

VALLIS REPORT

MERGING OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID)

AND FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (FCO)



© **Figure 1:** Photo taken from devex - <https://www.devex.com/news/dfid-faces-wake-up-call-on-gender-equality-strategy-97116>

Who are DFID?

The Department for International Development (DFID) in the UK uses aid to tackle the global challenges of our time including poverty and disease, mass migration, insecurity and conflict. They focus on:

- Strengthening global peace, security and governance;
- Increasing resilience and response to crisis
- Tackling poverty;
- Helping the most vulnerable;
- Promoting global prosperity;
- Delivering value for money.

DFID works in countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, many of which are fragile or at risk from fragile neighbours. In addition to working directly in countries, DFID also gives UK Aid through multi-country global programmes and core contributions to multilaterals.



Figure 2: UK aid in action – Gov.UK

How much money does the UK spend on development currently?

G7 countries have committed to spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on overseas development. The UK is the only G7 country to have this enshrined in law and has met this target for 5 consecutive years.

By comparison, no other G7 country and only 4 countries globally met this target in 2018. This means that for every £8 given by donor countries, the UK is responsible for £1.

However, not all of this money is spent by DFID. In 2017, DFID spent 73% of UK aid, with the FCO as the next biggest spender. The proportion of non-

DFID ODA is steadily increasing – in fact doubling since 2009.

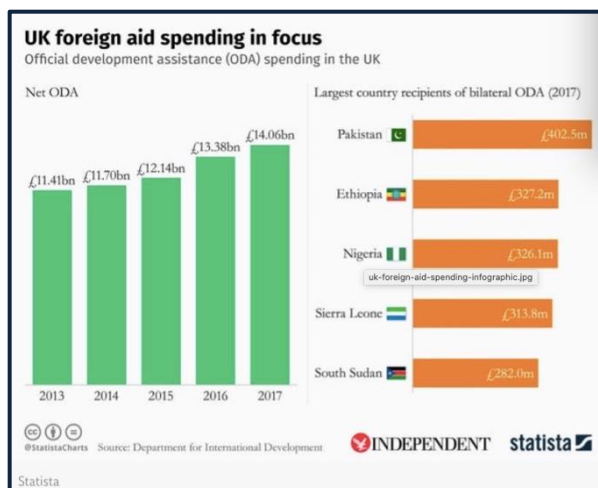


Figure 3: UK foreign aid spending in focus – *The Independent & Statista*

Why is DFID being merged with the FCO?

On the 16th June 2020, Downing Street released a statement stating DFID and FCO would merge, with the aim of “uniting development and diplomacy in one new department that brings together Britain’s international effort”.

“This is exactly the moment when we must mobilise every one of our national assets, including our aid budget and expertise, to safeguard British interests and values overseas.” – Prime Minister Boris Johnson

The Prime Minister described himself as particularly motivated by Hurricane Irma, in 2017, when UK Aid money was not able to be used to rebuild British lives in the British Virgin Islands.

The new department would be expected to offer more consistent and collaborated policies, instead of two departments making decisions separately. This would not be unusual – Australia, New Zealand and Canada all manage foreign policy and development under one department.

What is the argument against this?

Whilst many people agree more coordination and integration between DFID and FCO is necessary, a complete merge may bring about other problems.

Foreign policy should advance the national interest, whereas development policy prioritises global interest, and these can result in different priorities.

It has been argued that combining DFID and FCO could lead to the development budget being used to further the UK's political and security objectives rather than as humanitarian aid. For example, the changes would allow the budget to be spent on "all peacekeeping work and broadcasting services", diverting some funds to the Ministry of Defence and the BBC.

"The concept of giving aid in the national interest is both flawed and immoral. Evidence shows that aid is far less likely to be effective if donors put their own priorities, or the interests of big business and private finance, ahead of the needs of countries and people who should benefit from that aid." – *Laura Taylor, head of global advocacy for Christian Aid, The Independent*

Additionally, DFID has succeeded in gathering the top experts in development, and has built up an impressive reputation abroad, both of which would be at risk by the reform.

What will change?

Announcements are expected over the coming weeks and months regarding the specifics of the merge, with many questions currently unanswered. It has been confirmed that the Foreign Secretary will make decisions on aid spending which are in line with UK priorities overseas. Within each country, foreign office ministers will be responsible for development collaboration as well as other aspects of the bilateral relationship with that country, hopefully leading to better coordination.

"It was always frustrating how difficult it was to do good, effective joint-working between the departments" – *Lord Peter Ricketts, former Foreign Office permanent under-secretary, Civil Service World*

The UK will continue to spend 0.7% of GNI (equating to £13.4 billion) on aid.

It is planned that the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will be established in September 2020 and preparation for this to take place has already begun.

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