

The UK's global contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

Progress, gaps and recommendations 2022



About Bond

Bond is the UK network for organisations working in international development. We connect and champion a diverse network of over 400 civil society organisations to help eradicate global poverty, inequality and injustice. We work to influence governments and policymakers, develop the skills of people in the sector, build organisational capacity and share expertise.

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This report was compiled by:



Executive summary

Our world today is dealing with intersecting crises of monumental proportions. The Covid-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc across the globe, pushing millions of people into poverty, deepening inequalities, disrupting children’s education, and putting pressure on already weak health systems, exacerbating the very problems the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were designed to address. At the same time, we are seeing the growing threats of climate change and conflict.

Even before Covid-19, achieving the transformative potential of the SDGs was a huge challenge, but the events of the past few years mean we need to redouble our efforts. In an era of instability, the SDGs provide us with a framework to build resilience and address the interconnected crises of climate change, Covid-19, conflicts, poverty and inequality, whilst leaving no one behind. This report analyses the UK’s international implementation of the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda, which includes the 17 SDGs, is a commitment that brings together human rights, development and environmental frameworks. It represents an agreement by world leaders to collectively create a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable world. The 2030 Agenda integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – and is closely linked to other global and regional sustainable development frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the second of which provides a new framework for financing the SDGs.

The UK’s progress from an international perspective

At the annual UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF) for Sustainable Development, governments and other stakeholders come together to review international progress on the SDGs and undertake Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of each country’s progress. The UK government last reported to the HLPF in 2019. While it played a central role in negotiating the SDGs in 2015, there are clear gaps in the UK government’s own implementation of the SDGs. In the 2019 VNR, the UK government committed to establishing a multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism to monitor progress on the SDGs, both domestically and internationally,

and to improve cross-government delivery of the SDGs. However, three years on, very little progress has been made on meeting any of the commitments laid out in the report. Against the backdrop of Covid-19 and the growing threats of climate change and conflict, which have knocked back hard-earned progress on the SDGs, the UK’s lack of global leadership on the SDGs is concerning. The UK’s decisions to cut Official Development Assistance (ODA) during the pandemic and merge the highly specialised and well-regarded Department for International Development with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have undermined the UK’s position as a thought leader in international development and its power to convene countries to push for positive social change.

The UK’s new international development strategy

The UK’s new international development strategy was launched in May 2022¹. This provides an important framing for the future of UK international development and ODA, which are relevant to SDG implementation.

The strategy has some welcome aspects. It acknowledges the importance of the SDGs and the links between poverty, climate change and conflict. It prioritises women and girls, and it commits to upholding human rights and building transparent and accountable institutions. It also pledges that all ODA spending departments will report annually on progress to achieve the SDGs, and that the cross-government means of implementing ODA will be refreshed, yet there is a lack of clarity on how or when both will be implemented – sectoral participation here will be critical. But there are significant gaps in the strategy. Beyond the headline commitment to the SDGs, there is very little information on how they will inform decision-making. The principles of the 2030 Agenda are not addressed; there isn’t a clear commitment to leave no one behind, which was previously a central pillar of UK international development. There is an overemphasis on the economic pillar of sustainable development, without the acknowledgement of the indivisibility of the 2030 Agenda, and there is little on policy coherence, especially in the shift from multilateral to bilateral aid.

1. FCDO, UK Government (2022), [The UK Government’s Strategy for International Development](#)

The need for this report

This report builds on Bond's 2019 paper *The UK's Global Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals*². It evaluates the UK's progress in implementing all 17 of the SDGs and highlights critical gaps. It looks at the impact Covid-19, the ODA cuts and other emerging threats are having on the UK's ability to deliver the SDGs and leave no one behind. It contains concrete policy recommendations that should be followed to get us back on track to effectively deliver on the SDGs. We have not included domestic progress on the SDGs, as this will be covered in an upcoming report by the UN Global Compact Network UK. Our analysis complements that analysis by addressing the areas where, in Bond's view, focus and investment are most needed from an international perspective.

The report provides an independent civil society perspective on the UK's international delivery on the SDGs. It is an extensive, collaborative effort, coordinated by Bond's SDG Group, which consists of over 150 member organisations. The group advocates for the full, inclusive implementation of the SDGs with a strong focus on their global impact. The report brings together material from across the international development sector and beyond, with direct contributions from over 50 organisations and 9 networks and working groups. Chapters have been compiled by individuals and organisations with the relevant expertise. All the goals are interlinked, so this report also offers us, as civil society, the opportunity to develop and improve our integrated approaches, including multi-sectoral ways of working.

The content and recommendations in this document reflect wide consensus across the sector. However, this does not necessarily mean that all organisations, including leads for each chapter, necessarily endorse every point made. The report reflects the diversity of approaches and ways of working across the sector and Bond's network. We hope this leads to fruitful discussion and improved collaboration between the UK government and civil society during future VNR processes.

Cross-cutting issues

While the individual chapters on the 17 SDGs address specific challenges and policy recommendations for each goal, several cross-cutting issues have emerged that are worth highlighting here.

1. The UK has lost its direction on the SDGs

Facing the interconnected crises of Covid-19, conflicts and climate change, the world needs leadership on the SDGs now more than ever. But since 2019, there has been a noticeable lack of strategic direction in the UK's international implementation of the SDGs.

As an internationally-agreed framework that addresses all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental), the SDGs provide a blueprint for global cooperation and solidarity. Recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic must be grounded in a firm commitment to the SDGs and fulfil the human rights principles that underpin the 2030 Agenda if it is to be resilient, fair and inclusive. The UK has not set out how it will contribute to this important, interconnected agenda – this lack of policy coherence is a running theme in all the report's chapters.

2. Recent crises reinforce the need for ODA, yet the UK has drastically cut its contribution

It is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change and persistent conflict are exacerbating existing patterns of inequality. In 2019, the UK government promised to leave no one behind in its international development work. But, so far, its commitment to this transformative principle of the 2030 Agenda has not translated into all of its policies, programmes and ODA spending, and it was almost entirely absent in the UK's new international development strategy. There are excellent standalone examples, which should be acknowledged, but there is a lack of consistency across the UK government's international work. There is also evidence that recent decisions made by the UK government caused significant harm to those left furthest behind, including women, girls and people with disabilities. Tackling inequalities between and within countries must be a key focus of the FCDO in the coming years.

3. The UK needs to better integrate the SDGs into its policymaking and accountability

The UK has made some strides in building the capacity of national statistical systems in partner countries and promoting data disaggregation. But it needs to go further in ensuring that everyone is counted and that evidence-based solutions to meet the SDGs, based on timely, quality, disaggregated data, are being implemented. It is absolutely crucial that we know how UK ODA is being used in efforts to achieve the SDGs, including who is being left behind and why. To know where gaps remain, data systems must be able to track, not just national or global averages, but progress relating to people who have been marginalised and left behind.

4. There needs to be more transparency on commitments

While the UK's past record on transparency and accountability has been strong, its commitment to transparency is waning, and accountability has been

2. Bond (2019), [The UK's global contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

consistently undermined. The government demonstrated an extreme lack of transparency around the ODA cuts, which significantly impacted communities that have been marginalised as well as damaging community relationships and local trust. This has eroded faith in the UK as a development partner, at home and abroad. Additionally, although the UK government has made some welcome announcements at international summits, it has been reluctant to publish delivery plans to turn these announcements into reality. Transparency and accountability are the cornerstones of effective development. To demonstrate the impact of UK ODA on achieving the SDGs these principles must be fully reembraced.

The UK could play a transformative and influential role in achieving the SDGs. To do so, urgent action is needed to unite civil society, academia, the private sector, local government and others to collectively implement an ambitious plan. A first step is to take immediate action to fulfil its 2019 VNR commitment to establish an inclusive, multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism on SDG implementation. There must be greater coherence between the UK's domestic and international policy, and whilst this report focuses on the international expertise of Bond members, there is a clear recommendation that domestic implementation needs greater clarity and coherence. This is the role of the UK government, and one this report recommends it urgently plays.

The role of civil society – why a collective effort is needed

The SDGs carry an important message: to leave no one behind. These goals really are for everyone, everywhere and that is exactly what it will take to achieve them by 2030; for everyone to come together and take action.

While the Millennium Development Goals paved the way for the SDGs, more people around the world are aware of the SDGs, why they are important, how this impacts daily life and what they can do to make them a reality. We are seeing an increasing number of individuals use the SDGs in their communications and advocacy efforts, including world leaders, private sector representatives, activists, celebrities and civil society CEOs. The comprehensiveness of the SDGs, along with their recognisable branding, has allowed the 17 goals to leave the walls of the UN and government buildings and infiltrate brands, campaigns and creativity worldwide.

Before the SDGs were agreed in 2015, we as civil society lobbied to ensure our thematic areas were included as specific goals and/ or targets. This collective and passion-driven effort resulted in a comprehensive set of SDGs. However, since then, the number of civil society organisations that use the SDGs in their communications and advocacy efforts has declined, and the focus has shifted back towards thematic-based efforts. In order to effectively advocate for and achieve the goals in the run up to 2030, we are encouraging civil society organisations to use the 17 SDGs more explicitly. The power of communication not only enables people around the world from different walks of life to learn about the SDGs, it also makes those who have committed to achieving the goals more accountable.

With the SDGs reaching their seventh year – and soon, the halfway mark – now is the time to raise awareness, to advocate for the goals and to take action towards them.



Leave no one behind: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:
Bond

Leave no one behind is the central transformative pledge of Agenda 2030. This compels us not only to transform the lives of those who are the furthest behind but to also fight discrimination and the root causes of inequality within and among countries.

This is difficult to achieve. It means being committed to prioritising the people who are the most marginalised and demands ambition and an appetite for risk. It means working in the most fragile contexts and supporting the most complex of needs, whilst also seeking to rebalance power, opportunities and outcomes between groups and individuals across all areas of international development and assistance.

The UK had a good track record of recognising the importance of leaving no one behind, particularly the need for robust, disaggregated data to inform targeted approaches that reach under-represented communities. In July 2018, the Department for International Development (DFID) supported the launch of the Inclusive Data Charter, committing partners to ensure that no one is left behind in the pursuit and measurement of social and economic progress. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) also provides comprehensive supporting materials and expert advice on data disaggregation to further support the SDGs and the leave no one behind agenda³.

However, since 2019, the UK's commitment to leave no one behind has been largely absent as a core consideration and principle, given the decisions and changes that have been made to its international policies, programming and investments. For example, the UK's response to the Covid-19 pandemic has centred on domestic needs and national

interests at the expense of its commitments to those furthest behind, particularly in the purchase and distribution of vaccines and in the reduction of official development assistance (ODA) budget. Analysis of the cuts to ODA has shown that people who are the most marginalised have been the hardest hit⁴, particularly women, girls, people with disabilities and those impacted by conflict and crises. The impact of this has been unnecessarily made worse by government analysis of this impact being withheld from the development community, which could respond to support those most affected.

However, there are opportunities for the UK to build on its track record and demonstrate solidarity and commitment to leaving no one behind, if it can find the will and resources to implement well thought-through strategies; for example, by delivering on its *Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan*⁵. There is also a need to make the most of the FCDO merger; to align defence, diplomacy, trade and development to address various but interconnected global challenges, and the most complex needs in the most fragile places, by reaching across departments and ensuring interventions are coherent.

The world is facing complex challenges. New and protracted conflicts⁶ are compounding the impacts of climate change⁷, and other local and international political, health and environmental shocks, to increase humanitarian needs and deepen existing inequalities. Crises disproportionately affect people who have already been marginalised, particularly women and girls. So we must respond in ways that reach the furthest behind first. This demands concerted and targeted efforts, not broad-based responses.

3. UN, '[Increasing the transparency of SDG data in developing countries \(unlocking the power of data through new presentation and dissemination techniques\)](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

4. UK Parliament (8 March, 2022), '[Government obstructing scrutiny after misleading MPs on impacts aid cuts have on women and girls](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

5. DFID/FCDO (6 March 2019), '[Policy paper: Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

6. Mitchell, D. and Karr, V. (eds.) (2014), *Crises, conflict and disability: Ensuring equality* [p.226], New York, Routledge..

7. Kett, M. and Cole, E. (2018), *Disability and Climate Resilience Research Report*



Covid-19

Covid-19 has not affected all groups equally.⁸ Children, refugees, migrants, indigenous peoples, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, LGBTQ+ people, older people and people with disabilities⁹, including people with intellectual disabilities¹⁰, have been among the worst affected¹¹.

Since the pandemic began, people who are marginalised and economically disadvantaged, particularly people who work in urban health and sanitation sectors (many of whom lacked adequate protection), had a greater risk of contracting Covid-19 and were more likely to die from it. This is driven by a lack of access to quality, well-capacitated health systems (see more in Goal 3).

People who are marginalised have been unfairly impacted by measures to contain the virus. For example, people employed in the informal sector – disproportionately, minorities, women, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ people – have little access to social protection when their incomes are frozen due to lockdowns. In 2020, between 119 and 124 million people are estimated to have been pushed into extreme poverty by the pandemic.¹²

The pandemic also threatens to reverse 20 years of education gains, as many education systems have failed to meet even the basic learning needs of children (see more in Goal 4).¹³ Before the pandemic began, 258 million children and young people were already out of school¹⁴, a figure that undoubtedly will have increased. Girls and children with disabilities have the greatest risk of never returning to school¹⁵. Covid-19 has also led to the number of children in child labour growing to 160 million, the first increase in two decades.¹⁶

Covid-19 has also put at risk the limited progress made on gender equality. The pandemic's impacts are exacerbated for women and girls in all spheres, from health to economy, food security to social protection (see more in Goal 5).

8. Civil Society Collaborative on Inclusive COVID-19 Data (2021), [An Unequal Pandemic: Insights and Evidence from Communities and Civil Society Organisations](#)

9. Inclusive Futures (2021), [Consequences of exclusion: a situation report on organisations of people with disabilities and COVID-19 in Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe](#)

10. Bosworth, M. et al. (2021), ['Deaths involving COVID-19 by self-reported disability status during the first two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic in England: a retrospective, population-based cohort study'](#), *The Lancet Public Health*, Vol 6, 11, e817–e825

11. Inclusive Futures (2021), [Evidence of the impacts on and risks to people with disabilities from the COVID-19 pandemic and how international development actors are responding November 2020-March 2021](#)

12. World Bank (2021), ['Updated estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty: Looking back at 2020 and the outlook for 2021'](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]

13. UN (2020), [Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Children](#)

14. UNESCO, ['Out-of-School Children and Youth'](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]

15. Humanity & Inclusion (2020), [Let's break silos now! Achieving disability-inclusive education in a post-COVID world](#)

16. UNICEF (9 June, 2021), ['Child labour rises to 160 million – first increase in two decades'](#) [online press release, accessed June 2022]

For some women and girls, such as those with disabilities, intersecting inequalities have further increased their risk of experiencing violence.¹⁷

Impact of ODA cuts

In March 2021, the FCDO assessed the impact that proposed ODA cuts would have on equalities. The report, published in March 2022¹⁸, found the cuts would have a negative impact on women, girls, people with disabilities and others who are marginalised because of protected characteristics, and would also harm the FCDO's aspirations on disability-inclusive development. The assessment found there would be a significant reduction in the number and size of targeted programme activities aimed at those furthest behind and that, 'without targeted initiatives, development gains may not benefit the 'hardest to reach''. It flagged that, although there are existing mechanisms to maximise the positive use of ODA, it would not be possible to fully mitigate against the impacts of the cuts on efforts to achieve more equal societies. Despite these concerns, the FCDO went ahead.

The ODA cuts had a huge impact on programmes that seek to address gender equality. There was a 75% cut in bilateral programming to address violence against women and girls (VAWG), a 70% cut for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) bilateral programming, and an 80% cut for SRHR central programming. The FCDO's own assessment flagged that the cuts would impact girls' education and wider efforts on gender equality. Yet, at the same time, the UK was championing gender equality, through its Action Plan on Girls' Education, the G7 Girls' Education Declaration and the Global Education Summit.

There were also significant cuts to existing disability inclusion programmes as well as to mainstreaming the needs of people with disabilities across bilateral programmes. For example, the withdrawal of FCDO support to all neglected tropical disease (NTD) programmes left more than 200 million of the world's poorest people at risk from NTDs. Other examples include the cancellation of UK Aid funding for a project supporting communities affected by leprosy and disability in Bangladesh. As a result, thousands of people who are marginalised and living in extreme poverty missed out on health education and income generation opportunities, which they could have used to lift themselves out of poverty. The cuts to social protection, estimated at around 60% of bilateral spend, cut programmes that, in the FCDO's own words, 'seek to reduce poverty and are a key tool in mitigating Covid-19 social and economic shocks for the poorest and most marginalised'¹⁹.

17. UNICEF (2020), [COVID-19 response: Considerations for Children and Adults with Disabilities](#)

18. International Development Committee/ International Relations and Defence Committee (7 February 2022), [Gender equality in UK aid spending](#) [letter to Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs]

19. International Development Select Committee (8 March 2022), ['FAO International Development Committee: Equalities Impact Assessment'](#), [online document accessed June 2022]



Spotlight: The UK's action on disability inclusion and girls' education

The UK has played an instrumental role in influencing other actors to do more on disability inclusion. At the recent Global Disability Summit, the FCDO launched its new Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy 2022–2030, along with 18 UK government commitments. Although this ambitious strategy is welcome, the commitments made at the summit are vague and contain very few measurable objectives or financial commitments, and there is a lack of transparency on how the strategy will be implemented. It is important that the strategy is implemented through a delivery plan with clear timelines, indicators, funding allocations and accountability mechanisms to enable quality impact that can be fully demonstrated, developed and monitored in full consultation with organisations of persons with disabilities.

The 'equality continuum' within the strategy is an interesting concept and we welcome the commitment to ensure that, at a minimum, interventions do no harm. This approach could be an important mechanism to mainstream inclusion across the FCDO, and the department should provide further clarity on how this will be implemented in practice. This should be assessed for each programme and the definition of do no harm clearly defined to ensure it encompasses not exacerbating existing inequalities between groups. As a leader on disability inclusion, the FCDO should make a clear commitment to move from minimum to at least medium standard (i.e. to actively address the needs of diverse identity groups and address barriers). A delivery plan should set clear targets for this, alongside specific timelines for when all programmes will exceed the minimum standard.

The UK government also played a key role in securing the Girls' Education Declaration at the 2021 G7 Summit, and in 2021 it launched a new Girls Education Action Plan, which sets out the UK's strategy for supporting children who have been marginalised the most into education. The strategy highlights the Girls' Education Challenge transition and the Leave No Girl Behind project as success stories, but unfortunately falls short of committing to scale up, build on or extend these initiatives. To continue to be seen as a positive force on inclusion, the scale of the UK's investment on inclusive education, and particular allocations to girls with disabilities as well as girls from ethnic minority and indigenous backgrounds, should be clearer. In addition, the strategy could be clearer on how the FCDO intends to monitor progress on education for children with disabilities and ethnic minority and indigenous girls. It could also be better aligned with FCDO's Global Disability Summit commitments, including the commitment to track results disaggregated by disability across all new education activities and ensure an inclusion focus in reporting.

The impact the cuts will have on the prioritisation, across the UK's ODA spending, of groups that have been marginalised is very concerning. The UK has previously played an influential role on the principle of leaving no one behind, for example, by hosting the first ever Global Disability Summit and leading the G7 in 2021 to adopt a Declaration on Girls' Education. However, these commitments are unlikely to deliver to communities that have been marginalised if they are not backed up by continued leadership, appropriate financing and clear implementation plans, targets and indicators. Additionally, it is essential for the FCDO to be clear about how the increased women and girls' budget²⁰ will be allocated to prioritise those hardest hit by the ODA cuts and ensure the UK government meets its promise to leave no one behind.

DFID/FCO merger

It is positive that the FCDO is responsible for deciding the final departmental allocation of ODA and administering the majority of UK ODA. While other government departments can play a key role in delivering ODA, when relevant to their areas of expertise, the FCDO is best placed to spend the majority of ODA as it can build on the expertise and experience that DFID had in using ODA to concretely address entrenched poverty (including tackling complex and intractable poverty traps that keep groups behind). But the FCDO is a new department and many of its processes and policies are still in development, while significant numbers of ex-DFID staff are leaving. It is therefore critical that the appropriate mechanisms are put in place, and that DFID's expertise is built upon, to ensure that ODA is administered effectively and equitably. This means administering it in line with the UK International Development Act, the Gender Act, the 2030 Agenda commitment to leave no one behind and the Paris Agreement. As an example, the FCDO should ensure that it consistently uses the OECD's Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) gender and disability markers, and that these markers are also used to monitor funding in these areas.

20. GOV.UK (17 November, 2021), '[Preventing sexual violence in conflict: Foreign Secretary's speech at the Gender Equality Advisory Council](#)' [online text of Foreign Secretary speech]



Inclusive data

In the early weeks and months of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK was one of the first to publish data disaggregated by ethnicity and religion, which revealed infections and deaths significantly varied by community. However, data availability continues to be a serious constraint, holding back progress on reducing inequalities and promoting sustainable development.

The 2019 voluntary national review (VNR) recognised the important role the UK plays in supporting other countries in 'strengthening and modernising their national statistical systems to enable them to gather and analyse good quality disaggregated data', as well as pressing for a coherent and aligned global monitoring system²¹. The 2019 VNR also recognised the importance of data, and it committed the UK to promoting inclusive, disaggregated data, innovative data collection and the use of non-official data.²²

While the ONS has published its action plan to implement the Inclusive Data Charter²³, the UK government – despite being one of the charter's earliest champions – has yet to publish a whole-of-government action plan with clear guidelines on how it will monitor progress on the charter. Progress on the Inclusive Data Charter has been largely paused since 2019, and there has been no progress on advancing data disaggregation by ethnicity. Furthermore, the government does not publish data on cross-government ODA spending, appropriately disaggregated. It is also highly concerning that the UK's commitment to supporting data disaggregation efforts around the world was entirely absent from its new international development strategy.

It is critical that the FCDO prioritises and promotes the importance of collecting evidence and research on under-represented groups to better understand progress being made on the SDGs, to inform policy and decision-making, and to assess the impacts of its own policies, such as the Modern Slavery Act. This should include supporting the disaggregation of monitoring and surveillance data by all feasible protected characteristics, using internationally recognised tools. This will ensure all actors can understand impact and allocate resources equitably. The FCDO must also go beyond official data sources as they do not capture the complex needs of communities that have been marginalised, particularly those affected by conflict and crisis. The FCDO must also ensure effective use of OECD DAC gender and disability markers to analyse how much ODA is both gender-equitable and disability-inclusive. The SDG's emphasis on inequality and groups that have been marginalised provides an opportunity to rethink the data that is collected and look for information that is more relevant to those left furthest behind.

To build on the UK's strengths in this area, the government should urgently publish an updated Inclusive Data Charter action plan, building on DFID's initial commitments and increasing ambitions on inclusive data, including disability-inclusive and ethnically disaggregated data.

To ensure no one is left behind, the UK government should:

1. Ensure the new international development strategy and all other thematic strategies and underpinning policy frameworks are informed by, promote, and uphold the principles enshrined within the 2030 Agenda. The principles include commitments to respecting human rights, leaving no one behind, and approaches that are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent, equal and non-discriminatory.²⁴
2. Improve transparency and accountability towards commitments and targets aimed at those furthest left behind. Commitments made at summits and in strategies should be implemented through clear delivery plans, with clear timelines, indicators, funding allocations and accountability mechanisms that are developed by meaningfully engaging communities that have been marginalised.
3. Conduct analysis to understand whether cuts to mainstream programmes have disproportionately impacted groups that have been marginalised and take action to revise these trends if identified. Additional equalities assessments should be conducted and published on a regular basis to ensure transparent and accountable decision-making.
4. Ensure effective use of the OECD DAC gender and disability markers to analyse how much ODA is both gender-equitable and disability-inclusive.
5. Urgently publish an updated Inclusive Data Charter action plan with responsibilities clearly defined alongside priorities and activities, and ensure that learnings from the implementation of DFID's original Inclusive Data Charter action plan²⁵ are incorporated.

24. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/jpo/wp-content/uploads/sites/55/2017/02/2030-Agenda-for-Sustainable-Development-KCSD-Primer-new.pdf>

25. UK aid (2019), [Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan](#)

21. HM Government (2019), [Voluntary National Review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

22. Ibid

23. ONS (13 July, 2021), ['Inclusive data charter action plan for the global Sustainable Development Goals'](#) [online document, accessed June 2022]



SDG 1: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:

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The Covid-19 pandemic has taken the world further off course from ending poverty in all its forms by 2030 (SDG 1). The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund predict that global extreme poverty rates will return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022, but 600 million people are projected to still be living in extreme poverty by 2030. This is significantly off track from the SDG target.²⁶

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Irreversible setbacks to poverty reduction occurred during the pandemic, which affected individuals and households, irrespective of later improvements in well-being. For instance, millions of children around the world have lost up to two years of schooling. Many from the poorest households were unable to access online education and are likely to enter job markets with lower education outcomes as a result, limiting their lifelong earnings. Others have dropped out of school, either because of early marriage or to work to support their families. Food insecurity during the pandemic will have caused child stunting and wasting, with lifelong consequences (see more in Goal 2). Combined, these factors are likely to contribute to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Certain groups of people are more vulnerable to rising levels of poverty and inequality caused by the pandemic, particularly women, children and young people, informal workers, people with

disabilities, ethnic, caste and religious minorities, indigenous people, older people, migrants and LGBTQ+ people. It is estimated that 60 million more children are now living in resource-poor households than before the pandemic.²⁷ The UN estimates that 47 million women and girls have been pushed into extreme poverty.²⁸

Covid has exacerbated the issue of the 'new poor', who have different levels of vulnerability to those who were living in poverty before the pandemic. Eight out of 10 of people who are newly in poverty live in middle-income countries²⁹, highlighting the fragility of progress towards poverty reduction and the critical importance of certain measures such as universal social protection to prevent poverty. Covid has also pushed households that were already in poverty before the pandemic into extreme poverty.

In many low-income countries, Covid-19 itself has not been the main driver of rising poverty rates – lockdowns and their economic consequences have been far more damaging.³⁰ This has had severe implications for things like food insecurity (see Goal 2). The World Bank reports that income inequality has risen as a result of the pandemic, partly wiping out the progress that had been made in the last two decades³¹, and there is early evidence that within-country inequality will hit people who are the most marginalised and economically disadvantaged the hardest³². The pandemic has diverted funding away from the poorest people, and this has had an impact on attaining SDG 1.

27. *Ibid*

28. UN News (15 March, 2021), '[COVID-19 has exposed endemic gender inequality, Guterres tells UN Women's commission](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

29. World Bank (7 October, 2020), '[COVID-19 to Add as Many as 150 Million Extreme Poor by 2021](#)' [online media release, accessed June 2022]

30. Chronic Poverty Advisory Network, '[Covid-19 Poverty Monitor](#)' [webpage, accessed June 2022]

31. World Bank (7 February, 2022), '[Global income inequality and the COVID-19 pandemic in three charts](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

32. International Development Select Committee, '[Written evidence by Results UK to the International Development Committee inquiry into extreme poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals](#)' [online, accessed June 2022]

26. International Development Select Committee, '[Extreme poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals: Written submission made on behalf of the Bond SDG Group, February 2022](#)' [online, accessed June 2022]



Other threats to SDG 1

Downward mobility into poverty has been exacerbated by multiple and overlapping drivers beyond Covid-19³³. As recognised within the UN Secretary-General's latest annual SDG report, 'the triple threat of COVID-19, conflict and climate change makes the global goal of ending poverty by 2030 beyond reach unless immediate and substantial policy actions are implemented'.³⁴

Just as the causes of poverty are complex, it is crucial to recognise that poverty is a multidimensional experience, with income being just one measure. Taking a holistic approach to extreme poverty must ensure that gender equality, food security, economic growth, education and inequality are all addressed in equal measure. Poverty is a result of systemic failures, and it is driven by inequalities and other forms of marginalisation, discrimination and power asymmetries operating at the level of individuals, households, communities, institutions and wider systems. To understand what drives poverty in a particular context it is important to look all these levels.

Adequate data availability is holding back progress on SDG 1. Data disaggregation is key, but it is also important to make sure it is used to support evidence-based policy-making and to identify entry points for action and budget allocation to support communities in poverty. Use of more inclusive data to guide responses, including data generated by human rights organisations, is also desirable.

The UK's role

The reduction in the UK's official development assistance (ODA) has damaged the UK's ability to play a positive role in delivering SDG 1 and its diplomatic standing in an increasingly complex and multipolar world. The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) reviewed the management of the 0.7% ODA spending target in 2020 and found that cuts have disproportionately affected countries that are most vulnerable to Covid-19.³⁵ The cuts happened at a point when global extreme poverty was rising for the first time in 20 years.

In the past, the UK has shown leadership among large bilateral donors in its focus on poverty alleviation. It was also one of the largest donors to the World Bank's International Development Association fund for the world's poorest countries.³⁶ But the 20th replenishment saw the UK government cut its contribution by 55%, an estimated \$1.8

billion.³⁷ This reduces the UK's influence over multilateral resources.

The UK has made the political decision to include Covid-19 vaccine donations, debt relief and recycled SDRs (special drawing rights) within the 0.5% ODA budget. While donation of vaccines and debt relief are welcome, counting them within this budget squeezes available resources for critical interventions to fight poverty.

It is highly concerning that the *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*³⁸ excluded extreme poverty as a strategic objective for ODA, and it is only mentioned once in the international development strategy³⁹.



Target 1.3:

Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

Social security is a fundamental human right, which should be available, affordable, adequate and accessible.⁴⁰ Social protection systems have enabled low-income countries to withstand some of the worst effects of Covid-19. UNDP analysis shows that social protection measures prevented 15 million people from falling into extreme poverty in 2020.⁴¹

When adequate, appropriate and correctly targeted, social protection systems enable families to escape extreme poverty, and are critical to emergency response, recovery, and building long-term resilience to future shocks. Investments in social protection systems can also reduce gender and income inequality.⁴² According to the World Bank data, 36% of all people who escape extreme poverty are empowered to do so through social protection systems.⁴³ For women in particular, comprehensive and multidimensional social protection schemes can minimise income losses and barriers to earning a living that arise from unpaid care work and childbirth. This leads to better overall outcomes for children. Such schemes can also support people who are resource poor to invest and engage in entrepreneurialism, supporting 'growth from below'.⁴⁴

37. Devex (16 December, 2021), '[Devex Newswire: IDA replenishment stumbles over UK cuts](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

38. HM Government (2021), [Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#)

39. FCDO, UK Government (2022), [The UK Government's Strategy for International Development](#)

40. OHCHR, '[OHCHR and the right to social security](#)' [webpage, accessed June 2022]

41. UNDP (2021), [Mitigating Poverty: Global Estimates of the Impact of Income Support during the Pandemic](#)

42. UN Women / Elson, D., and A., Seth (eds.), (2019) [Gender Equality and Inclusive Growth: Economic Policies to Achieve Sustainable Development](#)

43. World Bank (2018), [The State of Social Safety Nets 2018](#)

44. Chronic Poverty Advisory Network (2019), [The Chronic Poverty Report on Growth](#)

33. International Development Select Committee, '[Written evidence by Results UK to the International Development Committee inquiry into extreme poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals](#)' [online, accessed June 2022]; Chronic Poverty Advisory Network, 'Covid-19 Poverty Monitor' [webpage, accessed June 2022]

34. International Development Select Committee, '[Extreme poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals: Written submission made on behalf of the Bond SDG Group, February 2022](#)' [online, accessed June 2022]

35. ICAI (2019), [Management of the 0.7% ODA spending target in 2020: A rapid review](#)

36. World Bank (2020), [Annex 14: IDA19 Partner Contributions in the US](#)



Often, social protection investments return more to the economy than they cost. Recent research found that 1% of GDP invested in social protection leads to 1.1% GDP growth and 1.8% growth in government tax revenues on average.⁴⁵ An increase of 1% of GDP invested in social protection systems reduces poverty rates by 7%, lowers the Gini index (representing national inequality) by 1%, and increases employment by 0.6%, with women's employment increasing more than men's.

Policy in this area should focus on increasing access and inclusion by investing in universal social protection floors and systems. These measures should include targeted support to ensure groups that have been disproportionately excluded or marginalised are included. Currently, the most vulnerable people, such as those living in extreme poverty, are the most likely to be missed by social protection programmes.

To increase the transformative impact of poverty reduction and social protection measures it is important to take a more holistic approach. There is evidence to suggest that using a spectrum of approaches, including cash transfers, economic inclusion, and graduation programmes can have beneficial longer-term impacts. It can also be more cost-effective to layer additional services on top of cash transfers, particularly for members of the poorest communities. With a more limited ODA budget, a premium should be given to the approaches that have the highest impact, are cost effective, and have transformative impact for people who have been marginalised.

To achieve SDG 1, the UK government should:

1. Restore ODA to 0.7% and cease increasing the overall level of ODA spending through other government departments until steps are taken to ensure all ODA is spent transparently and is primarily focused on poverty reduction and reducing inequality.
2. Ensure that social protection programmes are part of a comprehensive set of interventions that can nurture 'growth from below' to more effectively enable households to escape and remain out of poverty over time.
3. Review ODA spending to ensure resources are targeted towards the people and places that need them most, especially least developed countries, 'countries left behind' and countries where a large proportion of the population live in poverty, including the 'new poor' in middle-income countries.
4. Re-establish its place as a global leader in funding poverty reduction programming and convening knowledge and evidence, and use its diplomatic capabilities to advocate for the expansion of poverty reduction programmes.

45. Development Pathways (2021), [Investments in social protection and their impacts on economic growth](#)



SDG 2: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:
RESULTS UK, Concern Worldwide
and CAFOD



RESULTS

SDG 2 commits to 'end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture'. This recognises the links between supporting sustainable agriculture, tackling malnutrition, empowering smallholder farmers, promoting gender equality, ending rural poverty, ensuring healthy lifestyles, tackling climate change and other issues addressed across the SDGs.

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected the world's progress against tackling hunger and malnutrition. Globally, between 720 and 811 million people faced hunger in 2020 – around 118 million more people than in 2019.⁴⁶ Close to 193 million people were acutely food insecure in 2021, a 40 million increase since 2020, and this is likely to get worse with the Ukraine conflict.⁴⁷ The Global Nutrition Report 2021 highlights the rise of malnutrition-related diseases: 149.2 million children under 5 years of age are stunted, 45.4 million are wasted, and 38.9 million are overweight.⁴⁸ In addition, 20.5 million babies (14.6% of all live births) have a low birth weight and 570.8 million girls and women of reproductive age (15–49 years) are anaemic.

Tackling hunger and malnutrition together is essential to end preventable deaths, avoid ill-health and maximise economic opportunities for all. Promoting good nutrition enhances productivity and economic outcomes, which are fundamental to accelerating poverty reduction and tackling inequalities. Although closely related, hunger and malnutrition are

46. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2021), [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021](#)

47. Global Network Against Food Crises (2022), [Global Report on Food Crises](#)

48. Development Initiatives Poverty Research (2021), [Global Nutrition Report 2021](#)

different. Hunger is a physical condition, which results from insufficient intake of food, while malnutrition happens over a period of time due to inadequate or excess food intake or utilisation of nutrients. Hunger and malnutrition are complex and multi-sectoral issues that can only be addressed by tackling both their direct and underlying causes. Without addressing these underlying factors, improvements are unlikely to be significant or sustainable.

Target 2.1:

By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round

Up to 20 million people in the Horn of Africa region currently face acute food insecurity, with thousands on the brink of famine (as of 2022)⁴⁹. Climate change and conflict are driving significant increases in global hunger. In May 2021, the UK led the establishment of the G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact. This commits to allocate \$7 billion for famine prevention and response in 42 countries facing acute food insecurity, including the 3 countries that were at immediate risk of famine in early 2021 (Yemen, South Sudan, and Nigeria). The compact helped to draw international attention to worsening acute food insecurity in many parts of the world and aimed to tackle the issue, while also strengthening the resilience of people most vulnerable to acute food insecurity in the future. However, despite promising language, the compact lacked specific and transparent targets. There was no breakdown of the \$7

49. World Food Programme (19 April 2022), [No rain and no resources: millions of families across the horn of Africa pushed closer to catastrophe each day](#), [news article accessed June 2022]



billion by donor or by type of official development assistance (ODA), and it is likely that this was not new funding but existing humanitarian ODA already committed. Despite the call for implementation plans, these were not forthcoming. This has made it difficult for civil society to hold G7 countries accountable to their commitments.

Since then, food security has continued to deteriorate, including in the Horn of Africa, which is suffering its worst drought in 40 years, and where opportunities for pre-emptive action have now been missed. More must be done to shift the international response to act earlier and build better resilience, which not only saves lives but reduces the overall cost of the humanitarian response. With the Ukraine conflict impacting food prices and the availability of essential foods, fertilisers and fuel, global food insecurity is likely to worsen.

Target 2.2:

By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and address the needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and older persons.

The first Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit was hosted by the UK government in 2013, mobilising around £17 billion to combat malnutrition, of which the UK contributed £1.25 billion in new investments. However, the UK’s commitment to nutrition expired in 2020, and was not renewed until February 2022. This created a gap in UK nutrition funding in 2021. At N4G, the UK government committed to adopt the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) nutrition policy marker. In February 2022, the UK announced a belated financial commitment of £1.5 billion for nutrition between 2022 and 2030.

The adoption of the OECD policy marker for nutrition, and its current integration into FCDO programmes from planning stages, will increase the effectiveness of existing nutrition programmes. It will also enhance new development programmes where improving nutrition is a stated objective. While a financial commitment to nutrition is welcome, £1.5 billion is a significant reduction in funding for nutrition programmes, compared with previous commitments and with what the FCDO spent on nutrition between 2013 and 2020. This funding level effectively confirms and maintains the disproportionate cuts to nutrition spending made in 2021. This is extremely concerning, given the escalating need for nutrition interventions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in countries in conflict and facing other vulnerable contexts.

The damaging impact of malnutrition on children’s lives can be prevented through nutrition-specific interventions, including infant and young child feeding (IYCF) and relevant

breastfeeding and complementary feeding support, particularly in the critical first 1,000 days of life. There is an urgent need to curb the rising rate of malnutrition worldwide, and to meet the WHO global nutrition target for 2025 on maternal, infant and young child nutrition. This can be achieved with adequate funding from N4G donor countries, of which the UK has long been recognised as a key leader.

Since the Bond’s last SDG report in 2019, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) has reviewed and assessed DFID’s work on nutrition⁵⁰. It found that DFID had made important advances in response to ICAI’s previous review as well as significant progress on improving its nutrition results methodology, country programme implementation and national systems strengthening. The ICAI review confirmed that the UK surpassed its goal to reach 50 million people by 2020 through its nutrition programmes, and that long-term decreases in stunting have been made in countries where UK ODA is supporting nutrition. Disappointingly, the UK hasn’t renewed its commitment to reach over 50 million children, women and adolescent girls with nutrition-relevant programmes in the next 5 years. This demonstrates a lack of ambition and inhibits the UK’s ability to support good nutrition worldwide and meet its global health goal to end preventable deaths.

To ensure progress on its own Ending Preventable Deaths strategy, the UK government should consider how the actions of the FCDO will help to deliver performance metrics. Given that malnutrition plays a role in 45% of all under-5 deaths, a top-line indicator for the FCDO performance metric ‘mortality rates in children under 5 years of age and new-borns’ must be focused on the impact of its nutrition programming.

Target 2.3:

By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

In 2015, G7 countries adopted the Elmau Broad Food Security Commitment⁵¹ to work with partner countries and international actors to lift 500 million people out of hunger and poverty. This initiative was set up in line with the 2030 Agenda and SDG 2. In 2021, the G7 under the UK presidency reported progress on all G7 indicators. For Indicator 2.1 (smallholder focus), the UK reported that less than half of its ODA programmes on agriculture and rural development

50. ICAI (2020), [‘Report: Assessing DFID’s results in nutrition: A results review’](#) [online document, accessed June 2022]

51. G7 (2015), [‘Leaders’ Declaration G7 Summit, 7–8 June 2015’](#)



included objectives with an explicit focus on smallholder farmers. On Indicator 2.2 (gender focus), the UK reported that only 24% of its programming included specific gender objectives. These results aren't encouraging, and fall short of a much-needed programmatic focus in UK ODA on smallholder farmers, in particular female farmers. These results also suggest that the UK has no disaggregated data to report progress on left-behind populations, such as pastoralists, fishers, family farmers and indigenous people. This is particularly concerning, given that Indicator 2.3.2 requires countries to provide data on the average income of small-scale food producers by sex and indigenous status. It also calls into question the UK's pledge to 'put the furthest behind first'⁵².

a positive fund to increase climate resilience practices and to support smallholder food producers. However, the UK government has failed to make an official contribution to the GAFSP's second replenishment.

A recent study led by CAFOD and the RSPB⁵⁵ shows that UK ODA now gives low priority to agriculture and land use and fails to recognise its importance in promoting poverty alleviation, protecting and restoring nature and tackling climate change. The report found the UK lacks a clear and consistent agricultural vision in its ODA strategy and has failed to design and manage coherent sector programming for targeted social and environmental outcomes. This limits the potential to support SDG 2 and tackle the global crises of nature loss and climate change, in line with the broader 2030 Agenda and global commitments led by the UK at the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference⁵⁶.

Target 2.4:

By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

Extreme poverty and hunger continue to predominate in rural areas, with smallholder farmers and their families making up a significant proportion of people who are hungry and living in poverty. To eradicate poverty and hunger significant financial support is needed, including from UK ODA, for agroecological approaches that boost food production and consumption in a way that benefits people and nature. In 2021, the UK committed to report against the ten core performance criteria and five advanced criteria⁵³ provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization's Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE)⁵⁴, as part of the G7 Food Security Working Group process. While this is the right step to take to deliver on Target 2.4 and across SDG 2, there is a gap in reporting against these criteria. For instance, there is no consistent data on decreased exposure to pesticides, increased agricultural biodiversity, improved soil health or increased resilience. In the G7 Financial Report on Food Security and Nutrition for 2021, the UK reported that the FCDO's programming and policy work was seeking to adopt more climate-relevant practices appropriate to local contexts. In the report, the UK highlights the World Bank's Global Agricultural and Food Security Platform (GAFSP) as

52. DFID/FCDO (6 March, 2019), '[Policy paper: Leaving no one behind: Our promise](#)' [online document, accessed June 2022].

53. 1) Secure land tenure, 2) Increased productivity, 3) Increased income, 4) Added value, 5) Decreased exposure to pesticides, 6) Increased dietary diversity, 7) Women's Empowerment, 8) Increased youth employment, 9) Increased agricultural biodiversity, 10) Improved soil health, 11) Increased resilience, 12) Improved Food Security & Nutrition, 13) Decent Work, 14) Increased water use efficiency & decreased water pollution, and 15) Climate change mitigation.

54. FAO, '[Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation \(TAPE\)](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022].

55. CAFOD and RSPB (2021), '[Harnessing the potential of agriculture for people and nature: the role of UK aid](#)'

56. [UN Climate Change Conference 2021/COP26](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]



To achieve SDG 2, the UK government should:

1. Immediately disburse its 2022 N4G nutrition funding commitment while ensuring that the policy maker ensures well planned and implemented nutrition-sensitive programmes across sectors, with funding scaled-up for countries in fragile contexts where people experience significant hunger and malnutrition. This commitment should be revised and increased ahead of the next N4G in 2024 to align with the investment needed to meet the WHO global nutrition targets by 2025 and SDG 2 by 2030.
2. Urgently scale up funding for humanitarian assistance to tackle ongoing hunger crises, such as in the Horn of Africa, while substantially investing in the prevention of such crises by tackling underlying drivers and building the resilience of communities to future shocks.
3. Report in all future voluntary national reviews on all ODA spent on agriculture and food systems against all criteria of the FAO's TAPE. This includes all relevant climate finance as part of the UK's new International Climate Finance Strategy. The UK should also make substantial contributions to the second replenishment of the GAFSP.
4. Align its international development strategy with the work of the G7 Food Security Working Group, the custodian of the Elmau Commitment, which will meet every year until at least 2030. The UK government should also increase its global support for sustainable agriculture, in line with Target 2.3. By the 2023 VNR, it must complete the review process and align all UK ODA with the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance.
5. Devise an updated inclusive data strategy in order to collect and report disaggregated data on left-behind populations, such as pastoralists, fishers, family farmers and indigenous people (as required by SDG Indicator 2.3.2).



SDG 3: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by: Compiled by Action for Global Health



SDG 3 aims to ‘ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages’, which is underpinned by achieving universal health coverage (UHC) (Target 3.8).⁵⁷ Progress towards this goal will need to focus on tackling the gaping health inequities that exist between and within people and groups due to geography, socio-economic status, specific characteristics (including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics) and/or groups that have been socially excluded. These health inequities often exist because people are deprived of healthcare services, as health services are not fully provided or accessible to them, leading to increased deaths and ill health.

Since Bond’s 2019 report, global progress towards SDG 3 has been dramatically impacted by Covid-19, climate change and conflict. Whilst there is increasing UK recognition of these intersections – for example, the 2021 UK-hosted Climate Change Conference (COP26) included a health strand – this is yet to translate into concrete commitments and action.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had severe health impacts, and it has increased health inequities, particularly for disabled people and people already experiencing health disparities, which have been further exacerbated by vaccine inequity. As resources and personnel have been diverted from essential health services to the Covid response, other health issues

57. UN, ‘[Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages](#)’ [web page, accessed June 2022]

Personal testimony: Victimising the victim

My name is Kamala. Due to mental health issues and also no money, no job situation, I was loitering on the streets in a dazed state of mind, which was later diagnosed at KOSHISH⁵⁸ as psychosis and mood disorders. One night, somebody offered me food which was drugged, but I failed to realize that until it was too late. In my unconscious state of mind I was gang raped and left wounded on the street. Somehow, the next morning after reviving a little, I collected myself and reached a nearby police station for medical help and also for lodging a complaint. Instead of offering psychosocial support, medical examination and treatment, the police shunned me, branding me as a ‘boula’ [mad person].

Since I was as scared as well as wounded, I dragged myself to a nearby government hospital for help and medical aid. But they denied me services on the count that I do not have a citizenship card. For seeking emergency aid, I needed to have an identity card. For making a police complaint, I needed to have a sanity certificate. I kept running from pillar to post but to no avail.

Isn’t legal equity, as in equitable legal provisions, as important as equity in the health sector? For equity in health services, we need to look beyond the health, in the realm of legal norms, socio-economic and political empowerment, education and awareness.

58. KOSHISH is an organization of persons with psychosocial disabilities established to promote the rights of persons with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities in Nepal. More information can be found [here](#)



have worsened. The UK's official development assistance (ODA) cuts to essential health services (explored under Target 3.8) provide concrete examples of this shift.

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The Covid-19 pandemic has had severe health impacts, and it has increased health inequities, particularly for disabled people and people already experiencing health disparities, which have been further exacerbated by vaccine inequity. As resources and personnel have been diverted from essential health services to the Covid response, other health issues have worsened. The UK's official development assistance (ODA) cuts to essential health services (explored under Target 3.8 below) provide concrete examples of this shift.

Progress towards UHC is eroded by the impacts of climate change. Recent floods in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa have resulted in reduced accessibility to health services as well as distrust in them. Eroded roads and washed away bridges and homes have displaced people, reduced people's access to healthcare, and damaged health infrastructure.

Similarly, wars and conflicts are putting progress towards SDG 3 at risk. It is in fragile and conflict-affected settings where 60% of the world's child and maternal deaths occur.⁵⁹ Analysis from WHO shows how the war in Ukraine is increasing health risks. – For example, limited oxygen supplies are reducing the capacity of the Ukrainian health system to treat severely ill patients.⁶⁰

The UK's contribution to progress on SDG 3 has also been impacted by the merger to create the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the reduction in ODA, and changing international development priorities.

Assessing the UK's commitments and actions towards SDG 3

Bond's 2019 SDG report called on the UK government to focus on supporting health systems strengthening (HSS) to achieve UHC as well as prioritising a number of policy areas, such as mental health and equitable access to quality medicines, vaccines and diagnostics.⁶¹ The report also

59. Wagner, Z. et al. (2018) 'Armed conflict and child mortality in Africa: a geospatial analysis', *The Lancet*, Vol 392, 10150, p.857-865; OECD (2018), *States of Fragility 2018*.

60. WHO Health Cluster (2022), *Ukraine Public Health Situation Analysis (PHSA) - Short form*

61. Bond (2019), *The UK's global contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals [Chapter 3]*

highlighted the importance of maintaining ODA spending on health, including funding for HSS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. In this section, we assess the UK's commitments and action towards SDG 3 and UHC between 2019-2022, including progress towards the above recommendations.

SDG 3 within the UK's broader approach to development

Following the merger to form the FCDO, the Global Health Directorate was established, and the then-Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab identified global health as one of seven development priorities.⁶² In March 2021, the UK's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy built on this priority, committing to 'prioritise supporting health systems'. But due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the framing of this priority shifted to focus on improving global health security and pandemic preparedness, whilst SDG 3, UHC and the principle to 'leave no-one behind' were deprioritised.

This trend continued following changes to ministerial responsibilities in 2021, as Foreign Secretary Liz Truss shifted focus to other development priorities. The Foreign Secretary has committed to refreshing the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality, although the framing has shifted to 'women and girls' and become more exclusionary of other people who have been marginalised due to sexuality, gender identity and expression, who often experience increased barriers to healthcare. Additionally, the Foreign Secretary has not emphasised access to essential healthcare as one of the priority strands for her focus on women and girls (particularly for progress towards Target 3.1 to reduce maternal mortality and 3.7 to enable universal access to sexual and reproductive care, family planning and education). However, it was positive to see that the UK's recent Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy included a strand on 'achieving inclusive health for all', although the details of implementation are yet to be made clear.

The UK's global health policies and strategy

Following Bond's 2019 recommendations, in August 2020 the FCDO published Approach and Theory of Change to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support. In December 2021, following civil society consultation, the FCDO published Ending preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children by 2030, which particularly links to Target 3.1 and 3.2, and Health systems strengthening for global health security and universal health coverage. Both policy papers seek to emphasise human rights, country leadership, strong and resilient health systems, gender equality, action on

62. GOV.UK (26 November, 2020) 'Official Development Assistance: Foreign Secretary's statement, November 2020' [online, accessed June 2022]



climate change, and transforming water supply, sanitation and nutrition services as the cornerstones to end preventable deaths and ensure the universal right to health. Whilst the papers recognise that groups that have been marginalised must be at the helm for progress towards SDG 3 to be equitable, the implementation of this approach is still unclear.

The UK’s work towards SDG 3 has lacked overall coherence and coordination due to the lack of a dedicated, public strategy to guide its work on global health (the last strategy expired in 2015). A cross-government, public global health strategy is essential. This would create a roadmap and track progress on the UK’s role in delivering all commitments under SDG 3, strengthen coordination and policy coherence across UK ODA to health, and bolster the UK’s role as a vocal champion of global health issues.

Personal testimony: Health disparities due to gender identity

My name is Sebastian. Healthcare in the UK is not universal, equitable, accessible or acceptable for people who are transgender. I waited three years for a first appointment with a gender identity clinic. Many of my peers have been waiting four to five years. Some gender-affirming surgeries mean waiting a further five to eight-plus years, on top of long processing times. These extended timelines have created a parallel system for those who can pay out of pocket to access private healthcare within months, and for the majority who are reliant on NHS services. There is, in essence, minimal to no gender-affirming healthcare available.

I was privileged to be able to self-finance access to hormones and chest reconstruction surgery, costing over £8000. I’ve experienced issues common to many transgender people; delays to my NHS care were exacerbated by lack of training amongst primary caregivers where GPs were unwilling to refer me or prescribe hormones despite clear NHS guidance, and routinely refused to provide me with care that I’m entitled to (e.g. HPV vaccine). This forced me to use trans-affirming separate clinics. Barriers of misgendering and stigmatising questions have discouraged me from seeking healthcare services for my other health needs. These barriers echo those faced by transgender people across the world and are a contributing factor to the disproportionately high rates of HIV and poor health outcomes my community experiences. This is why the work that bodies like UNAIDS supports to counter this is vital to finance and protect.

Target 3.8:

Achieve UHC, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

To achieve UHC globally all individuals and communities must be able to access the essential, quality health services they need throughout their life without suffering financial hardship. The health workforce is central to efforts to strengthen health systems and reach UHC.

Despite the UK’s commitment to support the delivery of the 2019 UN Political Declaration on UHC, the UK’s ODA cuts have reversed, disrupted and delayed progress. Early analysis indicates that the UK’s global health spending has been cut by up to 40% – a devastating blow during a global pandemic. For example:

- Cuts of £150 million (around 90%) to funding for the elimination and eradication of neglected tropical diseases means that tens of millions of people could miss out on treatments.
- More than 80% cuts in funding for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) bilateral projects, impacting the transmission of various communicable diseases.
- Ambulances in Sierra Leone left without enough fuel resulted in patients with severe complications not being taken to hospitals for emergency care (typically 70% were mothers and children). Over 300 referrals were not made as a result, which no doubt led to fatalities.
- The Health Partnership Scheme was cut by 100%. These programmes would have seen NHS staff provide training to 78,000 healthcare professionals, benefitting more than 430,000 patients.
- The health workforce delivering GOAL, a mental health project, was reduced due to funding cuts of 50%. These cuts undermined capacity to complete crucial research on mental healthcare financing and governance.



Target 3.b:

Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in TRIPS regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all

As with Target 3.8 and 3.c, UK cuts to Target 3.b were substantial –there was a £120 million gap between allocations and commitments. Cuts to this research agenda damages the capacity to provide the evidence needed to address complex health research challenges, such as new vaccines. As Covid-19 has shown, health risks and vulnerabilities are shared globally, so it is critical that the UK plays its part to address emerging health threats.

The UK, like other high-income countries, reneged on its commitment to support equitable vaccine sharing when it secured bilateral vaccine supplies outside the COVAX mechanism, draining the global supply. As a result, COVAX only managed to deliver 700 million of the 2 billion⁶³ doses it aimed to deliver by the end of 2021. The UK government has also actively prevented low- and middle-income countries from building domestic capacity to manufacture vaccines by blocking an agreement to temporarily waive intellectual property protections on Covid-19 tools. Its decision to prioritise intellectual property rights above human rights has been condemned as racist and rooted in colonialism, slavery and apartheid by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.⁶⁴

To achieve SDG 3, the UK government should:

1. Urgently return to the 0.7% commitment and reinstate financial commitments to global health, including ambitious funding for the implementation of its policies on ending preventable deaths and health systems strengthening. This should be guided by the principles of listening to and being directed by people with lived experience of health inequities.
2. Ensure all health ODA contributes to strong, resilient health systems (including community health systems), in line with national priorities. It should significantly scale up support to countries to develop, finance and deliver long-term human resource strategies for health.
3. Commit to externally publish a cross-government global health strategy, following substantive consultation with civil society and people with lived experience of health inequities in low- and middle-income countries.
4. Appoint a special envoy on UHC to champion the UK's commitments towards achieving Target 3.8 and leverage priority global advocacy moments, including the UN High-Level Meeting on UHC in 2023. The FCDO's upcoming strategy on women and girls should maintain a commitment to addressing structural drivers of gender inequality through more transformative and inclusive approaches that tackle patriarchal power structures. Sexual and reproductive health and rights and inclusive health should be explicit priorities.

63. AP News (15 December, 2021), '[Vaccine alliance chief: Omicron could trigger 'inequity 2.0'](#)', [online article, accessed June 2022]

64. OHCHR/Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (April 2022), '[Statement on the lack of equitable and non-discriminatory access to COVID-19 vaccines](#)'



SDG 4: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:

Send My Friend to School Coalition



Education is a fundamental human right that has the power to transform the lives of children across the world. Quality, safe, inclusive and free public education is the cornerstone of the delivery of all SDGs: it saves lives, improves nutrition and health, reduces child, early and forced marriage, and leads to more equal, respectful, and open societies. It is critical to achieving gender justice, peace, stability and climate resilience. Yet now, more than ever, education is out of reach for hundreds of millions of children and young people globally.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further exposed existing inequalities in global education and has revealed systemic failures in the delivery of inclusive education provision.⁶⁵ Around 1.6 billion learners and 100 million educators have experienced disruptions to teaching and learning during the pandemic, and the pupils who are the most marginalised have fared the worst.⁶⁶ UNESCO estimates that up to 11 million girls will never return to school, while many more children with disabilities – who were already 2.5 times less likely to go to school than children without a disability – will not now return to school.⁶⁷ Even before the pandemic, 258 million children and young people were out of school.

65. UNICEF (2020), [COVID-19: How prepared are global education systems for future crises?](#); Save the Children (2020), [Save our Education](#)
66. UNESCO (19 March, 2021), [‘One year into Covid-19 education disruption: where do we stand?’](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]
67. UNESCO (2020), [Covid-19 Education Response: How Many Students are at Risk of Not Returning to School?](#)

Target 4.1:

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

More and better financing is urgently needed to deliver SDG 4. A \$148 billion annual financing gap must be plugged in low- and lower-middle-income countries if SDG 4 is to be achieved by 2030, according to UNESCO.⁶⁸ Despite this huge financing gap, which could increase by up to one third due to the global pandemic, education remains far too low on the list of donor priorities and many national budgets. Global official development assistance (ODA) to education has remained stagnant over recent years and currently sits below 2010 levels, at just 10.8%.⁶⁹

Constant crises, conflicts and emergencies are making it much harder for children and young people to access quality teaching. In places affected by crisis, for example, 75 million children and youth are in need of educational support. Conflict also exacerbates vulnerabilities: teenage pregnancy can increase by as much as 65% during an emergency while 54% of the world’s out-of-school girls are in crisis-affected countries.⁷⁰

The UK has already demonstrated commitment to education in emergencies through its support for the UN’s Education Cannot Wait (ECW) global fund, in the government’s own Get Children Learning strategy and the Girls’ Education Declaration. Yet support for education in crisis contexts

68. UNESCO (2020), [Policy Paper 41: COVID-19 is a serious threat to aid to education recovery](#)
69. UNESCO (2020), [Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education: All Means All](#); UNESCO (2017), [Policy Paper 31: Aid to education is stagnating and not going to countries most in need](#)
70. Education Cannot Wait (2020), [Winning the Human Race: 2020 Annual Results Report](#)



must be strengthened if these commitments are to be met. Moreover, international cooperation with initiatives such as ECW should be prioritised. This includes ensuring that teachers are viewed as a key priority in any emergency education response, and invested in accordingly. The UK government should make the case for teachers to be prioritised in ECW's forthcoming strategy. It should work alongside teachers, children, civil society and others to deliver an ambitious pledge at the next ECW replenishment in 2023.

Although girls' education is a Conservative Party manifesto commitment and a personal priority of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the overall budget for girls' education has been cut by at least 25% in 2021-22 compared to 2019.⁷¹ It is estimated that 700,000 fewer girls will be supported by UK ODA for education between 2019-2022 compared to 2015-2018.⁷² Analysis shows that cuts have been worse for education programmes that focus on gender equality than those that do not.⁷³

The impact of the cuts on education programming is slowly emerging. The Small Charities Challenge Fund has been cancelled, which supported programmes educating homeless girls in Uganda, children with special educational needs in Tanzania and child labourers in Bangladesh. Elsewhere, cuts to funding for UK Aid Direct means programmes run by Children in Crossfire that focused on pre-primary education in Tanzania, plus educational projects run by Street Child in Nepal and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to get girls into school, have all been given just three months to close.⁷⁴ The Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and United Nations Population Fund have all publicly reported on the devastating impact that large-scale cuts to UK ODA is having on their women's and maternal health programming in Zambia and Haiti, respectively.⁷⁵ The knock-on effect is that girls living in acute poverty are now losing access to vital health services, including family planning, which allowed them to stay in education.

If the UK government is serious about its commitment to achieving SDG 4, it must minimise the hurt caused by recent ODA cuts and urgently reinstate its 0.7% commitment. Moreover, if it is to match its support with its global ambition, the UK government should commit to increase the proportion of education ODA to 15%. It should also fulfil its commitment to a fully-funded Global Partnership for Education – ensuring the partnership reaches its \$5 billion target and that the Girls' Education Accelerator is fully funded – and play a leading role in the upcoming Education Cannot Wait replenishment campaign, with an ambitious and early pledge.

71. CGD (23 April, 2021), '[As it Assumes Leadership of the Global Education Agenda, the UK Slashes Its Own Aid to Education](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]
72. ActionAid UK (2021), '[Written Submission to the International Development Committee inquiry on the impact of the Aid cut](#)' [online document, accessed June 2022]
73. Gender and Development Network (2021), '[UK Government decisions to cut UK Aid are disproportionately falling on women and girls](#)'
74. The Guardian (13 May, 2021), '[Why is the UK slashing its international aid budget?](#)' [online podcast, access June 2022]
75. Ibid

Access to education and learning outcomes

The children in the world who have been the most marginalised and are the most resource poor are experiencing extreme learning poverty. Around 258 million children are out of school, and even when children are in school, millions are not learning.⁷⁶

The UK has made progress in driving global efforts to improve learning outcomes. Building on earlier manifesto commitments to help realise every girl's right to education, the UK government hosted the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education and made education a central component of its G7 presidency. Notably, it introduced two ambitious global targets for improving access and learning in low- and lower-middle income countries by 2026: to get 40 million more girls into education, and to increase the number of girls who are reading by the age of 10 by a third.

To realise these global targets, the UK government sought endorsement of its Declaration on Girls' Education at the 2021 G7 summit. The targets and declaration were supported by all leaders at the summit. But progress may stagnate if the UK does not urgently work with G7 members and low- and middle-income countries to develop a tangible plan to deliver the targets and regularly report on progress. More detail should be publicly announced which sets out how G7 investment is being used (on which initiatives and countries), and how the G7 is using its influence to push for policy changes and domestic resources to ensure collective efforts are made to reach the declaration's targets. As the UK led the efforts for G7 endorsement of the declaration, it has the responsibility to continue to lead and coordinate efforts to its realisation.



Target 4.2:

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

Quality early childhood and pre-primary education is the foundation of a child's learning and wellbeing journey. Every stage of education that follows relies on its success. Yet, despite the proven and lifelong benefits, more than 175 million children – nearly half of all pre-primary-age children globally – are not enrolled in pre-primary education.⁷⁷ Providing universal access to pre-primary education is a reachable target, but it requires a practical and bold approach that addresses present realities. In its

76. World Bank (2019), '[Ending Learning Poverty: What Will It Take?](#)'
77. The World Bank (2021), '[The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery](#)'



girls' education action plan (GEAP), the FCDO's commitment to flagship research on education systems across a girl's lifetime, including her early years, is welcomed. However, faster progress and greater investment is needed to support the achievement of Target 4.2. The UK government should fund smart, proven strategies that can help low- and lower-middle-income countries to develop quality universal pre-primary education while remaining sensitive to present realities.

Target 4.a:

Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

Intersecting forms of discrimination continue to marginalise children, particularly girls, unaccompanied minors and children with disabilities who experience the impacts of weak education systems the most. The launch of the GEAP and the Girls' Education Declaration were welcomed, however, crucial barriers and solutions to girls' education are omitted. Much greater continuity and clarity is needed to ensure a joined-up approach that provides effective learning environments for all. For example, disability is only included as a footnote in the declaration, and sexual and reproductive health and rights are excluded from the GEAP.

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is deeply damaging to children's physical and mental health, as well as their learning outcomes, and girls are particularly vulnerable to violence. The Safe Schools Declaration is an important tool in combating SRGBV (and other forms of violence in and around schools, including attacks on schools). The UK government's commitment to rally international support for the declaration is welcomed but this support needs to be tangibly put into action.

Linking education with gender-responsive health and protection services is crucial. Tackling complex gender barriers to education requires coordinated investment and interventions across sectors – including water, sanitation and hygiene, child and social protection, gender-based violence, comprehensive sexuality education, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. The government must do more across its policies to promote a holistic approach that includes these sectors.

Target 4.c:

By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially LDCs and small island developing states (SIDS).

The FCDO's GEAP commits to investing in teachers, recognising that "having competent, creative, and well supported teachers is one of the most impactful and cost-effective ways to get girls learning"⁷⁸. Moreover, the strategy commits to "[taking] a fresh look at how to train, recruit, and motivate teachers"⁷⁹. This focus is welcome.

Delivering the UK government's ambitions on global education, including those set out in the 2019 manifesto and G7 Girls' Education Declaration, in addition to SDG 4 more broadly, means prioritising the world's teachers. Qualified, well-trained, properly resourced, respected and decently paid teachers are critical to securing high-quality, inclusive education⁸⁰. Despite this, a lack of qualified teachers represents one of the greatest barriers to universal primary and secondary education in low- and lower-middle income countries, and too often teachers are poorly trained and resourced.⁸¹

The funding committed to the Global Partnership for Education in 2021 will help to train up to 2.2 million teachers should the partnership become fully funded.⁸² However, in 2015 UNESCO estimated that 69 million new, qualified teachers needed to be recruited to achieve SDG 4.⁸³ In sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that 15 million teachers need recruiting by 2030, while several countries in the region will need to increase teacher recruitment by over 15% per year.⁸⁴

To support the recruitment, retention and training of teachers, the UK government should champion and support low- and lower-middle income countries to increase domestic resource mobilisation by improving education's share of public financing to benchmarks agreed in the Incheon Declaration. Policies should be adopted that improve education's share of national budgets, increase the size of the public budget overall through progressive tax bases, reduce debt servicing and resist austerity.

78. FCDO (2021), [Policy Paper: Every girls goes to school, stays safe, and learns: five years of global action](#)

79. Ibid

80. Send My Friend to School (2022), [All My Friends Need Teachers](#)

81. Ibid

82. Global Partnership for Education (2021), [Raise Your Hand: a case for investment](#)

83. UIS (2016), [The world needs almost 69 million new teachers by 2030 to reach the 2030 education goals](#)

84. International Taskforce on Teachers for Education (2021), [Closing the gap: Ensuring there are enough qualified and supported teachers in sub-Saharan Africa](#)



The UK government cannot achieve its agenda on inclusive education without leading and championing investment in good teaching. Supporting low- and lower-middle income countries to recruit, train and retain teachers, and invest in their safety and working conditions, is one of the most efficient and effective routes to quality, inclusive education for all children, particularly girls and children with disabilities. The FCDO should therefore introduce a new strategy on global teacher policy that addresses this need.

To achieve SDG 4, the UK government should:

1. Urgently reinstate the commitment to 0.7% and the budget spent on global education, and increase education's share of UK ODA to 15%.
2. Make a large, ambitious, multi-year pledge to Education Cannot Wait and ensure that the UK remains one of the fund's largest financial supporters.
3. Make commitments to gender-transformative education; increase investment in evidence-based approaches and solutions that have gender equality and inclusive education as primary objectives within formal and non-formal education.
4. Put gender equality at the heart of its education policies and programming, including supporting training for teachers on gender equality in the classroom, and prioritising areas with large gender gaps and higher rates of gender-based violence, child and early marriage and low rates of sexual and reproductive health services.
5. Fund smart, proven strategies that can help low- and lower-middle-income countries to develop quality, universal, pre-primary education.
6. Introduce a new strategy on global teacher policy that delivers on the recommendations in Send My Friend to School's report All My Friends Need Teachers, supporting the recruitment, training and retention of teachers in low- and lower-middle-income countries.



SDG 5: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:

Women for Women International, the Gender and Development Network (GADN), Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), ActionAid UK, Oxfam GB, Development Initiatives and CARE International UK.



Historically, the UK government has held a reputation for putting gender equality at the centre of its international policy and has played a vital and influencing role for others. However, both the domestic and global contexts of the last few years threaten the UK government's approach to achieving gender equality and progress towards SDG 5. Structural discrimination within the economy, the long-term consequences of Covid-19, climate change and conflict are intersecting threats that are exacerbating gender inequality. Each of these disproportionately impacts women and girls, especially those facing multiple forms of discrimination.

Upholding the rights of women, girls and gender non-conforming people is vital in and of itself. And without gender equality we won't meet the SDGs. Therefore, working to centre gender equality across every SDG is necessary (including by working with men and boys and challenging gender norms). This is also an effective way to achieve gender equality and support women's and girls' rights.

Priority should be given to interventions that consider the experiences of the many women and girls who face multiple, intersecting discriminations based on class, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and other factors, who experience the greatest obstacles to fulfilling their rights. Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer women and gender non-conforming people face many barriers due to development programmes that exclude them, intersectional violence and discrimination, unequal opportunities and underrepresentation. Laws and action

plans that specifically support these communities are urgently needed to ensure they benefit from the SDGs.

It is not too late for the UK government to act with intention and transparency, and through meaningful consultation with women and girls, and gender non-conforming people. This will ensure there is direct support for policies and programmes that promote the rights of women and other communities affected by gender inequality and address their needs as well as ensuring that the structural barriers to gender equality are recognised across all policies and programmes.

Reflecting on Bond's 2019 recommendations for SDG 5

To date, the implementation of Bond's 2019 recommendations has been limited. This chapter is written with reference to previous recommendations as we continue to call for greater transparency, policy coherence, monitoring, accountability, and collaboration with women's rights organisations.

By merging FCO and DFID and reducing official development assistance (ODA), the UK government has decreased its capacity to meaningfully contribute to the achievement of SDG 5 in the last three years, as demonstrated by the March 2021 Equalities Impact Assessment. This found ODA cuts were likely to have a negative impact on people who have been marginalised the most, including women and girls.⁸⁵ Despite its manifesto commitment and legal obligation, in 2021 the UK government cut ODA by approximately £4 billion.⁸⁶ A report by CARE UK and Development Initiatives suggests the cut in ODA spend on gender equality since 2021 is £1.9bn.⁸⁷ Development must not be reduced to a means of achieving changes in diplomacy, trade and defence.⁸⁸

85. Development Initiatives and Care UK for FCD0, (25 March 2021) '[Equalities Assessment](#)' [online document, accessed June 2022]

86. Ibid

87. Development Initiatives and Care UK, (25 March 2021) '[Equalities Assessment](#)' [online document, accessed June 2022]

88. ?



While the UK government now faces challenges in contributing to successfully achieving SDG 5, it has made some welcome contributions that should be acknowledged and sustained. These include renewed investment into evidence-based programmes through the initiative What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale, which signals commitment to breaking the link between violence against women and extreme poverty.⁸⁹ The UK government has also made investments towards women's economic justice and rights, including with women's rights organisations.

COVID-19, climate change and conflict

There remain significant external risks to the UK government's approach to gender equality, in policy and practice. These risks include the threat of Covid-19, climate change, and rising conflict and insecurity.

Women and girls have disproportionately felt the social, political and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. And, as with all crises, this has been most felt by the women and girls who are the most marginalised. Covid-19 cost women an estimated \$800m in lost income⁹⁰, and 47 million women and girls have been pushed into extreme poverty.⁹¹ All types of violence against women and girls have intensified, including intimate partner and domestic violence, online violence, hate crimes, and the targeting of women and girls for trafficking.⁹² Women's unpaid and community work has also increased, along with disproportionate increases in unemployment.⁹³

To deliver progress on gender equality, the climate crisis must be addressed. Climate change has severe consequences for everyone, but disproportionately impacts people who have been marginalised, particularly women and children.⁹⁴ Yet women's lack of land rights limits their opportunities to participate in, contribute to and benefit from environmental policies and programmes.⁹⁵ The impact of long droughts and heavy rain increases girls' vulnerability to violence, as deforestation means that they must go further distances to obtain firewood for fuel, for example.⁹⁶ Underlying gender inequality means the effects of climate change have multiplied the risks to women and girls. Violence against women and girls can happen anywhere, but it happens most in conflict zones. To embed a sustainable

approach to conflict prevention into the UK government's strategy, the disproportionate effects of climate change and Covid-19 must be addressed.⁹⁷

Women's rights organisations, women-led organisations and feminist thinkers and activists are providing viable, alternative propositions for recovery that can sustainably address the systemic inequalities the pandemic, climate change and ongoing conflict have exposed. Now is the time to listen to these solutions and put them at the heart of recovery to achieve SDG 5.⁹⁸

The impact of UK Government spending on policies and programmes

The reductions in ODA had a vast impact for multiple sectors, including humanitarian relief and education. The significant reduction in funding disproportionately impacted women and girls who have been marginalised the most.⁹⁹ Whilst the UK's new international development strategy commits to reinstating funding for women and girls it is unclear when and how much will be restored. The UK government has an opportunity to define this in its upcoming strategy on women and girls.

UK ODA for humanitarian programmes fell by 38% in 2021 compared to 2019.¹⁰⁰ In 2020, humanitarian programmes focusing on gender equality as a primary objective were more severely cut than those with no gender equality objectives. Compared with 2019, 39% of humanitarian spending where gender equality was the main objective was cut. Despite being one of the UK's current priorities, girls' education saw a 40% cut in funding in 2021.¹⁰¹ As a result, the Global Summit for Education fell short of its target to replenish the Global Partnership for Education.

89. IRC (2021), [What works to prevent violence against women and girls: Impact at scale](#)

90. Oxfam (29 April, 2021), ['COVID-19 cost women globally over \\$800 billion in lost income in one year'](#) [online media release, accessed June 2022]

91. UN (11 July, 2021), ['As COVID-19 Pushes 47 Million Women, Girls into Extreme Poverty, Secretary-General Calls for Upholding Reproductive Health Rights, in World Population Day Message'](#) [online media release, accessed June 2022]

92. UN Women, ['The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19'](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]

93. Gender and Development Network (March 2022), ['Lessons for a feminist Covid-19 economic recovery: Multi-country perspectives'](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]

94. Gender and Development Network (March 2022), ['Environment'](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]

95. GAPS (2021), [Now and the Future – Pandemics and Crisis: Gender Equality, Peace and Security in a COVID-19 World and Beyond](#)

96. Ibid

97. GAPS, ['GAPS Response to Possible UK Aid cuts'](#)

98. See, for example, the Gender and Development Network's [online resources](#) and [this page](#), which includes links to both the Canadian and Hawaiian feminist recovery plans proposed by coalitions of women's rights organisations and feminists.

99. CARE International UK, ['UK Government decisions to cut UK Aid are disproportionately falling on women and girls'](#)

100. Ibid

101. The Guardian (27 April, 2021), ['Dominic Raab is challenged to admit 40% cuts to foreign aid for girls' education'](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]

Target 5.2:

Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

The FCDO's *Equalities Assessment* reported that UK ODA cuts would 'reduce services available to women and girls who are subject to sexual violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH), and [its] ability to progress safeguarding objectives and championing of a survivor-centred approach'.¹⁰² This is despite the fact that incidents of sexual abuse and harassment against women are rising. For example, CARE International found that levels of domestic violence and sexual harassment of women in Yemen increased by 63% during the last five years due to the conflict there, and other forms of violence against women and girls have also risen.¹⁰³ UNFPA warned in March 2022 that a lack of funding could lead to 100,000 women dying from complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

Despite these cuts, the UK government has continued to make some investment in preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls, for example, through the What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls " and the What Works: Impact at Scale programmes mentioned above.¹⁰⁴ The UK government has also demonstrated renewed commitment to preventing violence against women and girls in conflict with the announcement in November 2021 of new funding and a global Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative conference, scheduled for 2022.¹⁰⁵

Target 5.4:

Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

Tackling the structural barriers preventing women and girls from equal economic rights and opportunities requires significant investment in social infrastructure 'to create decent work for underpaid carers; recognise unpaid care work; provide universally accessible social protection; and

102. FCDO, (25 March 2021) '[Equalities Assessment](#)' [online document, accessed June 2022]

103. CARE International UK '[UK Government decisions to cut UK Aid are disproportionately falling on women and girls](#)'

104. IRC (2021), What works to prevent violence against women and girls: Impact at scale

105. FCDO (16 November, 2021) '[Foreign Secretary launches campaign to tackle sexual violence in conflict around the world](#)' [online media release, accessed June 2022]

re-value care and well-being, putting them at the heart of Covid-19 economic recovery'.¹⁰⁶ In responding to the intersection of Covid-19 and women's economic rights, it is vital the UK government considers the informal sector (and women's over-representation within this sector) as it plans for economic recovery.

The FCDO should conduct a gender-responsive analysis of the experiences and needs of the communities in which ODA is operating so that the UK's response addresses the diversified needs of a country's whole population. This should assess the prevalence of informal work and the fiscal policy space of respective governments to enact social protection measures and bolster public services. Evidence-based support from the FCDO can help kickstart the process towards enabling governments to manage and fund their own universal social protection systems. Additionally, the FCDO can support women's rights organisations to undertake rapid care analysis, time use surveys and deploy other tools¹⁰⁷ to build evidence, and support advocacy initiatives to tackle women's unpaid care and domestic work.

Target 5.5:

Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Women being able to express their collective and individual voice and agency is a fundamental right. And it is necessary to improve outcomes for women in all aspects of decision-making. There has been some progress towards achieving target 5.5 as women now make up 25% of national parliamentarians¹⁰⁸, up from 11% in 1995. However, this still falls significantly short of national and global targets. Women still face widespread discrimination in entering politics and holding political offices. For women's full and effective participation to be meaningful, the UK government must engage with under-represented communities and civil society organisations to better understand their experiences and expertise. Consulting and engaging in this way will develop FCDO expertise on the rights and needs of groups that have been marginalised. Priority should be given to meaningfully consulting with women and girls so that their lived realities are at the forefront of policymaking.

106. Women's Budget Group (2022), '[Centring care in Covid-19 economic recovery: a five-point care package](#)'

107. For example, Oxfam (2021), '[Care Policy Scorecard: A tool for assessing country progress towards an enabling policy environment on care](#)'

108. UN Women, '[Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]



Target 5.6:

Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

The proportion of UK ODA provided to sexual and reproductive healthcare has declined since 2019.¹⁰⁹ In 2021, less than 1% of ODA was spent on sexual and reproductive healthcare, with a decrease of £80.3 million compared to 2019. While funding towards sexual and reproductive healthcare had increased between 2016 (£86 million) and 2019 (£252 million), current data suggests a reversal of this upward trend, with £156 million reported in 2020 and disbursements more than halved in 2021 compared to 2019 (£124 million).¹¹⁰ Some of the most notable cuts in 2021 include a reduction in funding of 85% to UNFPA and of 83% to UNAIDS. Marginalised women and girls living in conflict affected countries will be the hardest hit by these cuts, and they will significantly impact progress towards target 5.6.

Target 5.c:

Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Increased funding mechanisms are not the only tool to achieve SDG 5. Improved legislation and policies are equally fundamental for reaching this goal. As an executive board member of the IMF, the UK could and should use its influence to support a strong gender equality strategy. An open letter from civil society¹¹¹, however, suggests a number of shortfalls in the development process of the IMF's gender strategy, such as the lack of consultation with civil society organisations and women's rights organisations. Beyond the IMF's gender strategy, there is some concern around the UK government's international development strategy.¹¹² Women and girls appear as a priority within the strategy, but the government's approach has been to silo particular aspects of women's rights instead of 'mainstreaming' gender equality

across all of its development work, including conflict, climate and health. To fulfil Target 5.c, the UK government must take a holistic approach to legislation and policies that impact women and girls who have been marginalised.

To achieve SDG 5, the UK government should:

1. Meaningfully engage with women's rights organisations to offer other forms of support to, and protection of, these organisations and women and girl human rights defenders. Guarantee funding for gender equality and the rights of women and girls by increasing the provision of accessible, flexible long-term funding.
2. Ensure gender is mainstreamed across other programmes and funding streams, from programme design to implementation. This can be done by dedicating budgets for women's and girls' rights and gender equality, building staff capacity, and developing and monitoring gender-transformative indicators across all programmes and strategies.
3. Commit to gender-sensitive responses in conflict to address the immediate needs and concerns of women and girls, who will be disproportionately impacted by conflict and at further risk of gendered violence.
4. Develop and publish context-specific gender strategies for all countries where the UK engages in foreign affairs and has development priorities in order to set strategic directions and reinforce the importance of gender equality commitments across all contexts.

109. CARE International and Development Initiatives (2022), [UK leadership on gender equality globally: learning from past lessons on where the UK should invest for women and girls](#)

110. Ibid

111. Bretton Woods Project (24 January, 2022), '[Civil society letter to the IMF Board to call for open consultation on upcoming Gender Strategy](#)' [online, accessed June 2022]

112. GAPS, '[GAPS Response to Possible UK Aid cuts](#)'



SDG 6: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:
UK WASH Network

SDG 6 covers the domains of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and sustainable water management. This is a diverse area. Activities range from ensuring access to sanitary facilities so that women can maintain menstrual hygiene to monitoring transboundary water flows in a time of a rapidly changing climate. Besides being essential for life, WASH and water management impact on many other areas, including food, health, education, energy, gender equality, economics and environmental protection. Moreover, delivery of SDG 6 is intrinsically linked to building resilience to climate change.

Progress towards SDG 6 is already off-track and slowing further. One in four people still do not have a safely managed water service at home. Almost half do not have a safely managed sanitation service at home, and almost one in three lack soap and water.¹¹³ Achieving universal access to at least basic drinking water in fragile states by 2030 will require the current rate of progress to increase fourfold, and a sevenfold increase is needed to achieve universal access to basic sanitation. Yet the goal is to achieve more than 'basic' services, and the world is even further away from achieving safely managed services for all.

Underperforming WASH services and inadequate physical infrastructure are symptoms of systemic weaknesses across governance, service providers and asset management. WASH services depend on diverse inputs

113. WHO and UNICEF, '[Updated global estimates for WASH in schools: the world is off track for SDG WASH targets](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

and actions. Responsibilities are often scattered across government departments, agencies and NGOs. Bottlenecks and disconnections create gaps in this system, so good performance in one area does not always result in better WASH services. Inequalities in power and resources are a root part of the problem. This demands new ways of working and funding, rather than just increasing or accelerating current efforts.

In recent years, two external factors have had a significant impact on progress: Covid-19 and climate change. Covid-19 has affected the provision of WASH services and highlighted global inequalities in people's access to WASH. However, Covid-19 has also given rise to innovation, including new and exciting partnerships such as the Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition. Climate change also affects water and WASH systems, and makes it more challenging to achieve SDG 6. Increased weather changes, floods and droughts directly affect water resources, WASH infrastructure and service demand, whilst also resulting in social and economic instability that undermines development.

The UK's role

The UK has a great history of supporting SDG 6, particularly on WASH. Many major INGOs in the WASH sector have their roots here, both in development and humanitarian contexts. They continue to be influential and, alongside a flourishing community of researchers and independent consultants, work to ensure that all aspects of WASH and water management are considered. For example, the UK INGO sector has raised the importance of equity and inclusion, working with people with disabilities and people with incontinence, and on transgender-inclusive sanitation¹¹⁴, gender-based violence and menstrual and perimenopausal hygiene. UK research and development has been strong, with many institutions generating vital knowledge.

114. Boyce, Paul, et al. (2018), '[Transgender-inclusive sanitation: insights from South Asia](#)', Waterlines, Vol 37,2, p.102-117.



The ongoing investments in research have developed world-leading capacity, which has enabled the UK to rapidly respond to changing WASH needs during Covid, engage in Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change working groups, and leader international WASH programming. But this track record has been critically undermined by the implementation of cuts to the official development assistance (ODA) budget. Both programmatic and knowledge leadership have been lost as a consequence.

The FCDO's role

Within the UK, the FCDO has and will continue to have a central role, not just as a donor but through its leadership and coordinating role. However, its ability to deliver progress on SDG 6 is constrained by significant relative and absolute budget cuts, a trend that predates the pandemic. The Independent Commission on Aid Impact's (ICAI) 2022 review¹¹⁵ of the FCDO's approach documents declining budgets since 2018, showing that WASH dropped from 2.7% of ODA in 2018 to 0.5% in 2021. In tandem, we have also seen WASH programming become more vulnerable as it is increasingly embedded in wider, multi-sector programmes and then squeezed out completely or significantly reduced.

The budget cuts are just one aspect of a wider concern about the priority the FCDO gives to SDG 6. WASH and sustainable water management are critical to supporting the UK's international development priorities of women, girls, health, hygiene and climate resilience. This means both need, not only adequate financial resourcing, but to be made more visible by becoming central to the agendas of decision makers, including international agencies, governments, civil society and the private sector.

ICAI's 2022 review also highlights the emergence of a strategic shift in programming, which will see an increased focus on building WASH systems and sustainable services. This shift is welcome, but will require patient, flexible and long-term investment in institutions, governance and communities, as well as continued capital investment. It also requires new ways of designing interventions, monitoring and measuring change, and places emphasis on continuous learning and adaptive management. System strengthening is therefore unlikely to be a cheaper or easier option than the earlier focus on large, in-country programmes designed to deliver on the UK's global WASH targets.

115. ICAI, ['The UK's changing approach to water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\)'](#) [web page, accessed June 2022].

Target 6.a:

By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies.

The magnitude of the global WASH crisis requires a comparable response. Yet we have seen a marked decline in expenditure from DFID/FCDO since 2018. This is making the UK's response woefully inadequate.

Going forward, the renewed interest in systems-strengthening will require a focus on strengthening accountability for water resource management and WASH services. This entails financial support so that sector partners can identify clear roles, responsibilities and performance standards and ensure transparency. Simultaneously, support for civil society and social accountability work is essential to empower the 'demand side' of systems strengthening. Concerted international effort requires continued engagement with, and influence through, the Sanitation and Water for All Partnership, of which the UK is a founding member. Representation in this partnership should extend to the most senior level within the FCDO.

We further note that there is no indicator for capacity building support. There has been little coordinated action since a report by the International Water Association ten years ago. This is a bottleneck to progress, which is restricting activity in other parts of the WASH system.

Target 6.a:

Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management

The ODA cuts have significantly affected existing local programmes, forced organisations to close offices and make staff redundant and have led to other governmental institutions withdrawing their grants after the completion of funding submissions. Yet, grassroots interventions are vital to understanding the issues faced by local communities and play a critical role in collecting data and monitoring progress. To address this the FCDO should support interventions such as providing information to affected populations, supporting civil society and citizen accountability programmes (with an emphasis on engaging women's groups and other under-represented communities), consultation, redress mechanisms and improving communication.

Target 6.1:

By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.

Two billion people lack access to safely managed water, and the Covid-19 pandemic has stretched this gap further. Even where people have access, the quality of their service is often low and vulnerable to climate changes.

The FCDO's investments in climate resilient WASH have supported the development of climate resilient water safety planning. But more investment is needed to support the integration of WASH, water resources and climate information to expand climate resilient services.

Target 6.2:

By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations

Globally, progress on sanitation is stagnant. Inadequate sanitation services particularly affect women and girls throughout their lives. Addressing this requires more ambition and necessitates focusing on the needs of different groups. For example, adequate WASH facilities are needed to support perimenopausal women's menstrual hygiene. And we need much better provision for sexual and gender minorities and other communities that are marginalised to ensure no one is left behind. The current attention being paid to the rights of sanitation workers, including manual scavengers and street sweepers, needs to be reflected in further investment by the FCDO to protect workers as access to sanitation services is expanded.

Innovation is critical to accelerate work in this space. A good example is the way that the FCDO leveraged its existing investments in WASH research to support the development of the Hygiene Hub, a repository of resources developed by a global network of researchers to improve access to, and uptake of, safe handwashing and the water services to support it.

Target 6.3:

By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally

Water quality is a significant global challenge, and while some aspects have been by addressed by the FCDO, there is scope for much more to be done. FCDO investments have been used to develop novel biosensors for monitoring water quality, and engaged governments and industry on advancing wastewater treatment. Yet, further investment is needed to advance these approaches and ensure progress towards Target 6.3 is embedded in the FCDOs investments in industrial development.

Target 6.4:

By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity and Target 6.5: By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate

To date, the UK government's investment in integrated water resources management (IWRM) has been limited, despite the fact that sustainable WASH systems depend on sound and inclusive water governance. UK ODA should identify research, learning and programming on WASH and water resources in a holistic manner, including focusing on activities by corporate actors that impact water security. Strengthening standards, guidelines and transparency is necessary so that investments and supply chains don't deplete water resources. The FCDO has led the way with the Glasgow Declaration for Fair Water Footprints. Signatories have committed to supporting responsible, sustainable and equitable use and consumption of water (linked also to SDG 8 and 12). This provides the FCDO with significant opportunities to drive and recognise responsible water use.



To achieve SDG 6, the UK government should:

1. Invest significantly more in sustainable WASH and IWRM, and create a more consistent and certain funding environment for NGOs and local grassroots organisations involved in this work.
2. Ensure a whole-of-FCDO approach to WASH that focuses on strengthening WASH systems and protecting the right to water and sanitation. It should also continue supporting fragile and conflict-affected contexts and identify holistic research, learning and programming on IWRM and WASH.
3. Ring-fence funding for cross-sector integration of WASH, including with health, education, economic and nutrition investments. Include WASH targets and indicators in all health, education, nutrition, disability and climate interventions, plans and policies. Integrate WASH and hygiene behaviour change programmes into existing public health programmes, such as for child health, vaccination, nutrition, education and livelihoods. Ensure WASH is included as a crucial element of the government's approach to the international treaty on pandemic preparedness and the development of the cross-Whitehall global health strategy.
4. Introduce mandatory reporting on women's engagement and economic empowerment to help achieve equity in both WASH programming and policy development. Include good governance and accountability measures in both direct programming and government support for WASH to support stronger civic space and voice, and engagement between communities and authorities.



SDG 7: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:
Climate Action Network UK (CAN-UK)



Meeting SDG 7 and improving access to clean and efficient energy is widely seen as a major catalyst to achieving many of the other SDGs. Progress on SDG 7, if met using renewable sources, can deliver huge benefits for billions of people in areas such as health and education, and can at the same time address the triple emergencies of climate change, environmental destruction and poverty. Around 3.6 billion people live in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change¹¹⁶ and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has identified universal energy access as vital to reduce vulnerability and build resilience to the effects of the climate crisis, especially for rural populations.¹¹⁷

Those with affordable, clean and reliable energy see improvements in living standards and livelihoods, while those without face many negative consequences. These include health problems and poor medical facilities¹¹⁸, loss of income due to a lack of electricity and lighting, an inability to study during hours of darkness or access online learning, missing out on digital infrastructure and communication opportunities, and being unable to access technological improvements and safely refrigerate food and medical supplies. Women and children are disproportionately affected by a lack of access to electricity and clean cooking. For example, in low-income countries women and children

116. IPCC (2022), [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability: Working Group II contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#)

117. Ibid

118. Clean Cooking Alliance (2021), [Air Pollution, Health and Clean Cooking](#)

can spend around 10 hours a week gathering fuel outside of their community, during which time they are more likely to be subjected to violence.¹¹⁹

SDG 7 is intrinsically linked with the Paris Agreement's goal to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C through a phase-out of fossil fuels and rapid infiltration of renewables in the global energy mix. To limit heating to 1.5°C, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has made it clear to governments that there must be no new oil, gas or coal development, and the majority of existing fossil fuel use must be phased out by 2050.¹²⁰ The transition to clean and reliable energy not only plays a key role in preventing catastrophic climate change, it has the potential to create 38 million sustainable jobs by 2030 and 43 million by 2050.¹²¹

The importance of reliable and clean energy for all was reinforced by the Covid-19 pandemic. The correlation between health and energy has been laid bare, including the need for refrigeration of Covid-19 vaccines and the functioning of oxygen systems in hospitals. Similar to other sectors, the pandemic has highlighted inequality, laying bare the unequal distribution of energy and the services it provides.

119. Clean Cooking Alliance (2021), [Gender And Clean Cooking](#)

120. IEA (2021), [Net Zero by 2050](#)

121. IRENA and ILO (2021), [Renewable Energy and Jobs – Annual Review 2021](#)



Target 7.1:

By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services

Access to electricity has improved over the past decade, particularly in Asia. In 2011 around 1.3 billion people globally were without electricity, by 2017 this had fallen to 853 million. Latest estimates (2019) put this figure at 759 million (78% of those without electricity live in Africa and 20% in Asia). The vast majority of people (99%) gaining access to electricity over this period has been in Asia, primarily India and Bangladesh, due to rapid electrification of densely populated cities. In contrast, Africa has seen an increase in the absolute number of people without electricity, in part due to population growth.¹²²

The number of people without access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking reduced from 2.7 billion to 2.6 billion between 2017 and 2019.¹²³ But this was before Covid-19, and it is estimated that in 2020 15 million people and up to 450,000 enterprises missed out on increased energy access due to the pandemic.¹²⁴ It is anticipated that progress on Target 7.1, particularly for the excluded communities, will have slowed in the last two years or even reversed.¹²⁵ Covid-19 combined with limited funding slowed the pace of activity in the off-grid sector, where projects are most likely to deliver energy access for rural communities, while on-grid had modest growth in 2020/21.¹²⁶ While all low-income countries are hit by energy poverty, nearly half of people living in African countries (46%) still have no access to electricity and 900 million rely on solid fuels for cooking, such as charcoal and firewood (most in Sub-Saharan Africa).¹²⁷ We continue to see the grave consequences of this on the climate and environment due to deforestation, and on people's health.

Current levels of finance for Target 7.1, nearly half of which comes from international flows, fall significantly short of what is needed. Another issue is where finance goes; of the 20 countries most in need, 7 received less than \$100 million a year and only a third of these resources go to power homes.¹²⁸ Significantly, off-grid renewables represent only 1% of the overall finance for projects to expand energy access in access-deficit countries.¹²⁹ Support for clean

122. IEA, IRENA, UNSD, World Bank, WHO (2021) [Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report](#)

123. SEforAll (2021), [Deep Dive Analysis: Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2021 analysis](#)

124. GOGLA (2021), [Global Off-Grid Solar Market Report Semi-Annual Sales and Impact Data](#)

125. SEforAll (2021), [Deep Dive Analysis: Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2021 analysis](#)

126. IRENA and ILO (2021), [Renewable Energy and Jobs – Annual Review 2021](#)

127. IRENA (2021), [The Renewable Energy Transition in Africa](#)

128. SEforAll (2020), [Energizing Finance: Understanding the Landscape 2020](#)

129. IRENA. (2021) [World Energy Transitions Outlook: 1.5°C Pathway](#)

cooking is woefully inadequate and requires a jump from \$31.5 million to \$5 billion a year to meet this target.¹³⁰

Given the above, we are significantly off track to meet Target 7.1. Current projections indicate that 660 million people will lack access to electricity and 2.3 billion will be without clean cooking in 2030.¹³¹ Without significant action the geographical imbalance of energy access will remain, with a substantial proportion of those without electricity and clean cooking expected to be in Africa. Almost all Asian countries have seen improvements and will continue to progress, providing they can reach rural populations. Given the population will increase by 1 billion in sub-Saharan Africa and almost 100 million in Northern Africa by 2050, a focused and rapid scale up is needed in Africa, backed by appropriate levels of finance.



Target 7.2:

By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

By 2016, 17% of global energy consumption was powered by renewable sources, up from 16.4% in 2010. However, latest figures show a stagnation at around 17.1% - and the figure is only 10.7% when you exclude traditional biomass.¹³² Africa has the highest share of renewables in its total final energy consumption at 53.6%, but without traditional biomass this figure is 7.8%. Europe, North America and China have added record levels of renewables to their energy mix in recent years. However, the top 20 energy consuming countries still only have a cumulative total of 16% of their energy coming from renewables.¹³³ Covid-19 has had a mixed effect on the progress being made to increase renewable capacity, with most of the new capacity being added in China and record amounts being added in the US, while across Europe the picture remains variable and growth has been lacking in Africa. A clear example of this geographical disparity is that, of the 72% of new electricity derived from renewables, less than 2% of it can be attributed to countries in Africa and the Middle East.¹³⁴

Global investment in renewables saw a limited increase of 2% between 2019 and 2020, with the EU and the UK making the largest investments after China.¹³⁵ In low- and middle-income countries there was an increase of 6% between 2018 and 2019, but this slowed to only 1% between 2019 and

130. SEforAll (2021), [Deep Dive Analysis: Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2021 analysis](#)

131. IEA, IRENA, UNSD, World Bank, WHO (2021) [Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report](#)

132. Ibid

133. SEforAll (2021), [Deep Dive Analysis: Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2021 analysis](#)

134. IRENA (2021), [The Renewable Energy Transition in Africa](#)

135. IEA, IRENA, UNSD, World Bank, WHO (2021) [Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report](#)



2020.¹³⁶ Around \$14 billion of international public finance has flowed to low- and middle-income countries to support clean energy.¹³⁷ However, minimal amounts have been disbursed to support mini-grids, one of the main routes to increasing rural energy access.¹³⁸

One reason for the lack of progress on SDG 7 – which hampers the wider SDGs – is continued support for fossil fuels. This is demonstrated by G20 members still providing at least three times as much international public finance for fossil fuels than for renewables (\$77 billion versus \$28 billion annually).¹³⁹ This is a paradox, given that in almost all cases the cheapest and best option for new electricity generation is renewables.¹⁴⁰ This is no more apparent than in Africa, where public and private finance institutions invested at least \$132.3 billion between 2016 and 2021 in fossil fuel companies and projects (see more in SDG 12).¹⁴¹

Projections show that renewables will still only take up 18-20% of global consumption by 2030, meaning we are off track to achieve Target 7.2.¹⁴² Public and private finance for clean energy is significantly short of the levels required to get on track for 1.5°C and for SDG 7. Covid-19 recovery spending represented an opportunity to accelerate a just energy transition. However, Covid-19 recovery allocations (2021-2023) represent only 35% of the level of investment needed to reach net zero by 2050, with 40% of energy spending still going to fossil fuel.

Given Africa's potential to generate renewable energy from current technology is 1,000 times larger than the demand projected for the coming decades, and with renewables the least-cost option in most cases, there is an opportunity for progress to be made.¹⁴³ But disparity remains a fundamental challenge, with funding 200 times higher in high-income countries than in low-income countries.¹⁴⁴ The fossil fuel industry plans to invest \$1.4 trillion in exploration and development of new oil and gas in Africa by 2050, which will be primarily controlled by European, Asian and North American companies.¹⁴⁵ It is estimated that an increase in investment from the current \$320 billion to \$850 billion a year is required in the power sector alone to be close to reaching SDG 7 by 2030.¹⁴⁶

136. REN21 (2021), [Renewables 2021 Global Status Report](#)

137. IEA, IRENA, UNSD, World Bank, WHO (2021) [Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report](#)

138. IRENA and ILO (2021), [Renewable Energy and Jobs – Annual Review 2021](#)

139. Oil Change International and Friends of the Earth (2021), [Past Last Call](#)

140. IRENA (2021), [The Renewable Energy Transition in Africa](#)

141. BankTrack, Milieudefensie, and Oil Change International (2022), [Locked out of a Just Transition](#)

142. SEforAll (2021), [Deep Dive Analysis: Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2021 analysis](#)

143. BankTrack, Milieudefensie, and Oil Change International (2022), [Locked out of a Just Transition](#)

144. IISD, Global Subsidies Initiative (29 October, 2021), 'The Data Is in—Governments Must Green Their COVID-19 Recovery to Keep Global Temperature Rise to 1.5°C' [online article, accessed June 2022]

145. Oil Change International (2021), [The Sky's Limit Africa](#)

146. IEA (2021), [World Energy Outlook 2021](#)



Target 7.3:

Double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.

Early improvement has slowed in recent years due to low fossil fuel prices, with both the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) predicting further stagnation. The most inefficient countries are within Africa and Asia, particularly those with industry-based economies. Global investments for energy efficiency have also plateaued over the last 5 to 7 years (\$266 billion in 2020) and remain well short of what is needed.¹⁴⁷ In transport, analysis by the IEA suggests that vehicle fuel economy has plateaued in recent years globally; increasing vehicle size and power has eroded as much as 40% of the fuel consumption improvements that would otherwise have occurred thanks to technical advances in vehicles and engines.¹⁴⁸

The UK's support of SDG 7

The UK government's contribution to SDG 7 has been varied, with strong rhetoric on climate change leading up to and during COP26 in Glasgow and some leading policy announcements. However, progress has been counteracted by the recent official development assistance (ODA) cuts, the FCDO merger, continued support for domestic fossil fuels, and long delays to the *International Development Strategy* and the *International Climate Finance* (ICF) strategy refresh.¹⁴⁹ The UK's ICF provided 41 million people with improved access to clean energy and installed a cumulative clean energy capacity of 2,400MW between 2011/12 and 2019/20.^{150 151} At COP26, there were a raft of energy-related announcements, including £126 million for the Transforming Energy Access platform¹⁵², and the UK COP26 Presidency garnered global commitments to end the use of coal. Civil society awaits and hopes this does not lead to a dash for gas, and for clarity on what is new or existing UK funding, alongside a full understanding of impacts of the UK ODA cuts on energy programming overseas.

March 2021 saw the implementation of a UK policy which should prevent future support of fossil fuels overseas.¹⁵³

147. SEforAll (2021), [Deep Dive Analysis: Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2021 analysis](#)

148. IEA (2021), [Vehicle fuel economy in major markets 2005-2019 GFEI Working Paper 22 GFEI Working Paper 22](#)

149. ICAI (2021), [UK aid's alignment with the Paris Agreement A rapid review](#)

150. FCDO UK Government (2021), [2021 UK Climate Finance Results](#)

151. Note: the Government methodology has changed, so figures are not comparable between years

152. UK aid/TEA (November 2021), [UK government announces £126 million of scale-up funding for the Transforming Energy Access platform](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]

153. UK Government, BEIS (2021), [Aligning UK international support for the clean energy transition](#)



However, some loopholes remain, including support for gas power, where this is deemed to be aligned with national climate plans, and funding for carbon capture, storage and utilisation technologies, which are yet unproven at scale. This policy will guide the UK's 'voice and vote' at the multilateral development banks, where it is a shareholder on energy lending, but it won't – on its own – prevent these institutions, which receive UK ODA, from continuing to invest in fossil fuels. Ahead of COP26, the International Development Select Committee told the UK government it should close all loopholes that allow the British International Investment (formerly CDC Group) and Private Infrastructure Development Group to operate outside of the policy and continue to finance fossil fuels (the two organisations are estimated to have exposure to fossil fuels worth over £1bn).¹⁵⁴

Positively, and somewhat quietly, the UK leveraged its overseas fossil fuel policy at COP26 to garner a group of 39 countries and institutions (including Germany, USA, the European Investment Bank and Agence Française de Développement) to pledge to end support of unabated fossil fuels overseas by 2022 and increase their support for the clean energy transition.¹⁵⁵ If fully implemented, this could shift up to \$24.1 billion a year out of fossil fuels and into clean energy.¹⁵⁶ Notably, the list of signatories did not include major funders like Japan and the World Bank. Unfortunately, the commitment also retains loopholes, particularly around gas power and application of the term 'unabated fossil fuels', which need to be addressed. Given the recent nature of these policies, their impact on SDG 7 progress remains to be seen.

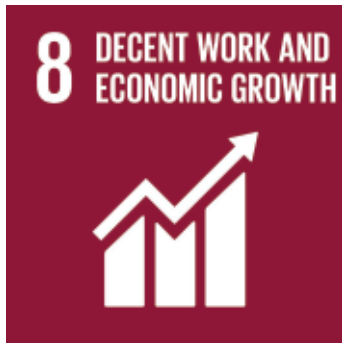
To achieve SDG 7, the UK government should:

1. End UK public finance for fossil fuels to deliver on the UK's commitment to 1.5°C by
 - a) closing the 'exemptions' in the UK's overseas fossil fuel policy
 - b) leading current signatories to agree to close loopholes in the Glasgow Joint Statement on international fossil fuel support, and expanding the number of signatories to ensure greater financing of renewables in low-income countries
 - c) ending support for new fossil fuels domestically, and substantially increasing support for renewables to tackle the cost-of-living crisis
 - d) using the UK's ongoing role as COP26 President to ensure an agreement on ending fossil fuel support by the world's biggest polluters ahead of COP27.
2. Increase UK finance, and promote international finance, going to low-income countries, in particular, excluded communities. This financing should be used for decentralised renewable energy solutions that tackle energy poverty and enable adaptation to climate change, while supporting the transition to low-carbon mobility.
3. Place 'do no harm' solutions for clean cooking and energy access at the heart of UK's ODA priorities for energy programming.

154. House of Commons International Development Committee (2022), [Global Britain in demand: UK climate action and international development around COP26: Government response to the Committee's Second Report](#)

155. UN Climate Change Conference UK 2021, COP26 (4 November, 2021), [Statement On International Public Support For The Clean Energy Transition](#) [online, accessed June 2022]

156. Oil Change International (12 November, 2021), [France joins commitment to end international oil, gas, and coal finance by 2022](#) [online media release, accessed June 2022]



SDG 8: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:
Leonard Cheshire and Oxfam GB



The aim of SDG 8 is to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth along with full and productive employment and decent work for all. The 2019 report highlighted four key areas of focus: inclusive economic development; standards of work in global value chains; decent work for youth; inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Despite moderate economic growth across the world, projections for 2022 and 2023 are in decline.¹⁵⁷ Emerging and developing economies are taking the greatest hit, with growth expected to drop by 1.9% between 2023 and 2021.¹⁵⁸ Rising inflation will affect workers in low- and middle-income countries the most, which in the absence of adequate and enabling policy environments will cause shocks to workers and households. Women and young people are will be particularly impacted, as more women will be pushed into poverty and youth unemployment will continue to grow.

Nothing has exposed the systemic injustice in global economic structures more than Covid-19, where we have witnessed deepening entrenched inequalities between people who are rich and people who are poor. The wealth of the richest people has doubled since the pandemic¹⁵⁹, whilst estimates put the number of people pushed into poverty due to the pandemic at 150 million.¹⁶⁰ Despite upwards growth before the pandemic, the absence or inadequacy of investment into decent job creation, skills, entrepreneurship, as well as lack of investments into public services, means

157. World Bank (11 January, 2022), '[Global Growth to Slow through 2023, Adding to Risk of 'Hard Landing' in Developing Economies](#)' [online media release, accessed June 2022]

158. Ibid

159. Oxfam (2022), '[Inequality Kills: The unparalleled action needed to combat unprecedented inequality in the wake of COVID-19](#)'

160. World Bank (24 June, 2021), '[Updated estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty: Turning the corner on the pandemic in 2021?](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

that workers and households have not been able to withstand economic shocks during the pandemic. Although government schemes to subsidise workers' wages were implemented in many countries, these often left out millions of informal workers and failed to reach people left behind.

The informal economy comprises more than half of the global labour force.¹⁶¹ The absence of formal contracts, and minimal workers' rights for many, combined with weak social protection systems, resulted in many workers losing jobs and income overnight due to the pandemic. Women and girls are disproportionately affected and are most at risk of losing jobs and livelihoods. In 2021, women lost more than 64 million jobs – a loss of 5%, compared to 3.9% for men.¹⁶² A conservative estimate puts lost income for women in 2021 at \$ 800 million¹⁶³, but this does not include informal workers who make up 89% of the female workforce in Africa and 95% in South Asia.¹⁶⁴ At the same time, women's care work – paid, underpaid and unpaid – substantially increased as public services failed to keep pace with increasing need.¹⁶⁵

Covid-19 has also had a significant impact on persons with disabilities. Data from 51 countries shows that 19.6% of women with disabilities are employed compared with 29.9% of women without disabilities. For men the employment rate is 52.8% for men with disabilities, compared with 64.9% for men without disabilities.¹⁶⁶ This gap has become more acute since the pandemic. For example, a survey conducted in Bangladesh and Kenya in April 2021 found many people

161. ILO, '[Informal Economy](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

162. Oxfam (29 April, 2021), '[COVID-19 cost women globally over \\$800 billion in lost income in one year](#)' [online media release, accessed June 2022]

163. Ibid

164. UN Women, '[Women in the changing world of work: facts you should know](#)' [online infographic, accessed June 2022]

165. GAD Network (March 2022), '[Lessons for a feminist Covid-19 economic recovery: Multi-country perspectives](#)' [online resource, accessed June 2022]

166. WHO and World Bank (2011), '[World Report on Disability](#)'; Groce et al. (2011) '[Poverty and disability – a critical review of the literature in Low and Middle-Income Countries](#)' [p.237]

with disabilities had increased employment and job security concerns. In Kenya, 68% of respondents with disabilities reported not being able to work and 65% of those in work had job insecurity concerns. In Bangladesh a staggering 80% reported not being able to work, and more than 85% of those employed felt insecure in their job.¹⁶⁷

Global youth unemployment rose from 13.6% in 2019 to 13.8% in 2021. This figure masks huge regional variations, with youth unemployment at 29.6% in Northern Africa and 18.9% in Southern Asia but 8.7% in Sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁶⁸ Just under half (46%) of young people who are employed are 'own-account' workers or contribute to family businesses, and 30% are still living in extreme poverty, despite working.¹⁶⁹ Serious gaps in education, skills development and job creation persist for youth. Many youth, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, are not being provided with the education and skills they need to meet the demands of the changing world of work.

Wages continue to fall short of living wage standards with many barely getting by. Since the pandemic, thousands of informal workers lost income and their jobs overnight due to lockdown restrictions, closures in factories and major disruptions to global and local supply chains. On opening up, workers have faced wage cuts, intimidation and threats. Across the world, 156 countries continue to impose Covid-related restrictions affecting freedom of assembly, and 62 have restrictions affecting freedom of expression.¹⁷⁰ These laws have been used by national governments to ban protests, justify use of force, arrest workers and activists, use government surveillance and intimidate workers.

Two years on from the start of the pandemic, governments, the medical profession and private sector companies have made concerted efforts to ensure a vaccine was created and produced at scale. However, by blocking waivers to patents at the World Trade Organisation, some governments, including the UK government, have prioritised profits for corporations over people. This is coming at a cost of \$9 trillion to the global economy.¹⁷¹

Covid-19 has also exposed the care crisis; in particular, the inadequacy of public services and social protection provision. Immediate increases in social protection are needed, for example, through the Global Social Protection Fund.¹⁷² Just and equitable recovery will also require longer-term investment in social infrastructure.¹⁷³ Not only will this

increase the supply of decent work in women-dominated sectors and reduce women's burden of unpaid care, through the multiplier effect it will also increase future government revenue streams.¹⁷⁴

Workers, such as farmers, fisher folk and those dependent on forests, are already seeing the impacts of climate change through income losses caused by extreme weather, such as droughts and floods. Despite small-scale farmers, both male and female, making up the majority of global food producers, measures to support farmers to adapt and mitigate to climate change are still falling short. This is likely to result in internal displacement, migration, famine and death. The World Bank estimates that climate change could result in 216 million internal climate migrants across South Asia, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, North Africa, and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.¹⁷⁵ This year, we are already witnessing devastating levels of hunger and famines in the Horn of Africa as a result of drought, Covid-19 and inflationary market pressures accelerated by the Ukraine conflict. It is estimated that one person is dying every 48 seconds due to hunger.¹⁷⁶

The absence of decent quality jobs combined with the Covid-19 pandemic has increased many communities' vulnerability to exploitation and modern slavery, whilst climate change is likely to further heighten trafficking¹⁷⁷, including sex trafficking. Women and children are disproportionately at risk. Migrants seeking unskilled or daily wage work are particularly vulnerable to labour trafficking, including bonded labour. This, in turn, adds stress to already stretched public justice systems mandated to provide protection and services for migrants and accountability for perpetrators. Tackling modern slavery and trafficking requires a full-scale response which has both prevention and response at the heart of it.

Decent work is key to achieving a number of SDGs (e.g. Goals 1, 5, 10 and 13). The ILO's Decent Work Agenda comprises of four equally important, inseparable and interrelated pillars: employment creation and enterprise development; social protection; standards and rights at work; governance and social dialogue, and has gender equality at its heart. The ILO highlights that freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining are particularly important to achieve these four strategic objectives. This means that strong, independent trade unions are key to achieving decent work and sustainable development. However, according to the International Trade Union Confederation's 2021 Global Rights Index, which ranks 149 countries on their degree of respect for workers' rights, 'abuses of the right to strike, the right to establish and join

167. Leonard Cheshire (2020), [Impact of Covid-19 on the lives of people with disabilities](#) [p.3]

168. ILO (2020), [Technology and the future of jobs: Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020](#)

169. Ibid

170. ICNL, ['COVID-19 Civic Freedom Tracker'](#) [online resource, accessed June 2022]

171. People's Vaccine ['5 steps to end vaccine apartheid'](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]

172. ITUC – International Trade Union Confederation (2020), [A global social protection fund is possible](#)

173. De Henau, J. (2022), [Costs and benefits of investing in transformative care policy packages: A macrosimulation study in 82 countries](#). ILO Working Paper 55

174. Gender and Development Network (2022), [Briefing: Centring care in Covid-19 economic recovery: a five-point care package](#)

175. World Bank (2021), [Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration](#)

176. Save the Children and Oxfam (2022) [Dangerous Delay 2: The Cost of Inaction](#)

177. These links have also been highlighted by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, 31 October, 2021), ['COP 26: Climate change and modern slavery'](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]

a trade union, the right to trade union activities and civil liberties and the right to free speech and assembly are at an eight-year high'.¹⁷⁸

The economic case for inclusion

If we are to truly leave no-one behind, then it is imperative that all under-represented groups are able to participate in their communities without discrimination. Addressing the environmental barriers and other forms of discrimination that contribute to unequal outcomes would have clear economic benefits. This includes opening up new inclusive opportunities for communities that have been marginalised to contribute economically as part of the workforce, which in turn provides benefits for everyone.¹⁷⁹ This includes direct economic gains from increased incomes and labour productivity as well as indirect benefits, such as reduced spending on social assistance programmes and increased tax revenues.

Exclusion from work not only has a negative impact on people with disabilities but also on their families, communities and nations as a whole.¹⁸⁰ A study in South Africa, for example, found that, on average, people with severe depression or anxiety lost \$ 4,798 in income per year, about half the average income level. In total, this equates to \$3.6 billion in annual lost income.¹⁸¹

Whilst the FCDO (and previously DfID) have invested in work and employment, what comes next is crucial, given the impacts of Covid-19 on people who have been the most marginalised. For interventions to be equitable greater costs may be incurred to ensure excluded or hard-to-reach communities are included. This means providing targeted support for people with disabilities and their families to assist with their employment and find business opportunities, something that is especially important given that challenges for jobseekers with disabilities were complex even before the economic impact of Covid-19. A good example of how this can be achieved is the UK Aid-funded economic empowerment programme i2i (Innovation to Inclusion¹⁸²), where 250 staff from across Unilever in Bangladesh participated in online training run in partnership with Inclusive Futures formal employment programmes.¹⁸³

It is also essential to recognise contributions made to the economy by those who are often invisible to policymakers, such as older women. Older people, especially older women, are key contributors to the global economy, yet are often a

hidden workforce who are not recognised or recompensed for their work. Women over the age of 60 take care of their grandchildren, grow food for family consumption, carry out

work in community projects and earn money, generally in precarious informal work, to support themselves and their families. However, these contributions to wellbeing and to the economy are often invisible to policymakers. Too often, data on the population of 'working age' uses arbitrary cut-off points, such as 60 or 65, and labour force surveys invariably underestimate informal work. Even data on the care economy often leaves out grandmother-carers and focuses on older women only as people that need care.¹⁸⁴ In making plans to 'build forward better' from the Covid-19 pandemic, we need to ensure that we reflect the diversity of women's experiences in later life, including how they continue to contribute to the wellbeing of others and to the economy through their work, both paid and unpaid.

178. ITUC (30 June, 2021), '[2021 ITUC Global Rights Index: COVID-19 pandemic puts spotlight on workers' rights](#)' [online resource, accessed June 2022]

179. Bond (2016), '[Leaving no one behind: The value for money of disability-inclusive development](#)'

180. CBM (2016), '[Inclusion Counts: The Economic Case for Disability-Inclusive Development](#)'

181. Lund, C. et al. (2013), '[Mental illness and lost income among adult South Africans](#)', *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, Vol 48, 5, p.845–851

182. Innovation to inclusion, '[About i2i](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

183. Inclusive Futures (June 2022), '[Inclusive business recovery post COVID-19](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

184. Age International (2021), '[Older women: The hidden workforce - Access to justice](#)'

To achieve SDG 8, the UK government should:

1. Promote democratisation of the IMF and World Bank and support policy alignment with achieving decent work for all by 2030, protecting human rights, and a just transition to net zero under the Paris Agreement.
2. Invest in holistic Covid-recovery programmes that promote the creation of decent green jobs and skill development, including for informal workers, by implementing ILO Recommendation 204 (*Transition from the informal to the formal economy*).¹⁸⁵
3. Support the introduction of a new Business, Human Rights and Environment Act, as called for by the UK Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights.
4. Support trade unions/elected worker representatives, workers groups and associations so they are in the driving seat to deliver the decent work agenda.
5. Support and fund increases in investment in social infrastructure to provide additional decent work for women and reduce their unpaid care burdens while increasing future government revenues, and support calls for a Global Fund for social protection.
6. Join the growing number of countries supporting the waiver of patents at the WTO to ensure that low- and middle-income countries can produce their own vaccines, and people have equitable access to free vaccines, testing and treatment.
7. Provide debt relief and cancellation as part of the global post-Covid recovery plan, recognising the interdependence of the global economy and people.
8. Ensure the UK's revised modern slavery strategy sets out a clear theory of change for reducing vulnerability to, and the prevalence of, modern slavery, which is founded on access to justice and strengthening the rule of law, and target aid and diplomacy to work bilaterally with countries to ensure local ownership of the response to modern slavery.
9. Work to create the fiscal and policy space for governments to recognise the need for investment in social infrastructure to centre care and wellbeing within the Covid economic recovery. In its new women and girls strategy, the FCDO should recognise the contribution of unpaid care and the need for investment in public care services.
10. Recognise that progress on women's economic justice and rights must be front and centre in post-Covid economic and trade plans. The UK government should ensure that women's economic justice and rights is a key pillar in the new women and girls strategy, with discrete and adequate budgets for programming to support this. The FCDO's work on women's economic justice should be rooted in gender analysis and meaningful consultation with women and girls.

185. ILO, [Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 \(No. 204\)](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]



SDG 9: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:
Engineers Against Poverty



Effective infrastructure is vital to meet the most pressing global challenges of our time, including achieving inclusive economic growth, improving livelihoods and lessening the effects of climate change. The importance of infrastructure is also reflected in many other SDGs, such as SDG 3 (Target 3.6 road safety) and SDG 11 (sustainable cities). However, the Global Infrastructure Hub estimates that there is a \$15 trillion investment gap between what is currently being spent and what is needed.¹⁸⁶

The UK is an enthusiastic supporter of the 'private first' approach to infrastructure investment. At the G7 summit hosted by the UK in 2021, the Build Back Better World (B3W) partnership was launched, which aims to meet the infrastructure needs of low- and middle-income countries.¹⁸⁷ This is widely seen as a response to China's Belt and Road Initiative.¹⁸⁸ There is an increasing risk that geopolitical rivalry will distort investment decisions to the detriment of low-income countries and the achievement of the SDGs. Other groups the UK is a part of, such as the G20, have focused on mobilising private investment to fill the infrastructure investment gap.¹⁸⁹ This approach has been critiqued by civil society.¹⁹⁰ In reality, a very small proportion of investment in infrastructure in low-income countries comes from private finance for a number of reasons, not

least because it is seen as high risk and unable to provide reliable revenue streams. The majority of infrastructure investment instead comes from the state, and as such it is critical that the UK focus on governance, including strengthening public institutions, tackling corruption and improving transparency.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are promoted as the solution to the shortfall in financing needed to achieve the SDGs. However, there are many examples of failed PPPs due to their high costs, lack of transparency and the risks they pose to the public purse.¹⁹¹ The UK should avoid promotion and incentivising of PPPs for social and economic infrastructure financing and instead promote high quality, publicly funded, democratically controlled and accountable public services and investment in public infrastructure.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown the risks of corruption and mismanagement in public expenditure.¹⁹² Infrastructure is already amongst the most corrupt sectors. On average, one third of investment is lost to corruption, mismanagement and inefficiency¹⁹³, rising to more than 50% in low-income countries¹⁹⁴. When a pandemic, or another complex emergency, requires rapid deployment of public investment, the risks increase even further. Investing in governance (including transparency and anti-corruption) to reduce these losses could result in up to one third more in productive investment without having to mobilise additional finance.

The UK must ensure all infrastructure investment decisions are aligned with meeting the SDGs and delivering the goals of the Paris Agreement, including keeping to a 1.5° warming scenario and achieving global net zero emissions

186. Infrastructure Outlook '[Forecasting infrastructure investment needs and gaps](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

187. UK Government, '[G7 leaders commit to protect planet and turbocharge global green growth](#)' [online media release, accessed June 2022]

188. The Diplomat (22 June, 2021) '[B3W: Building an Alternative to the BRI or Falling Into the Same Trap?](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

189. OECD, '[Roadmap to infrastructure as an asset class](#)'

190. Eurodad (2018), '[Three compelling reasons why the G20's plan for an infrastructure asset class is fundamentally flawed](#)'

191. Eurodad (2018), '[History RePPPeated: How Public Private Partnerships Are Failing](#)'

192. Accountability Lab (16 July, 2020), '[Corruption is rife in the COVID-19 era. Here's how to fight back](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

193. World Economic Forum (4 February, 2016), '[This is why construction is so corrupt](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

194. IMF (3 September, 2020), '[How Strong Infrastructure Governance Can End Waste in Public Investment](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

by 2050. The latest IPCC report on climate change shows how lower-income countries have contributed the least to unprecedented and irreversible climate changes while experiencing the worst impacts.¹⁹⁵ It is clear that we must go further and faster to adapt to the effects of climate change and address the loss and damage it is causing. Targets 9.1 and 9.a should only be achieved through the development of infrastructure that is designed to be resilient to climate change and natural hazards.

Digital technologies, collectively referred to as Infratech¹⁹⁶, are transforming the way infrastructure and services are being delivered. However, there is scant evidence that Infratech is being mobilised to meet the SDGs. The UK should ensure that Infratech is mobilised to meet the SDGs by, for example, using e-commerce to connect rural producers with markets, ensuring spending on road maintenance is consistent with national development goals, reducing traffic congestion in cities and improving air quality.

The FCDO does not currently have an overarching infrastructure policy. DFID produced a Policy Framework in 2015¹⁹⁷ but it is now very outdated, especially since the merger. The lack of an overarching strategy on infrastructure undermines policy coherence and makes it difficult for external stakeholders to measure progress and exercise accountability.

The UK launched the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST) as a pilot project in 2008. It became an independent charity in 2012 and has an impressive track. The FCDO was due to renew its commitment to CoST in 2021, but cutbacks in official development assistance (ODA) prevented it. More recently the FCDO agreed to provide £1 million to CoST in financial year 2022/23, but this falls short of what is required.

Construction is a major employer in many low-income countries, but the jobs created are often informal and poorly paid, and workers are exposed to high risks of injury and poor health. Construction workers have a right to decent pay and conditions, safe working environments, to join trade unions and to be paid on time and in full. Migrant workers are often particularly vulnerable to rights violations, and they should not be subject to the constraints and indignities of the kafala system, used in the Middle East to monitor migrant workers, or similar employment frameworks.¹⁹⁸

In 2019 DFID established the International Development Infrastructure Commission¹⁹⁹ to boost private capital investment into sustainable infrastructure. The pandemic and cuts to official development assistance (ODA) have

195. IPCC (2022), [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability: Working Group II contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#)

196. G20 Infrastructure Working Group (2021), [G20 Riyadh InfraTech Agenda](#)

197. DFID (2015), [Sustainable Infrastructure for shared prosperity and poverty reduction: A policy framework summary](#)

198. Amnesty International (2020), [‘Reality Check: Migrant Workers Rights with Two Years to Qatar 2022 World Cup - Amnesty International’](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]

199. DFID (2020), [International Development Infrastructure Commission: Report](#)

delayed the implementation of its recommendations²⁰⁰. In November 2021 the FCDO announced that CDC was being rebranded as British International Investment²⁰¹ to help mobilise up to £8bn a year of public and private sector investment in international projects by 2025 (see more in SDG 17). The FCDO is about to launch the British Support for Infrastructure Projects (BSIP) initiative and UK Expertise for Green Cities and Infrastructure. These initiatives must focus on achieving the most pressing global challenges, including tackling the climate emergency and meeting the SDGs.

To achieve SDG 9, the UK government should:

1. Use its influence in the G7, G20 and B3W to avoid overemphasis on mobilising private investment to meet the infrastructure investment gap and the SDGs. This will require a renewed focus on governance, including strengthening public institutions, tackling corruption and improving transparency.
2. Ensure investment decisions are aligned with meeting the SDGs and delivering the goals of the Paris Agreement. UK investment should not be used to compete with China or any other country for geopolitical influence. Instead, the UK should promote multilateral cooperation to meet the infrastructure investment backlog and tackle global challenges.
3. Promote international standards of transparency and accountability in infrastructure investment, including the Open Contracting for Infrastructure Data Standard, and adopt them domestically.
4. Ensure that Infratech is mobilised to meet the SDGs through, for example, using e-commerce to connect rural producers with markets, ensuring spending on road maintenance is consistent with national development goals, reducing traffic congestion in cities and improving air quality.
5. Promote construction workers’ rights through its bilateral and multilateral partnerships. It should also encourage the ratification and implementation of all international labour standards relevant to construction.
6. Consult with civil society and other stakeholders and develop a comprehensive strategy for the FCDO’s infrastructure investments. It should describe how its support for infrastructure will contribute to meeting climate targets and achieving the SDGs.

200. DFID (2020), [International Development Infrastructure Commission: Report](#)

201. FCDO UK Government (24 November, 2021), [‘Truss revamps British development finance institution to deliver jobs and clean growth’](#) [online media release, accessed June 2022]



SDG 10: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:

Save the Children UK. Section contributions from Sightsavers, Development Initiatives, Christian Aid and Leonard Cheshire.



Inequality is an obstacle to eradicating extreme poverty and achieving sustainable development and peace. It harms economic growth, undermines a country's social contract, fosters instability and violence, and hampers progress in a number of other areas, especially health. According to the inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (HDI)²⁰², sub-Saharan Africa loses 33% of its HDI to inequality and South Asia by 25%. Inequality also means the people who are the most marginalised and deprived often feel the impacts of climate change the worst.

The importance in tackling growing inequality is explicit in SDG 10, which seeks to reduce inequality within and among countries. However, it is also implicit across the other SDGs, which seek to reduce the gaps in outcomes between different groups in society. Moreover, the transformative principle of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind commits governments to address discrimination and marginalisation and to track and reach the furthest behind first²⁰³.

Before Covid-19 progress on ending chronic poverty was already slowing, with huge disparities between various socioeconomic groups in society. For example, mortality rates for children in the world's poorest 20% of households was typically two to three times the level for the wealthiest 20%, and 40% above the global average.²⁰⁴ According to

the United Nations Committee for Trade and Development, since the 1980s the share of national income going to labour has decreased in all regions and in almost every country, while the profit share has correspondingly increased. This redistribution of income seen in developed and developing countries highlights a race to the bottom in labour costs. The causes include wage suppression, the erosion of social security, growing market concentration and decreasing unionisation rates.²⁰⁵

SDG 10, with its recognition of the importance of reducing inequality both between and within countries, has enshrined within it the principle that each country carries responsibility for tackling economic inequality at home as well as globally. The UK government's foreign policy in all of its forms, including official development assistance (ODA) as well as its international trade, financing and migration policies, should be aligned with this principle. To support progress towards economic equality, the UK government should use its influence to promote fairness in global economic governance, including in relation to taxation and debt, and to support fiscal and policy space for governments of lower-income countries to implement fiscal, wage and social protection policies that are effective in reducing inequality.

The 2019 SDG Bond report highlighted that the UK had not shown a clear commitment to achieving all aspects of SDG 10.²⁰⁶ It noted that the UK had taken action on some relevant policy areas, in particular in its approach to include various under-represented groups in its programmes and leading the international agenda with the Disability Summit and the Addis Tax Initiative.²⁰⁷ The report also assessed the

202. UNDP, 'Human Development Index (HDI)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

203. Development Initiatives (2022), [Inequality, measuring it and why it matters for poverty reduction: briefing](#)

204. Save the Children (2018), [Still Left Behind](#)

205. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2019), [Trade and Development Report 2019](#)

206. Bond (2019), [The UK's global contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

207. Bond (2019), [The UK's global contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 10: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK](#)



UK's ODA contribution towards SDG 10 by looking at the proportion of ODA that reached the people in the poorest 20% of global income distribution. It found ODA decreased to countries with the largest share of these populations between 2006 and 2017.

Since 2019, there has been little progress in terms of policy and programmes designed to explicitly tackle inequality. While Covid-19 has exacerbated inequality across the world, there has been little indication that equity has been a primary criteria in deciding ODA spending and budgeting, or that an equity lens has been mainstreamed across the portfolio.

Covid-19 and inequality

The COVID-19 pandemic did not only lead to unprecedented decreases in aggregate income, it is also very likely that it significantly increased economic inequality. Changes in the global income distribution are driven by changes in inequality, both between and within countries. However, limited data on changes in income inequality (as well as the fact that the pandemic is still ongoing) significantly restricts our ability to draw final conclusions.

Initial data suggests that in between-country inequality rose between 2019 and 2021. A recent analysis of GDP growth incidence on the global income distribution showed that this is less due to the initial drop in incomes in 2020, but rather to the lack of recovery in 2021 in incomes of people within the poorest 40% of global income distribution.²⁰⁸ These findings are supported by an analysis of household-level impacts (mostly through phone surveys), which point to greater economic damage in low-income countries.

This suggests Covid-10 as increased global inequality, but we don't have the full picture yet as it is unclear how the pandemic affects inequality within countries. From the pandemic's beginning, it was expected that socio-economic factors (e.g. income, education, occupation) and individual attributes (e.g. age, gender, race) would often determine people's capacity to work remotely, access public services and safety nets, and their risk of job loss.²⁰⁹

How those pre-existing inequalities translate into changes in income distribution in the pandemic's aftermath depends on a wide range of factors and policies, and will vary over time. In low-income countries, in some cases income inequality may have actually been dampened by the fact that the pandemic's initial impact was lower for poorer (often rural) communities, as lockdowns and economic restrictions affected better off (often urban) households.²¹⁰

In other cases, extremely poorly paid workers in informal sectors with no security may have been hit hardest, which will have exacerbated inequality. Some evidence exists in high-income countries that income inequality has even decreased due to generous social protection measures.²¹¹ However, insights from surveys, administrative data and evidence from previous pandemics²¹² suggest that, despite some exceptions, income inequality will increase within most countries in the aftermath of Covid-19.

New analysis by the World Bank²¹³ of 34 low- and middle-income countries further supports the hypothesis that Covid-19 has increased within-country inequalities in the short term. This analysis found that income losses in 2020 were likely regressive in most countries, with the bottom 40% of the population experiencing larger income losses than the top 60% (this gap was larger in urban areas than rural ones). This is also reflected in simulations of the Gini index, which was higher in 2020 because of Covid-19, than it would have been without Covid in 29 out of 34 countries. While the effect size was relatively small, with an average expected Gini index rise of 1%, the combination of increased inequality and negative growth rates resulted in higher extreme poverty for all countries in the sample.

Significant additional risks, differences in the ability to continue learning, disparities in Covid-19 vaccination rates and unequal economic recoveries could also result in long-term increases in inequality both within, as well as between, countries.

Even before Covid-19, economic policies were failing to adequately address inequality. At least 10% of the world's population (734 million people) were already extremely poor – surviving on less than \$1.90 a day – and almost half of humanity were living on less than \$5.50 a day²¹⁴, most of whom were in precarious employment. People's exposure to health and income shocks during the pandemic was therefore very unequal.²¹⁵ Covid-19 both amplified pre-existing inequalities and exposed how inequality increases the fragility of progress towards poverty reduction; something that is also threatened by other shocks and stresses, including those related to climate change. Trends that have reduced investment in public services and social protection, such as austerity measures, have increased people's vulnerability to these shocks and need to be reversed.²¹⁶

208. See [Narayan et al. \(2022\)](#). Analysis based on impact of GDP growth rates for each centile of global income distribution, under the assumption of no change in income distribution within countries.

209. This is supported, for instance, by evidence from high-income countries, which shows that the ability to work remotely increases as individuals move up the wage distribution, see [Narayan et al. \(2022\)](#).

210. [Narayan et al. \(2022\)](#)

211. For example, this is the case in the US or in Brazil ([Neidhöfer, Lustig, Tommasi 2021](#)).

212. [Furceri et al. \(2020\)](#)

213. [Narayan et al. \(2022\)](#)

214. World Bank, '[Poverty Overview](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

215. [Vargas Hill, R. and Narayan, A. \(2020\), Covid-19 and inequality: a review of the evidence on likely impact and policy options](#)

216. UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights (11 September 2020), Looking back to look ahead: A rights-based approach to social protection in the post-COVID-19 economic recovery.



How is the UK doing?

The UK has still not shown a firm commitment to SDG 10 in its ODA spending and programming. While it has published a number of inclusion strategies, such as the FCDO's the Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy and its vision for gender equality, there has been little indication that achieving SDG 10 is a priority for the UK. The Cabinet Office's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, published in July 2021, does not indicate that tackling inequality either within or between countries is a priority. Likewise, the new international development strategy makes no commitment at all to tackling inequality.

Numerous analyses have shown that the UK's ODA cuts have had a negative impact on poverty reduction and, by extension, tackling inequality. Whereas the percentage of people living in extreme poverty is anticipated to become increasingly concentrated in Africa, the FCDO's budget for the continent is declining, both in absolute terms and relative to other regions. The FCDO has directly allocated £896 million to Africa in 2021/22. While some additional support will come from thematic categories, this is likely to represent a reduction of over 50%.²¹⁷ In real terms, this will be the lowest spend by the department (and its predecessors) in over 15 years.²¹⁸ In addition, despite the UK's ambition to promote gender equality, especially in relation to girls' education, ODA cuts to education programmes have been worse for those that include a focus on gender equality than those that do not.²¹⁹

We are concerned that the importance of equity and reaching people who have been the most marginalised does not come through strongly in the UK government's current priorities. Governments, including the UK, made a commitment to development that leaves no one behind with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Six years on from agreeing the SDGs, there are critical gaps in the UK's own policy, programming and political commitment to implementing them.

Target 10.1:

By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average.

To achieve Target 10.1, governments need to address the intersecting inequalities that are inextricably linked to economic inequality, including gender, ethnicity, age and disability. Globally, people with disabilities represent over \$1.2 trillion in annual disposable income and with equal opportunity can contribute between 3-7% of GDP. However, the rationale for disability-inclusive development goes beyond this, as development that includes people with disabilities is likely to be more effective development for all people.²²⁰ For example, adopting inclusive teaching methodologies are more likely to meet the varied needs of all children, and infrastructure built using universal design principles will be more inclusive and accessible to everyone, not just people with disabilities.

Increasing the incomes of the bottom 40% income earners at a rate higher than the national average also depends on redistributive national fiscal policies. These policies include as progressive taxation and transparent and gender-responsive public spending to support rights, such as to health and education. It also requires progress to be made on other development goals in ways that prioritise the needs of people who are the most marginalised.

Target 10.2:

By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other status.

Since 2019, the UK has made some progress in advancing this target through specific inclusion strategies, noticeably on people with disabilities and women and girls, although data on the impact of these strategies has been limited.

People with disabilities make up 15% of the world's population²²¹, and 80% of disabled people live in developing countries. There are 240 million children with disabilities in the world.²²² In low and middle-income countries, more

217. Center for Global Development (2021), [Assessing the UK's ODA Focus on Poverty and Africa](#)

218. Ibid

219. CARE International UK 'UK Government decisions to cut UK Aid are disproportionately falling on women and girls'

220. Bond (2016), [Leaving no one behind: The value for money of disability-inclusive development](#)

221. World Health Organisation and the World Bank (2011), [World Report on Disability](#)

222. UNICEF (2022), [Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities](#)



than half of the 65 million children with disabilities are not in school²²³, with girls disproportionately affected²²⁴.

Before the pandemic, people with disabilities and their families were poorer across all socio-economic indicators than their peers without disabilities²²⁵, and this gap is increasing²²⁶. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated and exposed the pre-existing inequalities²²⁷, exclusion, stigma²²⁸, discrimination, marginalisation and violence people with disabilities experience²²⁹. Alongside direct physical and mental health impacts, we have seen harmful consequences for people with disabilities arising from overwhelmed health, education and social systems worldwide. Women and girls with disabilities, older people with disabilities and under-represented groups²³⁰, including people with intellectual disabilities²³¹ ²³², have been among the worst affected²³³.

While the Global Disability Summit hosted by the UK government in 2018 was a step-forward, progress since then has been slow, and the Covid-19 pandemic has increased inequalities around the world which has further eroded gains. It is imperative that the UK government supports efforts to build back from the pandemic in an inclusive way and delivers on its commitment to leave no one behind. For the UK government to continue its legacy as a leader on disability inclusion, the commitments made at the 2022 Global Disability Summit should be strengthened and a comprehensive delivery plan to implement the FCDO's Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy needs to be published. In addition, the recently published equalities assessment on ODA cuts has shown the negative impacts the cuts have had on achieving gender equality and inclusive development, alongside a disregard for transparency and openness. The FCDO should ensure that the increased women and girls' budget pledged by the Foreign Minister is equitably allocated and supports women and girls who are the most marginalised. If this is not achieved, there is a severe risk that women and girls with disabilities will not benefit from development interventions.

While disability has been a core priority for the UK government, other protected characteristics have fared even less well. For example, the FCDO has not prioritised work with racialised minorities (in spite of global attention in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd), nor indigenous people. The lack of progress on the collection of data disaggregated by ethnicity – despite being a pledge stated in the Inclusive Data Charter – makes efforts to monitor this difficult. The FCDO has made some progress on the links between religion and poverty, with the partial implementation of the Bishop of Truro's report, a major inter-ministerial summit planned for July 2022 in London, and the work of successive special envoys on the topic. However, again there is no disaggregated data, and the inclusion of religion in both humanitarian and development interventions remains piecemeal and unsystematic (to our knowledge). Making links between the exclusion of racialised, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups and conflict prevention is a missed opportunity, and the rumoured downgrading of work on conflict prevention and work in conflict-affected and fragile states remains a major cause for concern.

223. Ibid

224. UNICEF (2013), [The State of the World's Children: Children with Disabilities](#)

225. Banks L., Kuper H., Polack S. (2017), 'Poverty and disability in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review'. PLOS ONE, Vol. 12

226. World Bank (2017), [Disability Gaps in educational attainment and literacy](#); Groce and Kett (2013), [The Disability and Development Gap](#)

227. UN (2020), Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19

228. Meaney-Davis, J., Lee, H. and Corby, N. (2020), [The impacts of COVID-19 on people with disabilities: a rapid review](#), Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Query No: 35

229. For evidence about the increased risk of violence against women during COVID-19 see UN Women (2020), [The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19](#)

230. Inclusive Futures (2021), [Consequences of exclusion: a situation report on organisations of people with disabilities and COVID-19 in Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe](#)

231. Bosworth, M., et al. (2021), 'Deaths involving COVID-19 by self-reported disability status during the first two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic in England: a retrospective, population-based cohort study', *Lancet Public Health*, Vol. 6

232. In the UK, people with intellectual disabilities were 6.3 times more likely to die and [Inclusion International](#) found over 90% of respondents reported reduced access to health/support services.

233. Inclusive Futures (2021), [Consequences of exclusion: a situation report on organisations of people with disabilities and COVID-19 in Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe](#)



To achieve SDG 8, the UK government should:

1. Have an explicit commitment on reducing inequality and focus on this across its ODA portfolio. Spending should aim to narrow disparities based on wealth, gender, ethnicity and other markers for disadvantage.
2. Support more national action to redistribute wealth and tackle inequality, including through international cooperation such as through the Addis Tax Initiative, to enhance capacities for domestic resource mobilisation. It should use its influence within international financial governance to challenge policy agendas that seek to reduce the tax burden on companies and cut public spending, such as those promoted by international financial institutions, and support enhanced representation of low- and middle-income countries in economic and financial institutions.
3. Support action to address structural inequalities, discrimination and social exclusion which are huge barriers to the achievement of economic rights and inclusion. Links should be made between this work and conflict prevention and social cohesion goals.
4. Support training and education for workers about their rights and how to claim them, and help build the capacity of trade unions to bargain collectively for living wages and decent working conditions.
5. Promote a worker-centred approach to trade, in line with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which exempts vital public services from the scope of free trade agreements and includes effective mechanisms for the enforcement of labour standards.
6. Support governments to implement progress monitoring towards indicators 10.4 and 10.4.2²³⁴. The redistributive impact of fiscal policy now provides an important tool for assessing the effectiveness of fiscal policy in addressing income inequality.
7. Ensure that it hosts at least the UK's fair share of refugees. Ensure that refugees and internally-displaced people get the help they need to address the wide-ranging consequences of their displacement, including through humanitarian and long-term development efforts.
8. Recognise and champion the crucial role that gender-responsive and universal health, education and social protection play in reducing inequality, particularly when they are publicly financed, carefully designed to overcome inclusion barriers, and delivered for free. Support countries to remove user fees and build social protection floors. Support the strengthening and expanding of public services through long-term, predictable, coordinated and, where possible, on budget ODA. Put in place further measures to ensure the work of the FCDO and British International Investment does not increase inequality through profit-making interventions in public services in other countries.
9. Do more to support data disaggregation efforts and to track, not only national and global average progress, but also the pace at which disparities between socioeconomic and other significant groups within countries are narrowing (or indeed widening). Survey and other data should be used to regularly and transparently report on inequality and convergence trends. Reporting on convergence should be an important part of the next Voluntary National Review when considering the progress made towards the leave no one behind pledge and SDG 10.

234. The indicator measures the difference between the pre- and post-fiscal income inequality measured by the Gini coefficient, taking into account direct and indirect taxes, social insurance and old-age pension contributions, direct cash or near-cash transfers, and subsidies. See UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, '[SDG Indicators. Metadata repository](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]



SDG 11: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:

Sightsavers, FIA Foundation and Reall, with the British Council



By 2030, 60% of the world's population will live in cities. The current model of urban growth is environmentally, socially and economically unsustainable.²³⁵ It is estimated that 90% of future urban growth will occur in less developed regions, with three countries – India, China and Nigeria – accounting for over a third of the increase. The fastest growing cities are those with less than 1 million inhabitants, which account for 59% of the world's urban population. At least 1.6 billion people worldwide currently live in sub-standard housing. This lack of affordable, safe and accessible housing is a global crisis, and it's increasing.²³⁶

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has hit cities particularly hard, with greater population densities making social distancing more difficult, increasing the risks of transmission. Slum housing, which has inadequate water access, poor sanitation, overcrowding and hazardous conditions, made self-isolation, handwashing and basic hygiene difficult. The escalating housing deficits across both Africa and Asia underscore how affordable housing is a key opportunity for post-Covid economic growth strategies. Yet only 15% of countries have housing initiatives in their Covid economic recovery plans.²³⁷

The climate crisis poses a significant challenge for urban environments. How future cities are built, the materials used,

and the source and efficiency of energy use is critical. People living in urban environments in low- and middle-income countries are being increasingly affected by the impact of the climate crisis, rising sea levels, increased pollution and climate-vulnerable infrastructure.²³⁸ Investing in and constructing climate-smart, affordable urban infrastructure and housing in Africa and Asia can address a range of climate-related mitigation and resilience challenges at scale.

SDG 11 provides a framework for addressing many of the challenges faced by an urbanising world and links with many other goals. The aims of SDG 11 are complemented by the New Urban Agenda²³⁹, and supported by biannual World Urban Forums²⁴⁰. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and relevant disaster risk reduction (DRR) forums also link with Target 11.5. But progress was off-track even before the Covid-19 pandemic, which the latest UN Secretary-General's report on SDG progress concludes makes it 'even more unlikely that this Goal will be achieved, with more people forced to live in slums, where quality of life is deteriorating and vulnerability increasing.'²⁴¹

The UK has several projects looking at cities in developing countries and emerging economies. Yet, two years since the FCDO was formed, there is still insufficient clarity over responsibility for implementing SDG 11. Its now-closed Cities and Infrastructure for Growth (CIG) project developed a series of resources for informing urban programmes, including an urban handbook.²⁴² Current UK projects include national urban poverty reduction programmes in Myanmar and Bangladesh, and a sustainable urban economic development programme in Kenya.²⁴³ Investment into cities

235. UN Habitat (2020), [World Cities Report 2020](#) [p.7]

236. UN Habitat (2016), [World Cities Report 2016](#)

237. World Economic Forum (20 January, 2022), ['3 ways to reinvent affordable housing in a post-pandemic world'](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]

238. UN Habitat (2020), ['Climate change'](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]

239. UN Habitat (2017), [New Urban Agenda](#)

240. UN Habitat, ['World Urban Forum'](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]

241. UNDOC (2021) [Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General](#)

242. ICED (2019), [The Urban Handbook for Sub-Saharan Africa](#)

243. Development Tracker, ['Cities and Infrastructure for Growth \(CIG\) - Myanmar Country Programme'](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]



and sustainable urbanisation has continued through British International Investment (formally the CDC Group) and the Private Infrastructure Development Group.

The UK has previously funded research supporting national governments and city leaders to unlock the potential of cities while reducing climate risks.²⁴⁴ Global Future Cities, a recently closed £20m programme, has developed an approach to assessing the potential of urban development projects to contribute towards the implementation of the SDGs.²⁴⁵ It is unclear how these lessons will be shared, particularly in the new £500 million British Support for Infrastructure Projects programme, and there is currently a lack of transparency about how the initiative will promote SDG implementation and focus on poverty alleviation.²⁴⁶

including climate finance – particularly for people in the bottom 40% of global income distribution.

An estimated 300 million homes are required by 2030. This provides the UK government with an opportunity to build on its experience to catalyse this market through strategic investment and interventions and to harness expertise from across the UK’s built environment sector, such as its world-leading green innovations and finance sector. Yet, since the merger to create the FCDO, there has been uncertainty and a lack of clarity on future direction and funding. But there are opportunities for the UK to continue to take this work forward across different government departments and country offices, and for the UK to build on the momentum in scaling up its investment and impact.



Target 11.1:

By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

Quality affordable housing with secure tenure, clean water and sanitation is a catalyst for meeting the health and wellbeing needs of people living on low incomes. Building in ways that are climate-smart ensures that the construction of much needed affordable homes will not result in negative future climate impacts and will instead boost climate resilience and foster social cohesion. Delivering housing at scale will catalyse macroeconomic growth and job creation and support financial inclusion when ‘building back better’.

The UK government has played a strong role in pioneering urban affordable housing solutions in Africa and Asia, notably through its long-term support of Reall’s 2002-2021 Community-Led Infrastructure Finance Facility (CLIFF) programme.²⁴⁷ The CLIFF programme enhanced access to affordable housing for people in the lowest income groups by developing market-oriented solutions to demonstrate the long-term commercial viability of affordable housing to commercial property developers and housing finance providers who, in turn, have offered products to low-income customers. While the FCDO funding has ended, this work has continued, and it now includes green solutions that are ready for scaling up. Better data is critical to bridging housing market data, unlocking cities as engines of growth, and demonstrating the impact of affordable housing, in order to resolve information asymmetries and increase investment,



Target 11.2 and 11.6:

Target 11.2: by 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons and Target 11.6: By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

Of the 1.35 million road traffic deaths that occur each year (relevant to Targets 11.2 and 3.6), 93% occur in low- and middle-income countries.²⁴⁸ For over a decade, the UK has supported the World Bank’s Global Road Safety Facility (GRSF) with funding from both the FCDO and the National Institute for Health Research.²⁴⁹ This has funded practical resources to make roads safer, such as high quality reports, a ‘speed management hub’, and a series of tools including the new Road Safety Screening and Appraisal Tool, which informs all World Bank spending on road projects.²⁵⁰ There are promising signs that the World Bank’s new Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), which requires that all projects avoid or minimise road safety risks and impacts, is leading to a significant improvement in the safety of road projects. Joint funding from the GRSF and the new UN Road Safety Fund is enabling additional support to countries, such as Tanzania.²⁵¹ Support for global road safety is a UK success story, contributing to over 320,000 lives saved and leveraging \$43 in road safety commitments for

244. FCDO Development Tracker, ‘[New Climate Economy Coalition for Urban Transitions](#)’ [web page, accessed June 2022]

245. Global Future Cities Programme, ‘[How is the Global Future Cities Programme addressing the SDGs?](#)’ [web page, accessed June 2022]

246. UK Government, DIT (2021), ‘[Policy paper: Made in the UK, Sold to the World \(web version\)](#)’ [online, accessed June 2022]

247. Reall (2021), [Affordable Homes Movement in Africa and Asia 2014-2020: summary report of Phase 2B of the Cliff Programme](#)

248. WHO (2018), [Global status report on road safety 2018](#)

249. Global Road Safety Facility – World Bank (2021) [Annual Report 2021](#)

250. Global Road Safety Facility – World Bank, ‘[Speed Management Hub](#)’ [web page, accessed June 2022]

251. World Bank (11 August, 2020), ‘[The UNRSF and GRSF Announce Partnership to Improve Road Safety Delivery in World Bank Funded Projects in Tanzania](#)’ [online media release, accessed June 2022]



every \$1 invested.²⁵² It is vital the UK maintains its positive role in this area.

Air pollution (Target 11.6) from vehicles is also a major issue in cities. Poor air pollution contributes to 11.65% of deaths globally, with highest levels in low- and middle-income countries.²⁵³ The UK government, as host of COP26, prioritised electric vehicles and has helped establish the Zero Emission Vehicle Transition Council to accelerate the shift to electric vehicles globally.²⁵⁴ Within the UK, London has made bold moves in expanding its Ultra Low Emission Zone, and its Mayor, Sadiq Khan, is currently Chair of the C40 Cities, a global network of 97 cities that is aiming to tackle air pollution worldwide and support emissions reduction strategies, particularly in cities on the frontline of the climate crisis.²⁵⁵

The New Urban Agenda calls for governments to “promote the safe and healthy journey to school for every child as a priority”. Investing in safe roads, and quality infrastructure for walking and cycling, has multiple benefits and supports the achievement of many other SDGs. To support social distancing on transport in response to Covid-19 and replace reduced capacity on public transport, many cities around the world have introduced ‘pop up’ measures to promote space for safe walking and cycling.

infrastructure to better deliver connected and more inclusive cities and infrastructure services for all. The strategy also commits to promote the application of universal design concepts. and collaborate with people with disabilities whenever the FCDO engages with governments on their infrastructure strategies and cities plans. At the recent Global Disability Summit, the UK re-committed to expanding disability inclusive actions in the Private Infrastructure Development Group. However, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact has found that commitments to universal design are not always included in terms of reference or carried out in implementation.²⁵⁶ In addition, provisions which support people who have been marginalised are often the first to be cut. It is essential that the FCDO publishes the delivery plan for this strategy with clear indicators, a timeline and allocated funding. This will help ensure these commitments are implemented and monitored so that people with disabilities can access services, jobs and amenities and fully participate in society.

The strategy recognises the increased risk of violence faced by women and girls with disabilities and the need to ensure they can access essential services. For example, evidence has also shown that lack of accessible and affordable transportation options means that, when family planning clinics closed in local communities, women and girls with disabilities faced increased challenges to travel to other communities to receive sexual and reproductive health services and goods.²⁵⁷ It is essential that the UK government recognises intersectionality by mainstreaming age, gender and disability, and using appropriate indicators in infrastructure and urban development to improve the lives of people who have been marginalised.

Target 11.2 and 11.7:

Target 11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons and Target 11.7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

Target 11.4:

Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage

SDG 11 includes two targets that specifically reference people with disabilities (11.2 on accessible transport and 11.7 on green and public spaces) and recognises the need for inclusive human settlements. It is positive to see that the FCDO’s new Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy commits to accessible, disability-inclusive, universally designed

SDG 11.4 calls on stakeholders to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage. The Cultural Protection Fund is a £50 million official development assistance (ODA) fund that supports efforts to protect cultural heritage at risk. The fund aims to help to create sustainable opportunities for economic and social development through sharing knowledge and learning to foster, safeguard and promote cultural heritage. Grants are available to applicants working with local partners in one or more of the fund’s ODA target countries.

Recognising the urgent need to protect cultural heritage from climate change, in 2020 DCMS and the British Council

252. World Bank, ‘[Global Road Safety Facility](#)’ [web page]; World Bank (25 November, 2015), ‘[Road safety is an issue of equity for the poor](#)’ [online article, accessed June 2022]

253. Our World in Data (2017; revised 2021), ‘[Air Pollution](#)’ [web page, accessed June 2022]

254. UK Government, BEIS/DfT (10 November 2021), ‘[Notice: Zero Emission Vehicles Transition Council: 2022 action plan](#)’ [online document, accessed June 2022]

255. Mayor of London (4 March, 2022), ‘[Mayor announces plans to expand Ultra Low Emission Zone London-wide](#)’ [online media release, accessed June 2022]; C40 Cities, ‘[The C40 Chair](#)’ [web page, accessed June 2022]

256. ICAI, ‘[Report: DFID’s transport and urban infrastructure investments. A performance review – 12 Oct 2018](#)’ [web page, accessed 2022]

257. UNFPA and Women Enabled International (2021), ‘[The Impact of COVID-19 on Women and Girls with Disabilities](#)’



launched a new climate programme as part of the Cultural Protection Fund. Funds were awarded to five heritage projects that respond to the risk of climate change to heritage in East Africa. The projects aim to advance regional cultural protection by supporting knowledge exchange between experts and empowering local organisations with the skills to protect their cultural heritage.²⁵⁸

To achieve SDG 11, the UK government should:

1. Clearly articulate its strategy for urban development, and how it will address the challenges and opportunities in low- and middle-income countries.
2. Outline how it will capitalise on its experience to continue leading pioneering, affordable urban housing solutions, working with partners with an increasing green focus.
3. Continue to fund vital road safety research to ensure wider spending on road infrastructure from multilateral banks and national partners is effective.
4. Widen its support for low-carbon mobility in low- and middle-income countries, including walking and cycling infrastructure and zero emission vehicles.
5. Publish delivery plans and accompanying budgets for the commitments made at the Global Disability Summit in the Disability Inclusion Strategy; use appropriate indicators broken down by age, gender and disability, and meaningfully engage groups that have been marginalised.
6. Invest in more programmes that implement accessibility audits and disability-inclusive infrastructure, such as the Disability Inclusive Development programme, to build on progress and continue to foster pooled expertise to realise the promise of inclusive sustainable cities.
7. Continue to ensure support for cultural heritage contributes to the achievement of wider environmental and social goals.

258. For more information, see British Council [‘Evaluating the Impact of the Cultural Protection Fund’](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]



SDG 12: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:

Bond with input from
Good Neighbours UK and CAFOD



As the world's economy and population continue to grow, and with it the subsequent demand for resources, to achieve sustainable development by 2030 requires drastic changes in the way we consume and produce both goods and resources. Decoupling economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation is one of the most critical and complex challenges facing humanity today. It requires political leadership that will effectively transform business practices and individual consumption. The Covid-19 pandemic caused a decline in economic activity, and with it the impact of pollution²⁵⁹, but it also demonstrated the scale of change needed to mitigate the detrimental effects of climate change.

Covid-19 has increased awareness of the need for sustainability – panic buying of fuel and other household essentials has made people more aware of the scarcity of resources and has moved the issue into the public consciousness. Additionally, the conflict in Ukraine has increased public awareness of countries' dependency on the export of natural resources. In the UK, people have become more attentive about what and how they consume.²⁶⁰ The Covid-19 pandemic has also highlighted the interconnectedness of the global production network, reviving discussions about the risks and instabilities associated with the international fragmentation of production.²⁶¹ These disruptions have reinforced calls for greater self-sufficiency and reshoring of production.²⁶² If reshoring takes place, it is critical that it is accompanied by targeted strategies to ensure that effective transformations benefit people with the fewest resources.

But it is not just the pandemic and the Ukraine crisis that will have long-term impacts on supply chains. The demand for minerals could have many adverse effects, including economic crimes, environmental harm and human rights violations. Minerals needed in the UK and elsewhere must be sourced responsibly in a manner that promotes the rule of law, protects human rights, the environment and frontline communities. It is critical that the UK government takes an integrated approach to ensure minerals are sourced responsibly in order to support a just and rapid transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy.

259. Chemical and Engineering News (25 September, 2020), '[COVID-19 lockdowns had strange effects on air pollution across the globe](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

260. Deloitte, '[The Climate Change Pandemic: How COVID-19 could accelerate our engagement with sustainability](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

261. OECD (2021), [Global value chains: Efficiency and risks in the context of COVID-19](#)

262. Brenton, P et al. (2022) [Reshaping Global Value Chains in Light of COVID-19: Implications for Trade and Poverty Reduction in Developing Countries](#), Washington, DC: World Bank

Target 12.6:

Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle; and Target 12.a: Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

People around the world are experiencing human rights abuses, environmental destruction and the impacts of the climate crisis, driven by global demand for crops, minerals and energy. British businesses are linked to these abuses through their supply chains, subsidiaries and investments, yet complex corporate structures allow them to evade accountability. Responsible companies are undercut by firms operating to lower standards, and there is a lack of clarity and certainty on business responsibilities. Voluntary measures taken by business to address their social and environmental impacts have failed to tackle the problem sufficiently, and reporting and transparency measures, while important, are often insufficient on their own to incentivise businesses to act.²⁶³

The UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights stresses that unless business contributions to the SDGs are based on accountability and respect for human rights, 'the private sector risks undermining rather than supporting sustainable development'. National plans to implement the SDGs should align with national action plans to implement the UN's *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights* and the *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*.

To date, the UK government has failed to adopt a comprehensive approach to tackling negative business impacts on human rights, the environment and climate change. A supply chain transparency provision in the Modern Slavery Act 2015 is limited to modern slavery and only requires corporate reporting, rather than action. The deforestation due diligence legislation in the Environment Act 2021 is a step forward as it requires businesses to ensure their supply chains are deforestation-free. However, its commodity-focused, sector specific approach risks being less effective than a more comprehensive and consistent approach contained within a single piece of legislation.

Civil society groups are calling for a Business, Human Rights and the Environment Act to hold companies to account when they fail to prevent human rights abuses and environmental harms.²⁶⁴ The Joint Committee on

263. OHCHR, '[Key recommendations for connecting the business and human rights agenda to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

264. Corporate Justice Commission, '[A "Business, Human Rights and Environment Act" – Principal Elements](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

Human Rights recommended²⁶⁵ that such legislation be brought forward to impose a duty on all companies to prevent human rights abuses along the lines of the relevant provisions of the Bribery Act 2010, and the British Institute of International and Comparative Law found the model to be legally feasible.²⁶⁶ Public opinion also supports new rules to punish companies that do not act responsibly, with research by Onward finding that two-thirds of people across all ages favour 'tackling companies that behave badly' over 'helping companies in the private sector to succeed'²⁶⁷. Businesses have also expressed support for greater regulation to ensure clarity and level the playing field for all companies.

Target 12.7:

Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities.

In May 2022 the UK government brought forward a Procurement Bill. This aims to develop a procurement regime that is simple, flexible and takes greater account of how social value can play a big role in contributing to the government's 'levelling-up' goals.²⁶⁸ Value for money remains the highest priority in procurement, but the Bill will also require buyers to take account of national strategic priorities, such as job creation potential, improving supplier resilience and tackling climate change.²⁶⁹ The government has also published its *Greening Government Commitment 2021 to 2025*²⁷⁰, which sets out the actions UK government departments and their partner organisations will take to reduce their impacts on the environment. The UK government should take further action to ensure both human rights and environmental due diligence are central in public procurement. Some positive steps have been made on tackling modern slavery in government supply chains.²⁷¹ But a more comprehensive strategy is needed, one which goes beyond an issue-by-issue or sector-by-sector approach.

265. House of Lords, House of Commons Joint Committee on [Human Rights \(2017\), Human Rights and Business 2017: Promoting responsibility and ensuring accountability](#)

266. BI ICL (2020), [A UK Failure to Prevent Mechanism for Corporate Human Rights Harms](#)

267. Onward (2019), [Generation Why?](#)

268. Cabinet Office (2021), [Transforming Public Procurement: Government response to consultation](#)

269. UK Government, Cabinet Office (12 May 2022), '[Simpler, more flexible and transparent procurement](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

270. DEFRA (28 October, 2021), '[Policy Paper: Greening Government Commitments 2021 to 2025](#)' [online document, accessed June 2022]

271. UK Government, Cabinet Office (18 September, 2019), '[Procurement Policy Note 05/19: Tackling Modern Slavery in Government Supply Chains](#)' [online document, accessed June 2022]

Target 12.8:

By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

The Environment Act 2021 grants powers relating to product information which will introduce labelling and information schemes so that consumers are more informed in their choices. Although it is important to empower individuals to make more sustainable and ethical consumption choices, it should not be up to consumers alone to make responsible decisions. Rather, the government should take action to guarantee consumers can buy products that are free from abuse. This could include securing a global ban on cosmetics animal testing, promoting sustainable palm oil options in UK supermarkets, providing greater funding to Fairtrade-certified farmers and playing its part within the UN Environment Programme’s 10YFP’s²⁷² sustainable lifestyles and education programme.

To achieve SDG 12, the UK government should:

1. Bring forwards a Business, Human Rights and the Environment Act to hold companies to account when they fail to prevent human rights abuses and environmental harms
2. Take further action to ensure both human rights and environmental due diligence are central in public procurement.
3. Take action to guarantee consumers can buy products that are free from abuse. These could include securing a global ban on cosmetics animal testing, promoting sustainable palm oil options in UK supermarkets and providing greater funding to Fairtrade certified farmers, as well as taking a leading role within the 10YFP’s sustainable lifestyles and education programme.
4. Ensure robust implementation of its new policy on ending overseas support for fossil fuels (see more in Goal 7). There must be no new fossil fuel investments, and all existing fossil fuel-based investments must be reviewed and divested from as soon as possible.
5. Increase engagement with, and build the strength of, the 10YFP as a convening platform for stakeholders to share innovative solutions towards greater sustainable consumption and production.

272. 10YFP stands for the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production



SDG 13: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:
Climate Action Network UK (CAN-UK)



“The cumulative scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health. Any further delay in concerted global action on adaptation and mitigation will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all.”

This powerful and urgent statement was signed off by all governments and published in the IPCC’s sixth assessment report in February 2022.²⁷³

The report – described by UN Secretary General António Guterres as “an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership” – is a stark warning to humankind and a wake-up call to global leaders. It lays bare how human-induced climate change has already pushed our natural and human systems beyond our ability to adapt and led to irreversible impacts for people and planet. These impacts, and the losses and damages they are causing, are happening sooner, faster and are more severe than previously thought, and they are increasing with every fraction of a degree of warming. We are bearing witness to the rapid deterioration of our ecosystems and the sustainability of our planet and way of life.

²⁷³ IPCC (2022), [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#)

The report also provides unequivocal evidence of the injustice of climate change. Inequity and marginalisation linked to gender, ethnicity, disability and low incomes are causing those with the least resources, who have done the least to cause this existential reckoning, to face climate change’s worst impacts. This injustice, and the disparity in the distribution of climate vulnerabilities and impacts, is driven by historical and ongoing patterns of inequity, such as colonialism, unfair governance systems that dominate from the local to the global, and unsustainable development patterns. Nearly 3.6 billion people worldwide are now climate vulnerable.

Bond’s 2019 SDG report

In our 2019 report, we noted that the responsibility for large scale climate mitigation lies with industrialised countries, including the UK, which must rapidly decarbonise their economies. We also stated that the priority focus for low-income countries is to adapt to the changed and changing climate to prevent losses, suffering, and a rolling back of development gains. We noted that climate change is a threat multiplier that exacerbates poverty and inequality, and that development is now harder – and more expensive – to achieve across all sectors due to a changing and more changeable climate.

To that end we called for a considerable step-change in finance for climate action to meet SDG 13 as well as thorough alignment of all official development assistance (ODA) spending, government policies and investments with the Paris Agreement, to ensure that actions to address climate change were not undermined by continued investment in that which is causing harm. Urgent action was also needed to recognise and address loss and damage caused by climate change, and ensure that those suffering the worst consequences of climate change now and in the future, are not left to pay the costs with their lives and livelihoods.



Global trends and progress made

Extreme poverty is rising again after years of decline, driven by the Covid-19 pandemic, conflict and climate change. Catastrophic hunger has been on the rise at unprecedented levels. In early 2021 at least 161 million people faced crisis levels of hunger, a situation that only worsened as the year progressed.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has significantly advanced action on climate change over the last 30 years. However, globally we are not yet on course to collectively meet the Paris Agreement’s goals of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C and providing the finance needed to pursue low-carbon sustainable development, adapt to climate change, and address loss and damage from its impacts.

The UNFCCC’s 26th Conference of Parties (COP26), which took place in Glasgow in November 2021, sought to keep the goal of 1.5°C ‘alive’. In the words of Alok Sharma, UK COP26 President, “We can now say with credibility that we have kept 1.5 degrees alive. But, its pulse is weak and it will only survive if we keep our promises and translate commitments into rapid action.”²⁷⁴ In the negotiated Glasgow Climate Pact all countries agreed to revisit their nationally determined contributions (NDC) in 2022 to close the gap to 1.5°C. With the world already at 1.2°C of heating, it remains to be seen whether all countries will live up to this commitment to revisit their NDC this year, and whether enough action will be taken in time to prevent catastrophic overshooting of the 1.5°C temperature limit.



Target 13.1:

Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

The UK has a good track record on many climate finance issues. The UK Biennial Finance Communication to the UNFCCC, submitted in December 2021²⁷⁵, retained the commitment to 50% UK international climate finance (ICF) for adaptation and committed to provide £11.6 billion between 2021 and 2025. The UK also continues to provide the vast majority of climate finance as grants (89% from 2016 to the end of 2019), and has adopted a new policy to end public fossil fuel investments overseas.

But there are critical areas where the UK has gone backwards since 2019. Of most concern are the recent ODA cuts, which undermine efforts towards the sustainable, just and resilient

future envisaged in the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. In the face of the climate crisis, a global pandemic, loss of nature and growing inequality, insecurity, and poverty, now is not the time for the UK to step back from this vital commitment, particularly given the links between poverty, nature and climate change and the need to ensure that the climate crisis is addressed in a way that leaves no one behind. Reducing ODA – while at the same time drawing on it as the only source of climate finance – will inevitably harm people who have been the most marginalised, pushing huge numbers (back) into poverty.

Faced with a climate emergency not of their making, low-income countries have a reasonable expectation of extra support, and under the UNFCCC countries, including the UK, committed to provide this. Yet cuts to ODA represent a double cut in support to countries that have not received new and additional climate finance, and now will receive both climate finance and other development support from the same, much smaller pot. Climate finance was not meant to come at the cost of other critical ODA areas. But this is now the case as the UK fulfils its climate finance commitments from a budget that it has chosen to significantly cut, and which has also shrunk due to declining GNI.

In the context of rising levels of hunger, escalating loss and damage from climate change impacts, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and cuts to the UK ODA, the need for new and additional sources of climate finance is more pressing than ever.

Annual adaptation investment needs in low- and middle-income countries are currently estimated to be in the region of \$70 billion and are expected to reach \$140–300 billion by 2030 and US\$280–500 billion by 2050. The UK must play its part in identifying new sources of grant-based public climate finance to ensure that climate change support does not come at the expense of vital ODA spending in other areas, and does not increase the debt burden on countries on the frontline of the climate crisis. It is clear that ODA alone will not be sufficient to meet rising climate finance costs alongside other critical development needs.

Despite the five-year ICF spending commitment, adaptation programming was cut when UK ODA was reduced in 2021. This wasted taxpayers money by closing quality programmes mid-way through implementation before outcomes had been reached. Climate action is most effective when frontloaded, given the urgency and scale of the climate crisis, yet this is now the second five-year ICF commitment in which spending has been put off until later in the period. This undermines the urgent need to provide adaptation investment now and makes sustainable and high-quality spending harder to achieve. The UK left itself with a heavy uplift in ICF spending in 2020 to achieve its last five-year commitment, which was then compounded by the challenges of a global pandemic.

Lessons must be learnt to manage spending more evenly year-on-year moving forward. However, given the cuts to adaptation programming in 2021, and the strain on the

274. UNFCCC (2021) [COP26 keeps 1.5c alive and finalises Paris Agreement](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]

275. HM Government (2020) [United Kingdom Biennial Finance Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#)



ODA budget as a result of the war in Ukraine, there is a fear that ICF spending will continue to be 'put off' until the last moment, and risk being missed or of poor quality. The UK's ICF strategy update has also been delayed for many years. It is crucial that an effective, robust, science-based strategy, one that fulfils the International Development Committee's (IDC) 2019 recommendations²⁷⁶, is published and implemented with urgency.

COP26 finally brought global attention to the loss and damage being suffered by least developed countries (LDCs) small island developing states (SIDS) as a result of insufficient climate action. Loss and damage refers to the impacts of climate change on people and nature, where adaptation has not occurred or is not sufficient to withstand the impacts. Loss and damage has been recognised in the UNFCCC negotiations since the early 1990s, and it is enshrined in Article 8 of the Paris Agreement as an area of climate action alongside mitigation and adaptation. Despite the devastating loss and damage being suffered around the world, little progress has been made on this vital area of climate action.

Climate change is costly and deadly. It hits hardest those who are least responsible for causing it, and undermines progress on every other SDG. The Climate Vulnerable Forum estimates that low- and middle-income countries could face financial losses of US\$4 trillion per year by 2030. Low-income countries are exposed to some of the most severe climate impacts. They have the least capacity to adapt, and find it hardest to recover from the loss and damage caused by devastating floods, droughts, heatwaves, cyclones and rising sea levels.

More and more people are facing significant and frequent impacts of climate change, which are reversing development gains. The biggest impacts are being felt by people in low- and middle-income countries who are the most marginalised and economically deprived. There are certain characteristics, such as disability, age and gender, which increase vulnerability to climate change and the cycle of poverty. The human costs of climate change include increased hunger and poverty, reduced access to water, and climate-induced migration and displacement which makes people vulnerable to trafficking and modern slavery. With limited available options, those people and countries least responsible for the climate emergency are forced into even greater indebtedness to address the losses and damage suffered, thus exacerbating the cycle of poverty.

Despite climate-vulnerable countries and civil society elevating this issue to a level never before seen or heard within the debating halls of a COP, under the UK presidency the priorities of high-income nations were allowed to dominate and block a proposal by the majority world for a loss and damage finance facility, leaving millions of impacted people without the justice and support they deserve. It is now in the hands of COP27 in November 2022 to deliver this much needed finance facility.

276. International Development Committee (2019) [UK aid for combating climate change](#)

Target 13.a:

Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the UNFCCC to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100bn annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalise the Green Climate Fund (GCF) through its capitalisation as soon as possible

The global commitment to provide \$100 billion a year by 2020 in climate finance has not been delivered. This was off course before the pandemic and continues to remain unfulfilled. While the actual scale of finance needed by low-income countries for climate action far dwarfs this figure, delivering on this commitment made under the UNFCCC process remains crucial to restoring and building trust with low-income countries and providing some of the finance that is urgently needed.

The UK used its presidency of COP26 to advance progress on climate finance through the development of a \$100 billion delivery plan and by brokering a commitment to double adaptation finance (although this still falls short of the \$50 billion a year expected under the \$100 billion commitment). The UK must use its remaining time as COP President to work with countries to deliver on the commitments to concretely demonstrate increased adaptation finance flows by COP27 and robust implementation plans.

The findings in February 2022 of the IPCC six assessment report on impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability²⁷⁷ are timely and must inform the discussions begun this year on a new, collective, quantifiable climate finance goal to replace the \$100 billion target from 2025 onwards. Those discussions must now be anchored in the realities and urgency laid bare by the IPCC. The UK Presidency should work with parties to reframe climate finance discussions away from top-down, contributor country-led negotiations, to instead be needs-, science- and justice-based and undertaken in recognition of solidarity and historic responsibility. The IPCC report must be formally recognised in the proceedings and serve as a basis for those finance discussions, with specific subgoals for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage to avoid a repeat of the failures of the \$100 billion goal to meet the needs people who are the most climate vulnerable.

The UK has played an active role in developing and strengthening the Global Climate Fund, and has committed to channelling £1.44 billion of UK ICF via the fund over a four-year period from 2019.

277. IPCC (2022) [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#)



To contribute to SDG 13, the UK government should:

1. Revisit and strengthen its NDC in 2022 in line with the Glasgow Climate Pact, which the UK presided over, by increasing the target reduction to at least 75% by 2030. This would recognise the UK's historic responsibility for climate change, as the country that led and financially benefited from the industrial revolution and the continued carbon-based economy.
2. Restore UK ODA to 0.7% GNI and establish additional sources of public finance to fulfil the UK's responsibilities under the UNFCCC to provide new and additional climate finance for climate action overseas.
3. Conclude the UK's COP26 Presidency role by demonstrating concrete progress on implementation of the \$100 billion delivery plan and the COP26 commitment to double adaptation finance, with measurable increases in climate finance flows in 2022.
4. Urgently publish an effective, robust, science-based ICF strategy that fulfils IDC's 2019 recommendations, manages portfolio spending in a consistent and high-quality way over each five-year commitment period, and catalyses transformational climate action in low-income countries.
5. Broker a deal as COP26 President in 2022 to establish and resource a loss and damage finance facility at COP27 in support of the calls of those hardest hit by the climate emergency not of their making, and provide new and additional UK finance specifically for addressing loss and damage.
6. Ensure all UK policies, investments and trade agreements support efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C, are consistent with the Paris Agreement, and enable countries to pursue inclusive, low carbon, climate resilient development.
7. Catalyse a just transition to a future of work that contributes to sustainable development. In doing so, apply an intersectional lens to domestic and international climate action that facilitates the inclusion, through meaningful consultation and engagement, of those who have been the most marginalised.



SDG 14 and 15: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:

Bond with input from UK NGO Forest Coalition

Natural resources and systems are fundamental to human life; they underpin our wellbeing and our economies. But all over the world, nature is in decline. Habitats and species are being lost, land degraded, and the seas overexploited. Extinctions today are happening much faster than nature would predict, and around one-quarter of the world's mammals, 1-in-6 bird species, and 40% of amphibians are at risk.²⁷⁸

Additionally, three-quarters of the land-based environment and about 66% of the marine environment have been significantly altered by human activity. In 2021 alone, 9.3 million acres of primary old-growth forest were lost in tropical regions, resulting in 2.5 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions.²⁷⁹

Covid-19 and its unprecedented effects on human development are a cautionary tale of the type of challenges we are likely to face unless we transform the way we interact with the planet.²⁸⁰ Indeed, tackling deforestation and protecting nature are vitally important to reduce the risk of future pandemics. Land use change is one of the five leading drivers of biodiversity loss, and deforestation and forest degradation account for approximately 15-20% of global emissions. It is now widely understood that we cannot deliver on the SDGs and end poverty, or meet our commitment to 1.5°C, without tackling this. Protecting our remaining primary and intact ecosystems, restoring degraded lands – in particular, forests and wetlands – and

protecting and upholding the rights of indigenous people and customary rights holders, as well as mainstreaming forest governance and sustainable land management practices, are urgent priorities and the basis for the survival of humankind. Multiple studies have shown that indigenous people and other customary rights holders are the best guardians of the forest.²⁸¹

In November 2021, the UK government had huge opportunity as host of the UN Climate Convention in Glasgow (COP26) to drive international political momentum and ambition for nature, and to face the nature and climate crises head on. It has another opportunity to push this agenda forward during the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15), and at the next UN Climate Convention (COP27) later in 2022.

It was welcome that the UK government made protecting and restoring ecosystems a key priority of COP26. Numerous announcements were made, but it is essential to turn these announcements into concrete action. To truly demonstrate ambition and play its part in this regard, the UK needs to lead by example with regards to its efforts to tackle deforestation and land conversion. It must continue to work with signatories to the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, and with financial institutions, businesses and funders, to ensure they deliver on these commitments. CBD COP15 offers a crucial opportunity for nations to come together to agree a global plan this decade to save nature. The UK must build on the momentum created by COP26 and champion the development of a strong global framework, which is underpinned by the resources and accountability mechanisms to drive implementation.

278. Our World in Data, '[Extinctions](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022]

279. Fauna and Flora International, '[Nature News Round-up: Climate extremes already with us](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

280. UNDP (2020), '[Human Development Report 2020](#)'

281. The Guardian (25 March, 2021), '[Indigenous peoples by far the best guardians of forests – UN report](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]



SDG 14: Life below water



Target 14.1:

By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.

The UK remains significantly vocal on efforts to tackle plastic pollution. At the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in March 2022, the government worked with international partners to secure a breakthrough on negotiations to kickstart a new, legally binding treaty on plastic pollution.²⁸² Although the UK seeks to use its domestic experience to be a global voice for change, offsetting the problem of marine pollution remains an issue with a large amount of UK plastic waste still ending up in nations with unsatisfactory records on marine pollution.²⁸³ The UK should ensure it is not just offsetting the problem of marine pollution but tackling it at its source.

Additionally, while action on plastic is important as it accounts for half of all ocean litter, the remaining half consists of other types of pollution that is damaging our marine ecosystem. It was welcome to see the UK be a key proponent of plans for a new science-policy panel that will contribute to policymaking on the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution²⁸⁴.

Goal 15: Life on land



Target 15.2:

Target 15.2: By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.

Significant progress has been made globally towards sustainable forest management, but still forest loss remains high. In 2020, the earth's land surface was covered by 31% percent of forest; 100 million hectares less of forest cover

than 2 decades ago.²⁸⁵ Forests play an important role for livelihoods and the wellbeing of people in rural and urban locations and contribute to regulating water cycle and mitigating climate change. Loss of forests contributes to global warming and has negative effects, in particular, on the livelihoods of people with the least resources²⁸⁶.

The Covid-19 crisis is expected to have negative impacts on forest resources and increase the risk of deforestation and associated biodiversity loss²⁸⁷. The 2022 State of the World's Forests found that trees, forests and sustainable forestry can help the world recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and combat looming environmental crises, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, but this will require societies to better recognise the considerable value of forests and their crucial roles in building inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies²⁸⁸. Tackling deforestation can also help to prevent the emergence of future pandemics by reducing the contact between humans and wild animals.²⁸⁹

Deforestation and biodiversity loss are areas where the UK government has made strong policy and financial commitments to protect endangered species and habitats²⁹⁰. For example, the forest governance, markets and climate programme has helped bring about governance and market reforms that reduce the illegal use of forest resources and benefit people with low incomes who depend on forests for their livelihoods.²⁹¹ It is critical that the UK government continues to support this vital work on forest governance.

It is essential that funding is provided directly to indigenous peoples and local forest communities, who are the best stewards of the forests. It was welcome to see the pledge at COP26 to advance support and funding for these communities²⁹². All funding, and any policy commitments and legislation, needs to respect indigenous peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent for anything affecting their lands. Any new funding and actions to protect forests and biodiversity must not come at the expense of the rights of indigenous people and forest communities.

The independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) found that UK programmes have successfully targeted the most relevant drivers of deforestation and biodiversity loss, and the UK has played a significant role in promoting global cooperation on the drivers of deforestation and biodiversity loss.²⁹³ However, ICAI also concluded that cross-government coordination is not always good, and the UK's efforts to halt deforestation and prevent irreversible biodiversity loss

285. FAO, ['Sustainable Development Goals: Indicator 15.1.1 - Forest area as a percentage of total land area'](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]

286. Ibid

287. Ibid

288. FAO (2022), [In Brief: The State of the World's Forests 2022](#)

289. Science (24 July, 2020), ['Ecology and economics for pandemic prevention'](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]

290. ICAI (2021), [International Climate Finance: UK aid for halting deforestation and preventing irreversible biodiversity loss: A review](#)

291. Ibid

292. UN Climate Change Conference UK 2021, COP26 (4 November, 2021), ['Statement On International Public Support For The Clean Energy Transition'](#) [online, accessed June 2022]

293. ICAI (2021), [International Climate Finance: UK aid for halting deforestation and preventing irreversible biodiversity loss: A review](#)

282. DEFRA, UK Government (2 March, 2022), ['UK backs ambitious global action to tackle plastic pollution'](#) [online media release, accessed June 2022]

283. BBC News (20 January, 2020), ['Malaysia returns 42 containers of 'illegal' plastic waste to UK'](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]

284. DEFRA, UK Government (2 March, 2022), ['UK backs ambitious global action to tackle plastic pollution'](#) [online media release, accessed June 2022]



lack a coherent, overarching strategy.²⁹⁴ While there are strong examples of ‘joined-up’ working across government departments within the portfolio, ICAI also found examples of avoidable duplication and fragmentation, most notably around cross-cutting issues, such as private sector engagement and sustainable financing.²⁹⁵ A more coherent approach is critical to enable greater combined impact.²⁹⁶

ICAI found that there has been mixed progress in influencing private sector regulation and practice. Progress on implementing voluntary commitments has been limited, so the focus has shifted towards regulatory measures, both within the UK and internationally²⁹⁷. It was welcome to see the government commit to introduce an amendment to the Environment Bill to place new responsibilities on larger businesses using forest risk commodities in their supply chains²⁹⁸. The UK government should pursue ambitious legislation for companies and finance – in keeping with the recommendations of the Global Resource Initiative Taskforce²⁹⁹ – and should also introduce an ambitious and legally binding target to end deforestation within UK agriculture and forestry supply chains as soon as practicable, by no later than 2030³⁰⁰.



Target 15.5:

Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.

Our planet’s wildlife populations have fallen by 68% since 1970.³⁰¹ Despite this, the world failed to meet the target to protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species by 2020. None of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets were fully met in 2020, and this in turn threatens the achievement of the SDGs and undermines efforts to address climate change.³⁰² RSPB analysis also found the UK failed to meet almost all the commitments it made for nature in 2010.³⁰³

Recently the UK government has had greater recognition of the importance of biodiversity, as illustrated by the commissioning of the Dasgupta Review on the economics

294. Ibid

295. ICAI (2021), [International Climate Finance: UK aid for halting deforestation and preventing irreversible biodiversity loss: A review](#)

296. Global Resource Initiative (2020), [Final Recommendations Report](#)

297. ICAI (2021), [International Climate Finance: UK aid for halting deforestation and preventing irreversible biodiversity loss: A review](#)

298. DEFRA, UK Government (November 2020), [Consultation on the introduction of due diligence on forest risk commodities, Summary of responses and the Government’s response](#)

299. Global Resource Initiative (2020), [Final Recommendations Report](#)

300. Ibid

301. WWF (2020), [The Living Planet Report 2020](#)

302. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2020), [Global Biodiversity Outlook 5: Summary for policymakers](#)

303. RSPB (2020), [A Lost Decade for Nature](#)

of biodiversity³⁰⁴. Projects like the Darwin Initiative offer small grants for local initiatives working on biodiversity and wildlife protection to support poverty reduction. The UK portfolio also includes a range of support to NGOs to help build their capacity for effective advocacy to hold government and the private sector to account on reducing the drivers of deforestation and biodiversity loss.³⁰⁵ The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which began in 2021, brings opportunities and impetus for healing nature and acknowledges that, without reviving ecosystems, we cannot achieve the SDGs or the Paris Agreement.³⁰⁶

With the global biodiversity financing gap estimated at \$711 billion³⁰⁷, there is a compelling need for the UK government to play its part in catalysing and mobilising complementary private and philanthropic investments, in addition to funding that has already been committed through mechanisms outside of official development assistance (ODA). The global footprint of the UK and its investments are having major impacts on nature, which are especially driven by infrastructure development and increasing land conversion. Given the shift towards prioritising infrastructure investment through mechanisms like British International Investment, it is critical that more is done to address transparency and ensure that development projects do not undermine environmental objectives.

The 2020 Leaders’ Pledge for Nature, and the Leaders’ Declaration on Forests and Land Use signed at COP26 provide clear directions for actions to meet and exceed this SDG target. The UK must build on the momentum created at COP26, and champion the development of a strong global biodiversity framework at COP15, making sure these are underpinned by the resources and accountability mechanisms to drive delivery.



Target 15.7 and 15.c:

Target 15.7: Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products; and Target 15.c: Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities.

The illegal wildlife trade is estimated to be worth up to \$23 billion a year and is a significant driver of many species’ global decline.³⁰⁸ The UK continues to be a strong

304. OGL (2021), [The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review](#)

305. ICAI (2021), [International Climate Finance: UK aid for halting deforestation and preventing irreversible biodiversity loss: A review](#)

306. UN (2021), [Ecosystem Restoration Playbook](#)

307. ICAI (2021), [International Climate Finance: UK aid for halting deforestation and preventing irreversible biodiversity loss: A review](#)

308. ZSL, [‘Illegal wildlife trade crisis’](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]



global advocate for tackling this trade. In October 2021, it announced an additional £7.2 million to tackle the illegal wildlife trade through the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, providing essential support to projects around the world for the benefit of wildlife, nature, local communities and economies – and global security.³⁰⁹ In total, the UK is investing over £46m between 2014 and 2022 to combat the illegal wildlife trade by reducing demand, strengthening enforcement, ensuring effective legal frameworks and developing sustainable livelihoods.³¹⁰

To achieve SDGs 14 and 15, the UK government should:

1. Measure the UK's global footprint, especially for key goods and commodities. Ensure better transparency and accountability mechanisms for the private sector on the sourcing and sustainability of these commodities, including strong and ambitious requirements under, and enforcement of, Schedule 17 of the Environment Act³¹¹, and delivering on the package of recommendations from the Global Resource Initiative taskforce³¹².
2. Collaborate across government and with the private sector to develop programming on the UK's global footprint. Ensure domestic policies are consistent in recognising this problem. Lead global initiatives for other high-consuming countries to do the same.
3. Revisit DFID's economic development strategy to build in a greater focus on environmental sustainability. Ensure financial flows, trade policies and taxation policies are also coherent with the goals of environmental sustainability.
4. Lead on catalysing and mobilising private and philanthropic investments to complement ODA. Ensure funds are available to recover species and properly manage protected areas, marine sanctuaries and the high seas as well as supporting indigenous people and local communities directly.
5. Promote an ambitious post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework under the CBD that drives real action to reverse biodiversity declines. Ensure this is underpinned by the necessary financial resources, and a robust accountability mechanism that recognises the urgency of the climate and biodiversity crisis. Integrate this across all conventions, including the UNFCCC, the UN Convention on Combating Desertification and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).
6. In the remaining months of the UK's COP Presidency, ensure that all parties take urgent action to deliver on their commitments made at COP26, including the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use.

311. Legislation.gov.uk, 'Environment Act 2021' [web page, accessed June 2022]

312. Global Resource Initiative (2020), [Final Recommendations Report](#)

309. DEFRA UK Government (1 October, 2021), '[UK commits additional £7.2 million to tackling illegal wildlife trade](#)' [online media release, accessed June 2022]

310. Ibid



SDG 16: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:

Bond, with contributions from the Bond Conflict Policy Group, World Vision UK, Oxfam GB, Minority Rights Group International and Stonewall

The realisation of SDG 16 can be a positive catalyst for the achievement of the other SDGs. However, the UK's leadership role in the areas of SDG 16 continues to diminish, as warned in Bond's 2019 report. There is a lack of policy coherence across all the SDG 16 areas, a lack of alignment of policy with practice, and a lack of sustained focus over the medium to long term. These three shortcomings could partially be addressed were the UK government to consistently play its part in the implementation of the SDGs and use the SDGs as a reference point in its foreign and development policy.

SDG 16 is of vital importance to LGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming people who often face barriers to accessing justice, with crimes against them underreported in most parts of the world. These communities face high rates of ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and extortion and are often subjected to violence in detention facilities. There is a general pattern of impunity, whereby government and law enforcement officials and public institutions are often unresponsive to their claims of violence and discrimination. There is an urgent need to repeal laws that criminalise same-sex sexual acts, gender identity or expression, and measures are needed to ensure access to justice. A key issue for achieving justice for LGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming people is to be counted in order to build an evidence-base. Civil society has needed to build its own data collection systems, through reporting platforms and mobile phone apps, to document the victims/survivors and perpetrators of rights violations and to use this evidence to tackle barriers to justice and build stronger institutions.



Target 16.1:

Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

The decision to cut official development assistance (ODA) is hampering the FCDO's positive role in promoting peace and preventing conflict, and is undermining UK policy coherence. The cuts, which reduced the total ODA budget by £4.5 billion, resulted in various programme closures in 2021, and included cuts to lifesaving health and humanitarian assistance.³¹³ The FCDO faces a spiral of rapidly diminishing returns if it is drawn or forced into reducing investment in addressing the root causes of violent conflict globally. This reduction is partially the result of directing unprecedented resources towards selected emergencies, such as the Ukraine conflict, in the context of a reduced overall budget.

Evidence shows that promoting good governance and social cohesion, rigorous arms control, and linking conflict-prevention to climate, food and health security all offer good return on investment, in terms of conflict reduction and other outcomes. The UK government has yet to articulate a comprehensive view of conflict, relative to other drivers of marginalisation, which is urgently needed³¹⁴, and successive strategy documents all present different emphases without clear guidance to officials regarding implementation. The forthcoming Strategic Conflict Framework is a chance to rectify this, yet there is uncertainty around the document's status, given the personal pronouncements of the

313. Bond (15 March, 2022), ['The Impact of UK Aid Cuts on NGOs'](#); Devex (17 March, 2022), ['Tracking the UK's Controversial Aid Cuts'](#) [online articles, accessed June 2022]

314. Peace Direct, Alliance for Peacebuilding (2019), [Local Peacebuilding: What works and Why?](#)

Foreign Secretary.³¹⁵ Certain key, evidence-based principles need to be reasserted. Firstly, in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, achieving sustainable and effective results at scale in relation to SDG 16 requires integrated, systematic programming approaches programming across the humanitarian-development-peace ‘triple nexus’. This means linking short-term emergency response programmes to longer-term social change processes in development.

Secondly, conflict sensitivity in programming requires robust contextual analysis and flexibility to allow for real-time adaptation. To be effectively implemented, FCDO-funded programmes and projects in fragile and conflict-affected settings require long-term, strategic planning and a thorough application of context analysis. Humanitarian programmes tend to have shorter timeframes and fewer resources for deep analysis of conflict dynamics, and HM Treasury regulations on underspend are ill-suited to adapting to the surprises and delays that are part and parcel of programming in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Thirdly, while the UK government continues to disburse much of its ODA through large-scale grants and contracts, and increasingly to multilateral instruments such as the UN and World Bank, working with highly effective and well-established local actors brings significant contextual knowledge of what works. Local actors can have a more advanced network, an ability to better understand the context, can enjoy greater levels of trust and buy-in from local communities and other stakeholders (when properly included), and can address root causes with greater cost effectiveness. Conversely, political settlements that are not supported by wider society are less likely to withstand the test of time.

Moreover, non-state actors and groups that have been marginalised can play a significant and positive role in peacebuilding processes.³¹⁶ Learning from the UK-funded Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF) in South Sudan found that conflict sensitivity for the wider aid sector benefits from localisation.³¹⁷ The CSRF found locally-led responses were better networked and enjoyed higher levels of trust, which enhanced their sustainability. Local actors were also able to expand the reach of humanitarian programming by combining peacebuilding, development and humanitarian responses most appropriate to local needs, and could cover areas abandoned or avoided by risk-averse INGOs or during staff evacuations due to conflict or Covid-19.³¹⁸ Critically, localising SDG 16 by investing in subnational, local capacities for peace requires suitable financial arrangements that

315. FCDO UK Government (27 April, 2022), [‘The return of geopolitics: Foreign Secretary’s Mansion House speech at the Lord Mayor’s 2022 Easter Banquet’](#) [online text, accessed June 2022]

316. Krause J, Krause W and Branford P (2018), [‘Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace’](#), International Interactions, 4(6); Hall, E. (2021), [Futures Undisrupted: Living Up to the UK’s Commitments to Children](#); Saferworld (2021), [A people-centred approach to security and justice: Recommendations for policy and programming](#) [p.3]

317. Robinson A and CSRF (2021), [Localisation and Conflict Sensitivity: Lessons on Good Practice from South Sudan, Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility](#)

318. Hume, L. and Mitchell, L. (2021), [Strengthening Locally Led Peacebuilding: From Policy to Action](#)

support risk sharing, promote innovation, and can be directly allocated to local actors. It also requires data on efforts to support local leadership, community organising and movement building to be captured and shared.

Lastly, the response to conflict needs to be systemic rather than piecemeal. For instance, compare the unprecedented scale of the UK’s response in Ukraine with its response in the Horn of Africa, which is facing a severe, multidimensional crisis. The region is experiencing the worst droughts

Spotlight: The case of Yemen

Yemen remains a paradox. Just over 20 million people in Yemen – two out of every three – are reliant on aid to survive. More than 17 million do not have sufficient food to eat. Yemeni women and children bear the brunt of the war by making up 73% of internally displaced people. Since the start of the conflict, violence against women has increased by over 63% (according to the UN).

The UK is the penholder for Yemen at the UN Security Council, and is responsible for brokering Yemen peace negotiations. Yet the UK has sold billions of pounds worth of arms to the Saudi-led coalition, has closed down efforts at the UN Security Council to work for peace, and has failed to work with leading actors to ensure accountability for war crimes. Saudi-led coalition airstrikes caused more civilian harm in January 2022 than in the two previous years combined, making it the most violent month in the conflict in over five years.


The UK can become a credible broker for peace when it stops selling arms, which can only continue fuelling the conflict. The value of all arms export licences granted by the UK government to members of the Saudi-led coalition since March 2015 is estimated to be worth over £7 billion. Another £10 billion in arms under ‘open’ licences is thought to have been supplied. By comparison, the humanitarian assistance provided by the UK government is £770 million.


The UK’s disregard for past violations of international humanitarian law was ruled by the Court of Appeal to be unlawful, while NGOs and the UN have found UK weapon parts amongst the debris at the sites of various international humanitarian law violations. But instead of suspending arms transfers, the UK government has declared these violations to be ‘isolated’, and has instigated a judicial review that will take three years, kicking the issue into the long grass. Rather than have its hand forced by litigation, the UK government should suspend arms transfers while there is a serious risk that UK-made arms could be used to commit severe human rights violations.



in 40 years, and over 21 million people are living in extreme hunger, something that is being compounded by a dependence on Russian and Ukrainian wheat. Although the UK has been a leading humanitarian and development donor in the region, its role is now in decline due to cuts in ODA and reductions in staffing following the FCDO merger.³¹⁹ Yet others have not stepped up to fill this gap. Successive humanitarian appeals in East Africa have been underfunded, with commitments in 2022 so far covering only 3% of needs³²⁰. Neglect of nascent emergencies such as this will feed existing conflicts, and catalyse future ones, which will be yet more costly to resolve. This will undermine progress on all the other SDGs, as conflict prevents investment in infrastructure, services and governance.

The UK government should also promote the use of child rights impact assessments (CRIA) to identify the potential impact that a decision can have on a child, or a group of children, affected by it. The FCDO should integrate CRIA across its programme and project cycle management, including as part of due diligence and project appraisal processes.

 **Target 16.2:**
End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

 **Target 16.2:**
Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all, Target 16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements and Target 16.b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

The UK government is to be commended for its global leadership on a range of issues related to addressing violence against children, including its substantial and catalytic support for the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. The FCDO should continue its strong support of the partnership and take up DFID’s former role on the Board and Executive Committee.

The UK government’s Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy asserts its ‘support of open societies and promotion of human rights’³²¹. Yet a number of developments put the UK’s reputation as an open, tolerant and diverse modern society at risk.

We commend the UK government’s leadership in supporting the WeProtect Global Alliance and its international movement, whose goal is the elimination of online sexual exploitation of children. We also commend of the positive role it is playing in international efforts to prioritise effective safeguarding of vulnerable constituencies, in partnership with Bond, its enhanced safeguarding due diligence framework, its investment in initiatives to better protect children and adults, its commitment to improve reporting and data collection, its improved international recruitment practices, and the development of the international Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub.

Deprivation of citizenship

In 2014, amendments to the British Nationality Act 1981 extended deprivation of citizenship powers to the Home Secretary if they had reasonable grounds to believe a person could be naturalised as a citizen of another country, even if it risked making that person stateless if, for example, the other country refused to recognise them as nationals. The recent Nationality and Borders Bill has increased these powers. The effect of these laws were racially discriminatory because they had a disproportionate impact on non-White British people. This means 41% of non-white British citizens (or nearly six million people in England and Wales) could potentially be deprived of their citizenship due to their dual national status.³²² These laws also affect the ability of these citizens to participate in civil society and public life, not only because they effectively given them a ‘second tier’ status, but because their ability to exercise freedom of speech and assembly could be impacted by the precariousness of their contingent citizenship rights. Rendering people stateless, and by extension their children, is inconsistent with efforts to ensure a legal identity for all under Target 16.9, and it is inconsistent with efforts to promote an open society.

Yet, when addressing SDG 16.2 in its recent voluntary national review, the UK government limited itself to discussing the confrontation of sexual exploitation and trafficking, without mentioning corporal punishment under indicator 16.2.1, thus ignoring the most common form of violence against children.

319. UK Parliament, International Development Committee (23 September 2021), [‘Aid Cuts for ‘priority’ African Countries “outrageous and hypocritical”](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]

320. The 3% East Africa figure is the average of the 2022 appeals for Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan. UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service country figures in March 2022: Ethiopia: 0 funding for \$2.75bn appeal; Somalia: \$54.8m funding of \$1.46bn appeal (3.8%); and South Sudan: \$130.6m funding of \$1.67bn appeal (7.8%)

321. HM Government (2021), [Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#)
322. The New Statesman, 1 December 2021, [‘Exclusive: British citizenship of six million people could be jeopardized by Home Office plans’](#) [online article, accessed June 2022]

Exploitation and trafficking

The pioneering Modern Slavery Act 2015 was the first of its kind in Europe, but its intended effect has been undermined in various ways. Victims of modern slavery and human trafficking in the UK have been improperly jailed in breach of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. As many as one in twelve female prison inmates serving sentences are victims of modern slavery and trafficking but their exploitation has not been acknowledged, and several others have been deported by the Home Office³²³. Among those that are evidently cases of slavery or trafficking, one in four women became pregnant, a third of these arising from rape by their enslavers, and they were not given access to antenatal care from the NHS. The UK's approach has come under criticism for its heavy reliance on prosecutions to the detriment of victim support. Despite this, the number of both prosecutions and convictions for human trafficking and modern slavery in the UK are considerably lower than in other countries³²⁴. Experts, lawyers and the police have reiterated that, unless victims feel safe and supported with ongoing financial, legal and pastoral care, they will continue to distrust the authorities and are unlikely to come forward and provide evidence against their enslavers³²⁵. The qualified nature of the UK's support package is a major contributing factor to the low conviction rates. Its 'move-on' support can include ongoing accommodation, counselling, expert advice and advocacy, but only for a limited period of 45 days.

Hostile environment policy

Target 16.b is one that the UK government finds particularly challenging in many respects, both at home and in its efforts to end poverty globally. The use of citizenship deprivation and the unintended consequences of the Modern Slavery Act are related to the broader 'hostile environment' policy, promoted since 2014. This policy is both a catalyst and a symptom of the UK's worsening ethnic and racial disparity³²⁶.

People have been deported to countries where it was known they would be at risk of being tortured or killed. This violates the principle of non-refoulement in international law and Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998. Additionally, we continue to see the deleterious impacts of the hostile environment policy on the lives of all ethnic minorities, regardless of their migration

status or nationality³²⁷, including the under-reporting of crimes against undocumented people, and a lack of access to healthcare, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic³²⁸. The UK has adopted practice which is contrary to the tide of international best practice³²⁹. Never has this been more apparent than in the UK's decision to 'offshore' asylum application processing, which has been widely assessed as something that is unlawful³³⁰, exposes vulnerable people to risk³³¹, discriminatory, overreaching³³² and hugely costly³³³.

We commend the broad commitments made by the UK government to the people of Ukraine fleeing conflict, in particular the *Homes for Ukrainians* scheme and the Ukraine Family Scheme, however we are concerned at the disparity of treatment between Ukrainians and Afghans. Arguably, the UK government has a higher duty of responsibility to the Afghans who need to flee their country since the Taliban takeover, as the UK government was instrumental in supporting and encouraging equality for women and girls, accountability, democracy and human rights in Afghanistan. The failure to match the Ukraine effort with equivalent arrangements for Afghans raises the question of whether the racial or religious characteristics of the two populations have had any bearing on decision-making in these two responses.

The domestic picture sheds light on the low prioritisations of policies that embed non-discriminatory approaches in development programmes. As reported under several other goals, projects that tackle root causes of inequality have been cut in preference to others in several areas. The appetite of the UK government to take on the risk, expense and complexity of the 'harder cases' may have been eroded by the cuts and the merger combined. This has presented officials with very difficult decisions to make based on imperfect information in a very short time frame, and with diminishing levels of expertise in teams as a result of shifting roles and responsibilities accompanied by resignations of expert staff. The UK government needs to take steps to ensure that the fourth 'E' in value for money considerations (Equity) is clearly signalled to staff as a priority, and not an optional extra that can be sacrificed when budgets are reduced, with linked monitoring and enforcement that meaningfully delivers on equity alongside other value-for-money considerations.

323. The Independent (16 September, 2018), '[Female trafficking victims unlawfully held in UK jails due to "disturbing" failure to identify exploitation, finds report](#)'; The Independent (11 June, 2018), '[Government under fire for "outrageous" treatment of modern slavery victims facing deportation from UK](#)' [online articles, accessed June 2022]

324. Uddin, N. (2017), '[The Fight Against Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: the role of victim support in prosecuting this crime](#)'

325. The Independent (5 December, 2018), '[UK "lagging behind" on efforts to tackle modern slavery as victims not given adequate support, report warns](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

326. UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (19 April 2021), '[UN Experts Condemn UK Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Report](#)' [online media release, accessed June 2022]

327. UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (27 May 2019), '[Visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, UN Doc A/HRC/41/54/Add.2](#)' [p.17]

328. The Guardian (18 September 2021), '[Asylum seeker given £100,000 hospital bill after suffering stroke](#)'

329. The Tribune (2 July, 2020), '[Coronavirus and the Hostile Environment](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

330. FCDO (8 July, 2021), '[UN Human Rights Council: Universal Periodic Review Adoption – Rwanda](#)' [online statement, accessed June 2022]

331. US State Department (2021), '[Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Rwanda](#)'

332. Andrew Smith MP, Director of Policy, cited in BBC News (15 April, 2022), '[Rwanda asylum seekers: UK could send first people "within weeks"](#)'

333. The Guardian (17 April, 2022), '[Home Office chief questions whether Rwanda plan will deter asylum seekers](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

Target 16.4 and 16.5:

By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime and Target 16.5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

Two years into the Covid-19 pandemic, Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index reveals that corruption levels have stagnated worldwide. The results clearly demonstrate that countries with well-protected civil and political liberties generally controlled corruption better. This correlation highlights the undeniable relationship between fundamental freedoms of association and expression and low levels of corruption. Indeed, corruption enables human rights abuses and democratic decline, which in turn leads to increased corruption, creating a vicious circle.³³⁴

In 2016, the UK hosted the Anti-Corruption Summit in London, which saw 43 governments and 6 international organisations issue a bold Global Declaration Against Corruption³³⁵. At the Summit, the UK government made a number of commitments relating to illicit financial flows and should be commended for having met a number of these commitments. However, sound laws are inadequate if enforcement agencies are not properly resourced. The National Crime Agency estimates that the UK loses around £290 billion every year to fraud and money laundering, which equates to nearly 15% of GDP. By comparison, anti-corruption charity Spotlight on Corruption estimates that the average amount spent each year on law enforcement agencies is a mere £852 million, the equivalent to just 0.09% of total government spending or 0.042% of GDP.³³⁶

Research by Transparency International UK identified 929 UK-registered companies involved in 89 global corruption and money laundering schemes worth around £137 billion.³³⁷ To prevent the abuse of UK legal entities the UK government should reform company law to make it more difficult for criminals to access them, and it should create a credible deterrent against deliberate false reporting to Companies House. The UK government should also extend the 'failure to prevent' approach, which is used in corporate criminal offending, to economic crimes such as fraud and

money laundering, and task the Law Commission with the priority of reviewing the UK's outdated and inadequate corporate liability laws.

Progress with the British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies is still lagging. Research by Transparency International UK identified 1,201 corporate vehicles from these jurisdictions alleged to have been used in 237 large-scale corruption and money laundering cases worth over £250 billion – equivalent to the entire UK ODA budget for the past 20 years³³⁸. The UK government should work with these jurisdictions to close these loopholes as soon as possible by setting out public and time-bound plans to establish public registers of beneficial ownership.

Target 16.7:

Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy highlighted the UK's support of open societies as 'crucial building blocks' for transparent and accountable governance, noting the deterioration in global freedoms since the mid-2000s and an increasing prevalence of autocracies worldwide.³³⁹ The review acknowledged that efforts to reverse this decline must start at home and committed to work with civil society worldwide to protect democratic values.³⁴⁰ Nevertheless, references to open societies were notably absent from the new international development strategy³⁴¹.

Against this background, we strongly urge the UK government to revoke restrictions on peaceful procession, assembly and protest, recently imposed by Part 3 of its Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act. It must also evaluate the misuse of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), targets of which are often journalists, civil society organisations and whistleblowers. These lawsuits have a chilling effect on free speech. At a time when the right to protest is under attack around the world, the UK should be setting a positive example, rather than making it harder for people to speak out.

334. Transparency International (25 January, 2022), '[CPI 2021: Corruption, Human Rights and Democracy](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

335. UK Government (9 December, 2016), '[Policy paper: Global Declaration Against Corruption](#)' [online, accessed June 2022]

336. Spotlight on Corruption (2022) '[Closing the UK's economic crime enforcement gap: Proposals for boosting resources for UK law enforcement to fight economic crime](#)'

337. Transparency International UK, (2019) '[At Your Service](#)'

338. Transparency International UK (2018), '[Cost of Secrecy](#)'

339. HM Government (2021), '[Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#)'

340. Ibid. at para 9

341. Ibid. p. 47-48



Target 16.10:

Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

Tackling the killings of human rights defenders is an area in which the UK is well-suited to play a positive role. As UN Secretary General António Guterres noted, a threat to human rights defenders is part of a wider attack on civil society.³⁴² Linked, as it is in many cases, to anti-corruption efforts, the UK could engage on this issue as part of its priority focus on women and girls, as anti-corruption is the area that places female human rights defenders most at risk³⁴³. In 2021, the Special Rapporteur's report to the Human Rights Council showed that a culture of impunity, where very few are arrested and prosecuted for killings, serves to embolden the perpetrators and continues the cycle of violence.³⁴⁴ Often, criminal justice systems are themselves corrupt.

Other human rights defenders who appear to be disproportionately at risk include environmental activists, such as those protesting land grabs and representing the rights of indigenous people. One in two victims of killings recorded in 2019 by OHCHR worked with communities around land issues and the environment, with half of the killings in Columbia and the Philippines. The Special Rapporteur noted that since 2015, when the OHCHR began keeping records, there had been 1,323 recorded killings in 64 countries. The Special Rapporteur has asked States to intervene, but to date no State had engaged with the mandate to explore ways to stop these killings. This is a cause that is waiting for a champion – a role that the UK is well-placed to fulfil, with the right political will.

To contribute to SDG 13, the UK government should:

1. Invest targeted money in tackling the root causes of conflict, not least severe inequality and poverty, with strong local participation, leadership and accountability
2. Expand on the new international development strategy, with concrete targets for conflict-prevention and peacebuilding spending and outcomes.
3. Approach fragility and emergencies across the world as a single systemic failure that requires a joined-up and holistic response.
4. Improve the flexibility of grants in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, not least when it comes to underspend and carryover.
5. Increase the use of child rights impact assessments.
6. Cease the punitive use of citizenship deprivation where it could leave individuals stateless.
7. Suspend arms transfers where there is a realistic possibility of human rights violations by recipients.
8. Commit greater resources to pursue perpetrators of modern slavery violations.
9. Restore its focus on open societies for the sake of promoting human rights and preventing conflict.
10. Close legal loopholes affecting British Crown Dependencies, limit the use of SLAPPs, and take further steps to tackle corruption as a source of instability and human rights abuses, not least against women and girls.
11. Scrap the off-shoring of asylum applications and create safe, legal routes for migration without criminalising those seeking refuge.

342. UN (2020), [The Highest Aspiration: a call to action for human rights](#), [p.7]

343. Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (2021), '[Solidarity is our only weapon – the situation of women human rights defenders](#)' [p.10]

344. Special Rapporteur for the situation against human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor (24 December 2020), [Final Warning: death threats and killings of human rights defenders UN Doc A/HRC/46/35](#) [p.4]



SDG 17: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by: Bond. Section contributions from Debt Justice, the Trade Justice Movement, Geology for Global Development and Scotland's International Development Alliance.



The UK has supported the delivery of the SDGs through partnerships and finance, a crucial element of which is official development assistance (ODA). However, since 2019, the decision to merge DFID and the FCO, and significant cuts to the ODA budget, on top of existing issues such as a lack of cross-government policy coherence, risk significantly undermining the UK's approach.

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, financing for the SDGs was not enough. The OECD predicts that the \$2.5 trillion annual SDG financing gap in low- and middle-income countries will increase by \$1.7 trillion.³⁴⁵ To address this, international financing needs to be mutually coherent to avoid different policies and practices undermining each other. It is encouraging to see the UK improve its score on the Commitment to Development Index (CDI), which ranks it third out of 40 of the most powerful countries for its policies on investment.³⁴⁶ However, the CDI ranks the UK 20th for international investment agreements and indicates that it should include fewer provisions in its bilateral investment agreements that limit the policy space of its counterparts to pursue their development objectives.³⁴⁷

345. OECD (2020), [Global Outlook on Financing for Sustainable Development 2021: A New Way to Invest for People and Planet](#)
 346. Center for Global Development, ['The Commitment to Development Index'](#) [online, accessed June 2022]
 347. Ibid

Target 17.2:

Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries

Where we have seen significant backsliding is on the UK's ODA commitment. The decision to cap the ODA budget at 0.5% of GNI, down from the legally-enshrined 0.7%, cut an estimated £4 billion from the ODA budget in a matter of months in 2021. We have also seen a concerning trend in that ODA is moving away from tackling poverty and inequality.³⁴⁸ There is evidence that the cuts to ODA significantly harmed poverty-eradication efforts and disproportionately fell on bilateral programmes and vulnerable countries. The decision to withdraw funding as it was most needed, the scale of the cuts, and the speed at which they were implemented all caused significant harm to people's lives as well as to the reputation of the UK and its partner organisations. Greater transparency and analysis are needed to understand the scale of damage inflicted.

Alongside this, the UK has also made the political decision to include Covid-19 vaccine donations, debt relief, recycled SDRs (special drawing rights) and the supposedly 'new and additional' climate finance within the 0.5% aid budget. While these are welcome initiatives, counting them within the 0.5% ODA budget means there are fewer resources available for critical interventions to fight poverty.

348. Center for Global Development (2021), [Assessing the UK's ODA Focus on Poverty and Africa](#)

To achieve the SDG 17 target on ODA, the UK government should:

1. Restore ODA to 0.7% and make public the government's plan for scaling finance back up to meet this target.
2. Fulfil the Paris Agreement commitment to make climate finance new and additional to ODA.
3. Treat finance such as vaccine sharing, debt relief and SDRs, which present minimal fiscal burden to the UK, as additional to the ODA budget.
4. Improve the strategic focus of UK ODA to ensure it best targets drivers of poverty.

Target 17.4:

Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress.

Debt indicators were already worsening prior to the pandemic, which has further increased debt distress. Of the 69 countries assessed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 39 were in debt distress or at high risk in December 2021, up from 15 in 2013.³⁴⁹ Government external debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services for low- and lower-middle-income countries has more than doubled, from 3.4% in 2012 to 8.1% in 2020³⁵⁰, putting delivery of public services and achievement of the SDGs at risk.

When the pandemic began the G20 created a scheme to suspend debt payments in 2020 and 2021. However, only 23% of external debt payments were suspended for countries that applied to the scheme, primarily because debts to private lenders were not included.³⁵¹ The G20 has now created a common framework for debt restructuring. Three countries applied at the start of 2021, but none have had any debt restructured, with private lenders again refusing to take part. Around 45% of international

government bond contracts are governed by English law, as well as 90% of bond contracts of countries eligible for the framework.³⁵²

To help prevent debt crises from happening again, all loans to governments should be publicly disclosed so that parliamentarians, media and civil society can hold borrowers and lenders to account on how money is used. In 2019, private lenders through the Institute for International Finance agreed voluntary guidelines on disclosing details of loans to lower-income country governments, but only two banks have disclosed any loan information. In 2021 the UK used its G7 Presidency to obtain a commitment by G7 governments to disclose details of their loans to lower-income country governments.

To achieve the SDG 17 target on debt, the UK government should:

1. Make private creditors take part in debt restructuring, including through the Common Framework. Relevant jurisdictions, especially the UK, New York and the rest of the G7, should pass legislation to make it more difficult for private creditors to refuse to take part in debt restructuring. Governments should be politically and financially supported by the G20 and IMF to default on any creditor that refuses to take part in a Common Framework debt restructuring. The IMF and G20 should require any debt restructuring to reduce the risk of debt distress to at least a moderate level, with space to absorb shocks.
2. Build on the steps already taken on lending transparency. The UK government should work with the G20 to obtain a strong commitment to publicly disclose details of loans to governments and enact legislation to require loans to governments given under English law to be publicly disclosed.

349. Calculated by Jubilee Debt Campaign from IMF sources. Full data by country is at <https://data.jubileedebt.org.uk>

350. Calculated by Jubilee Debt Campaign from World Bank International Debt Statistics

351. Financial Times (12 October 2021), '[G20 plan for Covid debt relief to poor countries falls short](#)', [online article, accessed June 2022]

352. Debt Justice (4 May, 2020), '[G20 debt suspension request: 90% of bonds governed by English law](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]



Target 17.6:

Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.

Covid-19 brought showed the world the value of research capacity, a strong science-policy interface and effective mechanisms for international science cooperation. The role of science in delivering the SDGs is set out in the 2030 Agenda, with a global Technology Facilitation Mechanism³⁵³ established in Target 17.6 to improve cooperation on and access to science.

The *Sustainable Development Report 2019*³⁵⁴ notes that ‘science and technology are powerful agents of change’ and that ‘increased science-policy-society cooperation can harness breakthroughs in our understanding of coupled human-environment systems’. Recognising this potential, science-for-development features prominently in the UK’s *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (Integrated Review)³⁵⁵ and the international development strategy. This builds on the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)³⁵⁶, which draws on UK science capacity to work in low- and middle-income countries, with and for those disproportionately affected by diverse global challenges.

Enhancing international cooperation on science was severely weakened by ODA cuts in 2021. Disproportionately impacting GCRF project budgets³⁵⁷, these cuts threatened the trust and partnerships necessary to achieve impactful research on vital areas, such as reducing disaster risk and water insecurity. Whether tackling another pandemic or accelerating decarbonisation, the UK government should recognise the value of reliability if they are to realise their science ambitions.

353. UN ‘[Technology Facilitation Mechanism \(TFM\)](#)’ [web page, accessed June 2022]

354. UN (2019), [The Future Is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development: Global Sustainable Development Report 2019](#)

355. HM Government (2021), [Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#)

356. UK Research and Innovation, ‘[Global Challenges Research Fund](#)’ [web page, accessed June 2022]

357. The Campaign for Science and Engineering, ‘[ODA funding for research has been disproportionately affected: written evidence, submitted to Parliament](#)’ [online, accessed June 2022]

To achieve SDG 17 targets on science, the UK government should:

1. Publish a cross-departmental strategy outlining future engagement in the TFM and how it will leverage the knowledge and skills of the UK science community to support this.
2. Build on the opportunities created by the GCRF through dedicated funding calls, prioritising equitable partnerships and providing the guarantees required to demonstrate that the UK is a reliable international partner.



Target 17.9:

Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the SDGs, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation

In its follow-up review of DFID’s partnerships with civil society organisations in 2020, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact found DFID had made good progress in changing how it approached civil society partnerships to support long-term capacity development. The review recommended stronger attention be paid to the capacity and sustainability needs of civil society partners in low and middle-income countries.³⁵⁸ However, since the merger we have seen very little progress on this and no follow up to the commitments made in DFID’s 2016 Civil Society Partnership Review.

In recent years there has been a push to recognise the colonial power dynamics between the UK and the communities that it works with. It is now recognised that we should value the locally produced knowledge, expertise and lived experience of people and communities. While there is a role for funders to provide support and resources for communities to help them build their own capacity, this must not involve partners from high-income countries telling communities in low- and middle-income countries what to do.

Part of this change in thinking is based on a recognition that power should be shifted to local communities. The recent international development strategy commits the FCDO to becoming ‘locally owned’, arguing that ‘those who benefit from our work must have a voice in what we do, and how we do it’. However, there is little detail of what this will mean in practice.

358. ICAI (2020), [ICAI follow-up: DFID’s partnerships with civil society organisations: A summary](#)

To achieve the SDG 17 target on capacity building, the UK government should:

1. Prioritise transformational partnerships that provide long-term, flexible, core funding that give civil society organisations the power to make decisions themselves. Enable communities to lead, and focus on providing support and funding directly to local civil society organisations so that local actors are involved in the decisions that affect them and their communities.

to participate in international work to address the impacts of trade on climate goals and gender inequality. However, the UK is yet to set out a clear, overarching strategy for trade, and in particular trade and development. Despite the inclusion of better language, impact assessments still show an increase in greenhouse gas emissions as a result of UK trade deals, and commitments on gender have not translated into real action.

It is not clear that UK trade and investment policy will cohere with its SDGs commitments. The UK's work at the WTO has tended not to advance the principles or commitments of the Doha Development Round. The UK has rolled over EU Economic Partnership Agreements, despite requests from partner countries for time to revise the deals, and without addressing serious concerns about the impact on important development goals, such as increased regional integration.

 **Target 17.10 and 17.12:**

Target 17.10: Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the WTO, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda; and Target 17.12: Realise timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all LDCs, consistent with WTO decisions, including by ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from LDCs are transparent and simple, and contribute to facilitating market access.

Trade and investment rules have immense potential to support the achievement of the SDGs, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. However, as currently configured, trade and investment rules often contribute to worsening outcomes in areas such as inequality, environmental protection and climate change, access to public services, decent work and industrial development. Since trade and investment rules are negotiated behind closed doors, they can be developed without reference to the SDGs, human rights and other international commitments. They can limit countries' policy space by acting as a disincentive to regional integration or prevent countries from choosing the most appropriate policy mix to achieve their development goals. This effect is most apparent where an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism is included in a deal, as it can deter countries from taking policy decisions, for fear of being taken to arbitration, and impact revenues where large awards are made against countries.

Aspects of the emerging post-Brexit UK trade policy are to be welcomed. These include the steps it has taken to develop more extensive and binding provisions on climate change in its deals with the EU and New Zealand, which we hope will be replicated in future deals, and its commitment

To achieve SDG 17 targets on trade, the UK government should:

1. Produce a UK trade strategy that outlines how trade policy will support UK foreign policy commitments, including the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement.
2. Rethink Economic Partnership Arrangements by developing a new approach that supports inclusive and sustainable economic growth and prospects for productive employment, and addresses gendered disparities (see SDG 8).
3. Develop proper mechanisms for transparency and scrutiny in trade negotiations and agreements involving civil society and trade unions.
4. Ensure UK trade policy coheres with its SDG commitments, human rights, tackling climate change and ensuring there are no other negative impacts on low- and middle-income countries. This should include suspending negotiations with countries where there is evidence of serious breaches of human rights.
5. Exclude investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms from all future trade and investment agreements.
6. Design a preferential market-access scheme offering duty-free, quota-free market access to imports from economically vulnerable countries, including but not limited to, the world's least developed countries. Make regional trade cooperation and integration the central aim of such a scheme.
7. Use its position as an independent member to push for a fundamental rethink of the purpose and powers of the WTO.

The UK is also seeking a deal with India, classified as a lower-middle-income country, home to one-quarter of the world's poorest people and where there are serious concerns about human rights, including the detention without trial of a UK national who alleges he has been tortured. Despite this, there is little detail setting out how the deal will support the achievement of the SDGs or support UK human rights commitments.



Target 17.14:

Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.

Resources, implementation and governance structures are all crucial to ensuring a coherent cross-government approach to SDG implementation. Where governments assign leadership for implementing the SDGs indicates the level of political commitment as well as lines of accountability. According to an independent assessment of the 2021 voluntary national reviews (VNRs)³⁵⁹, leadership on the SDGs around the world usually resides with heads of states. But this is not the case in the UK, and political commitment to policy coherence for sustainable development remains low. Ownership and understanding of the SDGs in most government departments is also insufficient. Without strong and maintained leadership from the top, the necessary cross-government working and policy coherence is unlikely to be achieved. The Cabinet Office should be responsible for the UK's implementation of the SDGs, both in the UK and around the world, to ensure delivery sits at the very heart of government³⁶⁰.

In the 2019 VNR the UK government committed to 'review and further strengthen the existing means and mechanisms to oversee its contribution to domestic delivery of the Goals', and stated that 'this review will take place as a matter of priority and will examine both official and ministerial level structures'. No such review has taken place so we would urge this to happen as soon as possible.

In 2021, the UK government published its national planning framework in the shape of outcome delivery plans (ODPs). The ODPs improved the level of detail with regards to SDG reporting, but the public plans were very top-level and only provided information on which SDG targets were being implemented by the government's priority outcomes. The government missed an opportunity to resolve issues of policy coherence by conducting critical analysis on how the plans of each government department affect the others, or how domestic policies affect the UK's work internationally. The government should seek to address these gaps in future ODPs.

359. Cooperation Canada (23 February, 2022), '[Sixth Edition of Progressing National SDGs Implementation](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

360. House of Commons International Development Committee (2019), '[UK progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Voluntary National Review](#)'

Spotlight on devolved governments: Scotland's unique global contribution to the SDGs

Scotland's global contribution to the SDGs is notably distinct to other parts of the UK, given the Scottish government has developed a unique approach to SDG implementation and standalone international development and climate justice programmes. A key part of Scotland's approach to the SDGs has been to align and integrate the SDGs across government, in other words, making attempts to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development (SDG 17.14).

Key to this approach to the SDGs is its National Performance Framework (NPF). The NPF is the main mechanism through which the SDGs are localised and implemented in Scotland. It sets an overall purpose and vision for Scotland and is used to measure how well Scotland is progressing towards the national outcome which, by law, must be set and reviewed every five years.

Since 2018 and the last review, there have been 11 national outcomes that are broadly aligned to the SDGs. This includes a national outcome to be 'open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally'. The inclusion of an international outcome was a big step forward and has been a catalyst for better alignment and integration of Scottish government policy in support of SDG implementation globally, including, for example, by ensuring the SDGs and commitments to international development are part of its 2021 vision for trade and its climate change plan.

Scotland's commitment to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development has also brought about more recent commitments, including to establish the Ministerial Working Group on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, and to bring forward the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill, this requires public bodies and local government to take account of the impact of their decisions on sustainable development, in Scotland and internationally.

Research published in May 2020 suggests this latter commitment could be ground-breaking for the way it helps to narrow the gap between ambition and delivery of Scotland's approach to sustainable development. Strengthening accountability, systems, processes and duties in Scotland creates a culture of continuous improvement that encourages, nurtures and supports joined-up thinking, enabling Scotland to make an enhanced contribution to sustainable development at home and abroad.

To achieve the SDG 17 target on policy coherence, the UK government should:

1. Ensure that the SDGs are championed publicly by the most senior members of the government, particularly the Prime Minister, Chancellor and Foreign Secretary as a way to tackle both domestic and international challenges in a coherent way to build a better world for everyone.
2. Establish an appropriate mechanism in the Cabinet Office, at the very heart of government, to lead on communication and implementation of the SDGs across government, including coordination with existing mechanisms in the devolved administrations.
3. Clearly articulate how programme design and monitoring will balance cross-cutting issues, for example, how promoting one area of SDG implementation will link with the achievement of another goal whilst avoiding harm in other areas.
4. Outline how there will be consistency and coherence across all policies that guide the UK's relationships with other countries. This should include recognising the role of devolved governments in the UK and outlining how they will work together on international development.
5. Outline how it will ensure that other international actions (for example, trade, economic and growth strategies) do not undermine the objectives of UK ODA or lead to people being pushed further behind, particularly in light of growing inequalities as a result of Covid-19, and will also help to promote inclusion.



Target 17.17:

Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

Cross-sector partnerships are a central pillar of the SDGs and vital to their successful delivery. Consulting and engaging with non-state actors, such as civil society organisations, ensures a whole-of-society approach to implementing the SDGs. Engagement between government and civil society must be meaningful, inclusive and deliberative.³⁶¹ A pre-requisite for such engagement is having an environment that enables non-state actors to contribute. It is concerning that the UK recently passed several pieces of legislation that restrict civic space here in the UK, including the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, the Elections Act, and the Judicial Review and Courts Act, as well as proposing several more pieces including the Bill of Rights and Public Order Bill. It is critical that civil society engagement and participation in public debate and accountability is upheld, both in the UK and internationally.

In the 2019 VNR, the UK government committed to establishing an effective mechanism to enhance stakeholder engagement. The vast majority of countries that presented VNRs in 2021 make use of formal (67%) and informal (81%) mechanisms for engagement on SDG implementation.³⁶² The UK government, meanwhile, has yet to establish this critical tool. It is imperative that this is implemented as soon as possible.

To achieve SDG 17 targets on multi-stakeholder partnerships, the UK government should:

1. Take immediate action to fulfil its 2019 VNR commitments and establish an inclusive, multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism on SDG implementation to lead on evaluating and identifying gaps, adapting policies, and targeting areas where further progress is needed to ensure no one is left behind.
2. Ensure that all engagement with civil society is meaningful, inclusive and deliberative, and ensure civil society engagement and participation in public debate and accountability is upheld, both in the UK and internationally.
3. Proactively support international civil society around the world and in the UK, and collaborate on SDG implementation and advocacy.

361. Bond (1 April, 2019), '[Ensuring civil society is heard](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]

362. Cooperation Canada (23 February, 2022), '[Sixth Edition of Progressing National SDGs Implementation](#)' [online article, accessed June 2022]



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Bond

Society Building
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL

+44 (0)20 7837 8344
info@bond.org.uk

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3395681 (England and Wales)