

UK WASH Network Submission to the International Development Committee's inquiry: The Future of UK Aid

This evidence and testimony is submitted on behalf of the UK WASH network by the co-Chairs:

Dr Nick Hepworth (Water Witness International)

Dr Virginia Newton-Lewis (WaterAid)

The submission responds to each of the IDC's inquiry topics and includes testimony from those affected by the cuts, as well as an overview of the consequences of the proposed cuts for water resource management, climate resilience, and safe water supply, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

Our submission and the key points we raise reflect the contents of an open letter sent to the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab on 28th April 2021 which has been signed by over 120 leaders from civil society, academia and the private sector.¹ Signatories include the UK's leading academics and researchers working on global water and environmental issues; British Water, a membership association representing 180 UK companies working globally on all aspects of water and wastewater; the Alliance for Water Stewardship, whose members include the world's largest and most progressive multinational corporations, UN Agencies, as well as NGOs working directly with the world's most vulnerable people.

Summary:

1. Our submission sets out evidence for why cuts to UK ODA, including cuts of 80% on WASH represent a significant strategic misstep by the UK government which is incompatible with its stated global priorities and leadership ambitions on health security, girl's education, climate and nature, trade and jobs, and conflict avoidance.
2. Since 2015, the UK has helped over 62.6 million people gain access to safe water and sanitation. The cuts mean that a staggering 10 million people stand to lose out on gaining access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene facilities this year alone.
3. During the pandemic, this decision to halt support for water, hygiene and basic health maintenance is not just unethical, but risks the UK's global reputation and a domino effect where basic services for the poor are deprioritised globally. It is also an act of self-harm to the UK, given that 'no one is safe from COVID, until we are all safe'.
4. We highlight the lack of coordination, consultation and transparency surrounding the FCDO's decision making, and the harm this is causing to UK NGOs, partners and communities, and the UK's credibility as a global leader for international development.

¹<https://waterwitness.org/news-events/2021/4/28/open-letter-to-foreign-secretary-on-80-cuts-to-uk-wash-oda-budget>

Activities cancelled as a result of the cuts mean significant wasted investment, lost opportunities and undermining of past achievements. We provide testimony from those affected to illustrate the unequivocal damage caused by the UK's political decision to cut aid at a time when it is needed most urgently.

5. In light of our evidence, we urge an immediate response from the UK government and FCDO which includes:
 - Restoration of funding for existing programmes and those already planned on WASH, water and climate resilience;
 - Working with stakeholders to develop and deliver a coherent and comprehensive UK strategic response to the global water and sanitation crisis;
 - commitment to a transparent timescale for returning ODA to 0.7% GDP, and maintenance of operational capacity to manage delivery of this statutory commitment within FCDO and its partners.
6. Shared water security through universal access to safe WASH and sustainable water resource management is a critical enabler of the UK's global priorities. Building on the UK's global leadership role through adequate and well-focused ODA must therefore be a priority.
7. We welcome the opportunity to provide verbal evidence to the IDC and can provide additional evidence and information where required.

About the UK WASH Network

8. The UK Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Network represents UK NGOs, academics and independent experts working to address the global water crisis, and to accelerate delivery of UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6) of safe water, sanitation and hygiene for all.
9. The network is a sub-group of BOND, active since 1999 with over 100 members working at the front line of sustainable water resource management (WRM), water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and climate resilience for the world's poorest people.
10. The network aims to stimulate collaboration, knowledge sharing, accountability, advocacy and political ambition to maximize the UK's contributions to the delivery of SDG 6.

Context

11. The UK has been a leading contributor of aid on water and WASH, and since 2010 has been the fifth largest bilateral donor to the sector globally, and the fourth largest provider of grant ODA to heavily-indebted poor countries.
12. The UK has also prioritised funding to the poorest, for example as the largest bilateral provider of grant finance for basic water supply and sanitation services.
13. Funding to water resource management (WRM) has been a small part of the UK's commitments, averaging at most 68 million USD over the last five years, and has declined in recent years, despite increasing water scarcity, and political focus on the environment and climate change.²
14. The political decision by the government to renege on the UK's international commitment and statutory requirement to allocate 0.7% of GDP to aid, and to reduce it to 0.5% has led to extremely damaging cuts across UK ODA during a time of upheaval and significant need.
15. There is no economic justification for this, coming at a time when other countries experiencing the same economic challenges are increasing their aid budgets, and when UK military spending has increased by £16.5 billion.^{3,4}
16. The Foreign Secretary has stated that allocations to Multilateral Development Banks will be maintained, and this and other choices have left disproportionate cuts to some sectors, including WASH and WRM.
17. It has been reported that cuts to UK aid for WASH amount to over 80% of existing commitments. This will see the UK slip from 5th to 18th place among bilateral donors to the sector, behind countries including Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Belgium.

² Comparisons based on data taken from OECD Creditor Reporting System, Gross Disbursements, 2019 Constant USD.

WRM commitments based on CRS commitments, constant 2019 USD, including all the following codes, to produce a generous estimate: codes 14010: Water sector policy and administrative management 14015: Water resources conservation (including data collection) 14040: River basins development 14050: Waste management/disposal 14081: Education and training in water supply and sanitation 21040: Water transport 23220: Hydro-electric power plants 31140: Agricultural water resources 41020: Biosphere protection 41030: Biodiversity 41040: Site preservation 41081: Environmental education/training 43060: Disaster Risk Reduction.

Analysis of reducing commitments based on Water Witness analysis of the FCDO development tracker project level information.

³ <https://www.devex.com/news/devex-newswire-biden-s-6-8b-foreign-aid-budget-boost-99628>

⁴ <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2020/11/19/uk-to-boost-defense-budget-by-219-billion-heres-who-benefits-and-loses-out/>

IDC Topic 1: Strategy

The strategic targeting of UK aid spending, including the focus areas set out by the FCDO's seven global challenges and their alignment with the conclusions of the Integrated Review

Whether these focus areas address the most pressing global development challenges

The effectiveness of the Government's policy to focus ODA spending on countries where UK economic, security and development interests align

18. The goals of strategically targeting UK aid and greater policy coherence across government are laudable, and the 'seven global challenges' set out by government broadly reflect current global development priorities. However, the decision to cut aid on WASH and WRM so dramatically and so quickly and without consultation suggests a limited understanding of development contexts and drivers, which in turn threatens to undermine the UK's ability to deliver on its stated priorities of:

- Global health security
- Girl's education
- Climate and biodiversity
- Economic development and trade
- Open societies and conflict resolution

19. Each of these goals cannot be achieved without adequate investment in WASH and water management more widely, and the proposed cuts will damage our collective ability to deliver on each of these priorities, as set out in our evidence below:

Global health security

20. Reliable access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, including the availability of handwashing facilities in homes, schools and hospitals are fundamental elements of health security, as well as universal human rights. UK aid must respond to the striking inequalities in WASH access - and protection against COVID - which sees 63% of Africa's urban population unable to access basic water and hygiene services, and 1 in 4 healthcare facilities without basic WASH services – a problem which affects 2 billion people, a quarter of humanity.⁵

21. If the UK government is serious in its commitment to tackle COVID and reduce avoidable deaths globally, then access to improved WASH services must be prioritised. They play a

⁵ World Bank, 2020. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/nasikiliza/covid-19-solving-africas-water-crisis-more-urgent-ever>; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Health Care Facilities: Global baseline report 2019. New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization, 2019.

central role in reducing child mortality in low-income countries where water-borne disease causes 1.4 million avoidable deaths each year.⁶

22. Improved WASH services and household water security are critically important for managing the pandemic, reducing deaths and preventing the emergence of new strains.⁷ In the many countries supported by UK Aid which are waiting to benefit from vaccine roll-out, good hand hygiene remains a primary public health intervention to control transmission of the virus and new variants. Sustainable access to water and sanitation are precursors to improving public health and safety for women in particular.

Girl's Education

23. Inadequate WASH provision in schools and communities has a direct impact on educational outcomes, in particularly for girls. 443 million school days are lost every year because of water related illnesses, which also undermine attention and cognitive development.⁸
24. Water insecurity and inadequate WASH provision undermine girl's education in other ways. Women and girls spend a total of 200 million hours fetching water each day because of a lack of provision close to their homes, and so cannot use this time to study, attend school or fulfil their full potential in other ways.⁹
25. 1 in 3 schools lack basic WASH services, and over half of primary schools in low-income countries lack safe toilets.^{10,11} Girls frequently and regularly miss school while menstruating because of the absence of WASH for menstrual hygiene management.¹²
26. Drawing on data from their partners in 78 low-income countries the Global Partnership for Education have identified the top ten barriers to girl's education. The lack of separate and safe toilets is ranked as the 4th most important barrier, and opportunity

⁶ WHO . World Health Organization; Geneva: 2018. Global Health Estimates 2016: Deaths by Cause, Age, Sex, by Country and by Region, 2000-2016. [Google Scholar]WHO, 2018f. Global Health Estimates 2016: Deaths by Cause, Age, Sex, by Country and by Region, 2000-2016. World Health Organization, Geneva.

⁷ Brauer, Michael, Jeff T. Zhao, Fiona B. Bennitt, and Jeffrey D. Stanaway. "Global access to handwashing: implications for COVID-19 control in low-income countries." *Environmental health perspectives* 128, no. 5 (2020): 057005.; Staddon, Chad, M. Everard, Julie Mytton, T. Octavianti, W. Powell, N. Quinn, S. M. N. Uddin et al. "Water insecurity compounds the global coronavirus crisis." *Water International* 45, no. 5 (2020): 416-422.

⁸ UNDP. 2006. Human Development Report 2006: Beyond scarcity - Power, poverty and the global water crisis. New York. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2006>

⁹ (UNICEF, 2018). <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-collecting-water-often-colossal-waste-time-women-and-girls>

¹⁰ www.washdata.org – total schools sanitation chart at: <https://bit.ly/3wEz9NF>

¹¹ www.washdata.org – low income primary schools chart at: <https://bit.ly/3vwScj5>

¹² See e.g. Miiro, G., Rutakumwa, R., Nakiyingi-Miuro, J. et al. Menstrual health and school absenteeism among adolescent girls in Uganda (MENISCUS): a feasibility study. *BMC Women's Health* 18, 4 (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-017-0502-z>

costs of schooling (which includes the displacement of schooling so that girls can fetch water) as the 3rd greatest barrier.¹³

27. The UK's decision to cut investment in WASH therefore leaves millions of girls to face a life of drudgery and lost opportunity, and cannot be reconciled with the government's stated aims of getting 40 million more girls into school globally, and of 're-doubling efforts as a champion of girls' education and gender equality'.¹⁴

Climate and biodiversity

28. Improved water management is central to ensuring climate resilience, green growth and protecting nature.
29. 55 million people are already severely affected by droughts each year and 5 billion people are likely to face water shortages by 2050 because of drivers including climate change and pollution.^{15,16} At the same time, water offers exciting potential as a renewable energy resource, with less than 10% Africa's hydropower potential developed.¹⁷ Aquatic ecosystems and species are being degraded and lost faster than in any other biome, and an estimated 86% of world's rivers are 'seriously damaged' by human activity.¹⁸
30. Access to WASH is a critical component of climate resilience for households, communities and cities. Ensuring that WASH services are climate-resilient represents value for money for UK aid. Ensuring services are resilient to floods and droughts removes the need to repeatedly rebuild and rehabilitate services after disasters.
31. UK ODA for improved WRM and WASH are critical if the UK is to contribute meaningfully to climate resilience and the protection of biodiversity. UK commitments to WASH and WRM have declined in several recent years, a trend which needs to be reversed if the UK's claims of global leadership on climate and nature are to have any credibility.¹⁹
32. Cuts to agreed programmes within UK Aid Direct will condemn millions of people to exposure to increasingly frequent flood and drought events, and undermine efforts to

¹³ GPE https://apolitical.co/en/solution_article/just-how-much-can-menstruation-affect-girls-education

¹⁴ FCDO 2021, Every girl goes to school, stays safe, and learns: Five years of global action, 2021–26

¹⁵ https://www.who.int/health-topics/drought#tab=tab_1

¹⁶ WWAP (United Nations World Water Assessment Programme). 2018. The United Nations World Water Development Report 2018: Nature-based Solutions. Paris, UNESCO.

¹⁷ WWAP (United Nations World Water Assessment Programme). 2015. The United Nations World Water Development Report 2015: Water for a Sustainable World. Paris, UNESCO.

¹⁸ Su, Guohuan, Maxime Logez, Jun Xu, Shengli Tao, Sébastien Villéger, and Sébastien Brosse. "Human impacts on global freshwater fish biodiversity." *Science* 371, no. 6531 (2021): 835-838.

¹⁹ Based on OECD CRS analysis of commitments and comparison with project data from FCDO development tracker-data available on request

protect water ecosystem and so are staggeringly inconsistent with the UK's claimed leadership credentials on these global priorities.

Economic development and trade

33. Water security – the reliable availability of good quality water for production, health, livelihoods and ecosystems, coupled with acceptable risk from droughts, floods, conflict and pollution – is an essential precursor for economic development and job creation. The UN estimates that 78% of jobs are water dependent, 42% heavily water dependent.²⁰ Not only do industrial and agricultural growth need water for production, but they need a healthy workforce with access to safe WASH services.
34. Businesses, both in developing countries and UK based multinationals must be enabled through improved WASH services for a healthier and more productive workforce, as well as effective WRM to ensure reliable and good quality water for production.
35. The economic case is clear: every £1 invested in water and sanitation returns an average of £4 in increased productivity.²¹ The World Bank predicts that unless water security is prioritised, water-related losses in some countries will hit GDP growth by as much as 6 percent by 2050.²²

Open societies and conflict resolution

36. Water crises are a key driver of civil and ethnic unrest, regional conflict and migration, and may displace as many as 200 million people by 2050 (UN ESC, 2018). Improved water security is central to addressing the humanitarian challenges related to displaced people and refugees.²³
37. Cutting the UK's investment on WASH, at a time when strong leadership is needed most, is a strategic mistake if the UK government is genuine about its ambitions for inclusive growth, conflict prevention and mitigation.

²⁰ WWAP (United Nations World Water Assessment Programme). 2016. The United Nations World Water Development Report 2016: Water and Jobs. Paris, UNESCO.

²¹ Guy Hutton; Global costs and benefits of reaching universal coverage of sanitation and drinking-water supply. *J Water Health* 1 March 2013; 11 (1): 1–12. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2166/wh.2012.105>

²² World Bank Group. 2016. High and Dry : Climate Change, Water, and the Economy. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank.

²³ Akhter, Mehereen, Sayed Mohammad Nazim Uddin, Nazifa Rafa, Sanjida Marium Hridi, Chad Staddon, and Wayne Powell. "Drinking Water Security Challenges in Rohingya Refugee Camps of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh." *Sustainability* 12, no. 18 (2020): 7325.

FCDO Overall development strategy

38. Improved WASH services and water governance are pre-requisites for achieving the UK's global priorities and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which the UK has committed to achieving by 2030.
39. Health, equality, urban development, water and ecosystem protection, education, creation of decent jobs and prosperity all depend on delivering WASH and managing water resources effectively.
40. Despite some success in mobilising funds, capacity, institutional reform and political will, much work remains to deliver on the global goal of universal access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene. The sector has struggled to deliver where need is greatest, in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, and striking inequalities within water and sanitation provision between the rich and poor persist.²⁴
41. Despite international commitment to Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), only 40% of countries are anywhere near implementation of effective water resource management and in many, progress has slowed or reversed.²⁵
42. As a result, 80% of global wastewater goes untreated; freshwater species are being lost faster than in any other habitat; and water-related disasters are on the rise. The water crisis is now a primary threat to the global economy, a major driver of infant mortality, poverty and conflict, and these problems hit the world's poor and women the hardest.
43. Few global priorities can be as urgent and important as addressing the multifaceted global water and sanitation crisis, given its importance for economic progress, social justice, food and energy security, disease control, climate resilience, ecosystem functioning, and conflict avoidance.
44. The FCDOs stated goals are important, but without a coherent and comprehensive UK strategy in response to the global water and sanitation crisis, progress towards them will be severely hampered or simply impossible.
45. The FCDO should take the opportunity to demonstrate real leadership by convening UK and global water expertise and stakeholders to develop a progressive UK water and sanitation strategy. This should be backed by an appropriate level of investment, and build on available evidence about 'what works' to drive impactful and efficient aid, and joined-up government action in order to build on the UK's track record of leadership on WASH.

24 Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2017. Special focus on inequalities. New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO), 2019.

25 UN Water 2020, <https://www.sdg6monitoring.org/indicator-651/>

46. The FCDO has a key role to play in ensuring that global water security and universal WASH access are priorities across UK government and for our global partners, including through our leadership of COP26 and the upcoming G7 Summit.
47. The future focus on systemic change mooted by the FCDO will be important, but significant financing will also be needed to deliver the GBP 80 billion needed each year to deliver universal WASH access by 2030.²⁶ Supporting accountability and building systems that scale and sustain access require ODA investment that is reliable over the long term. Evidence shows how short-term and erratic partnerships undermine the effectiveness of ODA for accountability and system strengthening.²⁷
48. Through systems strengthening and innovation in automated monitoring, financing models, operation and maintenance, the WASH sector is making good progress. This is not the time to knock the sector off course. Systems strengthening requires comparable investment to basic infrastructure provision, and will be impossible without long-term political and financial commitment.
49. It is essential that aid is returned back to 0.7% of GDP as quickly as possible, so that the UK can honor our global and statutory commitments. UK commitments on WASH and WRM were in decline ahead of the cuts, and FCDO has lost globally recognized expertise and convening power as a result.
50. The coming months should be used to plan a strategic expansion of aid including on WASH and WRM in order to stimulate a global green recovery and to build global resilience to future pandemics.
51. As part of its strategy, the FCDO should seize the opportunity to work across government to support delivery of the SDGs, including those on water. For example, there are exciting opportunities to leverage the financial markets, private sector and our academic institutions to accelerate delivery of our water goals. Establishing water stewardship, full WASH access for workers and fair tax contributions in low-income territories as expected business norms, through their inclusion as a due diligence requirement in supply chains and investment decision making are clear and realistic examples of these opportunities.

²⁶ Guy Hutton and Mili Varughese, 2016, *The Costs of Meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Targets on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene*, The World Bank, <https://www.wsp.org/sites/wsp/files/publications/K8543.pdf>

²⁷ Hepworth, N.D., Brown, B.D. and Brewer, T. 2020. Accountability and advocacy interventions in the water sector: a review of global evidence. Part 1. Overview and Summary Results. Water Witness International, Edinburgh, UK

Focus Countries

52. FCDO should ensure that aid money focuses on the people most in need. Historically, tying aid to reflect 'strategic' benefits has been found to undermine aid effectiveness and value for money.²⁸
53. Half of the world's poor live in fragile states, and by 2030 up to two thirds of the world's extreme poor will live in settings of fragility, conflict and violence.²⁹ These contexts are characterised by a chronic lack of basic services such as WASH. To cut aid to WASH in these contexts will exacerbate displacement, gender-based violence, chronic ill-health, exclusion from education, and marginalisation of the poorest, women and vulnerable groups. The gains made in recent years in these areas are being jeopardised.
-

²⁸ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/untied-aid.htm>

²⁹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/publication/world-bank-group-strategy-for-fragility-conflict-and-violence-2020-2025>

IDC Topic 2: Administration

Changes to the administration of UK ODA, including the FCDO assuming responsibility for deciding the final departmental allocation of ODA and administering the majority of UK ODA

The split between bilateral and multilateral ODA spending, and the effectiveness of these channels for the delivery of UK aid

54. Before the merger of departments, water sector expertise in DFID's country offices was already in decline because of the drive to minimise staff headcounts. There is a risk that the merger of the FCO and DFID will further erode the skill-base needed within country offices to develop and manage programmes and demonstrate UK leadership. These, and an apparent de-prioritisation of water by multi-lateral partners like the World Bank have created a development 'blind spot' regarding water security. It is essential that water is prioritised with an integrated and holistic approach across WASH and WRM.
55. We've seen progress stagnate in many countries, in part due to poor donor coordination and weak leadership within the development partners. An FCDO leadership more articulate in how water flows through and sustains economies across the global south, and more confident in advancing solutions to water problems would be better able to address this strategic gap and the risks it brings. The ability to scan donor/government strategy and programming across sectors to review the need for interventions to improve water and climate security will be an important asset.
56. More broadly, additional FCDO staff dedicated to WASH and WRM at national, regional and global scales would be extremely valuable. FCDO staff are widely respected and influential and the soft power available through dedicated and knowledgeable staff are as important as appropriate levels of ODA. Dedicated staff will also be able to influence cross-departmentally for joined-up delivery, for example, by embedding water issues within CDC and DTI portfolios.
57. The new FCDO must ensure that sector specialists are retained or recruited to ensure that aid money is allocated strategically and spent effectively. Cuts to the bilateral programmes are particularly damaging given what has been achieved in the past through UK Aid.
58. UK bilateral programmes have also been generally well-targeted in terms of being pro-poor and working in fragile states for basic systems which favour poor communities. UK Aid has been the largest funder of rural sanitation for example.³⁰
59. The multilateral development banks primarily give loans, whereas bilateral aid is exclusively grants, which are more appropriate for low-income countries where needs are greatest. By increasing the proportion of aid that goes to MDB replenishments, UK

³⁰ <https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/rural-sanitation-high-ambitions-low-donor-financing>

grant ODA is converted by the MDB's into loan ODA. UK bilateral grant aid is needed more than ever given growing debt crisis and the impact of COVID-19.³¹

³¹ <https://washmatters.wateraid.org/sites/g/files/jkxoof256/files/blueprint-financing-a-future-of-safe-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-for-all.pdf>

IDC Topic 3: Process

The FCDO's approach to the process of implementing in-year changes to the aid budget during the 2020-21 financial year, including its communication with stakeholders

The FCDO's approach to setting ODA budget allocations for the 2021-22 financial year, including its communication with stakeholders

60. Decision-making by the FCDO in relation to the cuts has been rushed, and appears to have taken place without any consultation, rigorous analysis or recourse to evidence. Sector by sector, or programme by programme analysis of the impacts of cuts does not appear to have happened, and there has been a distinct lack of openness, transparency and shockingly poor communication around the process. For example, details of cuts in the WASH sector have not yet been made public despite several requests.
 61. Cuts to existing and agreed programmes are particularly damaging and introduce significant safeguarding and value for money risks. FCDO is rightly a demanding donor with high standards for due diligence and evaluation, so the transaction costs around UK Aid for all parties tend to be particularly high.
 62. The implications of FCDO 'pulling the plug' on so many programmes will hit the WASH sector hard, and as well as lost positive change, will also erode the resilience, capabilities and in some cases, the viability of the UK's aid delivery partners. It also leaves the UK's hard-won reputation as a reliable development partner severely diminished.
 63. In the experience of our network, there has been no consultation or other effort by FCDO to ameliorate these risks.
 64. As an urgent priority FCDO must communicate the impact of cuts by sector, including the loss of institutional capacity and skills, and their implications for our ability to return aid spend to 0.7% of GDP in the near term.
-

IDC Topic 4: Impact of the changes

Impact upon communities in lower income countries

Ms. Sareen Malik, Executive Secretary of the African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation

65. On behalf of the African Civil Society Network on Water, our 47 country members and the 422 million people living in poverty in Africa for whom we seek water justice, I thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the International Development Committee.
66. We represent those at the frontline: the 63% of urban populations in Africa that according to the World Bank, right now in 2020, cannot access basic water services and therefore cannot protect themselves or their children from COVID, or indeed cholera - a disease eradicated from Europe well over a century ago but which still snatches over 150 000 lives every year in the global south.
67. We represent the hundreds of thousands of people forced to migrate each year because of intensifying climate impacts, droughts, floods, changes in seasonality and broken ecosystems - migrants estimated to number 200 million by 2050.
68. We represent the African women and girls that every day spend 200 million hours collecting water, and whose daughters, and daughters' daughters will be locked into a life of ill-health and poverty if we fail to address the water crisis.
69. On their behalf we ask for careful reflection and reconsideration of the decision by the UK government to cut its world leading aid. We are particularly alarmed by the news that FCDO will cut aid on WASH and water by 80%, and that it will withdraw aid on water entirely from countries including Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria and South Sudan. Such a withdrawal from the sector will act as a break on the progress that is being made. The cuts will not only deny many millions of people from the chance to access safe water, sanitation and hygiene, but they send the political message that basic services for the poor are no longer a priority. The knock-on effects of these decisions will be significant and widely felt across Africa, and will undermine health, the wellbeing of women and girls, climate resilience, economic opportunity, sustainable growth and efforts to protect nature.
70. Instead of cuts, we need new action, new finance and new political leadership to address the water and climate crises. Without this, the water challenges of the future will be simply impossible to overcome. Already an additional ½ billion Africans are facing acute water stress because of climate change.³² New analysis by the Climate Equity Reference Group <https://climateequityreference.org/> shows how rich nations

³² USEPA/NASA 2015

continue to fail the world's poor by failing to tackle climate breakdown. Strategic support for water security needs to be at the centre of the global response.

71. We need the UK Aid commitment of 0.7% of GDP to be met in spite of 'COVID-recession'.
72. We need this support not just to ensure that our own water needs are met, but so that we can build our economies and trade fairly with the rest of the world. 62% of UK's total water demand lies outside the UK through the water embedded in clothes, food and commodities produced elsewhere.
73. Whilst every UK citizen directly uses one bathtub full of British water per day, indirectly they each suck up 30 bathtubs of other people's water. The Water Footprint Network tell us that a fifth of this comes from Africa. That's not a problem in itself – in fact – we desperately need the associated investment, trade and jobs for the extra 27 million young people which come to working age in Africa every year. The problem is that these water footprints too often trample on local people – through pollution, degraded ecosystems, water grabs, and heightened vulnerability to climate shocks.
74. The answer is simple and the solutions are available. As well as continued investment in strengthening our water institutions, the UK, and all importers of our virtual water must commit to a sustainable and equitable water footprint through the adoption of credible water stewardship in their supply chains, for example via certification against the International Water Stewardship standard.³³
75. We also welcome ongoing support to close the financing gap on water. As well as green finance which targets the good and divests from the bad, we need clean finance which avoids the 'ugly' – corrupt practices and off-shoring of profits. Analysis shows that governments in Africa are spending around 10% of what is actually needed for water security.
76. One of the primary reasons that governments underinvest on water is because they have limited tax revenue to allocate to it, and one of the main reasons for this is because multi-national corporations – many of them British or registered in UK tax havens are very good at not paying tax. The OECD calculates that the African public purse loses \$60 billion each year because of tax manipulation by corporations³⁴ about the same amount as the World Bank estimates it will take to deliver universal WASH in Africa. Companies must pay their fair share of taxes so that governments have the funds they need to manage water.³⁵

³³ <https://a4ws.org/>

³⁴ <https://www.ictd.ac/publication/tax-base-erosion-and-profit-shifting-in-africa-part-1-africa-s-response-to-the-oecd-beps-action-plan/>,

³⁵ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/publication/the-costs-of-meeting-the-2030-sustainable-development-goal-targets-on-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

77. Across all these issues the number one priority is accountable governance. Inclusive governance which has integrity is the answer, and will make the difficult trade-offs, enforce the laws, control the finance, and address the service delivery failures which hold water security back for millions of Africans.
78. Civil society plays a fundamental role in driving good governance. Representing those without voice, bargaining for change, and speaking truth to power – this is the fuel for the transformation we all need. This is backed up by the results of a [global evidence review](#). It shows how important our work is in driving improved services, environmental protection and resource management, by holding governments, financial institutions and corporations to account.
79. The problem is that even pre-COVID, and pre-FCDO cuts, financial support for civil society in Africa from multi-lateral and bilateral donors was drying up. I'm afraid that the UK hasn't invested strategically for almost a decade, and it's not alone. This comes at the same time as a widespread clampdown on civic space and the freedom of citizens to speak out and challenge government. Since 2015 seventy-two countries have introduced new laws to restrict the activities of CSOs and journalists. Last year over 200 people were murdered for protecting the environment and protecting water resources. That's unacceptable.
80. We urge the UK government and the FCDO to take a leadership position on these issues. For the UK to walk away from the water sector, the WASH challenge and civil society support in Africa is the last thing we need right now. We need you to be bold, and to prioritise UK leadership for global climate and water security.
81. As well as getting a proper deal on emissions and adaptation at COP26, we urge the UK government to use its position as a global financial and trading hub to transform global business and investment so that they are clean as well as green. We ask that you focus UK ODA, diplomatic power and aid programmes to drive accountable water governance, to protect the freedoms of civil society, and to address the financing gap which holds back change.
82. Cutting aid for water and WASH will lead to catastrophe within our lifetimes. It will take judicious leadership from the UK to secure the action we need, particularly as we enter a COVID induced recession. We offer our full collaboration to embed water justice at the heart of the recovery and to mobilise the new collaboration, action, transformation for a water secure future.

Herbert Kashililah, National Water Board Tanzania, Chair of Tanzanian Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (TAWASANET)

83. UK Aid and DFID/FCDO leadership of the aid agenda on WASH and water in Tanzania has helped millions living in poverty to achieve a better health and a better life through water and sanitation services in rural communities, cities, schools, and hospitals. The Payment-by-Results Programme for example has delivered 8,698 rural water points benefiting just under 2 million people. The UK's long-term commitment to the sector has helped shape better policies, effective institutions and action to protect our rivers, groundwater, lakes and wetlands from pollution and over-abstraction.
84. Nearly half of all people in Tanzania still lack access to safe water, and less than a quarter -and as few as 13% in urban areas - have access to a decent toilet. Like many countries in Africa our future development depends on improved WASH access and the sustainable exploitation of water resources for agriculture, cities, for hydropower and industry.
85. The sector is not dependent on UK Aid, but the withdrawal of British support will slow down the good progress we are making, and without doubt, it will be the poorest people, women, and girls - and our biodiversity - which will suffer the most. Withdrawal of Aid Direct funding from the Fair Water Futures Programme is a serious blow. It was poised to put drought and flood preparedness in response to the changing climate at the top of the political agenda.
-

Impact upon organisations implementing UK ODA programmes

86. Some Network members have experienced 100% cuts to agreed programmes. Below is testimony from network members on the impact of the cuts:

Dr Nick Hepworth, Executive Director, Water Witness

87. We were notified by FCDO in April that our UK Aid Direct 'Fair Water Futures' grant of some £1.2M over 4 years has been cut. The work focused on helping the most vulnerable people in Tanzania to secure water access, plan for and respond to floods and droughts, and to hold institutions to account for good water services, emergency planning and resource management. The programme focused particularly on empowering women to activate their rights to water and sanitation, and to be resilient to the impacts of climate change. Half a million people would have benefitted, with 5 million targeted to benefit from system change triggered by the work. The work was pioneering – testing new models for building climate resilience in Africa.

88. This opportunity for impact will be lost, and the cut, amounting to 50% of our total income threatens the viability of our organisation and survival of our partner organisations. Together, over the past 10 years, we have helped over 2 million people to become water secure and better able to cope with climate change. External evaluation has rated our UK government funded work as 'A', high impact and good value for money. The lost programme took two years to design and we risk losing over £1M of match funding because of this reversal of the FCDOs funding decision.

89. Of course we appreciate the financial upheaval of COVID, but our track record in building community resilience to water, climate and disease shocks, protecting nature and triggering better institutional performance is widely recognised as pathfinding. We are generating lessons to be scaled globally to guide future aid and climate interventions. We have been told that FCDO carefully screened out and protected climate resilience programmes from the cuts. That doesn't seem to be the case here.

Just A Drop

90. Our proposed project would have increased access to WASH for rural poor households, women and children in Siem Reap Province Cambodia, targeting a total 12,216 people in 12 villages and 8 schools.

91. The project would have helped tackle the spread of coronavirus, and helped to protect these communities, as well as improve their health, livelihoods and education which are already vulnerable, especially for women and girls.

92. The cuts have created huge disappointment, and a loss of trust by the communities we serve and our Cambodia partner.

93. Our Cambodia partner has suffered funding losses and delays due to Covid 19. The loss of the UK Aid programme is a further blow in a difficult time.
94. Along with countless other NGOs the impact on the communities we serve is devastating. To decide to cut spending on WASH by 80% when it is known what impact access to soap and water has on reducing the spread of Covid is disappointing. WASH and MHH are critical factors in supporting girls to stay in school so it is difficult to see how the government will reach its target of an extra 40 million girls in school by 2025 by cutting these services.

Raleigh international

95. Our project Youth for safe WASH in Nepal's marginalised hill communities would have improved access to and use of safe and sustainable water and sanitation among 6,000 community members (including 1,755 school children) in 15 of the Gorkha district's hard to reach hill communities by December 2023
96. The cancellation of this grant is remarkably short-sighted. The work that was planned as part of this initiative is urgent and life-saving. Without safe and sustainable WASH infrastructure and coordination, these communities are significantly more vulnerable to global covid pandemic.
97. The IDC should immediately recommend that the UK government reverses its decision to cancel programmes that address WASH issues and thereby contribute to alleviating the impact of the global covid pandemic.
98. Ongoing delays to the project caused by the budget cuts cause significant and increasing challenges including:
- Growing threats to the partner agreement (PA) with the Nepali Government. As is necessary, we have been building Raleigh International Nepal's (RIN) Y4WASH partner agreement (PA) with the Nepali Government and sharing relevant details including delivery plans and budgets.
 - As the partner agreement indicates Y4WASH was due to start on 1st January 2021, delays beyond this date may be perceived by the government as underspend and/ or under-delivery. 'Donor delays' are often not an explanation deemed acceptable by the Government. RIN will likely face criticism despite the current setbacks being outside of the organisation's control, and its reputation and credibility could be damaged.
 - Undermined relationships with local stakeholders. Both RIN and partner Renewable World (RW) have begun project discussions with prospective target communities and local government. Ongoing delays will likely have a negative impact on the organisations' relationships with these stakeholders.

Financial threats.

- Part of the funding underpinning the delivery of the 15 communities' Solar Multiple Use Systems (SolarMUS) is accessed by the communities with our support via the three Rural Municipalities (RMs). To secure this funding, the project has to be built into the RMs' budgets so the finances can be effectively earmarked and allocated. The cut-off point for the RMs including Y4WASH in its budget is fast approaching, with budgeting meetings having already started, therefore ongoing delays to the project start date increase the risk of missing this deadline. The inability to access these funds in 2021 and this financial support therefore only being available from 2022 onwards would have significant implications on the activities we're able to deliver this year.
 - All partners involved in the project – that is Raleigh International, RIN, RW and Goreto Gorkha – have built Y4WASH into their 2021 organisational budgets and modelled cashflow accordingly. Ongoing disruption to organisational funding is difficult to navigate at a time where financial management is already more challenging due to the impact of the global pandemic. As the delays continue, there becomes an increasing need to reconsider staffing models in light of planned Y4WASH activities not being delivered.
 - Raleigh International and all Y4WASH partners have, since the application was first approved for funding in February 2020, dedicated significant staff resource towards the pre-contract due-diligence process tasks. In addition, the project schedule and budget have had to be re-worked multiple times as initial timeframes towards the signed AGA have shifted more than once. At a time when smaller INGOs and their partners are under pressure caused by the ongoing pandemic, we ask that the FCDO are made aware of the additional staff resource issues and therefore financial pressure these delays to Aid Direct AGAs are causing.
99. Strain on partner relationships. The delays will also put increasing strain on partner relationships and could impact willingness to undertake future joint programming given the potential impact on Raleigh International and RIN's credibility.
-

UK Research

100. The cuts to ODA, which have disproportionately impacted the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), put in jeopardy more than £3 million investment in WaSH related programmes at 25 Higher Education Institutions (HEI)s. Programmes at risk of closure include:

- Brunel University (miniaturised solar concentrators for water desalination)
- Cranfield University (sanitation and hygiene equity)
- Kingston University (clean water initiatives in India)
- Loughborough University (sustainable technologies for WaSH)
- University of Leeds (sanitation in low income urban communities)
- University of the West of England, Bristol (appropriate technologies for safe rainwater harvesting systems in East Africa)

101. Funding cuts, feared to be up to 100% of current GCRF allocations, will greatly harm capacity-building at home and overseas as well as tarnishing the UK's reputation as a champion of WaSH as a key driver of sustainable development.

University of the West of England

102. Funding from GCRF supported the following research, development and knowledge exchange activities:

- Safe and secure rainwater harvesting for water security in East Africa
- Constructed wetlands for water storage in the Peruvian Andes and Indian Himalaya
- Case studies of nature-based solutions for water security in LMICs (the C-GINS database)
- Remote Sensing for Water Management in Africa (collaboration with UNESCO-IHE)

103. In the space of a few short weeks earlier this year we were advised that 100% of the funding for all these initiatives was being withdrawn with the result that all activities have stopped or will do so by July 31.

104. At least a dozen collaborators in LMICs have lost their jobs and approximately 100 others have lost some ongoing remunerative activity.

105. More than 50,000 people will not now benefit from the above work packages.

UK Private Sector – British Water

106. The consequences of the cuts to UKAID will be felt not just in NGO programmes and poor communities, but will also undermine our ability to trade and grow businesses globally. British Water, who work with UK industry to engage in developing countries, state

“The impact of [aid] cuts to trade within the water sector has been profound - removing TAP grants and trade show access funding from UK companies who seek to develop and export business in countries like Vietnam and Brazil is counter-productive. The decision affects not only British companies but the visited nations as well. Trade shows bring bilateral development and directly aids infrastructure improvements of nations like India by connecting solutions to challenges- deals happen on the ground and in person. Without these grants, trade shows have limited attendance and developing countries may not otherwise learn about the technology or expertise of the British businesses they so greatly need.”

“The uncertainty is awful. The key point is that for these things to work, you have to have time to prepare properly. It’s no use announcing TAP funding in July or August for a September exhibition.”

107. These programmes increase UK income and soft power. Overseas Fairs Division note that the TAP programme recorded over £18,000,000 worth of Export Wins.

Conclusion:

108. Our submission sets out evidence for why cuts to UK ODA, including cuts of 80% on WASH represent a significant strategic misstep by the UK government which is incompatible with its stated global priorities and leadership ambitions on health security, girl's education, climate and nature, trade and jobs, and conflict avoidance.
109. Since 2015, the UK has helped over 62.6 million people gain access to safe water and sanitation. The cuts mean that a staggering 10 million people stand to lose out on gaining access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene facilities this year alone.
110. During the pandemic, this decision to halt support for water, hygiene and basic health maintenance is not just unethical, but risks the UK's global reputation and a domino effect where basic services for the poor are deprioritised globally. It is also an act of self-harm to the UK, given that 'no one is safe from COVID, until we are all safe'.
111. We highlight the lack of coordination, consultation and transparency surrounding the FCDO's decision making, and the harm this is causing to UK NGOs, partners and communities, and the UK's credibility as a global leader for international development. Activities cancelled as a result of the cuts mean significant wasted investment, lost opportunities and undermining of past achievements. We provide testimony from those affected to illustrate the unequivocal damage caused by the UK's political decision to cut aid at a time when it is needed most urgently.
112. In light of our evidence, we urge an immediate response from the UK government and FCDO which includes:
- Restoration of funding for existing programmes and those already planned on WASH, water and climate resilience;
 - Working with stakeholders to develop and deliver a coherent and comprehensive UK strategic response to the global water and sanitation crisis;
 - commitment to a transparent timescale for returning ODA to 0.7% GDP, and maintenance of operational capacity to manage delivery of this statutory commitment within FCDO and its partners.
113. Shared water security through universal access to safe WASH and sustainable water resource management is a critical enabler of the UK's global priorities. Building on the UK's global leadership role through adequate and well-focused ODA must therefore be a priority.
114. We welcome the opportunity to provide verbal evidence to the IDC and can provide additional evidence and information where required.