A report by the APPG for the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development

Building Back Better: The SDGs as a roadmap for recovery

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Foreword

At the start of this year, the United Nations (UN) launched a 'decade of action' for delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres noting that, despite "tremendous enthusiasm" and "concrete progress" around the SDGs, "what we see is not enough" and the world remains "off track" for delivering the SDGs.[1]

Since those remarks, the world has been hit by the full extent of the Covid-19 outbreak. The consequences of the pandemic will impact progress towards the SDGs in numerous ways, which we detail in this report. The impact of the virus only heightens the need for increased action by the global community towards achieving the SDGs, and delivering on the commitment to 'leave no one behind', by 2030.

The UK has a crucial role to play in the decade of action, in both delivering the SDGs domestically and supporting other countries to do so. As the government minister with primary responsibility for the SDGs, it was encouraging to hear Baroness Sugg state during a parliamentary debate earlier this year that the SDGs "have a key role in framing and shaping recovery" from the Covid-19 pandemic, and that the "decade of action will be more crucial than ever".[2]

The Secretary of State for International Development, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, echoed these sentiments at the UN High-Level Political Forum on 15 July 2020, stating: "The Decade of Action is upon us, with only 10 years left to achieve the SDGs. The world needs the SDGs more than ever, but Covid-19 has posed yet further challenges to reaching them by 2030. Urgent action to accelerate progress is required."[3]

The UK Government now needs to back up these positive statements with action by using its domestic policies and influence abroad to ensure the SDGs are placed at the heart of the recovery from Covid-19.

Although the impacts of Covid-19 undoubtedly present challenges to delivering the SDGs, it is also true that the recovery from the pandemic presents an opportunity to build back better by using implementation of the SDGs as a 'ready-made' roadmap.

Rt Hon Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale & Theo Clarke MP
Co-Chairs, All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN Global Goals
for Sustainable Development

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[1] Antonio Guterres, Remarks to the General Assembly on the Secretary-General's priorities for 2020, 22 January 2020
[2] Baroness Sugg, Covid 19: Overseas Development Assistance debate, House of Lords, 22 April 2020, cited in the International Committee of the Red Cross, written evidence
[3] Achieving the SDGs amidst COVID-19, UK National Statement to UN High Level Political Forum 2020, delivered 15 July 2020, cited in the International Committee of the Red Cross, written evidence

Executive summary

Our inquiry sought to both establish the impact of Covid-19 on global progress towards achieving the SDGs and to determine the steps the UK Government should take to ensure the SDGs are at the heart of efforts to build back better as a roadmap for recovery.

We received evidence of the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had across a wide range of SDG areas.

In addition to the direct health impacts of Covid-19, the crisis has exposed weaknesses in health systems across the world and had secondary impacts on other health areas, such as disrupting routine vaccinations and sexual and reproductive health services, which threaten progress towards achieving Good Health and Wellbeing. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that at least 80 million children under the age of one are at risk of missing out on routine vaccinations for diseases such as diphtheria, measles and polio.

Evidence regarding the economic effects of the measures taken to contain the virus shows a significant impact on employment and income, particularly in the informal sector, and reductions in exports, foreign direct investment and remittances. These trends have already resulted in increased poverty and world hunger levels, which are predicted to continue to increase. For example, global rise in unemployment of nearly 25 million and income losses for workers of up $35 billion is expected. The effects of these catastrophic economic and employment trends will result in increased poverty rates, with the World Bank estimating that between 40-46 million people will fall back into extreme poverty, the first increase in extreme poverty since 1990.[4]

Education has been disrupted across the world, with schools closed to control the spread of the virus. The most vulnerable children have been particularly affected, with remote learning often not possible, and it is feared that many will never return to education. At the peak of the outbreak in April 2020, 194 nations had country-wide school closures, with 91 per cent of the world's children being out of school.

We heard that the Covid-19 crisis has helped to highlight the urgency of tackling climate change and protecting the environment, demonstrating that global coordination can help us take urgent steps to address shared problems. However, it also threatens to distract global attention from taking the necessary measures.

Progress towards gender equality has also been impacted, with women and girls bearing the brunt of the secondary impacts of the pandemic. Women have been particularly impacted by the socio-economic effects of the virus and the reallocation of resources and priorities from other health services towards responding to Covid-19. There has been a rise in gender-based violence and it is estimated that female genital mutilation and child marriages will increase due to the impact of the pandemic.

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[4] International Alert and Concern Worldwide, written evidence

Evidence shows that distrust in institutions, community tensions and conflict situations are all increasing following the Covid-19 outbreak. Disruption to conflict-prevention work as a result of the virus has further threatened peace.

Partnership working to achieve the SDGs is also under threat, with levels of international development aid likely to be affected. There is a risk that the response to the virus will undermine global collaboration, with countries failing to work together around a potential vaccine and treatments for Covid-19.

We also received evidence about specific groups that have been most impacted by the consequences of the virus. Already-marginalised groups have been particularly affected, with the evidence we received raising concern about the impact on people with disabilities, children, older people, refugees and displaced people, ethnic, linguistic & religious minorities and LGBTQAI+ individuals.

The SDGs as a roadmap to build back better

The SDGs now offer a 'ready-made' roadmap to recovery. They are also the closest thing to a global strategy that 193 governments have agreed.

While progress towards achieving the SDGs has been threatened by the Covid-19 pandemic, the need to 're-set' from its effects offer an opportunity to ensure delivery of the SDGs are a global priority. Prioritising key areas of economic and sustainable development will support and enable the achievement of the SDGs, especially if the leave no one behind principle is integrated into these approaches. The following are the key priorities for the UK Government based on the evidence we received:

Economic development

1. Integrate the leave no one behind principle into all UK Government activities so that the impact of UK actions at home and abroad on achieving the SDGs for the most marginalised in every context is understood and evaluated.

2. Enable and leverage finance available for delivering the SDGs through aligning trade deals with the framework, supporting debt restructuring and exploring options for cancellation where needed, supporting international and domestic tax reform for this purpose, and encouraging other actors such as the private sector to do business differently and demonstrate their impact on delivering the SDGs.

3. Maintain and develop programmes that support cash transfers, social protection, social insurance and market intervention measures to help individual businesses and workers cope with the economic fallout of Covid-19 containment measures. These measures must be developed and implemented in partnership with the people and communities benefiting from them in order to most effectively provide economic empowerment.

4. Invest in the creation of (and reskilling for) new, inclusive, decent jobs and livelihoods in sustainable and environmentally-friendly industries, including through grants and loans for small- and micro-enterprises and workers in the informal sector.

Sustainable development

1. Develop and implement more ambitious emissions-reduction policies in line with the UK's Paris Agreement commitments and support efforts to protect global biodiversity, recognising that dangerous climate change and loss of biodiversity are major threats to achieving the SDGs in the next decade.

2. Produce an ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) prior to COP26 and use the Summit to spearhead and inspire global action on reducing emissions and mitigating climate change.

3. Target UK Government support on adaptation to those most vulnerable to climate change to leave no one behind and ensure it delivers integrated solutions to tackling poverty, promoting nature restoration, and building climate and economic resilience.

4. Ensure any post-Covid-19 economic recovery packages support a green and just transition to sustainable and resilient business models and development pathways.

Build back better

1. Re-adopt the SDGs as an explicit roadmap to recovery.

2. Ensure that a Covid-19 vaccine and any proven treatments are available to all as fast as possible and free of charge to those who need it most.

3. Maintain current ODA for non-Covid-19 health programmes and support low-income countries to develop resilient public health systems and universal health coverage.

4. Invest and encourage wider investment in WASH facilities in schools and communities that do not already have adequate provision in order to help prevent further Covid-19 outbreaks, ensuring the principle of leave no one behind guides this support.

5. Increase spend from the international aid budget on education to 10 per cent given the impact of the pandemic on children and their education.

6. Commit to supporting governance and accountability-building mechanisms across government activities including within ODA, recognising the impact of the pandemic on civic space, drivers of conflict, transparency and corruption.

How to deliver the SDGs

1. Develop a cross-government strategy for achieving the SDGs and allocate responsibility for oversight of implementation to the Cabinet Office, overseen by the Prime Minister.

2. Establish a mechanism for ensuring and monitoring alignment, policy coherence and finding synergies across government with the SDG framework.

3. Develop a clear mechanism for engaging with stakeholders in reviewing progress in the UK and internationally, such as through engaging civil society, businesses and trade unions, in a systematic and inclusive way.

4. Use its influence to further lead and encourage businesses to adopt the SDGs and demonstrate their impact.

5. Ensure the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office puts strategic delivery of the SDGs at the heart of its work and builds on the strengths of both of the merged departments, increasing the transparency of UK aid and demonstrating the impact of its work on the poorest countries and communities in line with the leave no one behind principle.

About the inquiry and context

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development is a group of cross-party UK parliamentarians dedicated to championing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and monitoring their implementation. In early 2020, we launched an inquiry to assess the UK's progress on delivering the SDGs, and to investigate and evaluate the impact of Covid-19 on the SDGs at this crucial point in their delivery.

As part of the inquiry, we issued a call for written evidence, receiving over 30 submissions from a range of organisations, including charities and NGOs, businesses and trade unions. We also held three oral evidence sessions and conducted nine individual interviews in August 2020 with expert stakeholders from the UK and countries in the Global South to receive further testimony. A focus group was held with 17 sector leaders in September 2020 to provide feedback and input on a first draft of the report.

This inquiry builds on the previous work of other committees and the recent Voluntary National Review published by the UK Government. The International Development Committee inquiry, concluded in 2016, noted they were "deeply concerned at the lack of a strategic and comprehensive approach to implementation of the Goals. Without this, it is likely that areas of deep incoherence across government policy could develop and progress made by certain departments could be easily undermined by the policies and actions of others".[5] The report highlights the importance of revenue beyond aid, such as domestic resource mobilisation and private sector investment.

In a follow up inquiry in 2019 on the Voluntary National Review, the committee concluded that "the UK's first VNR was a welcome, but ultimately disappointing, review of the UK's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We found that despite some strengths, too often the VNR lacked coherence, depth and breadth of analysis, focusing instead on "cherry picked" data and case studies at the expense of facing up to the challenges that remain to be tackled in the UK and around the world".[6]

The Environmental Audit Committee report, published in 2017 and focusing on UK progress on the SDGs, states that "the Government's doughnut-shaped approach - which is to see the Goals as something for the UK to help other countries do, rather than drawing on other countries' experiences in implementing the goals here at

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[5] International Development Committee (2016) [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#)
[6] International Development Committee (2019) [UK progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Voluntary National Review](#)

home - suggests that it has little interest in, or enthusiasm for, maximising the opportunities and benefits presented by the Goals".[7]

The UK's Voluntary National Review published in 2019 addresses some of these issues, focusing on action in the UK. It argues domestic progress is being made but outlines areas for continued focus, such as continuing to tackle injustice to ensure no one is left behind, further increasing efforts to address climate and environmental issues, ensuring the housing market works for everybody, responding to mental health needs, and supporting a growing and ageing population.[8]

This inquiry builds on these prior examinations of the UK's role in supporting the SDGs and seeks to explore how the Covid-19 pandemic will influence some of the recommendations and areas identified for action in previous inquiries and reports.

The vast majority of the evidence we received as part of our inquiry focused on the UK's role in supporting international progress towards achieving the SDGs. This report therefore primarily focuses on the UK's international role, rather than its domestic progress on the SDGs.

Many stakeholders and written submissions highlighted parallels between challenges in achieving the SDGs in the UK and in other countries. This was particularly clear around issues such as inequality and the leave no one behind principle, which are apparent in the UK Government's stated aim to 'level up' areas of the country that are economically less developed. These issues apply as much to areas of the United Kingdom as they do to the UK Government's engagements internationally, highlighting the importance of the universality of the SDG Agenda.

While our report focuses on the UK's global role, we urge the Government to ensure the SDGs are prioritised domestically as well as internationally. As we heard from Chris Southworth, Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce UK (ICC UK): "It's really hard to influence the rest of the world unless you lead by example".[9]

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[7] Environmental Audit Committee (2017) Sustainable Development Goals in the UK
[8] UK Government (2019) Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals
[9] Chris Southworth, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020

SDG progress and the impact of Covid-19

The following section outlines specific impacts on different SDGs. However, there are some cross-cutting findings that emerge across all of the goal areas relevant to the UK Government:

- Covid-19 has largely exacerbated existing inequalities and exposed weaknesses in current health and other service delivery systems.

- Evidence shows already marginalised groups such as the urban poor, those working in the informal sector, people with disabilities, children and women and girls are those worst affected.

- Secondary impacts, such as the rise of other diseases where routine vaccinations have not been carried out or the lack of quality education provision leading to declines in school attendance, will be significant and are ongoing.

- The economic impact of the pandemic and the resulting lockdowns is having widespread impact across the SDGs. This is both directly through unemployment, decreased wages and increased precarity, as well as through potential declines in official development assistance (ODA) and government expenditure for the underlying issues that have made communities particularly vulnerable. Trade and foreign direct assistance are also significantly affected, with knock-on effects on national and household economies.

- There is a danger that Covid-19 could worsen pre-existing crises, such as climate change and conflict situations, either through the direct effects of the response to the virus or by distracting attention from these issues.

The global impact of the Covid-19 outbreak has been highly significant, with the pandemic and the required containment measures having a profound effect on progress in delivering the SDGs.

Many of the organisations we heard from in our inquiry were directly observing these consequences. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), for example, wrote:

> *"Through our operations in 105 countries around the world, we see first-hand how Covid-19 and its economic aftershocks are deepening fragility, creating a spike in humanitarian needs, accentuating the impact of violence and conflict, opening the doors to alarming levels of stigmatisation, increasing global poverty, heightening instability and tensions and reversing hard-won development gains."[10]*

This testimony demonstrates the wide-ranging impact of Covid-19 across SDG areas, with the pandemic affecting everything from health to conflict, poverty to gender equality and beyond. Below, we summarise evidence we received on the impact of Covid-19 on different SDGs.

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[10] International Committee of the Red Cross, written evidence

Health

The health impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, both direct and indirect, threaten progress towards achieving Goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing). The virus has also highlighted existing problems in delivering Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).

The direct health impact of the Covid-19 virus has been incomparable with anything the world has experienced in recent years, with over 27 million infections and 893,000 deaths worldwide at time of publication.[11] The most vulnerable communities in the UK and internationally have been particularly impacted, emphasising the need to put the leave no one behind principle at the heart of delivering the SDGs across all UK Government activity.

Professor Diana Mitlin from the University of Manchester noted the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on those living in lower-income urban areas, with 95 per cent of people contracting the virus living in urban areas. The impossibility of social distancing and undertaking adequate hygiene measures for the one in seven of people living in informal settlements puts them at much greater risk of contracting Covid-19.[12]

Covid-19 has exposed pre-existing problems with health services, as outlined by Action for Global Health:

> *"The same issues which are negatively impacting the COVID-19 response – inadequate PPE and supplies, global shortages of health workers due to fear, low pay and incentives, low access to WASH services in health facilities, lack of transparency and accountability in procurement and service delivery, and unclear public health information and communication – are also impacting the ability to maintain other essential health services, at even greater cost."[13]*

Even before Covid-19, more than half the world's population still did not have access to all essential health services[14] and there is a paucity of healthcare workers in many countries. The Trades Union Congress highlighted statistics showing that high-income countries collectively have nearly 12 times as many people employed in the health sector as low-income nations (580 per 10,000 people compared with only 49.23 per 10,000).[15]

The impact of Covid-19 has only further exacerbated these challenges in delivering Good Health and Wellbeing. The UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group told us the pandemic has "exposed the crisis in global

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[11] European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, COVID-19 situation update worldwide, as of 8 September 2020, accessed 8 September 2020
[12] Professor Diana Mitlin, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020
[13] Action for Global Health, written evidence
[14] Ibid
[15] Trades Union Congress, written evidence

health systems", noting that even the best-equipped countries have experienced high mortality rates and medical supply and facility shortages.[16]

Less-equipped health systems are even less able to respond to Covid-19. Chilufya Chileshe from WaterAid noted that nearly half of healthcare facilities have no hand washing facilities at point of care, meaning "the situation is dire" following Covid-19. She added that the disproportionate economic impact of the pandemic on low-income countries will result in a reduction in funding available for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), which the UK Government must step in to protect.[17]

The impact on health systems has led to numerous secondary health impacts of the pandemic. We were referred to estimates from Imperial College that the Covid-19 outbreak will result in an increase in HIV, TB and malaria-related deaths over five years of 10 per cent, 20 per cent and 36 per cent respectively, for example.[18] A recent WHO survey of 155 countries found that 120 countries reported disruptions to non-communicable disease services including rehabilitation, hypertension, diabetes, asthma, palliative care, dental care, cancer treatment and cardiovascular emergencies.[19]

Routine immunisation services have been disrupted by restriction of domestic and international transport, the suspension of immunisation campaigns and the strain on global supply chains. This disruption, Results UK told us, "risks the lives of millions of children globally and threatens to reverse years of progress made on immunisation".[20]

Children will be impacted heavily. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that at least 80 million children under the age of one are at risk of missing out on routine vaccinations for diseases such as diphtheria, measles and polio.[21] It is estimated that every percentage point contraction in global GDP from Covid-19 is expected to lead to an additional four million stunted children due to the impact on nutrition.[22] Using International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates of the economic impact of Covid-19, Concern Worldwide calculate that means "a 'least worst' case scenario of 12 million more stunted children and an undoing of more than five years of progress tackling stunting."[23]

Thirty million children's lives are in danger from these secondary impacts of Covid-19 according to World Vision estimates. The Bond SDG Group highlighted evidence that reductions in coverage of various life-saving interventions of around 15 per cent for six months will lead to an increase in child mortality of around 253,500 (an increase of 10 per cent) in 118 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).[24]

There is also expected to be a significant impact on sexual and reproductive healthcare. Research from the Guttmacher Institute, referenced in Action for Global Health's written evidence, estimated the impact of a 10

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[16] UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group, written evidence
[17] Chilufya Chileshe, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020
[18] Action for Global Health and Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[19] Action for Global Health, written evidence
[20] Results UK, written evidence
[21] Ibid
[22] Results UK and Concern Worldwide, written evidence
[23] Concern Worldwide, written evidence
[24] Bond SDG Group, written evidence

per cent decrease in sexual and reproductive health provision over 12 months (a reduction the study authors actually considered a conservative estimate of the likely impact of Covid-19 on such services). They concluded that a 10 per cent decrease could lead to 49 million more women with unmet need for modern contraception, 15 million more unintended pregnancies, 168,000 more newborn deaths, 29,000 more maternal deaths and three million more unsafe abortions.[25]

Adding to concern about the potential impact on pregnant women's access to antenatal care, VSO referred us to the findings of a study they conducted with the Liverpool School of Tropical Hygiene across Sierra Leone in 2015 following the Ebola crisis. The study found that there had been an 11 per cent decrease in women attending maternity services, and a corresponding 30 per cent increase in maternal mortality.[26] The implications of these findings for the likely impact on maternal mortality of Covid-19 are highly concerning.

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[25] Action for Global Health, written evidence
[26] VSO, written evidence

Economy & poverty

The disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is also having a debilitating economic impact across the world, with consequent impacts on levels of poverty, presenting particular challenges for delivering Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequality).

Measures taken in response to the pandemic across the world have already had a significant impact on employment, with the situation only likely to get worse. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that there could potentially be a global rise in unemployment of nearly 25 million and that income losses for workers globally could reach $35 billion.[27]

The High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK Her Excellency Saida Muna Tasneem told us that Covid-19 has impacted exports, foreign direct investment and remittances sent by temporary migrant workers, which will have a highly negative economic impact across the world. In Bangladesh, these economic effects have resulted in the loss of three per cent of GDP growth, with GDP growth falling below six per cent for the first time in a decade.[28]

We received evidence from organisations on the impact being felt by those they work with. The Fairtrade Foundation told us:

> *"The impact on jobs and livelihoods in developing countries has been rapid and deep, with hundreds of thousands of farmers and workers experiencing job losses and loss of income … Fairtrade flower farms have been some of the hardest hit by the early stages of the pandemic, with the flower industry experiencing a catastrophic drop in orders. An estimated £2.4 million will be needed to maintain a skeleton workforce on Fairtrade flower farms every 3 months to ensure a level of continued income for already vulnerable communities. An estimated £800m will be lost in cocoa tax revenue for Ghana, which provides essential extension services. Cocoa communities are already among the most vulnerable with high levels of poverty and health risks."[29]*

Research carried out by ICRC between May and June 2020 found that 81 per cent of ICRC beneficiaries from 17 countries reported that their livelihoods had been affected, mostly resulting in reduced income and loss of jobs. ICRC told us that those most at risk of losing their income as a result of government restrictions are those

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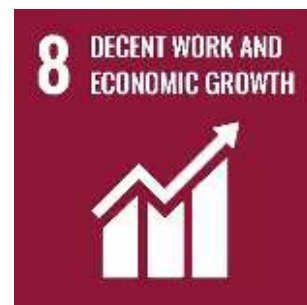
[27] Trades Union Congress and Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[28] Her Excellency Saida Muna Tasneem, oral evidence session, 26 August 2020
[29] Fairtrade Foundation, written evidence

involved in the informal economy and that "in many cases, these are breadwinners of already vulnerable households".[30] Likewise, Mercy Corps stated that:

> *"… those who operate in the informal economy, disproportionately women, youth and displaced groups, are hit particularly hard by [the economic] impacts, as they do not benefit from any social safety nets or unemployment schemes. Those impacts are therefore also likely to reverse progress made on reducing inequalities within countries."[31]*

VSO also referred to the impact on those employed in the informal economy, noting that there are an estimated 300 million informal workers across Africa, with McKinsey predicting that at least one third of these workers are vulnerable to losing their livelihoods as a result of the pandemic.[32]

SOS Children's Villages UK cited even more alarming predictions of the potential impact on employment across Africa, highlighting a warning from the UN Development Project earlier this year that half of all jobs across Africa could be lost due to Covid-19.[33] International Alert noted that the pandemic resulted in sub-Saharan Africa entering its first recession in 25 years, which threatens to reverse many of the development gains made in recent years.[34]

The effects of these catastrophic economic and employment trends will result in increased poverty rates. Research by the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) found that up to half a billion people could be pushed into poverty as a result of Covid-19,[35] while the World Bank expects between 40-46 million people will fall back into extreme poverty, the first increase in extreme poverty since 1990.[36]

Professor Diana Mitlin highlighted recent findings on the impact of Covid-19 on poverty, with figures showing that 78 per cent of people in informal settlements in Nigeria are unable to meet their basic needs and four out of five families living in favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, were living on less than half the income they had prior to the pandemic. Low-income families in Dhaka, Bangladesh recording their financial spending as part of a research study saw a collapse in income in the first month of the pandemic, spending four times their income on basic needs. Despite this, Professor Mitlin told us, "governments have demonstrated an inability to reach those working and living informally". For example, 85 per cent of respondents living in informal settlements in Nigeria had not been reached by government social protection programmes. "Looking forward, we can anticipate a devastating impact on the SDG to reduce poverty", she concluded.[37]

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[30] International Committee of the Red Cross, written evidence
[31] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[32] VSO, written evidence
[33] SOS Children's Villages, written evidence
[34] International Alert, written evidence
[35] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[36] International Alert and Concern Worldwide, written evidence
[37] Professor Diana Mitlin, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020

Food & nutrition

The economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic have exacerbated the challenges in achieving Goal 2 (Zero Hunger).

Concern Worldwide noted that world hunger levels have already been rising since 2015, with over 820 million people going hungry every day.[38] Following the Covid-19 outbreak, the World Food Programme has warned that around 36 countries may suffer famine this year. More than one million people in each of 10 countries are already on the verge of starvation.[39]

ICRC's research also found evidence of the impact the pandemic is already having on global hunger, with many ICRC beneficiaries resorting to 'coping mechanisms' related to food consumption, such as lower food consumption, modification of eating patterns, modification of cropping patterns, selling of livestock, modification of expense patterns, migration of family members, selling and leasing of assets, indebtedness, etc.[40] Coping mechanisms were reported as having been adopted by 61 per cent of Lebanese households, 52 per cent of Ethiopian, 47 per cent of Syrian and 43 per cent of Colombian families.[41]

A rapid market assessment conducted by Mercy Corps in May 2020 found that, in Ethiopia, 96 per cent of surveyed households reported that Covid-19 had reduced household expenditure on food. Seventy-five per cent of households had reduced the frequency of eating, and 21 per cent had reduced portion size.[42] The ICRC survey found that, on a global scale, only seven per cent of respondents reported that they have enough savings to absorb a protracted shock. As such, ICRC concluded that "further deteriorations resulting in increased rates of food insecurity and poverty are thus extremely likely."[43]

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) told us that the appointment of Nick Dyer as the UK's first Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs in September 2020 reflects the UK's prioritisation of Goal 2 (Zero Hunger).[44]

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[38] Concern Worldwide, written evidence
[39] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[40] International Committee of the Red Cross (1996) World Food Summit: Food security in armed conflicts – The ICRC's approach and experience, International Review of the Red Cross
[41] International Committee of the Red Cross, written evidence
[42] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[43] International Committee of the Red Cross, written evidence
[44] Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, written evidence

Education

Education has been interrupted across the world following the implementation of school closures to control the spread of the virus. At the peak of the outbreak in April 2020, 194 nations had country-wide school closures, with 91 per cent of the world's children being out of school.[45] These closures are having a profound effect on progress towards Goal 4 (Quality Education), which we were told "has never been in greater jeopardy".[46]

With schools closed, the switch to remote education has been challenging in many countries. For example, High Commissioner of the Republic of Kenya to the United Kingdom His Excellency Manoah Esipisu told us that in Kenya: "Education has been affected in a very direct way. We are having to promote more virtual education which wasn't really a thing in our part of the world … we are a very strong IT country and we are our region's leaders in technology and innovation [but] we still haven't been able to cover schools and students wherever they are with the ability to access education virtually".[47]

We heard that remote learning is often not possible for some of the most vulnerable children. SOS Children's Villages UK stated that "the most marginalised children – including those SOS works with – often have limited or no access to the resources and equipment they need."[48]

Sightsavers and Leonard Cheshire both raised concern about the impact on children with disabilities' access to education.[49] Leonard Cheshire noted that digital learning initiatives can represent both an opportunity and a challenge for children with disabilities: "Access to distance learning through digital technologies can be highly unequal, and not always adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities."[50]

Whilst even a temporary absence from education can have significant impacts on children's development, we heard widespread concern that some may never return. The Bond SDG Group, for example, told us that "in the poorest countries, many of these children, especially girls and the poorest and most marginalized, are at risk of never returning to school".[51] The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) warned that "many vulnerable adolescents in low- and middle-income countries may be permanently lured away from school to engage in income-generating activities – especially if they are left behind without access to distance learning and without learning support at home".[52]

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[45] Bond SDG Group, Overseas Development Institute, SOS Children's Villages UK, Send My Friend to School Policy and Parliamentary Working Group, Leonard Cheshire, written evidence
[46] SOS Children's Villages UK, written evidence
[47] His Excellency Manoah Esipisu, oral evidence session, 26 August 2020
[48] SOS Children's Villages UK, written evidence
[49] Sightsavers and Leonard Cheshire, written evidence
[50] Leonard Cheshire, written evidence
[51] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[52] Overseas Development Institute, written evidence

Climate change & the environment

The need for the global community to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic threatens to distract from the equally pressing need to take action on climate change, in line with Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and Goal 13 (Climate Action), and to protect the environment, in line with Goal 14 (Life Below Water) and Goal 15 (Life On Land).

One effect of the Covid-19 pandemic according to Project Everyone is that it has demonstrated that "together, we can take steps to allow the planet to breath and prevent climate change from becoming a threat that's irreversible".[53]

The Covid-19 crisis has also helped to demonstrate the urgency of action to halt climate change and protect the environment. The UN Global Compact Network UK told us that "COVID-19 has highlighted the risks our society faces because of biodiversity and habitat loss, and climate change" and that the crisis has served to demonstrate the importance of "[balancing] social and economic needs with the needs of our planet, protecting and managing nature, and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions."[54]

There is a risk that the impact of Covid-19 could distract from efforts to tackle climate change. In their written evidence, the Bond SDG Group warned that, in responding to Covid-19, "... the UK must not allow a reduced emphasis on other major crises, especially the climate and environmental crisis we all face".[55]

There is evidence that tropical forests are hot spots of pandemic impact. The Sussex Sustainability Research Programme provided evidence that deforestation is increasing in some areas of tropical forests because of the absence of law enforcement, migration, and other factors. This deforestation adds to greenhouse gas emissions and further endangers the cultures of indigenous peoples and sensitive ecosystems.[56]

The pandemic has, however, also had some positive environmental effects. Project Everyone noted: "Globally, pollution kills approximately 7 million people per year; but with a third of the world's population having lived under lockdown, we saw a significant decrease in pollution levels around the world."[57] However, as lockdown measures are eased, these benefits will only be short-lived unless measures to mitigate climate change are prioritised by governments.

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[53] Project Everyone, written evidence
[54] UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
[55] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[56] Sussex Sustainability Research Programme, written evidence and post-focus group written submission
[57] Project Everyone, written evidence

Gender equality

Progress towards Goal 5 (Gender Equality) has been affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. Whilst it was noted that the virus is taking the lives of more men than women,[58] women are bearing the brunt of the secondary impacts of the pandemic, with Dinah Musindarwezo of Womankind Worldwide stating that "Covid-19 has deepened gender inequalities in almost all areas affecting women's rights".[59]

The negative socio-economic impacts of the virus have particularly affected women. Women are vastly more likely to take on additional unpaid care roles, at a rate of 70 per cent even before the Covid-19 crisis.[60] These unpaid care roles have only become more necessary following the pandemic with care needed for those who are sick or isolating, or for children affected by school and nursery closures.[61]

Women are also more likely to work in the informal economy, which comprises 60 per cent of women's employment.[62] Dinah Musindarwezo told us that 94.5 per cent of work in Zimbabwe is in the informal economy, with women more likely to be carrying out this work.[63] As the UN Global Compact Network UK told us in their evidence, this means they have "few protections against dismissal and limited access to social protection".[64]

The work women are more likely to do carries health implications. Seventy per cent of frontline healthcare roles worldwide are carried out by women, putting them at greater risk of contracting Covid-19.[65]

The secondary health impacts of Covid-19 are also disproportionately impacting women and girls. The Trades Union Congress and VSO told us that the reallocation of resources and priorities, particularly around sexual and reproductive health services, as outlined in the health section above, is adversely impacting the health of women.[66]

Save the Children submitted evidence showing that girls had been particularly affected by lockdowns. A recent survey conducted by Save the Children found that girls in Lebanon were twice as likely not to have left the house since lockdown as boys. Data from Save the Children's programmes in Colombia shows that demand for support related to gender-based violence increased by 33 per cent from mid-March to mid-May 2020; calls to their helplines were up by 80 per cent; and requests for psychological first aid consultations rose by 62 per

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58 Sightsavers, written evidence
59 Dinah Musindarwezo, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020
60 Ibid
61 Concern Worldwide, Sightsavers, Women's Enterprise Scotland and Trades Union Congress, written evidence and Dinah Musindarwezo, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020
62 Concern Worldwide and UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
63 Dinah Musindarwezo, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020
64 UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
65 Concern Worldwide, UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
66 Trades Union Congress and VSO, written evidence

cent. Girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have reported sexual exploitation to meet basic needs since Covid-19 lockdown closed markets in which their parents work.[67]

There has been an increase in gender-based violence amidst the pandemic. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that domestic violence has increased globally by 20 per cent.[68] ADD International provided evidence of sharp increases in reported cases of domestic violence and violence against women in Uganda (and noted that many cases go unreported). They also referred us to the findings of a survey by the Manusher Jonno Foundation, which reported that at time of publication 4,249 women had faced domestic violence in Bangladesh since the start of the lockdown, with 1,672 of these being new cases.[69]

Initial findings from VSO's 'Sisters for Sisters' programme in Nepal, where younger girls are mentored to stay in school by older girls and young women from the community, "have shown that these girls are now at increased risk of domestic and gender-based violence, as well as early marriage as households struggling for resources look for ways to reduce expenditure."[70]

Estimates predict the impact of the pandemic may result in two million more cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) and 13 million more child marriages over the next decade.[71] UNFPA estimates that one third of the anticipated progress on the SDG targets on child marriage and FGM will be lost as a result.[72]

As detailed above, school closures have a disproportionate impact on girls' education. The ODI noted estimates that 10 million more secondary school age girls could be out of school after the crisis has passed.[73]

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[67] Save the Children, post-focus group written submission
[68] ADD International, written evidence
[69] Ibid
[70] VSO, written evidence
[71] Overseas Development Institute and Mercy Corps, written evidence
[72] Overseas Development Institute, written evidence
[73] Ibid

Institutional trust & conflict

The impact of Covid-19 is decreasing trust in state institutions and increasing conflict situations, threatening progress towards Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Public trust in government and institutions has been damaged by the response to the Covid-19 pandemic in many countries. International Alert told us that the pandemic is eroding already weak trust in government, amplifying divisive narratives and providing cover to authoritarian inclined governments.[74]

Mercy Corps highlighted Nigeria, Lebanon and Iraq as countries seeing particularly low trust in the government, with a Mercy Corps assessment of social cohesion in Iraq finding 85 per cent of respondents were unhappy with the government's handling of the pandemic.[75]

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) pointed to a recent study by the Varieties of Democracy Institute which found that 82 countries have a medium- or high-risk of democratic decline during the pandemic. With Covid-19 leading to the disruption of electoral processes and activities in countries and territories around the world, IFES warned that "these disturbances and uncertainties undermine established democracies and countries striving to consolidate democratic gains".[76]

This damage to trust and increase in tensions is leading to conflict situations. We were told by Mercy Corps that Covid-19 is a "threat multiplier which amplifies key drivers of conflict, and the risk of violent conflict will likely increase as the virus spreads", both at the local level due to tensions related to restricted access to resources, and at a wider level "as economic impacts unfold and populations become frustrated with their government's response, and authoritarian regimes use the pandemic to justify discrimination and other repressive measures".[77]

Concern Worldwide also felt that Covid-19 would amplify pre-existing conflict: "The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on the urban poor in contexts already affected by conflict could exacerbate existing tensions. The risk of violence is high in countries where the economy was already floundering, with high unemployment, frustration at government performance and pressures created by conflict in neighbouring countries."[78]

Mercy Corps reported that pre-existing anti-Syrian sentiment in Lebanon had been exacerbated by Covid-19, leading to aggression, resentment and the implementation of restrictive measures targeting Syrian refugees. Similarly, social cohesion has been affected in Iraq, with the aforementioned Mercy Corps assessment finding

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[74] International Alert, written evidence
[75] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[76] International Foundation for Electoral Systems, written evidence
[77] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[78] Concern Worldwide, written evidence

that 65 per cent of people feel Covid-19 has changed social dynamics in their area and 80 per cent of people reporting that Covid-19 and the subsequent restrictions have hindered populations' return and reintegration.[79]

The risk of further conflict has been heightened by disruption to peacebuilding programmes due to the Covid-19 outbreak. A consultation carried out by Peace Direct and Danish INGO Conducive Space for Peace found that important peacebuilding programmes and dialogues were cancelled in South Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the peace process in Colombia "stalling at a critical moment". Peace Direct also referred to research by Conducive Space for Peace, which found that four out of five local peacebuilders have experienced a reduction in funding since the start of the pandemic and almost 80 per cent have had to suspend activities.[80] Disruption to these crucial programmes threatens progress in achieving peace in conflict-affected areas.

We also heard that disruption related to Covid-19 has hindered the progress of landmine clearance. The Mines Advisory Group told us that most countries in which they operate suspended landmine clearance and that, while almost all have since allowed work to resume, "new social distancing requirements make the work of mine clearance teams less efficient and more time-consuming". Rules around social distancing also "make it more difficult to deliver life-saving risk education and collect information about possible mined area" with affected communities.[81]

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[79] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[80] Peace Direct, written evidence
[81] Mines Advisory Group, written evidence

International development assistance & global humanitarian progress

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Concern about the impact of Covid-19 on levels of official development assistance (ODA) and global humanitarian progress was also widespread, with many worried that Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) will be undermined.

The economic impact of the pandemic is likely to see ODA levels drop at a time when less-developed countries will need support more than ever. The Bond SDG Group wrote that "low-income and fragile countries are facing high and rising sovereign debt and decreasing tax revenues, essentially limiting their ability to respond to the crisis and achieve the SDGs".[82]

Global collaboration will also be particularly crucial in responding to the direct health impacts of Covid-19, with the Bond SDG Group warning of the risk of "limited production volumes, national hoarding and unjust distribution of health technologies that are currently in development. For example, the US Government has procured the world's supply of COVID-19 treatment Remdesivir and several High-Income Countries, including the UK, are seeking preferential access to vaccine candidates".[83] Failure by countries to work together to ensure a fair distribution of any treatments or future vaccine for Covid-19 will threaten progress towards Goal 17.

National collaboration and networking is also key to achieving the SDGs more broadly, as Takele Teshome of the Association for Sustainable Development Alternatives (ASDA), Ethiopia noted: "From my observation, without coordination and collaboration we cannot address the SDGs, but collaboration and networking is missing, everyone is running in their own compartments. There is a need to collaborate."[84]

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[82] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[83] Ibid
[84] Takele Teshome, interview

Particularly impacted groups

As well as receiving evidence on the SDGs being most affected by Covid-19, we were also told about specific groups that have been more impacted by the consequences of the virus. Marginalised groups are among the most affected, imperiling the prospects of achieving Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

People with disabilities

One such group was people with disabilities, whom Sightsavers told us "are being disproportionately impacted and discriminated against in multiple contexts … including existing barriers that prevent many people with disabilities accessing adequate health care on an everyday basis".[85]

Disabled people are being disproportionately impacted by the economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly as many disabled people work in the informal sector. A June 2020 Bangladesh survey conducted by ADD International revealed that "persons with disabilities lost 65% of their income since the Covid-19 crisis began, which in absolute terms, after adjusting for purchase power parity, is the equivalent of moving from £167 to £58 in monthly earnings".[86]

Leonard Cheshire also stated that people with disabilities are likely to be amongst the hardest hit by the economic impact of the pandemic given the additional barriers they face in securing and retaining employment. A survey carried out by members of 20 Disabled People's Organisations in Kenya and Bangladesh found that 68 per cent of respondents in Kenya had not been able to work since the onset of the pandemic and, of those that had been able to continue working, 67 per cent felt insecure in their job due to the pandemic. This figure was even higher in Bangladesh, where 85.9 per cent of respondents stated they felt insecure in their current job situation whether employed or self-employed.[87]

Children

Despite being less impacted by the direct health impacts of Covid-19, children are adversely impacted by many of the secondary impacts of the pandemic, particularly those who are most marginalised. SOS Children's Villages UK warned that this is worsening existing inequalities and "the long-term impacts of the crisis will hit these children the hardest and could have devastating consequences, robbing them of any chance to have a future".[88]

As outlined above, children's educational development is being affected by school closures. Similarly, the UN Global Compact Network UK highlighted reduction of care and protection services for children, including abrupt closure of care institutions and health services serving children, which has increased children's

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[85] Sightsavers, written evidence
[86] ADD International, written evidence
[87] Leonard Cheshire, written evidence
[88] SOS Children's Villages, written evidence

vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and abuse.[89] This is exacerbated by the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, which increases the risk of children being forced into marriage and working.[90]

SOS Children's Villages UK told us that there is a risk that, because children and young people have not been as physically affected by the virus, "the biggest risk is for the recovery efforts … not to consider them as one of the most affected by the pandemic".[91]

Older people

Older people are the most vulnerable to the direct health impacts of the Covid-19 virus as they are most likely to live with chronic conditions that put them at risk of the virus' worst effects.[92]

Age International argued that policies introduced by governments have also disproportionately impacted older people, who are already likely to face greater economic hardship. For example, in Serbia, a night curfew was imposed on anybody aged 70 and over, in Jamaica over 65s were not allowed to leave their homes and in Kerala in India a policy of 'reverse quarantine' designed to isolate older people from others in society was enacted. The effects of these policies, they told us, "risk entrapping an older person in chronic poverty and denying them voice and participation".[93]

Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and other particularly impacted groups

Refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) are at a much higher risk of Covid-19 due to the conditions in displacement camps, and the potential impact on them is of increasing concern, necessitating urgent action. The HALO Trust and Age International both highlighted deficiencies and overburden of healthcare and WASH facilities in displacement camps, which increase the risk of Covid-19 spreading.[94]

Concerns were also raised about the disproportionate impact likely to be faced by ethnic, linguistic & religious minorities,[95] such as indigenous peoples in Latin America,[96] and LGBTQAI+ individuals.[97]

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[89] UN Global Compact Network UK
[90] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[91] SOS Children's Villages, written evidence
[92] Age International, written evidence
[93] Ibid
[94] The HALO Trust and Age International, written evidence
[95] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[96] Sussex Sustainability Research Programme, written evidence
[97] Bond SDG Group, written evidence

The SDGs as a roadmap to build back better

As we have outlined above, the effects of Covid-19 threaten progress in delivering the SDGs in numerous ways. However, the crisis has also served to demonstrate the importance of the goals, with the UN's 'Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity' report stressing that if we had been investing in the SDGs "we could have been better prepared for this crisis".[98]

The SDGs now offer a 'ready-made' roadmap to recovery. As Project Everyone told us: "Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, these highly interconnected Goals are more relevant than ever … COVID-19 has halted and threatened progress towards these Goals. However, it has also provided the world with an opportunity to reset and re-think our actions to build a sustainable, inclusive system for people and planet."[99]

There is widespread support for a renewed commitment to the SDGs. In June 2020, the UN Global Compact Network UK and UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) coordinated a letter signed by leaders of over 150 businesses, civil society organisations, and from public life calling on the UK Government to use the SDGs to create a socially just and green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.[100]

The evidence we received as part of our inquiry also demonstrated this support. For example, Sightsavers referred to "the urgent need for the prioritisation of SDG implementation"[101] and the Bond SDG Group called for the SDGs to be the "explicit organising framework for recovery".[102] Chris Southworth from ICC UK told us that the SDGs should be "front and centre" of the Covid-19 recovery[103] and Louise Scott, Director of Global Sustainability at PwC, advocated a Covid-19 recovery plan "structured around the goals", adding that "it's the closest thing we've got to a global strategy [and] everyone is agreed on it".[104]

Many noted the interconnected nature of the SDGs and the importance of delivering the goals collectively. The UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group told us that, rather than solely focusing on Goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) in the Covid-19 recovery:

> "… the national and international COVID-19 response must also focus on gender equality, human rights, economic empowerment and education. Emerging evidence and country case studies suggests that interconnectivity across the SDGs is critical to controlling the COVID-19 pandemic and its secondary impacts, particularly for marginalised communities".[105]

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[98] UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
[99] Project Everyone, written evidence
[100] UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
[101] Sightsavers, written evidence
[102] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[103] Chris Southworth, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[104] Louise Scott, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[105] UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group, written evidence

Action for Global Health supported this, stating: "COVID-19 is a health crisis with multiple dimensions: among others, it exacerbates poverty, hunger, gender inequality, unemployment, and corruption. Thus, responses to the pandemic require holistic approaches, drawing from the linkages between SDG 3 and all other SDGs."[106]

Below, we explore in more detail the evidence we received on action the UK Government must take on specific SDGs. Over the course of our inquiry, a number of key sectoral recommendations emerged as to how the UK Government can build back better using the SDGs. We have outlined specific recommendations in each section below and provided our overarching recommendations for the Government in the conclusion.

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[106] Action for Global Health, written evidence

# Increasing economic empowerment & reducing inequality

As well as continuing to provide ODA, the UK's wider economic policies should be used to increase economic empowerment for those in low- and middle-income countries, and ultimately reduce inequality and poverty. Doing so will contribute to achieving Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Chiara Mariotti from Oxfam GB noted that so far "the role of Global Britain has not been framed around the UK's contribution to tackle inequality and achieve SDG 10. Inequality is a very clear example of the extent to which departments only focus on the SDGs they are interested in. More could be done by th e UK to reduce inequality at national and global level, for example by playing more of a leading role in driving tax reforms in a more progressive way."[107]

The terms on which countries can access loans can present challenges to their ability to make progress on the SDGs. For example, High Commissioner Manoah Esipisu told us that the reclassification of Kenya to a lower middle income country in 2014 has made access to low-interest concessionary loans from multilateral institutions more difficult because the new status means Kenya is expected to access loans from the market.[108] The UK can therefore use its role as a member of multilateral institutions to make the case for low-interest loans to support countries to invest in achieving the SDGs.

Debt restructuring and cancellation was advocated as a way in which the UK could support other countries to make progress on the SDGs.[109] The Sussex Sustainability Research Programme told us that helping the 24 countries in the class of 'debt distress' or near debt distress to achieve long-term debt sustainability would give them a better chance of coping with the current financial crisis and get back on track to achieving the SDGs.[110]

With the UK currently engaged in efforts to agree new trade deals ahead of the end of the transition period for the UK's exit from the European Union, the Trades Union Congress called for all new trade deals being negotiated, as well as those being rolled over, to be aligned with achieving the SDGs.[111] Chris Southworth said that "we need trade and development working hand in hand".[112] Similarly, WWF-UK told us:

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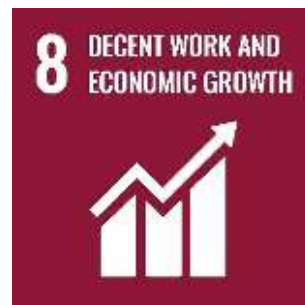
[107] Chiara Mariotti, interview
[108] His Excellency Manoah Esipisu, oral evidence session, 26 August 2020
[109] Bond SDG Group, Trades Union Congress, Project Everyone and UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group, written evidence
[110] Sussex Sustainability Research Programme, written evidence
[111] Trades Union Congress, written evidence
[112] Chris Southworth, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020

"The UK has a unique opportunity to lead the world in making trade work for people and the planet. At the same time as negotiating new trade deals for the first time in nearly fifty years, the UK will host the next international climate conference, COP26, as well as the 2021 G7 summit. Aligning these agendas in 2020 will demonstrate how we intend to contribute to a green global recovery that accelerates delivery against the Sustainable Development Goals. The UK can ensure UK Trade has a positive impact on the SDGs by legislating to fully align trade policy with our climate, environment and sustainable development commitments."[113]

In our oral evidence session with the High Commissioners to the UK of Kenya and Bangladesh, we were told that the UK's approach to trade with their countries is far more consequential for their economic performance than the UK's approach to aid. The High Commissioner of Kenya Manoah Esipisu highlighted the importance of agreeing a UK-Kenya trade deal to ensure trade flows are not interrupted when the UK ends the transition period of exiting the EU, and also noted the importance of the new FCDO continuing to provide 'aid for trade' support.[114]

High Commissioner Saida Muna Tasneem echoed this, pointing out that Bangladesh receives US$200 million annually from the Department of International Development (DfID), yet Bangladesh-UK bilateral trade is $5 billion, the UK's investment in Bangladesh is $2.5 billion and Bangladesh's remittances from the UK add up to $1.2 billion. This economic relationship contributes to Bangladesh's economy to a much greater extent than aid contributions, meaning "what we want is aid for trade … capacity building in trade, investment and regulatory systems so we can have a better World Bank 'ease of doing business rating'". Providing zero duty access to the UK economy until at least 2030 would also help Bangladesh to build sustainable economic growth.[115]

Providing economic support for individual businesses and workers was also felt to be important, with the ODI noting that "'growth from below' is how most people escape and sustain escapes from poverty".[116] Measures called for included cash transfers, social protection, social insurance and market intervention measures to help people cope with the economic fallout of Covid-19 containment measures.[117] Scaled-up investment in the creation of (and reskilling for) new, inclusive, decent jobs and livelihoods in sustainable and environmentally-friendly industries was advocated, including grants and loans for small- and micro-enterprises and workers in the informal sector.[118] These measures must be developed and implemented in partnership with the people and communities benefiting from them in order to most effectively provide economic empowerment.

The Fairtrade Foundation highlighted the importance of paying living wages as a way of achieving the SDGs, noting that communities that benefit from better wages are more equipped to deal with the public health needs arising from Covid-19 both at the household level and in terms of community infrastructure.[119]

The Government should also seek to work with the private sector to ensure business activity is in line with achieving the SDGs. Louise Scott from PwC told us that "business has a critical role to play in helping

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[113] WWF-UK, written evidence
[114] His Excellency Manoah Esipisu, oral evidence session, 26 August 2020
[115] Her Excellency Saida Muna Tasneem, oral evidence session, 26 August 2020
[116] Overseas Development Institute, written evidence
[117] Bond SDG Group, Mercy Corps and SOS Children's Villages UK, written evidence
[118] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[119] Fairtrade Foundation, written evidence

governments to achieve" the SDGs, and that, with studies showing a $12 trillion a year benefit to businesses of taking action towards achieving the SDGs, there is a strong business case for doing so, as well as it being "the right thing to do".[120] The UN Global Compact Network UK made the same point: "The Government has a vital role to play in mobilising efforts and galvanizing businesses to work together to achieve the SDGs. The business community needs the Government to send a strong message of support and to look favourably on those who are already working hard to embed the Goals in their strategy and contributing to a responsible business sector."[121]

The evidence we received highlighted that the economic recovery can be enhanced by prioritising the SDGs, rather than there needing to be a trade-off between action on the SDGs and economic recovery. The UN Global Compact Network UK highlighted ILO estimates that taking action to address climate change with a focus on the energy sector will generate 24 million new jobs worldwide by 2030 if the right policies are in place, while the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) estimates that jobs in renewables could reach 42 million – or four times the current level – globally by 2050 through the increased focus of investments on renewables.[122] Investing in clean energy and environmental measures can therefore help to boost decent work and economic growth, at the same time as acting on climate change.

Recommendations to the Government

1. Commit to spearheading international and domestic tax reform aimed at reducing inequality.

2. Support debt restructuring for countries in debt distress or near debt distress, and further explore options for debt cancellation.

3. Ensure all trade deals being negotiated are aligned with achieving the SDGs and the UK's climate and environmental commitments.

4. Provide 'aid for trade' to nations with less developed economies to support them to build sustainable economic growth.

5. Maintain and develop cash transfers, social protection, social insurance and market intervention measures to help individual businesses and workers cope with the economic fallout of Covid-19 containment measures. These measures must be developed and implemented in partnership with the people and communities benefiting from them in order to most effectively provide economic empowerment.

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[120] Louise Scott, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[121] UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
[122] Ibid

Action on climate change & the environment

The recovery period from Covid-19 is an opportunity for the UK to build in the measures that will be necessary to avoid the worst effects of climate change, a global crisis that requires just as urgent attention as the Covid-19 pandemic, and to protect the environment, in line with Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), Goal 13 (Climate Action), Goal 14 (Life Below Water) and Goal 15 (Life On Land).

The pressing need to take action on climate change was highlighted by Louise Scott from PwC: "It's incredibly urgent. We've got ten years to halve emissions or we won't keep warming below 1.5˚C", which she noted will see extreme weather and disruption at least as damaging as that seen due to Covid-19.[123]

The Fairtrade Foundation told us of the impact climate change is already having on those with whom they work:

> "Many poor farmers and workers in developing countries (who have done least to cause the climate crisis) have already been forced to abandon their fields and migrate. Climate-related risks to livelihoods are predicted to rise rapidly and, coupled with the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, the scale of the challenge facing producers on the front line is stark."[124]

Similarly, the High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK Saida Muna Tasneem told us that the "increasing climate-related phenomena is actually posing greater threats than Covid-19" for Bangladesh. The impact of cyclones and flooding on Bangladesh means "what we have achieved is getting washed away", we were told. Despite this, she informed us that of the aid provided to Bangladesh by DfID in 2018/19 just two per cent was allocated for action on climate change and the environment. High Commissioner Tasneem argued that the UK should instead ensure 50 per cent of its aid to Bangladesh is for reducing climate vulnerability "because that is the greatest threat to our national development".[125]

Saleemul Huq, of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCD), Bangladesh, argued that what the UK Government could most usefully do on climate change is reduce its own emissions so the impact on countries in the Global South is also reduced: "Giving money to Bangladesh is not what the UK Government has to do, cutting emissions is what the UK Government has to do. It should be no longer just

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[123] Louise Scott, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[124] Fairtrade Foundation, written evidence
[125] Her Excellency Saida Muna Tasneem, oral evidence session, 26 August 2020

helping poor countries, but doing their own work. What is the UK doing to fulfil its obligations? It can help Bangladesh by doubling its emission reductions. It is a bigger responsibility for them to acknowledge and stop the impacts."[126]

Salina Sanou of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), Kenya also told us that the UK "should strengthen the UN multilateral relations process, particularly [the] COP 26 [climate change summit taking place in the UK next year]. Here, the UK has a great role in ensuring that NDCs[127] are reviewed in an inclusive manner. This will contribute to achieving the SDGs and the Paris Agreement."[128]

As outlined above, there is an opportunity to design economic recovery measures to assist progress towards achieving net zero carbon economies. Indeed, as WWF-UK told us: "This development route will deliver more jobs, prosperity and wellbeing, and give us the best chance of delivering the SDGs."[129] Concern Worldwide wrote that doing so will help to mitigate the impact of future disasters and pandemics – "a clear win-win for the health of economies, people, and the planet."[130] Mercy Corps urged world leaders to ensure any economic measures taken "build resilience to future shocks – including climate related hazards – even as we respond to urgent needs".[131]

Mercy Corps added that the UK should ensure that 50 per cent of UK support for climate adaptation to LMICs is in fragile and conflict affected states and use its global influence as a major donor to encourage other governments and multilaterals to do the same. A recent Mercy Corps and Concern Worldwide report, 'At What Cost', shows that there is no correlation between the amount of money received for climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction by people living in extreme poverty and climate-vulnerability of a given country.[132] This means funds are not being targeted according to need and again shows the need for the leave no one behind principle to be central to all activities.

WWF-UK's evidence outlined how economic recovery packages can help to ensure a green and just transition to sustainable and resilient business models and development pathways. They told us that fiscal stimulus packages should be used to invest in nature, for example by investing in green infrastructure that reduces vulnerability to natural disasters, such as water shortages, and sea level rises. Financial support to the private sector should be "conditional upon keeping existing and ambitious environmental commitments and, where needed, introducing new commitments". Finally, debt relief must be provided "in a way that supports increased economic resilience through investment in a sustainable, low carbon development trajectory".[133]

It was widely felt that the UK's hosting of the next UN climate change negotiations (COP26) in November 2021 presents an opportunity for the UK to take a lead in advocating for global action on climate change.[134] In advance of the summit, the UK must develop a robust and detailed UK Nationally Determined Contribution

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[126] Saleemul Huq, interview
[127] Nationally Determined Contributions
[128] Salina Sanou, interview
[129] WWF-UK, written evidence
[130] Concern Worldwide, written evidence
[131] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[132] Mercy Corps, post-focus group written submission
[133] WWF-UK, written evidence
[134] Concern Worldwide, Bond SDG Group, FIA Foundation and WWF-UK, written evidence

(NDC) and build sustainability considerations more systematically into how it spends ODA and how it delivers its foreign policy, as advocated by WWF-UK.[135]

Recommendations to the Government

1. Ensure that climate policies and SDG policies, nationally and internationally, are aligned and that climate policies and measures advance other SDGs.

2. Target UK Government support to those most vulnerable to climate change and ensure it is targeted to 'leave no one behind' and delivers integrated solutions to tackling poverty, promoting nature restoration, and building climate and economic resilience.

3. Produce an ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution prior to COP26 and use the Summit to spearhead global action on climate change.

4. Develop and implement more ambitious emissions-reduction policies in line with the UK's Paris Agreement commitments.

5. Ensure any post-Covid-19 economic recovery packages support a green and just transition to sustainable and resilient business models and development pathways.

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[135] WWF-UK, written evidence

Improving global public health

The Covid-19 pandemic has emphasised the importance of increased attention on Goal 3 (Global Health and Wellbeing) and related goals including Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) and Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), as well as placing an emphasis on the leave no one behind principle across these goals.

The need to reduce infections and deaths from Covid-19 and pursue research into a vaccine is evidently a hugely pressing priority for the global community. As advocated by the Bond SDG Group, the UK must ensure that a Covid-19 vaccine and any effective treatments, if and when approved, are available to all as fast as possible and free of charge.[136] Other stakeholders who participated in our focus group also emphasised the role the UK Government could play in ensuring universal access to the vaccine.

Nevertheless, it is crucial that the health response to Covid-19 does not result in less attention on other health priorities. We heard of the importance of the UK Government maintaining ODA for health, with ODA currently accounting for close to one-third of all health spending in low-income countries.[137] This support is even more vital following the Covid-19 outbreak. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria estimates that, following the outbreak, it will require an additional $5 billion of financing over the next 12 months to continue the global fight against HIV, TB and malaria.[138] Action for Global Health emphasised that supporting universal health coverage (an area where the UK has particular expertise) and the underlying health systems could be a tangible and significant area of impact for the UK Government on SDG 3.8.[139]

Action for Global Health noted that, despite world leaders gathering to commit to achieving health for all last September at the UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage, the necessary investments and roadmaps have not materialised.[140] There is therefore a pressing need for a strengthening of healthcare systems, particularly in low-income countries, which the UK Government can support through direct funding, advice and support to governments to build strengthened, fully resourced, resilient public health systems.[141]

The UK's significant contribution in supporting water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) provision was highlighted in our inquiry, but we were told that further action is needed, with Covid-19 having further demonstrated the importance of WASH to maintaining good health. Chilufya Chileshe of WaterAid warned that the level of funding for WASH is "far from adequate", with 785 million people not having access to clean water close to

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[136] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[137] Action for Global Health, written evidence
[138] Action for Global Health and Results UK, written evidence
[139] Acton for Global Health, post-focus group written submission
[140] Action for Global Health, written evidence
[141] Bond SDG Group, written evidence

where they live and nearly two billion not having a private toilet. The proportion of global ODA going towards WASH is around three to four per cent, but in the UK's ODA the proportion is only two per cent. Beyond money, technical expertise is also important and is a way the UK can support countries to shift their approach to WASH.[142]

Professor Diana Mitlin of the University of Manchester felt that there has been a concentration in the UK's aid on delivering viable utilities, which "raises questions about the ability of the lowest income groups to buy into adequate water and sanitation". This lack of consideration over whether households can afford the WHO minimum recommended limits of water means that there are instances of families spending five to ten per cent of their income on water and still not meeting the WHO's recommended minimum. This highlights the need for the leave no one behind principle to be a requirement of any intervention the UK Government supports, she added.[143]

Nutrition was also highlighted as an important area for prioritisation to improve global public health. Results UK called for the UK Government to use its influential position and voice to drive a new focus and approach towards global collaboration on health and nutrition and to provide investment in global health education programmes on nutrition.[144] Concern Worldwide also referred to the UK's strong support for action on nutrition, having hosted the world's first Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in 2013, and called for the UK Government to build on this early leadership by driving progress at the next N4G summit in 2021.[145]

Recommendations to the Government

1. Work with international partners to ensure that a Covid-19 vaccine and any effective treatments, if and when approved, are available to all as fast as possible and free of charge.

2. Commit to maintaining current ODA for non-Covid-19 health programmes and supporting low-income countries to develop resilient public health systems and universal health coverage.

3. Invest and encourage wider investment in WASH facilities in schools and communities that do not already have adequate provision in order to help prevent further Covid-19 outbreaks, ensuring the principle of leave no one behind guides this support.

4. Invest in global health education programmes on nutrition and take an active role in driving progress at the next Nutrition for Growth summit.

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[142] Chilufya Chileshe, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020
[143] Professor Diana Mitlin, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020
[144] Results UK, written evidence
[145] Concern Worldwide, written evidence

Achieving gender equality

Global progress towards achieving Goal 5 (Gender Equality) continues to be inadequate, with estimates suggesting that it would take another 100 years to achieve global gender equality at the current rate of change.[146]

Dinah Musindarwezo from Womankind Worldwide noted the UK's political commitment on gender equality, citing the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014, the UK's global leadership at UN level and advancement of funding for gender equality. Nevertheless, she also felt that the UK Government needs to pay attention to policy coherence around gender equality, warn ing that "investment in one area of gender equality without paying attention to another will not achieve results".[147]

Mercy Corps called for the UK Government to increase funding for local women's rights organisations and movements, "especially in fragile and conflict affected contexts, where women face additional barriers to meaningful participation".[148]

In addition, they advocated a number of measures to ensure that all responses to the global crisis are gender-sensitive, including: increasing investments in interventions that specifically target women and girls and female-headed households; ensuring that women and girls are able to participate meaningfully in the design, implementation and evaluation of those interventions; and increasing investments in gender analysis, and sex- and age- disaggregated data.[149]

Recommendations to the Government

1. Ensure all UK Government policy, activities and investment contribute to achieving gender equality, including but not limited to ODA spending.

2. Increase funding for local women's rights organisations and movements and investments in interventions that specifically target women and girls and female-headed households, ensuring that women and girls are able to participate meaningfully in the design, implementation and evaluation of those interventions.

3. Increase UK development of gender analysis, and sex- and age- disaggregated data.

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[146] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[147] Dinah Musindarwezo, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020
[148] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[149] Ibid

Supporting education

The recovery from Covid-19 must ensure education is prioritised, in line with Goal 4 (Quality Education).

Aspects of the UK's approach to supporting education in other countries was praised in the evidence we received. The UK's August 2019 announcement of £90 million in new contributions for the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) fund made it the largest donor to the global fund for education in emergencies.[150] Both the Send My Friend to School Policy and Parliamentary Working Group and Leonard Cheshire praised the UK Government's prioritisation of girls' education.[151]

Despite this, we were told that the proportion of the UK's aid budget spent on education is "still far too low", currently standing at 6.97 per cent, well below the International Development Select Committee's recommendation of 10 per cent.[152] The Send My Friend to School Policy and Parliamentary Working Group called for the UK to provide a strong and early commitment to replenishing funding for multilateral education funds such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) as part of the recovery from Covid-19.[153]

High Commissioner Manoah Esipisu told us of the need for the UK to assist Kenya and other countries with education provision, pointing out that investment in education is a safe investment in a world affected by climate change as it "provides knowledge and ability that can't be washed away. Innovation can survive in any environment, anywhere".[154]

Other recommendations for ways the UK Government can support progress towards Goal 4 included: strengthening the leadership and meaningful participation of children, including the most marginalised, in all decision-making processes to ensure their perspectives are heard and needs are met; funding monitoring, evaluation and research into Covid-19 education responses, including collecting age-, gender- and disability-disaggregated data on the impact of school closures on children and their learning; and heavily investing in WASH facilities in schools which do not already have adequate provision in order to help prevent further Covid-19 outbreaks.[155] This last issue is particularly relevant in the case of refugees and international displaced persons (IDPs), facing deficiencies and overburden of healthcare and WASH facilities in displacement camps.

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[150] Send My Friend to School Policy and Parliamentary Working Group, written evidence
[151] Send My Friend to School Policy and Parliamentary Working Group and Leonard Cheshire, written evidence
[152] Send My Friend to School Policy and Parliamentary Working Group, written evidence
[153] Ibid
[154] His Excellency Manoah Esipisu, oral evidence session, 26 August 2020
[155] Send My Friend to School Policy and Parliamentary Working Group, written evidence

Recommendations to the Government

1. Provide a strong and early commitment to replenishing funding for multilateral education funds such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) as part of the recovery from Covid-19.

2. Increase spend from the international aid budget on education to 10 per cent given the impact of the pandemic on children and their education, addressing the vital importance of education for recovery

3. Develop engagement strategies ensuring the leadership and meaningful participation of children, including the most marginalised, in all decision-making processes to ensure their perspectives are heard and needs are met.

4. Fund monitoring, evaluation and research into Covid-19 education responses, including collecting age-, gender- and disability-disaggregated data on the impact of school closures on children and their learning.

5. Invest in WASH facilities in schools which do not already have adequate provision in order to help prevent further Covid-19 outbreaks.

Advancing peace, justice & strong institutions

With progress towards achieving Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) likely to come under considerable pressure following the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK Government must prioritise strengthening institutions, supporting social cohesion and preventing conflict. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of governance and accountability-building mechanisms across all Government activities including within ODA as part of the response to Covid-19.

Trust in state institutions has been damaged in many countries and regions during the Covid-19 pandemic. The UN Global Compact Network UK told us that the UK's leading in role in ensuring Goal 16 was adopted means it now "has an obligation to continue to press for a greater focus on promoting the rule of law, ensuring effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels, and specifically strengthening national institutions."[156]

The IFES wrote that promoting democracy, credible elections and good governance will help countries to respond to Covid-19 and be better prepared for future crises. The UK Government should provide support to electoral management bodies, provide ODA that promotes the effective resolution of electoral complaints and violations and support civic education programmes to equip people to engage in democratic processes and hold institutions to account.[157]

Action to tackle corruption will also be crucial in achieving Goal 16. Jonathan Cushing from Transparency International highlighted the rise in procurement-related corruption following the Covid-19 pandemic.[158] The April 2021 Special Session on the Anti-Corruption Convention is an opportunity for the UK to lead international action on corruption.[159]

Again, demonstrating the interconnected nature of the SDGs, Action for Global Health argued that corruption is impacting progress towards universal health coverage by affecting health system resilience, accountability and transparency. They wrote that "mainstreaming anti-corruption principles – such as transparency, accountability and multi-stakeholder participation – will result in more efficient spending, more effective delivery, and higher public trust in health systems' capabilities to tackle health crises".[160]

Issues around transparency were also highlighted by Oxfam GB, who noted that there can be a lack of transparency when funds go through private health providers and large hospital chains. Oxfam evidence showed that between 2010-2019, $500 million of UK ODA was invested in CDC Group and it went directly to

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[156] UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
[157] International Foundation for Electoral Systems, written evidence
[158] Jonathan Cushing, interview
[159] Action for Global Health, written evidence
[160] Ibid

for-profit health actors operating in low- and middle-income countries. More funds were invested in those actors indirectly. However, the CDC does not publish data on the impact on reaching poor people at scale or advancing the SDGs in health. Oxfam GB told us "more critical questions need to be asked about whether and how these investments impact on pro-poor progress towards universal health care and financial health protection, and whether or not they are causing harm".[161]

Support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches was widely recognised as being crucial in the aftermath of Covid-19.[162] International Alert called for all SDG interventions to be configured so that they are contributing to peace where being delivered in conflict-affected countries and advocated moving away from "overly technocratic approaches to SDG16 to one centred around a peacebuilding strategy".[163] Likewise, Peace Direct said that all ODA programmes focusing on Covid-19 (including aid to national governments and aid directed through INGOs) should adopt a conflict sensitive approach, especially in health, humanitarian and security sectors.[164]

The importance of the UK's commitment to spend 50 per cent of its ODA in fragile and conflict-affected regions was highlighted.[165] However, Concern Worldwide noted that initial analysis of OECD-DAC figures indicates that in 2018 the UK only disbursed two per cent of the total ODA budget under the OECD-DAC "Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution" coding. They told us that this reflects "an imbalance between what conflict costs the global economy and actual investments in conflict prevention".[166] Mercy Corps warned against diverting funds that build social cohesion or address the root causes of conflict elsewhere, and stressed the importance of addressing the urgent, proximate drivers of conflict linked to Covid-19.[167]

Further concerns around the UK's current approach to conflict prevention funding were raised by Peace Direct, who highlighted ICAI findings that within the UK Aid Direct funding mechanism and its predecessor the proportion of funding going directly to civil society organisations in developing countries is declining. Commenting on this, they stated:

> *"Restricting funding to a relatively small pool of recipients not only deprives local organisations of the chance to access funds for their lifesaving work, it also deprives the UK Government of access to knowledge and expertise on how to achieve SDG 16 from the bottom up. The new FCDO needs to counter this trend."[168]*

Goal 16 will not be achieved without effective engagement of citizens and civil society. According to Mercy Corps, the UK should ensure that civil society organisations, especially those representing women and girls, can help shape the design and implementation of responses to Covid-19 "to ensure healthy and productive engagement between state and citizens". Community mobilisation activities and close engagement with

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[161] Oxfam GB, post-focus group written submission
[162] Bond SDG Group, International Alert and Peace Direct, written evidence
[163] International Alert, written evidence
[164] Peace Direct, written evidence
[165] International Committee of the Red Cross, written evidence
[166] Concern Worldwide, written evidence
[167] Mercy Corps, written evidence and post-focus group written submission
[168] Peace Direct, written evidence

citizens around perceptions of government, misinformation, and hate speech were also all identified as effective means of strengthening trust in institutions.[169]

The necessity of local engagement was also identified by Simon Gill of the ODI, who emphasised the importance of mechanisms to deliver aid projects locally.[170] Peace Direct told us that individuals and organisations with deep roots in their communities have established trust, respect and have great influence in shaping opinions and behaviours. They argued that flexible, adaptive and long-term financing is needed for local peacebuilding efforts in order to manage community-level tensions and direct funding to local organisations with capacity for community level engagement.[171]

Recommendations to the Government

1. Ensure that the Government supports governance and accountability building mechanisms including within ODA.

2. Provide support to electoral management bodies overseas by providing ODA that promotes the effective resolution of electoral complaints and violations.

3. Support civic education programmes to equip people to engage in democratic processes and hold institutions to account.

4. Ensure effective transparency of any health ODA spending, along with robust anti-corruption measures, using the April 2021 Special Session on the Anti-Corruption Convention to lead international action.

5. Adopt a conflict-sensitive approach to the delivery of all ODA and SDG interventions, including through extensive engagement with citizens and civil society.

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[169] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[170] Simon Gill, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[171] Peace Direct, written evidence

Building on the Voluntary National Review

Many of the organisations we heard from felt that the UK Government's publication in June 2019 of a Voluntary National Review (VNR) of SDG progress was an encouraging sign of the goals becoming a greater priority. However, there was consensus that there has subsequently been a lack of progress in implementing the VNR commitments and identifying a timetable for a follow-up, with even the FCDO acknowledging to us that: "As a result of Covid-19, the context has changed significantly since production of the VNR."[172]

We heard repeatedly that many government departments do not currently pay sufficient attention to the SDGs, with UK Government departments' Single Departmental Plans (SDPs) widely felt to contain significant gaps, particularly around how departments will contribute to implementing the SDGs.[173] Sharon Sukhram of the Trades Union Congress told us that sole delivery of the SDGs needs to be taken out of the SDPs, which prevents policy coherence[174], a point also made in WWF-UK's written evidence, in which they added: "At best, they represent a mapping of existing policy against the goals but fall far short of the strategic plan which is needed".[175]

This lack of prioritisation of the SDGs in many departments was felt to be symptomatic of the current allocation of responsibility for cross-government implementation, with the Secretary of State for International Development taking primary ownership, despite the goals being both a domestic and international agenda. The recent merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and DfID mean that responsibility now needs to be reallocated regardless. We were told that the Government must identify the most appropriate department for coordinating implementation,[176] with most supporting the International Development Committee's recommendation that responsibility sit with the Cabinet Office.[177] although we were also told that the Treasury may be the most effective at ensuring other departments prioritise the SDGs.[178]

As well as identifying a responsible department for coordinating implementation of the SDGs, we heard repeatedly that a cross-government plan is needed to develop a pathway for achieving the SDGs.[179] This strategy would help to ensure the SDGs are prioritised by all government departments. VSO told us that in many countries in which they operate, national governments have established formal, centralised coordination structures for delivering on SDG commitments and that "there are lessons that could be learnt [by the UK] from other countries – both across the OECD and the Global South about SDG implementation and

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[172] Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, written evidence
[173] Sightsavers, Bond SDG Group, Project Everyone, WWF-UK and UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
[174] Sharon Shukram, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[175] WWF-UK, written evidence
[176] International Committee of the Red Cross, written evidence
[177] Sightsavers, Bond SDG Group and Project Everyone, written evidence and Chris Southworth and Louise Scott, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[178] Simon Gill, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[179] Sightsavers, Bond SDG Group, VSO, Age International, Project Everyone, and SOS Children's Villages UK, written evidence and Sharon Sukhram, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020

accountability".[180] Louise Scott from PwC referred to the approach in Germany, where responsibility for the SDGs sits above any single department, which recognises the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs.[181]

As part of this process, the UK Government needs to outline how it will engage with other stakeholders around the SDGs, as it pledged to do in the VNR and which was felt to be lacking at present. Chris Southworth of ICC UK outlined the need for a much more "open and inclusive approach" to the SDGs, with too much "ad hoc" stakeholder consultation at present.[182] Louise Scott from PwC felt that there is a danger that currently the Government and businesses are each waiting for the other to take the lead on engagement around the SDGs.[183]

The UN Global Compact Network UK told us there has been an "inability of the Government to coordinate stakeholders and bring together action from civil society, businesses, charities [and] individuals"[184], while the Trades Union Congress said that there is currently "no systematic engagement" by the UK Government with trade unions in low, middle-income and fragile/conflict affected states on the SDGs.[185] Chiara Mariotti of Oxfam GB told us that "we need mechanisms for better engagement of stakeholders. There was very disappointing and ad hoc engagement on the VNR."[186] A follow-up VNR should also be developed in close partnership with devolved governments within the UK.

VSO again noted the lessons the UK could learn from other nations, citing Sierra Leone, Kenya and Malawi as examples of countries where governments have actively engaged with civil society around SDG delivery.[187] The Bond SDG Group also noted Kenya's positive engagement with civil society, identifying Finland and the Netherlands as other examples.[188] Sharon Sukhram from the Trades Union Congress told us that their sister organisation in South Africa is involved in the Government-led National Economic Labour Development Council, influencing policy in a number of areas and, while the Trades Union Congress has been involved in negotiations with the UK Government around Covid-19, there is a need for more long-standing "meaningful engagement on strategy, policy-making and programmatic work".[189]

The evidence we received on the UK Government's current progress on the SDGs is perhaps best summed up by the UN Global Compact Network UK's conclusion that "the most pressing issue slowing the UK's progress on the SDGs is a lack of visible leadership from the national government".[190] The FCDO's written submission to us stated: "We have always been clear the VNR was not an end in itself but a tool to further galvanise future action and activity on the SDGs."[191] It is imperative that the UK Government now uses the opportunity of the Covid-19 recovery effort to place the SDGs at the centre of all its work.

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[180] VSO, written evidence
[181] Louise Scott, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[182] Chris Southworth, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[183] Louise Scott, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[184] UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
[185] Trades Union Congress, written evidence
[186] Chiara Mariotti, interview
[187] VSO, written evidence
[188] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[189] Sharon Shukram, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[190] UN Global Compact Network UK, written evidence
[191] Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, written evidence

Recommendations to the Government

1. Publish a comprehensive and ambitious follow-up Voluntary National Review by 2024 at the latest, providing further detail on how the UK will support implementation of the SDGs by 2030.

2. Commit to providing annual updates on cross-Government policy coherence on the SDGs.

3. Develop a cross-Government strategy for achieving the SDGs and allocate responsibility for oversight of implementation to the Cabinet Office, overseen by the Prime Minister.

4. Provide leadership for driving progress on the SDGs with other levels of the UK public sector and in the private sector via national and international businesses.

5. Develop a clear mechanism for engaging with stakeholders, such as civil society, businesses and trade unions, in a systematic and inclusive way.

Maintaining effective international development assistance

In order to best support the SDGs as part of the roadmap for building back better from Covid-19, it is essential that the UK continues to prioritise ODA to the poorest and most vulnerable countries and communities, in line with Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Effective ODA was felt to be even more important in light of the Covid-19 outbreak, which is "exacerbating some of the most urgent needs around the world, including food insecurity and gender-based violence"[192] and imperilling progress towards achieving the SDGs. The UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group called for the UK to partner with other large bilateral donors and multilaterals to convene discussions on how to make the best use of ODA to achieve the SDGs.[193]

With the pandemic reducing resources available to implement the SDGs, we were told that pursuing 'synergy drivers' - policies and measures that advance two or more goals at the same time - would be an efficient way of doing 'more with less' on the SDGs. The Sussex Sustainability Research Programme provided evidence from case studies in the Global South of examples of such synergy drivers, including sustainable supply chain management, sustainable agriculture practices and integrating public health programmes with sustainable forestry practices.[194]

A number of submissions expressed concern at the potential impact on aid spending of the merger of the FCO and DfID to form a new FCDO, which had yet to take place when we received evidence. Some organisations called for the decision to be reversed.[195] with many more opposed to it but resigned to its inevitability. The UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group noted that the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) has consistently rated the FCO's ODA spend as low on transparency and effectiveness, which they argued "[makes] it unsuitable to deliver accountable aid to the people who need it the most [and] in the interest of the achievement of the SDGs, and in ensuring the effectiveness of UK aid for the world's poorest, the UK government must reconsider the merger of DfID and FCO".[196] Whilst the merger has now been completed, the need for the new department to prioritise transparency and effectiveness in ODA delivery remains.

We also received recommendations on measures the UK Government should take to ensure the SDGs remain central to the work of the new department. Suggested measures included: the retention of a Cabinet Minister responsible for International Development, with a place on the National Security Council; maintaining DfID's technical expertise within a unified, coherent and dedicated administrative structure in its new department both in Whitehall and in Country Offices; retaining the International Development Committee and the ICAI;

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[192] Mercy Corps, written evidence
[193] UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group, written evidence
[194] Sussex Sustainability Research Programme, written evidence and post-focus group written submission
[195] Trades Union Congress and UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group, written evidence
[196] UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group, written evidence

remaining party to the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) rules for aid spending; and retaining the standards of transparency of the International Aid Transparency Initiative.[197] Again, despite these recommendations being made prior to the merger taking place, many remain relevant to the new department as it develops.

Continuing to deliver ODA to the most vulnerable

Many highlighted the importance of maintaining the focus of UK ODA on poverty eradication and helping the most vulnerable, rather than supporting the UK's 'national interest', such as foreign policy goals, national security interests or facilitating economic benefits for the UK.[198] Chilufya Chileshe of WaterAid told us that Prime Minister Boris Johnson's comments about using aid in line with the UK's 'strategic interests' is highly concerning at a time when climate change, poverty and access to WASH are all huge problems.[199] As the Bond SDG Group wrote, "a reduction in effective and poverty-focussed ODA-spending is … very likely to have a negative impact on progress on the SDGs."[200]

Retaining existing expertise

Louise Scott from PwC outlined concerns that the merger is a distraction to civil servants at a crucial time for SDG delivery.[201] Sharon Sukhram from the Trades Union Congress argued that there may be a loss of expertise which would harm progress on the SDGs.[202] Simon Gill, Managing Director of the ODI, said that the merger could be an opportunity to use resources in a more coherent way but that the Government must learn lessons from mergers that have been done well or badly in other countries and, at present, "I don't see that happening".[203]

Hameed Hakimi of Chatham House stated that the "political awareness of long-term FCO engagement is an asset, but granular bottom-up intervention experience of DfID is another asset. They did work in sync together in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but I am concerned a top-down merger may not build on those assets. We ... need to be aware of a potential clash of cultures between FCO and DfID."[204]

Similarly, Natalie Hogg of Transparency International noted the immediate risk of the UK losing technical capacity on addressing corruption if there is no follow on to current funding programmes under DfID.[205]

Engagement with local stakeholders

We were also told that the new department must increase engagement with local delivery groups and communities receiving aid to ensure ODA is spent most effectively. Referring to WASH specifically, Professor

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[197] UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group and Results UK, written evidence and Sharon Sukhram, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[198] UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group, Bond SDG Group, Concern Worldwide, Leonard Cheshire and Send My Friend to School Policy and Parliamentary Working Group, written evidence
[199] Chilufya Chileshe, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020
[200] Bond SDG Group, written evidence
[201] Louise Scott, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[202] Sharon Sukhram, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[203] Simon Gill, oral evidence session, 10 August 2020
[204] Hameed Hakimi, interview
[205] Natalie Hogg, interview

Diana Mitlin of the University of Manchester told us: "If communities are not organised then all manner of things cannot happen - investments in water and sanitation cannot be protected, services cannot be integrated, the most needy cannot be identified. There is a critical need … to support organised communities."[206]

This point was supported by interviews with sector leaders in Ethiopia, Kenya and Pakistan. Zia ur Rehman of AwazCDS-Pakistan explained that "if the UK Government really wants systemic change they need to engage with civil society. We are more accountable to our people, we are being held accountable by everybody … We need to prepare our people to hold our governments accountable".[207] Takele Teshome of ASDA in Ethiopia noted that "in general the international donor community and UN agencies should invest in building capacities that will really be sustainable. We have a lot of NGOs. We need to build local capacities and send them through to grassroots. I would recommend building local capacities to advocate for policy …. Because of the Covid challenge and climate risks we need to really have permanent shifts and we need to do things differently".[208] Salina Sanou of PACJA, Kenya also noted that "the more we support citizens, the more accountability will be addressed".[209]

The Sussex Sustainability Research Programme also highlighted the need for the UK to empower local communities to take ownership of SDG delivery, noting a current "worrisome gap between national planning and local implementation of SDGs. Responsibility for implementing the SDGs lies with national governments, but the implementation itself happens in local communities, businesses, and schools throughout each country … Research shows that local conditions must be factored in more decisively when implementing national plans for the SDGs".[210]

Delivering high levels of transparency

VSO told us that there are currently lower levels of transparency for ODA spending in non-DfID departments and that "the new FCDO should aspire to the high levels of transparency ... achieved by DfID".[211] Natalie Hogg of Transparency International highlighted the importance of making sure anti-corruption planning is built into all overseas interventions and particularly in the context of fragile and conflict-affected states and situations.[212]

We were told that the UK Government needs to better monitor how ODA is contributing to achieving the SDGs, with many calling for better reporting of data in line with the OECD DAC's standards.[213] The FCDO told us that: "The FCDO will continue to invest resources in improving the quantity and quality of ODA data and information made publicly available."[214]

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[206] Professor Diana Mitlin, oral evidence session, 12 August 2020
[207] Zia ur Rehman, interview
[208] Takele Teshome, interview
[209] Salina Sanou, interview
[210] Sussex Sustainability Research Programme, written evidence
[211] VSO, written evidence
[212] Natalie Hogg, interview
[213] Sightsavers, Mercy Corps and Leonard Cheshire, written evidence
[214] Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, written evidence

A number of interviewees also called for more focus on using data in their countries. Salina Sanou of PACJA, Kenya stressed the need for a locally-led approach: "We are pushing for citizen-driven data. It shouldn't come from the government only, that is not enough. We want citizens to be at the centre of the data."[215]

Zia ur Rehman from AwazCDS-Pakistan talked about the work they had done with citizen scorecards for the SDGs, which enabled them to reflect grassroot priorities and concerns, and also noted the pandemic meant they were able to improve on their data management, which meant that "the limitations of the system have come to the surface, for civil society but also for the government".[216] Hameed Hakimi of Chatham House also stressed the importance of an integrated way of collecting, managing and using data in contexts such as Afghanistan, to build up institutional memory and understanding of progress.[217]

The FCDO also acknowledged the challenges in securing robust data on the SDGs internationally: "Good progress had been made in increasing the availability of internationally comparable data for SDG monitoring, but challenges remain. There are significant gaps in terms of geographic coverage, timeliness and the level of disaggregation required. There is also a significant time lag in the availability of data for many countries."[218] By supporting citizen-driven data as part of ODA spending, the UK can help to drive improvements in monitoring of progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Recommendations to the Government

1. Maintain effective ODA focused on supporting the most vulnerable, rather than on supporting a narrowly-defined UK 'national interest' based on commercial, foreign policy or security considerations.

2. Maintain and protect DfID's existing technical expertise in its new department both in Whitehall and in Country Offices.

3. Retain the standards of transparency of the International Aid Transparency Initiative.

4. Retain the Independent Commission for Aid Impact.

5. Increase engagement with local delivery groups and communities receiving aid as well as civil society to ensure ODA is spent most effectively.

6. Commit to high levels of transparency within the new FCDO, with regular reporting of data in line with the OECD DAC standards and making best use of citizen-driven data.

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[215] Salina Sanou, interview
[216] Zia ur Rehman, interview
[217] Hameed Hakimi, interview
[218] Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, written evidence

Conclusion

With a decade to go, the SDGs are now more important than ever to create a resilient world with better health and social security systems. A world that can build back better from the impacts of this pandemic and be ready to respond to other future risks and challenges.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and affected already marginalised groups in particular, as well as exposing weaknesses in already overburdened national systems. The response therefore needs to put these groups and the 'leave no one behind' principle at the forefront of building back better, as well as strengthening the wider national systems that act as the safety net for vulnerable groups. Many of the issues these groups have faced are not new, but UK support needs to address the underlying causes for their vulnerability and ensure their needs are built into Covid-19 and SDG interventions.

The secondary impacts of the pandemic and economic effects from global lockdowns will have significant and ongoing impacts on achieving the SDGs. The international response to Covid-19 therefore needs to look beyond the immediate health impacts of Covid-19 itself to ensure the spillover effects and secondary impacts are also given sufficient attention. It is particularly important to ensure that these secondary impacts are not further exacerbated by a re-prioritisation of UK support and attention away from some of these issues.

The following section highlights the key recommendations from across the report. Economic and sustainable development will underpin any progress across the SDGs and support the UK Government's response to the impacts of Covid-19. The recommendations we have prioritised on Building Back Better are those that - from the evidence we received - will have most impact on delivering across the SDG agenda and mitigating the impact of the pandemic on the poorest communities across the UK and abroad.

The various recommendations outlined below for UK Government action on individual SDGs will all help to ensure the UK fulfils its responsibility to contribute to global progress in achieving the SDGs overall. However, the UK Government cannot take a siloed approach to the SDGs, choosing to prioritise some over others. As we heard repeatedly over the course of our inquiry, the SDGs are interdependent, with progress in one determining progress in the others.

This is also not only about UK aid, but about how the Government conducts its business, domestically and internationally. Trade and military decisions, domestic emission reductions, its approach to corruption and transparency across international relations, procurement: all play a crucial role in how the UK can support achieving the SDGs domestically and internationally.

Across the recommendations, the UK Government should place a renewed emphasis on engaging a wide range of stakeholders at home and abroad to broaden interaction with the agenda and increase accountability. Stakeholder engagement can play an important role in creating a more widely engaged civil society in

implementation and advocacy on the SDGs. In some countries, the Covid-19 pandemic has decreased space for civil society and building back provides an opportunity to support a variety of voices. Other organisations such as trade unions and business also have important roles to play and need to be brought on board as part of a coalition of actors. There needs to be a greater effort to engage the UK public around the SDG Agenda, with the current low levels of awareness of the SDGs contributing to a lack of prioritisation of achieving the goals at national level.

Summary of recommendations

Economic development

1. Integrate the leave no one behind principle into all UK Government activities so that the impact of UK actions at home and abroad on achieving the SDGs for the most marginalised in every context is understood and evaluated.

2. Enable and leverage finance available for delivering the SDGs through aligning trade deals with the framework, supporting debt restructuring and exploring options for cancellation where needed, supporting international and domestic tax reform for this purpose, and encouraging other actors such as the private sector to do business differently and demonstrate their impact on delivering the SDGs.

3. Maintain and develop programmes that support cash transfers, social protection, social insurance and market intervention measures to help individual businesses and workers cope with the economic fallout of Covid-19 containment measures. These measures must be developed and implemented in partnership with the people and communities benefiting from them in order to most effectively provide economic empowerment.

4. Invest in the creation of (and reskilling for) new, inclusive, decent jobs and livelihoods in sustainable and environmentally-friendly industries, including through grants and loans for small- and micro-enterprises and workers in the informal sector.

Sustainable development

1. Develop and implement more ambitious emissions-reduction policies in line with the UK's Paris Agreement commitments and support efforts to protect global biodiversity, recognising that dangerous climate change and loss of biodiversity are major threats to achieving the SDGs in the next decade.
2. Produce an ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) prior to COP26 and use the summit to spearhead and inspire global action on reducing emissions and mitigating climate change.

3. Target UK Government support on adaptation to those most vulnerable to climate change to leave no one behind and ensure it delivers integrated solutions to tackling poverty, promoting nature restoration, and building climate and economic resilience.

4. Ensure any post-Covid-19 economic recovery packages support a green and just transition to sustainable and resilient business models and development pathways.

Build back better

1. Re-adopt the SDGs as an explicit roadmap to recovery.

2. Ensure that a Covid-19 vaccine and any proven treatments are available to all as fast as possible and free of charge to those who need it most.

3. Maintain current ODA for non-Covid-19 health programmes and support low-income countries to develop resilient public health systems and universal health coverage.

4. Invest and encourage wider investment in WASH facilities in schools and communities that do not already have adequate provision in order to help prevent further Covid-19 outbreaks, ensuring the principle of leave no one behind guides this support.

5. Increase spend from the international aid budget on education to 10 per cent given the impact of the pandemic on children and their education.

6. Commit to supporting governance and accountability-building mechanisms across government activities including within ODA, recognising the impact of the pandemic on civic space, drivers of conflict, transparency and corruption.

How to deliver the SDGs

1. Develop a cross-government strategy for achieving the SDGs and allocate responsibility for oversight of implementation to the Cabinet Office, overseen by the Prime Minister.

2. Establish a mechanism for ensuring and monitoring alignment, policy coherence and finding synergies across government with the SDG framework.

3. Develop a clear mechanism for engaging with stakeholders in reviewing progress in the UK and internationally, such as through engaging civil society, businesses and trade unions, in a systematic and inclusive way.

4. Use its influence to further lead and encourage businesses to adopt the SDGs and demonstrate their impact.

5. Ensure the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office puts strategic delivery of the

SDGs at the heart of its work and builds on the strengths of both of the merged departments, increasing the transparency of UK aid and demonstrating the impact of its work on the poorest countries and communities in line with the leave no one behind principle.

The UN General Assembly in September 2020 is an opportunity for the UK Government to play a leading role in placing the SDGs at the heart of the global recovery from Covid-19. The UK can influence and support other countries to make leave no one behind commitments and outline how it will support implementation of the SDGs in the UK and in its international work. Similarly, the UK's presidencies of the G7 and COP26 in 2021 are an important opportunity for the UK to spearhead action on the SDGs, and we were pleased that the FCDO's written submission to our inquiry identified these as a chance for the UK "to take a leadership role in building back better, demonstrating that we are a global force for good in the world, whether it comes to trade, climate change or girls' education".[219]

The next decade is a crucial one to achieve the SDGs and leave no one behind. The recommendations in this report show how the UK Government can play its part in integrating this framework into activities in the UK and internationally, providing a roadmap to build back better after the Covid-19 pandemic and offering a prosperous, resilient future for all.

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[219] Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, written evidence

Annex

Acknowledgments

The researchers and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development express their thanks to all those who contributed to this inquiry, without whom this report would not have been possible.

The APPG is particularly grateful to Dr Susannah Fisher and Aidan Rylatt who researched and compiled the report, and to Alice Whitehead, Kit Dorey and Paul Abernethy at Bond who supported the inquiry.

Evidence

The APPG on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development would like to thank all those who provided evidence to the inquiry.

Oral evidence

The APPG on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development conducted three oral evidence sessions with the following witnesses:

Monday 10th August 2020

- Simon Gill, Managing Director, Overseas Development Institute
- Louise Scott, Director of Global Sustainability, PwC
- Chris Southworth, Secretary General, ICC UK
- Sharon Sukhram, Policy Officer, Trades Union Congress

Wednesday 12th August 2020

- Chilufya Chileshe, Global Policy Director, WaterAid
- Professor Diana Mitlin, Professor of Global Urbanism, University of Manchester
- Dinah Musindarwezo, Director of Policy & Communications, Womankind Worldwide

Wednesday 26th August 2020

- His Excellency Manoah Esipisu, High Commissioner of the Republic of Kenya to the United Kingdom

- Her Excellency Saida Muna Tasneem, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK, Ireland and Liberia & Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the IMO

Written evidence

The following organisations provided written evidence to the inquiry:

Action for Global Health
ADD International
Age International
Bond SDG Group
Carnegie UK Trust
Concern Worldwide
Fairtrade Foundation
FIA Foundation
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
The HALO Trust
International Alert
International Committee of the Red Cross
International Foundation for Electoral Systems
Leonard Cheshire
Mercy Corps
Mines Advisory Group
National Education Union
Overseas Development Institute
Peace Direct
Project Everyone
Results UK
Send My Friend to School Policy and Parliamentary Working Group
Sightsavers
SOS Children's Villages UK
SSE
Sussex Sustainability Research Programme
Trades Union Congress
UK Sustainability and Transition Working Group
UN Global Compact Network UK
VSO
Women's Enterprise Scotland
WWF-UK

Interviews

The APPG on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development conducted one-to-one interviews in August 2020 with the following individuals:

Saleemul Huq, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCD) (Bangladesh)
Takele Teshome, Association for Sustainable Development Alternatives (ASDA) (Ethiopia)
Zia ur Rehman, AwazCDS-Pakistan (Pakistan)
Salina Sanou, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) (Kenya)
Sheela Patel, Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) (India)

Natalie Hogg and Jonathan Cushing, Transparency International (UK)
Hameed Hakimi, Chatham House (UK)
Chiara Mariotti, Oxfam GB (UK)

The APPG on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development conducted a focus group in September 2020 to provide feedback on an initial draft of the report. The following individuals took part:

Salina Sanou, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) (Kenya)
Selena Victor, Mercy Corps
Zia ur Rehman, AwazCDS-Pakistan
Carine Bambara, The Brooke
Chiara Mariotti, Oxfam GB
Lewis Ryder-Jones, Scotland's International Development Alliance
Katie Husselby, Action for Global Health
Marion Osieyo, WWF-UK
Mosharraf Hossain, ADD International
Claire O'Shea, Hub Cymru Africa
Andrew Griffiths, Sightsavers
Steve Kenzie, UN Global Compact Network UK
David Banisar, Article 19
Professor Joseph Alcamo, Sussex Sustainability Research Programme, University of Sussex
Lilei Chow, Save the Children UK
Alice Macdonald, Project Everyone
Stefano D'Errico, International Institute for Environment and Development

Following the focus group, we received follow-up written submissions from:

Action for Global Health
ADD International
Article 19
Mercy Corps
Oxfam GB
Save the Children UK
Sussex Sustainability Research Programme
WWF-UK

Parliamentarians who took part in this inquiry:
Theo Clarke MP (Co-Chair)
Rt Hon Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale (Co-Chair)
Pauline Latham MP (Vice Chair)
Lord Chidgey (Vice Chair)
Patrick Grady MP

Lord Collins of Highbury
Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle
Lord Stunell
Baroness Boycott