

Building back better, brick by brick

G7 leaders must prioritise strengthening health systems around the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of well-functioning, properly resourced health systems as never before, with health systems in all countries around the world struggling to cope. In many lower income countries, the challenges have been enormous, with already patchy health services overwhelmed or shut down; and with meagre funds available to tackle the pandemic without displacing resources from existing provision. In many countries, diagnosis, care and treatment for diseases such as TB, access to nutrition services, and routine immunisation have all been hugely set back by the COVID response, wiping out much of the progress made against poverty and disease in recent decades.

This June, leaders of the world's seven largest economies – the 'G7' nations – will meet to discuss some of humanity's biggest challenges, with the pandemic response right at the top of their list. It's vital that they don't just prioritise their own domestic healthcare challenges, but contribute to a truly global effort. International solidarity will be needed to build stronger, more resilient health systems and kick-start global economic recovery. The G7 Summit, hosted by the UK Government, is an unmissable opportunity to adopt a holistic approach to strengthening health systems, tackling serious challenges such as extending the reach of routine immunisations; improving access to diagnosis, treatment and care for people affected by diseases like TB; and integrating nutrition services into wider health programmes. As Summit host, the UK has the chance to influence its G7 peers to take this holistic approach. In the run-up to the Summit, please write to the Foreign Secretary, asking for the UK to influence G7 leaders to put their weight behind a global, equitable approach to building health systems to enable a more effective response and sustainable recovery from the pandemic and to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

The impact of COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to [more than 2.7 million deaths](#) globally, and has amplified existing health inequalities within and between countries. And many more people are expected to die as a result of the indirect impacts of the pandemic on things like nutrition and infectious disease control.

For example, it has caused major disruption to immunisation services, with at least 80 million children under the age of one [missing out on routine vaccines](#) for measles, polio and diphtheria. And the fight against Tuberculosis (TB), previously the world's deadliest infectious disease, has been significantly set back by the pandemic, with [TB services facing severe disruption](#).

The disruption of food systems and the interruption of essential nutrition services has worsened the global burden of food insecurity and malnutrition. This could result in [an additional 6.7 million children with wasting](#) (low weight for height). Because of the pandemic, progress made in recent decades towards reducing poverty and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [has been stopped in its tracks](#).

How can we rebuild health systems?

Prosperous societies need healthy populations, and access to essential health services will be pivotal in the global economic recovery from COVID-19. For example, every US \$1 invested in immunisation yields a return of up to US \$52. And for every US \$1 spent on implementing the Global Plan to End TB, countries will save US \$44.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for stronger efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC). [Effective, adequately resourced health systems](#) will be vital for a sustainable global recovery from the pandemic, to address the indirect impacts of the pandemic on essential health services, and to prepare for future health emergencies. The COVID-19 response must help create stronger, more equitable health systems that deliver high-quality primary health care (the first point of health care for most people, such as local clinics). This should include access to routine immunisation, nutrition services, and diagnosis, care and treatment for infectious diseases such as TB. These represent [the building blocks](#) of an effective global health infrastructure.

The G7 Summit: a chance to really ‘build back better’

This June, leaders of the world’s seven largest economies – the ‘G7’ nations – will meet to discuss some of humanity’s biggest challenges, with the pandemic response right at the top of their list. G7 Summits have no legal authority, but when the seven richest nations agree on something, it can shift the global agenda. This year more than ever, international solidarity is vital for a truly global response to the pandemic, facilitating recovery, building stronger health systems and kick-starting economic recovery. The G7 Summit (11-13 June), hosted by the UK Government, is an unmissable opportunity to adopt a holistic approach to health systems strengthening that will tackle the serious challenges the world faces, including the need to extend the reach of routine vaccinations, improve the diagnosis and treatment of diseases, and integrate nutrition services into wider health programmes. With [disputes between developed nations over vaccine exports](#) and as yet insufficient support for international efforts to fight COVID-19 globally, it is vital that national self-interests don’t derail this crucial opportunity to genuinely help ‘build back better’ from the pandemic.

As Summit host, the UK has a big role to play in ensuring that G7 leaders take a holistic approach to the global pandemic response and recovery. And as the second-largest government donor to global health, the UK is well-placed to push for real change across the G7 in achieving health for all. At the G7, a clear focus on Universal Health Coverage will be required to strengthen global health security, help rebuild economies, and end preventable deaths – all stated by the Government to be its [priority global challenges](#).

What about the reduction in UK aid?

The UK has long been considered a leader in efforts to fight poverty and disease through its international aid programmes. However, the [Government’s recent announcement](#) that it would reduce UK aid this year [by around £4.5 billion](#) will do nothing to enhance its standing among other donor nations, risking its credibility at the G7.

Right now, we don’t know how the Government will pursue its plans to cut aid, which are being actively contested in Parliament and [may be illegal](#). However, if the Government’s rhetoric about ‘Global Britain’ is to have meaning, it must work in collaboration with other donors to help meet its stated commitments, such as to end preventable deaths, and to reach 50 million women and girls with nutrition interventions. This means pushing for a strong shared statement from G7 leaders, backed up by resources and action. An ambitious outcome from the G7 Summit will set the agenda for the future and see the UK Government make a shared commitment with strategically important allies.

The UK should use its position as Summit host to ensure that it commits the G7 to a truly global response to COVID-19, placing sustainable health systems at the core of efforts to tackle COVID-19 and “build back better” long-term. This month, please write to the Foreign Secretary, Rt. Hon Dominic Raab MP, asking the UK to influence G7 leaders to put their weight behind a global, equitable approach to building health systems to enable a more effective response and sustainable recovery from the pandemic, and to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Please copy your letter to Rt. Hon Michael Gove MP, Cabinet Office Minister responsible for the G7 Summit.

Take action!

Please write to the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab MP, copying in Michael Gove MP, Cabinet Office Minister, asking the UK to influence G7 leaders to put their weight behind a global, equitable approach to building health systems to enable a more effective pandemic response.

Contact details:

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Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP, Cabinet Office, 70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS
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Please let us know that you’ve taken action by emailing Ruthie Walters at ruthie.walters@results.org.uk