

International Development

Top Line

The UK Government commits to maintaining its global leadership on disability and continues to champion disability inclusive sustainable development.

On 16 June 2020, the UK Government announced the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to establish the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).¹ It is vital that the new Office continues to champion the inclusion of disabled people in its work, so that no one is left behind in these countries' commitments, ambitions and actions to move towards sustainable development.

Key Asks

We are calling for all political parties to commit to engaging with the UK Government to ensure that:

- the UK continues to meet its legal commitment to allocate 0.7% of GDP to international aid, allocating this in line with agreed OECD-DAC definitions of Official Development Assistance (ODA);
- the new Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office commits to continued implementation of DfID's Disability Inclusion Strategy 2018-2023, ensuring that people with disabilities will be at the centre of international development activities.
- the UK's commitment to 12 years of quality education for all girls is upheld, and that girls with disabilities are fully included in all efforts to achieve this.
- the UK remains committed to ensuring equality of opportunity to decent work for all in low- and middle-income countries, recognising that the most marginalised, including disabled people, require particular support to gain and retain meaningful employment.

Stats

- Over a billion people globally live with some form of disability. This amounts to approximately 15% of the world's population. This number is expected to double to 2 billion by 2050.
- Women are more likely to experience disability than men and older people more than young. Low- and middle-income countries have higher rates of disability than high-income countries, and the impact of disability on people in poorer areas is compounded by issues of accessibility and lack of health care services.
- The global youth population is at unprecedented levels. Estimates suggest that there are between 180 and 220 million youth with disabilities worldwide. Nearly 80% of them live in low and middle-income countries.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-announces-merger-of-department-for-international-development-and-foreign-office>

Context

Until 2015, people with disabilities were frequently left out of international development programmes. This changed with the signing of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This new global agenda placed persons with disabilities firmly at the heart of efforts to achieve sustainable social and economic development, with a commitment to 'Leave No-One Behind'. The UK government played a key role in securing this commitment to leaving no-one behind and has since been a global champion of the rights of persons with disabilities. The Department for International Development has been critical in advancing the UK's global leadership on this issue and has led the way through the development of its Disability Inclusion Strategy, its minimum standards for disability inclusion and its commitment to the use of the OECD-DAC disability marker which tracks that amount of Official Development Assistance allocated to disability inclusive development. Without the leadership demonstrated by the UK, and DFID in particular, on this issue, thousands of people with disabilities in some of the poorest countries would continue to languish in poverty.

Background information

Upholding the UK's global leadership on disability

The UK, through its international development programmes, has been a global leader and champion for the rights of persons with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries, leading the way in ensuring they are not left behind, as evidenced by the UK's hosting of the first ever Global Disability Summit in 2018.

Within the UK Government, the Department for International Development (DFID) has demonstrated strong leadership in supporting disability inclusion. This has been achieved through a range of measures such as the publication of the 2018 Disability Inclusion Strategy to guarantee disability is at the heart of everything it does and by ensuring UK aid supports the fulfilment of key human rights conventions such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

In addition, DFID's commitment to the SDGs' principle of leaving no-one behind has been especially important in ensuring that UK aid reaches those, such as persons with disabilities, who may otherwise have been overlooked by development assistance programmes. Disability-inclusive aid can have a life-changing impact for persons with disabilities – last year our own programmes supported over 5000 children with disabilities in Africa to get an education, and over 30,000 people across Africa and Asia to seek employment.

With the creation of the new Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), it is imperative that the UK continues to play its leadership and agenda setting role amongst global international development actors and upholds its commitment to protect the world's most disadvantaged and marginalised groups in the world. The government's upcoming National Disability Strategy presents an opportunity for the UK to reaffirm its commitment to disability inclusion both domestically and internationally.

It is vital that the new FCDO continues to champion the inclusion of disabled people in its work, so that no one is left behind in the commitments, ambitions and actions of low- and middle-income countries to move towards sustainable development.

Accountability and quality of Official Development Assistance (ODA)

Transparency

In addition to being a global leader on disability inclusion, the UK government, through DFID's leadership, has played a critical role in ensuring that ODA is used in the most effective ways, achieves strong value for money, is delivered transparently, and has positive and lasting impacts on the lives of some of the poorest people in the world.

Transparency ensures UK taxpayers can see that aid is spent where it's needed most, through effective and efficient programmes that achieve good value for every pound spent. Transparency also allows aid-spending departments to learn from and invest in the best development programmes, which is particularly critical now as the economic impact of Covid-19 is beginning to be felt both domestically and internationally.

DFID has been leading the way in ensuring the UK's ODA spend is transparent and accountable to the British public. Building on its 2018 Transparency Agenda, the recently published 2020 Aid Transparency Index rated the department "Very Good". Comparatively, the Foreign Office was rated one of the most negatively, receiving a rating of "fair". Currently 75% of UK aid is delivered through DFID. It is critical that as DFID and the FCO come together, DFID's expertise on aid transparency is retained in the FCDO and used to increase the transparency and accountability of all government departments with responsibility for ODA.

Public and Parliamentary Accountability

It is vital that all UK ODA spending remains accountable both to the British taxpayer, and those it seeks to assist. Parliamentary and independent scrutiny of the aid budget is critical to ensuring impact for every pound spent. The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI), created by a Conservative government, is a vital tool for ensuring value for money for the British taxpayer, and we recommend that the government protects and strengthens its ability to assess aid effectiveness.

In addition, the International Development Committee (IDC) plays a crucial role in scrutinising the UK government's expenditure of ODA – ensuring taxpayer's money is being spent where it is needed most. In the event of the dissolution of the IDC, a new cross-government Select Committee must be established with the remit to examine all aid spend across Whitehall in order to ensure effective scrutiny and accountability of aid spending.

