moves would help recognise and validate local expertise.

The one act that would reinstate confidence would be to immediately re-enact the commitment to 0.7% GNP for ODA.

Big Ideas and Innovations

2.

- What are the specific innovative proposals that can accelerate progress in international development?
- What initiatives, policies, partnerships, or technologies could result in accelerated progress?
- Are there big ideas on which the UK is particularly well placed to play a role?

Become a real champion of MDB reform (including but not limited to the Bridgetown agenda), build on the lead taken by the UK in ensuring the redistribution of SDRs (which helped countries like Yemen) but also implement action on tax havens and sign up to the Framework convention on Tax⁸.

Champion the 6 proposals for World Bank reform contained in this report by 74 CSOs⁹.

The focus on an increase of climate finance led by the UK Government at COP 26 seemed to herald a potential new era in climate financing. Action to disinvest from fossil fuels and to transform industrial processes has not followed and the corporate sector is increasingly accused of greenwashing. COP 28 offers the UK a chance to reclaim leadership and push for real progress on the commitments made in Glasgow in 2021. The White Paper should clarify that grant funding is necessary for climate action, including on Loss and Damage and that this should not be considered as ODA but as an investment to save the planet.

The White Paper could set out the importance of measuring, reporting and acting on spillover effects¹⁰. In the context of a global interconnected world, we are confronted with a complex system of transnational flows. The escalating interdependence of these diverse global flows has amplified cross-border environmental and socio-economic interactions and produced effects that transcend geographical boundaries. Of particular concern are the international trade-related flows, which give rise to far-reaching spillover feedback effects that have significant implications for international

⁷ <https://www.corra.scot/grants/voices-relationships-and-partnerships-in-international-development/>

⁸ <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2019/09/tackling-global-tax-havens-shaxon#:~:text=Tax%20havens%20collectively%20cost%20Governments,not%2Dso%2Dlegal%20means>

⁹ [CSO reaction to WBG evolution roadmap FINAL.pdf \(nationbuilder.com\)](#)

¹⁰ [Transforming Our World: Interdisciplinary Insights on the SDGs \(unsdsn.org\)](#)

governance and global frameworks. To effectively advance the realization of the SDGs, it is imperative to comprehensively assess the direct and indirect impacts of relevant policy measures to mitigate potential adverse consequences. There is an opportunity here for the UK to reclaim the lead on SDG innovation for implementation by championing the importance of measuring spillovers and taking action to mitigate adverse consequences.

Support WHO in championing a ONEHealth approach and take similar holistic approaches to other global problems, including education, climate change and policy coherence. As part of the Onehealth approach, champion vaccine equity using the UK's position to influence pharmaceuticals and encouraging the waiver of patents for key medicines and vaccines to enable access to the global poor. Apply conditions to publicly funded pharmaceutical Research and Development so that any medicines developed in the UK are affordable and accessible globally.

The Ukraine crisis has thrown into sharp relief the value of working closely with displaced populations and diaspora in 'host' nations, who bring insights and are also often directly connected to groups in countries in conflict. Syrian communities in the UK have similarly demonstrated an ability to raise funds and direct support to groups in need on the ground. The White Paper should acknowledge the value of these communities and promote engagement with them and with civil society organisations based in conflict zones to ensure more efficient use of humanitarian funds.

3.

- What new ideas for development cooperation would make the biggest impact in, or for, low income countries?
- What are the best ideas to accelerate progress for middle income countries which still have large numbers of poor people?

Implementing a gender responsive, inclusive approach, including the funding of feminist movements and other civil society networks can accelerate progress for the poorest in middle income countries. Adopting feminist principles to programming could radically change its impact. This could be done through relatively practical easy to implement measures e.g. by setting a benchmark for funding peace and security work that targets gender equality as a primary or significant policy objective. Introduction of systematic gender, climate and inclusion benchmarks would go some way to restoring confidence in the transparency of funding commitments. Learn from the Canadian Government and insist on a gender analysis as part of documentation before funding is sent. Other transformative measures would include: promoting the inclusion of non-paid care work in measuring economies; adding gendered rights and environmental due diligence requirements to business supply chains; and facilitating space for women's rights organisations in international policy discussions.

Support the development of social safety nets including in lower middle-income countries with large numbers of poor. Build on the accelerating use of new technologies for digital payments and learn the lessons from those who were able to support populations during Covid using a mixture of payments and support through telephone banking and other technologies¹¹.

In seeking to promote disaster risk reduction, whether in conflict zones or elsewhere, there remains a need for access to longer term funding that can be used flexibly if needed. 'Start/stop' funding,

¹¹ Lone, T., Shakeel, M., Bischler, J. (2020) 'Towards shock-responsive social protection: lessons from the COVID-19 response in Pakistan, Shock-responsive social protection responses during COVID-19, Oxford Policy Management, Oxford.

and uncertainty over funding, can have a hugely negative effect on locally-based civil society organisations' ability to retain and develop their teams. The White Paper should acknowledge the importance of longer term, flexible funding targeted at locally based civil society who actively participate in the creation of programmes and who evaluate the impact.

Support academic links with universities in the global south to enable them to share research and engage in genuine peer to peer academic partnerships (evidence from southern based civil society networks suggests a real demand for support to research capacity in the global south.) Currently the terms of donor funded research projects are set by donors and researchers in the Global North. FCDO could take a lead in encouraging greater co-creation of research projects to ensure full participation and ownership of researchers and academics in the global south. In addition, funding for research should include specific funding for dissemination, including in different languages to ensure that research is shared with affected communities and those consulted in research projects. Agreement on dissemination and publication of research should also include access for global south academics who cannot access expensive academic journals.

The White Paper should promote the localisation of the SDGs, globally and in the UK to transform their implementation and help champion the UN Secretary General's push in this direction.

The UK could also support the UN's call for a tax convention [UN Tax Convention](#)

ODA and 'beyond aid'

4.

- How can Official Development Assistance (ODA) be most effectively targeted and built upon?
- How can non-ODA financing be mobilised to ensure ambitious, innovative, and transformational international development?

UK reporting on ODA is currently not aligned to the SDGs. It is vital that decision-making around ODA investment is based on evidence on what best targets poverty and contributes to the implementation of SDGs, and that there is clear, time-bound and transparent reporting.

Considering that more than 4% of ODA is spent by British International Investment (BII) (and will increase up to 7% by 2027), it is important to introduce clear ways of measuring and assessing BII's contribution to SDGs disaggregated by targets addressing concerns around the transparency, effectiveness, and poverty-focus of BII's investments. All aspects of ODA, including BII should be included in transparent and public impact assessment and evaluation, realigned more closely to SDG targets.

The International Development Committee (IDC), in its recent report on extreme poverty and the SDGs, notes the lack of direction and strategy in recent years, in addition to a clear objective on poverty reduction as a function of its international development programmes. To address this, the UK should seek to apply the transformative principles of the 2030 Agenda in its international development work, including universal respect for human rights (particularly non-discrimination and equality) and the recognition of the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of the SDGs -

understanding that the implementation of all rights are necessary conditions for the realisation of the SDGs.

Many of the initiatives under the reform of governance of global financial architecture can also promote non-ODA financing. These include debt relief, climate finance as additional to ODA, re-channelling of SDRs and tackling of tax avoidance and illicit financial flows. The key for other non-ODA financing mechanisms such as trade and diplomacy is to ensure that they help to promote inclusion and are aligned with SDGs and international standards and principles supporting sustainable economic development and the 'leave no one behind' commitment. Programmes should support holistic solutions that seek to address multiple SDGs, and do not simultaneously undermine progress on other SDGs.

The UK should commit to reporting two further VNRs before 2030 and encourage devolved administrations to submit their own reviews in line with the UN's promotion of localisation of the SDGs.

Better targeting of ODA could be achieved by listening to those who count in the global south including southern based networks of NGOs. These and feminist networks might be supported to encourage more innovative approaches. Funding new research collaborations with institutions in the global south could also encourage the emergence of more innovative approaches. Ways to consider doing this were made in a report by IDS in 2023 ¹²

The White Paper should include recommendations from the IDC report on international Debt of March 10 2023 and consider action to incentivise private creditors to participate in debt relief, including the passing of legislation to cover the 90% of bond contracts governed by English Law. ¹³

5.

- How should scientific and technological expertise, private finance and the private sector, trade and investment, civil society networks and diplomacy be engaged to support global development action and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

In addition to encouraging the engagement of globally based academics in issues pertinent to sustainable development there is a wider need in the interests of policy coherence to ensure UK based calls for research cooperation are open to internationally based networks. A recent example of where this is not the case and which seems to discriminate against global cooperation can be found here [Pre-announcement: transdisciplinary funding to tackle antimicrobial resistance \(AMR\)](#) where it specifies clearly that "*The funded networks must be (UK) national and open to new members throughout their duration regardless of their location (international members may also join them, although they won't be able to receive funds).*" Some research monies run by Research Institutes are more open but there doesn't seem to be consistency. In such important areas of global research which are key to the global success of SDG implementation, Government can have a role in encouraging a norm that ensures real collaboration.

The UK's NAO is widely admired and plays an important fiduciary oversight role that helps reduce fiduciary risk for Government. To help support the localisation of decision making on funding and to

¹² Georgalakis, J. and Siregar, F. (2023) Knowledge Translation in the Global South: Bridging Different Ways of Knowing for Equitable Development, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, DOI: 10.19088/IDS.2023.028

¹³ [Debt relief in low-income countries \(parliament.uk\)](#)

encourage transparency and accountability for Government spending, the NAO could be supported to take on more bilateral work with other Governments, similar support could be given to the audit offices in devolved authorities who have equal expertise to share.

To facilitate direct funding of networks and organisations based in recipient countries, direct training support should be offered to ensure governance standards. Co-creation of projects, reporting and evaluation would also help minimise fiduciary risk.

Climate and development

6.

- How can progress on tackling ending poverty, economic growth, and the challenges of climate change be best brought together, in the context of Agenda 2030 (including building resilience, adaptation, and sustainable growth)?
- How can the opportunities be maximised? How can the limits and trade-offs be managed?

All industrialised countries who are responsible for historical carbon legacies must meet their international climate finance obligations, and respond to spiralling losses and damages, without rebranding existing international development assistance. They have a duty to identify new sources of finance to fund action to address the additional challenges created by the climate crisis. Without this, wider development gains - both past and those sought in future - will be undermined. The identification of additional funding would avoid the redirection of funds from other domestic priorities, such as funding for crucial public services.

To meaningfully ensure contribution to the achievement of the SDGs, the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) approach should be adopted. PCSD helps foster synergies across economic, social and environmental policy areas; identify trade-offs and reconcile domestic policy objectives with internationally agreed objectives and address the spill-overs of domestic policies.

To meaningfully ensure coherence with the SDGs, there must be a rigorous assessment of the global impacts of domestic climate policies.

A recent paper¹⁴ noted that the UK performs poorly on indicator 17.14.1 tracking commitment to policy coherence and the establishment of institutions to implement the SDGs. Key gaps are apparent in the UK - the lack of a coordination body for the SDGs within Government, and a mechanism for stakeholder engagement; an absence of frameworks and institutions to encourage and embed coherence across economic, social and environmental policies; and the absence of transparency and oversight around policy coherence across these 3 dimensions of sustainable development. The absence of domestic institution-building for the SDGs calls into question the UK's

¹⁴ Kipp Mann Benn, John Davis and Graham Long, Newcastle University: 'UK institutions for the SDGs – an assessment using SDG indicator 17.14.1' [reference to add]

stated commitment to the SDGs, misses an opportunity to enhance partnerships, and undermines global UK leadership.

Development spending should demonstrate climate impacts of both grants programming and organisational operations in relation to environmental sustainability. This would mean explicit data collection and publication requirements in all programmes, for both competitive and non-competitive grant awards. Climate proofing of all projects would recognise the extent to which a project is vulnerable to climate change, ensure they do not contribute, inadvertently, to climate change, and incorporate opportunities to adapt to, and mitigate, climate risks.

Key recommendations that emerged from the stakeholder discussions on feminist climate just policies¹⁵ that could be adopted by the UK Government included:

Continue and scale up support to climate activists, grassroots, rural and other marginalised women (including women farmers and fisherwomen), Indigenous peoples and climate refugees to facilitate their meaningful participation in all climate policy-making.

Use community-based data sources to inform climate policy and programming.

Revise M&E processes within climate programming to ensure that projects are responsive to community needs and measure inclusivity of processes.

Strengthen local groups' capacity to participate effectively in Environmental Impact Assessments in partner countries.

More specific effort could be made to ensure that funding recognises the knowledge/experience/resilience of affected communities, utilises indigenous knowledge and is gender focused.

Multilateral and bilateral action

7.

- What are the top priorities for strengthening multilateral effectiveness in international development?
- What are the issues and challenges most suited to bilateral cooperation (considering all levers)?

The White Paper must reflect a strong commitment to solidarity, fairness and collective action, in the spirit and letter of SDG 17, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. The nature of the challenges facing the global community today mean that decisions that affect all countries can no longer be settled at the margins of the G7 and IMF. The UK must go further in its support for MDB reform and ensure a system that is designed to increase equity between and within countries. The UK must shore up its support for broader reforms, that will address systemic weaknesses and root causes of the current overlapping and compounding crises, within processes and institutions that seek to give voice and agency to all countries disregarding the size of its economic power, and to protect human rights and dignity for all. Doing this in a meaningful way will involve sacrificing historical privileges within these institutions, but showing leadership towards equality now will have

¹⁵ See footnote 2.

significant dividends in UK soft power in the future, as partnerships develop for sustainable development and trust is rebuilt.

Tools and agreements to ensure aid effectiveness are not lacking. What seems to be lacking is the political will to implement agreements fully. Past agreements on e.g. the Grand Bargain on Humanitarian Action made in 2016, and the Aid effectiveness agenda set in Paris and enhanced in the Accra Agenda for Action in 2008 all point the way to a more responsive, mutually respectful approach to development aid, led by recipients, consulted with and led by those most affected by climate, social and economic injustice. Whilst reiterating these global commitments, including those made at UNFCCC, the UK could also set out in the White Paper how it intends to implement a more responsive approach through specific bilateral programmes, including as indicated previously sponsoring bilateral academic exchange to promote global south scholarship, technology sharing and transfer and innovative patent regimes for pharmaceuticals.