

Bond manifesto 2024:

A global system for people and the planet



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Introduction

Over the last three decades notable progress has been made globally on reducing extreme poverty, increasing access to health and education services and improving living standards. The UK has contributed towards these achievements through its Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget, support for debt relief and efforts to secure global commitment to the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, development progress achieved over this period was too slow and uneven across countries to achieve the MDGs by their 2015 deadline, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and fragile states. A wide range of marginalised groups – including women and girls, people with disabilities, older people, migrants and children – were also left behind as inequality grew.

In recent years, global challenges have deepened due to the Covid-19 pandemic and intensifying conflict and climate crises, all of which have contributed to global hunger and poverty increasing, and illustrated the fragility of recent development gains. There has also been a global trend of growing authoritarianism, closing civic space and rights constraints.

The resulting development shortfalls are staggering. Today, just under half of the global population live on less than \$6.85 a day¹, 2.4 billion women don't have access to equal economic opportunities², more than 700 million people are undernourished³, and every year 5 million children still die before their fifth birthday⁴. As a result, the UN is predicting that most of the SDGs are in danger of being missed by a large margin in 2030 and accelerating climate change and insecurity risk driving dramatic reversals in development.⁵



Despite these stark global challenges, the UK's ODA budget was reduced from 0.7% to 0.5% of UK gross national income in 2021, and in 2022 almost a third of this budget was spent in the UK. These decisions have weakened the UK's ability to support vulnerable countries and communities when they have needed it most.

It is also the case that over decades successive UK governments have failed to adequately address a number of global system failures which lie at the root of global poverty, inequality and exclusion, and which the UK has contributed to as a result of its colonial and economic history.

The global economic system is driving resource flows from low- and middle-income countries to high-income countries, increases in inequality, and deepening climate change and environmental degradation. Global governance and decision making is dominated by high-income countries, inadequate resources are available to invest in sustainable development, and rights aren't being protected and promoted by institutions. Even the development cooperation system is dominated by donor-country actors, reinforcing colonial power imbalances. Simply put, the global system isn't working for people, nature or the climate.

Ambitiously addressing these systemic failures must therefore be an urgent priority for the next UK government, alongside efforts to improve the scale and effectiveness of its development cooperation.

This manifesto, developed by Bond members, sets out the practical steps the next UK government could take to pursue this agenda, help secure delivery of the SDGs and evolve its global role from that of a donor and 'saviour' to a partner acting in solidarity.

Ambitiously addressing these systemic failures must therefore be an urgent priority for the next UK government, alongside efforts to improve the scale and effectiveness of its development cooperation.

1 Poverty is back to pre-COVID levels globally, but not for low-income countries. Yonzan, N., Mahler, D.G. and Lakner, C., World Bank, October 2023, [link](#).

2 Nearly 2.4 Billion Women Globally Don't Have Same Economic Rights as Men. World Bank, March 2022, [link](#).

3 The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2023, [link](#).

4 Under-five mortality data, UNICEF, January 2023, [link](#).

5 The Sustainable Development Goals Report: Special edition, UN, 2023, [link](#).

1. Act as a responsible and ambitious development partner



The UK's global role in promoting sustainable development stretches well beyond its aid programme to encompass its policies on trade, investment, business, migration, security and energy. The next UK government should look to maximise the contribution these policy areas make to achieving the SDGs, tackling climate change and promoting rights. Cross-governmental policy coherence for sustainable development is the most powerful channel for transformational change.

The UK's ODA programme and development expertise make a valuable contribution to global development efforts. Global needs, which are growing and evolving, require the UK to scale up its development and humanitarian assistance, and to better target it towards the most pressing sustainable development challenges. At the same time, the UK must ensure that its aid programmes are managed effectively, are led by the countries and communities being supported, and empower citizens to lead their own sustainable development.

To maximise the sustainable development impact of all UK policies and the UK's aid programme, the next UK government should:

- Develop a foreign policy that prioritises cross-government action to achieve the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, draws on feminist and human rights principles, and aims to promote global peace, equity and justice.
- Introduce a framework of ambitious commitments on sustainable development for globally-facing government departments to implement and a process to independently review performance and report to parliament.
- Challenge the attempted rollback on human rights and gender equality globally and nationally including by championing the importance of civil society and protecting civic space, including the right to operate and campaign freely, both domestically and internationally.
- Return ODA to the legally required level of 0.7% of gross national income and provide new and additional resources for meeting global climate finance commitments.
- Ensure the ODA programme is headed by a cabinet-level minister or secretary of state focussed on development and humanitarian assistance who has autonomy over budgets, policy and strategy, is guided by an ambitious development strategy and is supported by a dedicated and well-resourced staff.
- Ensure the highest standards of development effectiveness are applied to the ODA programme, including by better targeting aid on least developed countries and fragile states, and implementing international commitments on promoting country ownership, transparency and accountability.

Growing and evolving global needs require the UK to scale up its development and humanitarian assistance

- Ensure ODA strategies, policies and programmes are informed, guided and led by the priorities of local actors and communities, including by meaningfully engaging women's rights organisations, workers and producers, young and older people and people with disabilities at all stages of policy and programme development and implementation.
- Actively promote locally led approaches to development and humanitarian assistance by deepening the devolution of programme resources, design, decision making and implementation to national and local organisations in partner countries and ensuring programmes fully respect and promote local knowledge, expertise and community resources.
- Challenge power imbalances and racism in the development sector; address how structural racism is reflected in partnerships, organisations and interactions, and commit to addressing racism in a measurable and demonstrable way.

2. Create an equitable and sustainable international financial system that works for people, nature, and the climate



International financial institutions (IFIs), including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, play a vital role in governing the global economy and mobilising finance for development. But high-income countries dominate decision making in the IFIs, leading to policies and practices that all too often fail to address, or actually undermine, the needs of low- and middle-income countries. The UK should pursue ambitious reform of the IFIs so they fairly represent the needs of all countries and promote inclusive and sustainable growth.

The global system governing debt, tax and other forms of economic cooperation is failing to adequately support low- and middle-income countries. This is demonstrated by growing and damaging sovereign debt burdens and by multinational corporations' tax avoidance in these countries. The UK should ensure there are transparent, fair and globally representative systems for governing global debt, tax and other economic policies, including by supporting calls from low- and middle-income countries for decisions to be taken in the more democratic spaces of the UN. The UK should also champion new forms of inclusive multilateralism which decolonise global power relations.

To respond to these challenges and develop a fairer and more sustainable global financial system that works for people, nature and the climate, the next UK government should:

- Tackle the high, unsustainable levels of debt that are preventing low- and middle-income countries from investing in sustainable development by supporting the longstanding calls from low- and middle-income countries for a UN sovereign debt workout mechanism, which will provide a predictable rules-based system involving all relevant actors.
- Utilise the UK's significant responsibility for how private lenders operate by legislating to compel all creditors, including the private sector, to participate in debt relief processes.
- Work to deliver a more effective, fully representative and transparent system of multilateral development banks, which significantly increases the provision of finance for sustainable development without adding to unsustainable debt burdens and undermining social and environmental standards.
- Ensure that IFIs stop applying economic conditionality to their assistance and stop promoting austerity policies, and allow governments in low- and middle-income countries the fiscal and policy space they need to deliver essential public goods and promote gender equality.
- Support a universal UN Framework Convention on Tax, a fully representative global tax body and the introduction of comprehensive beneficial ownership registries in all countries and jurisdictions to curb illicit financial flows and tax abuse, reflecting the City of London's unique global influence.

The global system governing debt, tax and other forms of economic cooperation is failing to adequately support low- and middle-income countries.

- Work with other governments to ensure that all IFIs end new investment in coal, oil and gas, scale up investment in the global just transition away from fossil fuels, and do no harm to people, nature and the climate.

3. Recommit to the SDGs and 'leaving no one behind'



The SDGs are a global framework for just, equitable and sustainable development. Co-created with low- and middle-income countries and universally applicable, the SDGs offer a practical and transformative roadmap for global sustainable development, and country delivery plans provide a key tool to guide development partnerships and spending, in line with country ownership commitments.

Central to the SDGs is the principle to 'leave no one behind'. This is a commitment to eradicate poverty in all its forms and end all discrimination and exclusions, including in relation to income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, migratory status, disability, geographic location, sexuality and other identities relevant in national contexts.

Tragically, all the SDGs are currently off-track to be met by 2030, and most are likely to be missed by a large margin⁶. For example, based on current progress it will take 286 years to close gaps in legal protections and end the discrimination required to achieve gender equality⁷.

⁶ The Sustainable Development Goals Report: Special edition, UN, 2023, [link](#).

⁷ Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022, United Nations, September 2022, [link](#).

To support a comprehensive and ambitious agenda for achieving the SDGs by 2030, the next UK government should:

- Undertake regular, robust and meaningful reviews of the UK's contribution to global progress towards achieving the SDGs, with a role for civil society and other stakeholders, and to feed into the UK's broader Voluntary National Review.
- Ensure that all UK foreign and development policy and programmes are committed to 'leave no one behind' by focussing on those most in need, closing the gap between rich and poor and recognising that marginalisation is multi-dimensional.
- Promote gender transformative approaches to sustainable development by providing sufficient resources to target the structural causes of gender inequalities and gaps in securing rights, taking a multi-sectoral approach and addressing intersecting inequalities, and using the UK's influence to increase the fiscal space available to governments to fund vital gender transformative services.
- Tackle the challenges facing people with disabilities of all ages, including by allocating dedicated funding, taking a cross-cutting approach across policies, practices and programming, engaging with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and publicly tracking and reporting on progress.
- Promote age-sensitive approaches to sustainable development that address the different challenges faced by children and older people, including through engagement with youth-led and older-women-led organisations.

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- Acknowledge care as an economic issue and a right and build the care economy in line with the '5Rs framework' (recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation and reward for care work).
- Scale up efforts to deliver universal access to basic services by supporting the development of more resilient, equitable and sustainable health, education, social protection, energy, and water, sanitation and hygiene systems.
- Further invest in the disaggregation of data by income/economic status, gender, age, disability and geography, so as to better understand the lived reality of marginalised groups, especially those facing intersecting forms of marginalisation.

4. Do our fair share to tackle the global climate and biodiversity crises



Climate change and biodiversity loss exacerbates development challenges and are eroding hard-fought-for development gains, with the most marginalised people – including women and girls, people with disabilities, older people, migrants, children and marginalised groups – disproportionately affected, especially when these identities intersect. The climate and biodiversity crises are also the source of great injustice, a threat multiplier for food insecurity, water scarcity, conflict, forced displacement and modern slavery, and also disrupt education, health and other services.

Responding to the interaction between climate change, biodiversity loss, global inequality, poverty and human rights calls for a coherent and integrated approach that utilises diverse tools and forms of finance. There is a clear need both for development finance to be climate and nature positive as well as for significantly scaled-up, dedicated resources to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

Addressing the climate and biodiversity crises in a coherent and ambitious way will require the next UK government to:

- Ensure all ODA is aligned with the Paris Agreement (and efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- Make polluters pay for the climate and nature action needed, including by exploring measures such as excess profits tax on fossil fuel producers, redirecting fossil fuel producer subsidies, introducing a frequent flyer levy and taxing high-emitting luxury travel.
- Provide genuinely new and additional grant finance for the Loss and Damage Fund, which was operationalised at Cop28 for countries and communities on the frontline of the climate crisis.
- Provide transformational international climate finance that:
 - is new and additional to 0.7% GNI ODA, as promised under UNFCCC
 - is grant-based and not debt-creating
 - equally balances finance for mitigation and adaptation
 - prioritises UN climate funds, including the new Loss and Damage Fund
 - is conflict sensitive, rights based, inclusive, gender transformative, and locally led.

Responding to the interaction between climate change, biodiversity loss, global inequality, poverty and human rights calls for a coherent and integrated approach.

5. Develop a new approach to UK trade and private sector investment

UK trade and private sector investment are essential tools for development. However, ensuring that these powerful tools not only avoid exacerbating poverty, marginalisation, inequality, conflict, climate change and rights violations but help to reduce them requires trade and investment policies to be formally aligned with international commitments to the SDGs and climate change.


These trade and private sector practices need to be situated in a fair, multilateral trading system fit for the development and climate challenges of the 21st Century and supported by economic systems that target well-being and environmental protection alongside growth. The UK can play an important role in transforming the terms of trade and reforming the rules that rig the trading system in favour of high-income countries and multinational corporations, in order to enable low- and middle-income countries to participate equally.

To pursue this agenda for UK trade and private sector investment, the next UK government should:

- Develop a UK trade strategy that puts trade at the service of sustainable development, tackling poverty, inequality and modern slavery, and promoting the development priorities of low- and middle-income countries.
- Make trade policy more transparent; enable parliamentarians, civil society and the public to scrutinise trade deals, and give parliament the power to amend, approve or reject agreements.
- Introduce new legislation that mandates companies, the financial sector and the public sector operating in the UK to carry out human rights and environmental due diligence and holds them to account when they fail to prevent human rights abuses and environmental harms.
- Significantly reduce the volume of UK aid being used to capitalise British International Investment (BII) while it undertakes reforms to ensure that it has the strategic focus, business model and ways of working to significantly increase its contribution to poverty reduction and sustainability. BII must also end its investments in education and health services.
- Ensure that private sector stakeholders take a gender equitable approach to fostering the green transition and respect the rights of workers and communities impacted.
- Ensure that efforts to promote private sector investment are sensitive to conflict-affected contexts by applying risk mitigation measures and pursuing opportunities for investment that actively contribute to peace.

The UK can play an important role in transforming the terms of trade, so they enable low- and middle-income countries to participate equally.

6. Promoting stability, security and effective crisis responses

An illustration of two hands, one yellow and one pink, cupping a blue and green globe of the Earth. The hands are rendered in a stylized, painterly style with visible brushstrokes. The globe is positioned in the center, showing continents and oceans. The background is a light blue circular area with some faint, abstract lines and dots, suggesting a global or digital theme.

Recent years have seen conflict, humanitarian and health crises intensifying, with the most marginalised people – including women and girls, people with disabilities, older people, migrants, children and marginalised groups – most at risk and disproportionately bearing the brunt of these impacts. Despite this growing need, all too often crisis responses have been slow, underfunded and poorly coordinated. This undermines their impact in supporting the communities most at risk.

When responding to conflict, disasters and health crises, the UK must act rapidly and protect the people most in need of support. It must apply humanitarian principles and embed respect for rights and freedoms. The UK should also create the conditions that allow communities to lead efforts to strengthen their preparedness measures, and work to address the root causes of these crises to limit future occurrences.

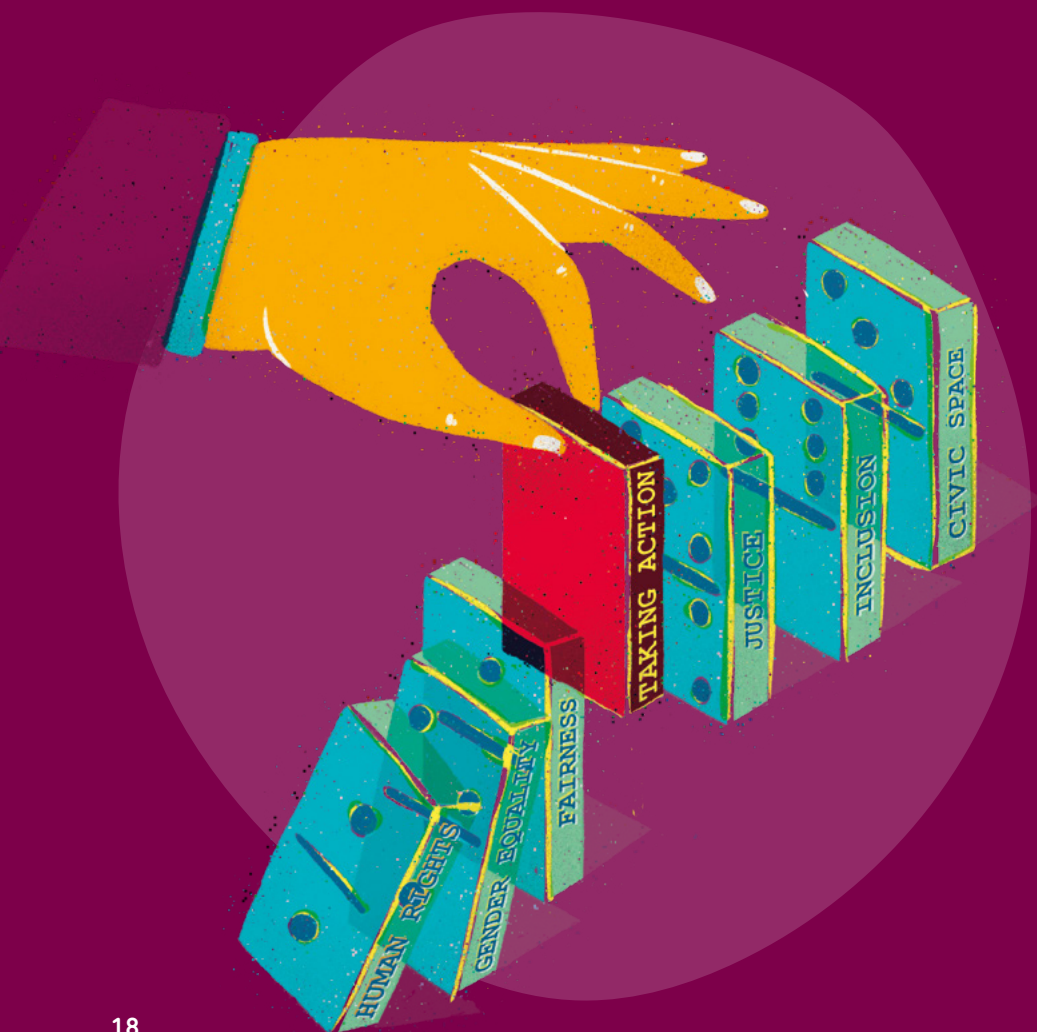
To address these challenges in promoting stability, security and effective crises responses, the next UK government should:

- Allocate the required levels of assistance to ensure the UK provides its fair share in financing responses to humanitarian crises across the world.
- Champion locally led approaches to anticipatory crisis prevention, action and resilience which put communities affected by crises in the driving seat of their own recovery, and create new mechanisms to drive these approaches forward.
- Uphold and champion international humanitarian law across all contexts, including by promoting the safety and security of humanitarian and health workers and by holding actors contravening these standards to account.
- Establish a prevention-focused national security outlook by ensuring security, foreign and development policy objectives include a focus on preventing crises as well as responding to them.
- Prioritise the prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence and ensure that survivor-centred responses are integral to all humanitarian programming.
- Build gender-sensitive and integrated peace capabilities – including supporting networks of mediators, researchers and peacebuilders – so the UK can swiftly respond to resolve crises and secure equitable impacts.

When responding to conflict, disasters and health crises, the UK must act rapidly and protect the people most in need of support.

- Provide robust legal protections in all sanction regimes and counter-terrorism regulations to facilitate principled humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities.
- Prioritise the development of, and investments in, an equitable, effective and inclusive global health emergencies architecture which is anchored in human rights.

7. Protect and promote rights, freedoms and civic space



There is a growing trend of governments reducing democratic space and increasing restrictions on civil society. Globally, democratic space is at its lowest level for decades, the number of governments that are introducing significant restrictions on civil society is growing, and legislation is increasingly being used to restrict the ability of civil society organisations to protest and campaign.

Ensuring a focus on open societies and the protection of civic space is vital for promoting fundamental rights and holding governments accountable for their responsibilities, and it enables more inclusive and sustainable outcomes in development and peacebuilding. To champion these issues, the UK's domestic actions must also reflect the international commitment it has made to promote and protect open societies and human rights.

To address these challenges in protecting and promoting rights, freedoms and civic space, the next UK government should:

- Prioritise meaningful partnerships with human rights defenders, including indigenous communities, women, LGBTQ+ advocates, migrant rights advocates and environmental defenders. These partnerships should include the provision of support and protection.
- Work with banks to enhance financial access for NGOs and small charities by increasing their risk appetite and addressing legal and administrative barriers to supporting NGOs.
- Further embed human rights in UK law, repealing and amending legislation that removes human rights, in particular those on protest.
- Remove restrictions on civil society campaigning domestically, and work with other governments to reverse restrictions on civic space in public debate and policymaking.

Ensuring a focus on open societies and the protection of civic space is vital for promoting fundamental rights and holding governments accountable for their responsibilities.



Bond is the UK network for organisations working in international development. We connect and champion a diverse network of over 350 civil society organisations to help eradicate global poverty, inequality and injustice.

Visit our website for the latest news and views from the sector, useful resources, funding opportunities, jobs, services and training.

Find out more at bond.org.uk

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