

Oppose the U-turn on aid

Show the Government that now is not the time for aid cuts.

RESULTS

The Government recently announced that it plans to spend less on aid in next year's budget, reducing the 0.7% of national income currently allocated to development, and cutting it to 0.5%. Combined with cuts announced earlier this year, this will mean the 2021 aid budget will be around £4 billion (30%) smaller than it was in 2019.

This is unacceptable, especially during a global pandemic that is causing vastly more poverty worldwide. It signals that the UK is effectively turning its back on already-marginalised people and failing to play its part in building a fairer world and leaving no one behind. The impact will be felt by the poorest and most marginalised communities the hardest, and many thousands of lives are at stake. With the UK hosting key global moments next year, the Government should be setting a good example of global cooperation.

It's up to us to show that members of the public support high-quality aid programmes that save lives and build stronger health and education systems. This month, please write to your MP asking them to raise your concerns with the Prime Minister, or write to your local media publication to express why now is not the time for cuts.

What's happening?

On 25 November the Government announced its spending plans for 2021 and, after months of speculation, the Chancellor Rishi Sunak MP [said in his speech that he intends to reduce amount the allocated to aid](#) from 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) to 0.5%. Given that that allocating 0.7% of GNI to aid is [enshrined in UK law](#), the Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab MP has indicated that the Government will try to [repeal the legislation](#), a decision that will need to be approved by Parliament early next year.

Over [200 charities](#), including RESULTS UK as well as many high-profile individuals, including [former Prime Ministers](#), warned the Government against this decision before the announcement was made.

This is the latest in a series of threats the current Government has made to the UK's good track record in reducing poverty through the aid budget. In July, it was announced that the Department for International Development would merge with the Foreign Office, a move which the [Prime Minister justified](#) by expressing that foreign policy and aid should be better aligned in order to further the UK's own national interest. Then, [£2.9 billion in cuts](#) to the 2020 aid budget were announced without warning or consultation. Now, the parliamentary scrutiny committee which oversees proper spending of the taxpayer's money on aid [is also at risk](#). We have been opposing this focus of aid spending on national self-interest and working to defend effective, transparent aid programmes that are focused on [reducing poverty and improving human development](#).

Why should we oppose this cut?

First and foremost, we know this will have a huge impact on the lives of people living in poverty. The UK has a good track record on providing impactful aid programmes, which will be even more needed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2015, [UK aid has helped 15.6 million children](#) to gain a decent education and at least saved 1.4 million lives through essential vaccinations. A further [60 million people](#), including children under 5, women of childbearing age and adolescent girls were reached through DFID's nutrition programmes from 2015 to 2019. Based on this level of impact, the newest cuts are likely to put thousands of lives at risk and deprive millions more of a chance to escape poverty.

The need in the world is also increasing, with decades of progress on poverty at risk of being reversed due to the impact of COVID-19 worldwide. Crucially, the knock-on effects of the pandemic may be more devastating than the virus itself with [150 million more people](#) vulnerable to extreme poverty by 2021. Other infectious diseases like TB are on the rise due to difficulties getting people diagnosed and treated during the pandemic – progress on TB could [be reversed back to levels seen in 2013](#), causing 1.5 million deaths by 2025. [Millions of children are missing routine vaccinations](#) for diseases such as measles, polio and diphtheria due to disruption to services caused by COVID-19. Back in March this year, [three quarters](#) of the world’s children and students were out of school due to national COVID-19 lockdowns and it’s likely that [30 million of these](#) will never return to formal education, with girls and disabled children most at risk of dropping out. [Up to 80 million](#) more people at risk of malnutrition too, as a result of lost livelihoods and increasing food prices. Now is not the time to retreat from our moral obligation to the world’s most marginalised.

Although the Chancellor framed the latest cuts as a financial decision in light of the economic situation here in the UK, we know it’s a political choice. Cuts of this size to the aid budget may reduce our impact on poverty by around one third, but only make a [tiny saving](#) domestically when compared to our wider public spending. At the same time, we’ve seen the Government [splash out an additional £16.5 on defence spending](#), a figure which exceeds its manifesto commitments by £4bn per year and clearly illustrates that there is enough money to be found.

This decision also reflects a U-turn on [Conservative Party manifesto commitments](#) made before the 2019 general election and amounts to a broken promise to people in lower- and middle-income countries. Other international development promises made at the same time, such as committing to fight for girls’ right to 12 years of quality education, and to help end preventable deaths of mothers and children, will also be much harder to keep with less money to spend, and the commitment to these must now be called in to question.

Lastly, with the UK hosting the G7 presidency and the UN Climate Change Conference or [COP26](#), as well as co-hosting the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education in 2021, the Government should set a good example to other countries while the UK is effectively in a position of global leadership. The decision to cut aid strongly calls into question the UK’s global leadership despite the Government’s rhetoric about a ‘Global Britain’, and sets a dangerous precedent at a time where global collaboration is needed to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and focus on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

What now?

If you have been able to take previous actions on the effectiveness of UK aid this year, thank you! We need to keep up the pressure on the Government to do the right thing and ensure our MPs are representing all of the voices who support UK aid. Please ask your MP to write to the Prime Minister with your concerns. Your MP’s support will also be needed early next year when the time comes to vote in Parliament on the future of the 0.7% legislation. If you have recently been in contact with your MP on [aid scrutiny](#) and [nutrition funding](#) and would rather wait before sending them another email, a second option is to try and get published in local media in order to amplify the reasons why cutting aid now is a bad idea. It’s vital to show the Government that this decision will not go unopposed.

Take action!

1. Please email your MP to let them know you oppose these cuts and ask that they write to the Prime Minister representing your concerns. Use the Talking Points in our Background sheet to guide you.
2. Write to a news media site or print publication local to you, explaining why the public should support 0.7%. Tips and advice on getting published in the Background sheet.

Let us know you’ve taken action by emailing Dela on delanderson@results.org.uk.