

# UK aid and poverty reduction

## What is poverty reduction?

RESULTS understands that poverty is not just about a lack of income, but about access to essential services too. We focus our campaigns on mobilising resources and changing policies to improve access to healthcare including nutrition, as well as a quality education. Ensuring that everyone in the world has access to these services, including the most marginalised people, who are often “left behind”, is also at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals.

By asking that UK aid remains focused on reducing poverty, we are asking for the Government to make a clear how it is contributing to improving the lives of the world’s poorest through ‘human development’ programmes, and not just boosting countries’ economic growth without guaranteeing that these gains will make a material difference to those in need.

## DFID’s contribution to poverty reduction

Focusing on the impact of aid rather than the need in the world can be a more positive and persuasive way of starting a discussion about this issue. DFID’s impact can be articulated clearly because of its word-leading reputation for measuring impact and transparency. Here are some examples:

- Through DFID, UK aid has supported immunisation of over 56 million children, saving 990,000 lives, between January 2015 and December 2017. The [recent UK pledge to Gavi](#) will help immunise up to 75 million children over the next five years.
- 60 million people, including children under 5, women of childbearing age and adolescent girls were reached through DFID’s nutrition programmes from April 2015 to March 2019.
- DFID has supported over 14 million people to gain a decent education between April 2015 and March 2019.
- The UK has helped immunise up to 45 million children against polio whilst saving £2 billion globally by 2035 in costs saved treating polio.

Source : [DFID annual report 2018-19](#). You can find some more positive examples of impactful aid projects via this [Global Citizen](#) blog.

## How does the FCO compare when it comes to poverty reduction?

Analysis from ONE found that the FCO spends very little aid in the world’s poorest and most fragile countries (16% in 2017). The FCO performs less well on transparency too – it was recently ranked 38th out of 47 donor agencies in the 2020 [Aid Transparency Index](#), whilst DFID ranked 9<sup>th</sup> with a “very good” rating.

It’s hard to measure the impact of the FCO’s programmes on reducing poverty, because it’s simply not as transparent. Although the department did cite [“supporting sustainable growth”](#) as one of its objectives in 2018-19, it was done within the larger objective of promoting the UK’s own ‘prosperity, people and global influence’. In 2019, an [independent review](#) found that a shift in spending aid in the UK’s national interest risked diluting the focus on poverty reduction.

You can also compare DFID, the FCO and other Government Departments on their aid spending’s poverty focus and effectiveness using [ONE’s 2018 Real Aid Index](#).

# Case study: Empowering girls in Ethiopia

It is important to bring the personal side of poverty reduction into discussions about international aid. One example of how UK aid is contributing to poverty reduction is through the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC), launched by DFID in 2012 as a 12-year commitment to reaching the most marginalised girls in the world. Here is Melesu's story, from a girls' education and empowerment project in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is currently the [second largest recipient](#) of UK bilateral aid.

Alongside [CHADET](#) and [Childhope](#), the GEC has been running a project that supports the most vulnerable girls to stay in school, and also to do well whilst there, by supporting teachers to provide intensive academic tutorials as well as broader care and support for targeted girls.

Mastewal is an Amharic teacher, but as a GEC focal teacher, she also facilitates 'life skills' sessions, and has been trained to run the Girls' Club. For the girls she teaches, Mastewal is a figure who inspires their education who also offers care and support.

Melesu is a student of Mastewal's whose early schooling was sadly typical of that for girls in many rural areas. From her first enrolment, she hardly attended and was performing badly. As the oldest child in her family, it fell to her to look after all her siblings and assist her mother in running the house. Melesu's parents decided she would marry because they lacked confidence in school, and the bride wealth that would earn from her marriage would be transformative for the entire family.



"I felt so afraid and unhappy, because I knew I would be taken from school and I would leave a life of learning and friends", she said. But Melesu also knew she had a chance to stop it. During Girls Club, they had learned about the 'Letter Link' box (pictured above) and why it was there – to report illegal child marriages.

After the marriage was reported, Mastewal contacted the community volunteers, well-known to all and well versed in the Girls Education Challenge principles. Together they started discussions with the parents, reminding them both of the law and of how CHADET could support Melesu to stay in school. Melesu's mother Bezunesh believes firmly in education, but feels poverty left her little choice: "I knew that with the bride wealth for her marriage I could afford to buy the things her younger siblings needed for school. Now that we are supported with the school costs for Melesu, and now that we are more aware about the consequences of child marriage, I would never take that decision again."

Mastewal and Bezunesh are Melesu's support team, cheering her on as she steadily improves at school and gets more confident in life. Mastewal reports happily: "She has a really good approach to tutorials. After her marriage was stopped and she started attending them, she began to improve at school, and her grades have really gone up since then."

As well as the tutorials, a shift has occurred in how Melesu's family sees the value of her education. Now Melesu still helps at home but is now given time to study and to attend tutorials on Saturdays.

Source: [Girls' Education Challenge Case Studies](#). You can find out more about DFID's work in Ethiopia, [here](#), and lots more stories in the form of short videos on DFID's 2019 hashtag, [#100waysaidworks](#).