

Foreign Secretary sets out new innovative development reforms

19.3.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Tackling conflict and supporting fragile states at centre of the government's new approach to development.

New figures published today show government will prioritise fragile and conflict affected states, humanitarian support, tackling violence against women and girls and global health threats as part of new approach to development. Following the announcement to reduce development spending last year, these reforms also seek to lever in more innovative finance to support development.

- Modern UK development support will prioritise fragile and conflict affected states – and those with greatest humanitarian need, including Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon and Sudan.
- Women and girls will be prioritised including preventing violence, championing their political and economic participation, and keeping children learning even in conflict.
- The UK will remain at the forefront of international action on climate change and nature loss with new focus on unlocking private investment for development.

Supporting fragile states will be at the heart of the UK's modern approach to development, the Foreign Secretary will announce today. With the greatest poverty and suffering now in states wracked by conflict and crisis, she will outline plans to prioritise support for countries affected by war – including protection for funding for Sudan, Palestine, Ukraine and Lebanon. She will stress that this will be matched by a stronger link with Britain's diplomatic action on conflict prevention and resolution.

Setting out how the UK's aid budget will be spent over the next three years, Yvette Cooper will signal a fundamental change in how the UK will approach international development, based on partnership not paternalism. This will include shifting focus from being a donor to an investor, with a new emphasis on providing the expertise which enables countries to build up their own capability, provide for their own communities and thrive without aid. This will draw on the best Britain has to offer, from our universities, scientific institutions, the City of London, and agencies like the Met Office and HMRC.

Driving innovation to unlock more global finance for development will be critical to the UK's new approach, leveraging institutions like British International Investment and reform of the World Bank, to drive growth and innovation, mobilise private capital, and provide returns over time.

National security is the first duty of this government. That's why, to fund a necessary increase in defence spending, the Government has taken the decision to reduce the UK ODA budget to 0.3% of GNI by 2027.

The Foreign Secretary, Yvette Cooper said:

At a time when conflict is raging in many parts of the world, we will maintain and protect our support to people in Ukraine, Sudan, Palestine and Lebanon, and match this with diplomatic action to prevent and resolve conflicts that are causing such devastation and humanitarian suffering.

With less investment we need to refocus to ensure it has the most impact. Responding to desperate humanitarian crises, preventing conflict and upholding international law are not only a core part of Britain's values and our common humanity. They are also central to Britain's interests, because in an increasingly interconnected world, we know that instability abroad affects us back at home.

That is why we will continue to invest in global health and climate action to transform lives, champion the rights of women and girls, and back the most effective parts of the multilateral system that can maximise our impact, because international development is a vital part of UK foreign policy.

Today we will set out how we will spend our overseas development budget more effectively than ever before — and how, by fundamentally reforming and reinvigorating our approach, we will deliver a better, more innovative development agenda that is fit for the modern world.”

In a statement to Parliament later, the Foreign Secretary is expected to announce that countries with the greatest humanitarian need, including Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan, will be prioritised to address harm caused by conflict and global threats. Overall, 70% of all geographic support will be allocated to the most fragile and conflict affected states by 2028/29. Core funding to Education Cannot Wait, funding education in crisis contexts, will match our previous pledge of £80m.

The UK's humanitarian leadership will continue, including extending longstanding partnerships with Scottish-based charity the HALO Trust and Manchester-based Mines Advisory Group (MAG) – two British organisations at the heart of humanitarian demining efforts – as well as the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).

The government's new approach to aid will see UK funding support some of the world's most vulnerable people to build prosperous, stable lives in their home regions, addressing drivers that cause people to migrate by dangerous, illegal routes. Alongside a greater focus on humanitarian aid for those most in need and support to fragile and conflict affected communities and states, £24 million a year will be ringfenced for migration-related projects which seek to address the underlying causes of illegal migration.

The UK will also continue to direct more funding through organisations that deliver the greatest impact, such as the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA21) which will deliver two-thirds of its work in Africa. Every £1 the UK invests in IDA unlocks £4, ensuring the maximum impact for the UK taxpayer.

We are also promoting more sustainable, transparent lending and strong public financial management to support developing countries to tackle unsustainable debt and prevent recurring cycles of crisis.

The Foreign Secretary has made women and girls a departmental priority and will today pledge that at least 90% of her department's aid programmes will integrate gender equality by 2030. Central spending on preventing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI) will be protected at 2025/2026 levels.

Programmes strengthening the delivery of lifesaving sexual and reproductive health services to millions of women in the poorest countries will also continue to receive funding. The UK will remain a leading investor in global health, safeguarding support to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to help save up to 8 million lives from the world's deadliest diseases between now and 2030, and the Global

Fund, to avert up to 22 million new cases or infections of HIV, TB and malaria by 2028.

The UK will also remain at the forefront of international action on climate and nature. Around £6 billion will be invested as International Climate Finance to support countries and communities on the frontline of the climate crisis. This will be bolstered by an additional £6.7 billion in UK-backed climate and nature positive investments, as well as billions in private finance to be mobilised including by leveraging the City of London's position as the green finance capital of the world, to drive investment and growth across the globe.

Levering in major new innovative finance and private sector resource to support growth, development and climate resilience, will be a key focus including through the new industry-led Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDE) Investor Taskforce.

We will also make the shift to investment and mutually beneficial partnerships and phase out FCDO bilateral country allocations to G20 countries - except in Turkey where we help share the burden on refugees.

Minister for International Development, Jenny Chapman said:

We are spending less on international development, but we are spending it better than ever. Our commitment to tackling global challenges — hunger, disease, insecurity and conflict — has not wavered. That is because the prosperity and security of the British people are inseparable from what happens beyond our borders.

Our partners in the Global South tell us they want partnership, not paternalism. Investment, not dependency. They want to trade and to build their own systems so they are able to thrive without aid. Our job is to help them do that.

That means backing the international organisations that deliver the best, leveraging others' contributions, particularly the private sector, and using the full breadth of the UK's strengths to drive growth and progress more than aid alone ever could.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-sets-out-new-innovative-development-reforms>