Leave no one behind: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:

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The "Leave no one behind" principle is a major theme throughout this submission. However, as we believe that it should also be a specific, resourced component of any UK SDG strategy, it has been treated separately here.

The pledge that no one should be left behind is a core principle behind the SDGs, as highlighted in the preamble to the UN's Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[1] The principle points to a growing consensus that the SDGs will not be achieved by 2030 unless those most socially and economically excluded and marginalised are both reached first and put front and centre of planning and implementation. The UK government has championed the principle, including setting out its own pledges in Leaving No One Behind: Our Promise to ensure that:

- Every person has a fair opportunity in life no matter who or where they are.
- People who are furthest behind, who have the least opportunity and who are the most excluded will be prioritised.
- Every person counts and will be counted.[2]

However, as is the case for many other governments, the challenge has been turning the principle into action. Recent national and international reports have highlighted that progress on the "leave no one behind" agenda is failing to meet the needs of the most marginalised people.[3] Four years since the goals were agreed, this is deeply concerning.

The UK's leadership and action on leaving no one behind

Four of seven reports by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) in 2016 and 2017 recommended embedding "leave no one behind" across ODA programming and called for further efforts to realise this.[4] It is not yet clear how the UK government intends to implement "Leave No One Behind" in practice, despite its former championing. In general, the overarching principle must be made clearer and involve leadership from both the prime minister and the secretary of state.

While "leave no one behind" is often simplified as a matter of data disaggregation, this is actually far from the case and alone will not be sufficient for its achievement. In fact, an inclusive and comprehensive approach across all the SDGs is what is required. A sole focus on data neglects, among other things, questions of feasibility, political will and social norms. While relevant left behind groups will change according to context, the UK should take specific mainstreamed actions to engage those on the lowest incomes and those marginalised either through conflict, identity or other status. This should include categories reflected in our recommendations on data disaggregation (see below), as well as caste, sexuality and/or LGBT identity and migratory status, among others.

Since the SDGs came into force, there have been several examples of good practice. DFID has made some progress in its planning and establishment of inclusive policies and approaches. Examples include the new Disability and Inclusion Strategy, the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality, the LGBT Approach, and the Youth Agenda.[5] The UK also led the

1. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld
2. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leaving-no-one-behind-our-promise/leaving-no-one-behind-our-promise
3. https://www.rescue.org/report/sdg-progress-fragility-crisis-and-leaving-no-one-behind
http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/2/gender-equality-in-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-2018

4. https://icai.independent.gov.uk/report/follow-up-2016-17/
5. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfids-disability-inclusion-strategy-2018-to-2023
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-strategic-vision-for-gender-equality-her-potential-our-future
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfids-approach-on-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-lgbt-rights
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfids-youth-agenda-putting-young-people-at-the-heart-of-development

way by co-hosting the first ever Global Disability Summit in London in July 2018. While these represent important moments, DFID should do more: to put these commitments into practice through specific initiatives, policies and programmes; to develop "leave no one behind" strategies for groups that are not, for whatever reason, going to be included in the UK's data disaggregation plans; and to address multiple and intersecting identities that impact development outcomes. Increased efforts to achieve the SDGs in humanitarian settings and for internally displaced people would also be welcomed.

More needs to be done to engage and work with civil society, especially in the Global South, working with key left behind groups, as part of the UK's approaches to consultation, partnership and capacity-building (see **Goal 17**). All UK government departments and bodies working internationally should commit to more meaningful engagement and ongoing dialogue with service users and with civil society, including marginalised groups such as women affected by conflict, youth and children, and those living with disabilities. Ongoing, meaningful dialogue is the only proper way to qualitatively assess whether the UK government is delivering progress on the SDGs for key left behind groups.

To ensure proper cross-government mainstreaming of "leave no one behind", gender awareness and sensitivity, as well as improved conflict analysis, across all policies and programming, the UK government should develop and provide practical tools, guidance and resources for all UK government staff and implementing partners working internationally. From a coherence perspective, the UK government should do more to ensure that other international actions (for example trade, economic and growth strategies) promote inclusion and do not lead to people being left behind (see **Goals 1**, **5**, **8**, **10** and **17**).

Inclusive data

The collection and use of inclusive, disaggregated data is critical to leaving no one behind, as well as to achieving **Target 17.18** on international support for statistical systems. The UK has played a central role in raising global attention to the importance of disaggregated data for development, especially for people with disabilities through the use of comparable and tested tools like the Washington Group Question Sets.[6] In 2017, DFID launched its own Data Disaggregation Action Plan, committing to work towards disaggregating according to sex, age, disability status and geography.[7] DFID's new Disability Inclusion Strategy recommits DFID to ensure all new programmes will collect, use and analyse disability-disaggregated data for relevant indicators.[8]

While work is underway to achieve parts of the Action Plan, much more needs to be done to make it a reality. For example, by making the best use of data that exists already and ensuring that household surveys are properly disaggregated. The UK should also do more to ensure that age disaggregation does not leave behind older people, who are typically excluded from statistics.[9] However, it is worth noting that the UK government did take steps to address this problem internationally through launching a UN Statistical Commission stakeholder group on ageing in March 2018.[10]

In July 2018, DFID supported the launch of the Inclusive Data Charter, committing partners to ensure that no one is left behind in the pursuit and measurement of social and economic progress.[11] In its draft Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan, DFID made an important commitment to building capacities for data disaggregation in other countries. Other factors, such as ethnicity and migratory status, are included in Target **17.18** (on capacity-building for data collection) but are not currently in DFID plans. Ethnicity, language and religion are key determinants of exclusion and development outcomes in many countries. These factors can become even more salient in fragile and conflict affected countries where the world's poorest are increasingly concentrated, leading to the intensification of "horizontal inequalities".[12] DFID is well placed to advocate for a global commitment towards disaggregating data by ethnicity, language, religion and other characteristics relevant to national context.

In addition, programmes working with children should track vulnerability by disaggregating according to care-giving or living arrangement.[13] While there are challenges to full disaggregation by these characteristics, such as where this may cause stigma or threaten privacy and security, DFID could use alternative or supplementary data collection methods like participant self-reporting that is monitored by trusted civil society partners.

6. http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/washington-group-question-sets/short-set-of-disability-questions/
7. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582315/Data-disaggregation-action-plan-Jan-2017.pdf
8. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/760997/Disability-Inclusion-Strategy.pdf

9. https://www.helpage.org/global-agewatch/blogs/caroline-dobbing-36/making-older-people-count-in-the-data-revolution-847/
10. https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/news/2018/03/title-statistics-commission-endorses-new-titchfield-city-group-on-ageing/
11. http://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/IDC_onepager_Final.pdf
12. http://ida.worldbank.org/theme/conflict-and-fragility
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTWDR2011/Resources/6406082-1283882418764/WDR_Background_Paper_Stewart.pdf
13. https://lumos.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/All_children_count_but_not_all_children_are_counted.pdf

To ensure no one is left behind, the UK government should:

- Ensure UK policies, strategies and programmes promote inclusion and increase equality internationally, by putting "Leave No One Behind" at the centre of its work. Provide practical tools, guidance and resources to all UK government staff and implementing partners working internationally to support cross-government application of the "Leave No One Behind" principle and gender sensitive analysis across all policy and programming.

- Implement existing inclusion strategies and approaches, including the new Disability and Inclusion Strategy, the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Approach and the Youth Agenda, in collaboration with relevant civil society organisations.

- Engage, collaborate with and fund civil society and other organisations representing left behind groups, especially those furthest left behind, as part of the UK's approaches to consultation, partnership and capacity-building. Commit to meaningful and ongoing dialogue with service users.

- Do more to ensure that other international actions, for example trade, economic and growth strategies, promote inclusion and do not lead to people being left behind (see **Goals 1**, **5**, **8**, **10** and **17**).

- Continue to advocate for disaggregated data on the global stage, including consistently promoting the use of the Washington Group Question Sets and the Inclusive Data Charter. Use the UK's influence to advocate for further disaggregation by ethnicity, language and religion and take steps to ensure older people are included in statistics. Take steps to realise commitments in the DFID Data Disaggregation Action Plan and Disability Strategy.

- Put in place strategies for ensuring marginalised groups not included in plans for official data collection and disaggregation are not left behind, for example through more effective use of unofficial data.

- Ensure data collection and disaggregation follow principles of data-protection, self-identification, participation of marginalised groups and independence of official statistics.[14] Ensure as far as possible the security and safety of participants.

14. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf

This chapter is part of Bond's report, **The UK's global contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals**.

Access the rest of the report at bond.org.uk/UK-global-contribution-SDGs

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