



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Information Rights Unit
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development
Office
WH 2.177
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Email: information.rights@fcdo.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/fcdo

February 2021

Ms H Rumford
hrumford@bond.org.uk

Dear Ms Rumford

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: FOI2021/01097

Thank you for your email of 18 January 2021 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

Details of the £2.9bn package of reductions in the UK's planned ODA spend for 2020, as announced by First Secretary of State Raab in July 2020, including details of which thematic areas or programmes have been identified for cuts and the respective amounts.

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) does hold information relevant to your request. However, we are withholding this information under Section 43 (2) (Commercial interests) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 and I have set out our analysis of the public interest factors relating to this exemption below.

FCDO records and publishes detailed information on aid spending by the UK government on an annual basis in our report called [Statistics on International Development](#) (SID). This is the main, most comprehensive official report on UK aid spending by calendar year.

Information relating to 2020 will be published in a future edition and will provide a departmental comparison to 2019 spend. As this information is intended for future publication, it is exempt from disclosure under Section 22 (1) of the Freedom of

Information Act 2000. I have set out our analysis of the public interest factors relating to this qualified exemption below.

Section 43 (2) (Commercial interest)

We are withholding information under Section 43 (2), which provides that information is exempt if its disclosure would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person including the public authority holding it.

In applying this exemption, we have had to determine whether the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Factors in favour of disclosing this information include the general public interest in transparency of Government's dealings with the private sector and our responsibility to achieve value for money in our international development activities.

Factors against disclosure include the very strong public interest in ensuring FCDO are able to review policy options in a secure and sensitive way which does not undermine the commercial interests of FCDO. Disclosure could have a damaging effect on FCDO's business reputation and the confidence which our suppliers and partners have in FCDO. This would undermine FCDO's commercial interests and could lead to FCDO incurring greater expense which would consequently undermine our ability to fulfil our role and to achieve value for money in the use of public funds.

We have concluded, therefore, that the balance of public interest in this case favours withholding the information.

Section 22 (1) (Information intended for future publication)

Section 22 (1) (a) (b) and (c) provides that information is exempt information if it is held by a public authority with a view to publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date. In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in disclosing the information against the public interest in withholding it.

Factors in favour of disclosure include the general public interest in transparency and openness around the amount and use of public money spent by the UK government on international development. There is a strong public interest in ensuring that this information is available for public scrutiny.

Factors against disclosure include the strong public interest in making the best use of public resources by pulling the information together; ensuring that it is accurate and publishing it in a consistent and comprehensive format as planned. The information we intend to publish in future editions of 'Statistics for International Development' has not yet been finalised.

As we have a well-established annual reporting process already in place, we have concluded that the public interest in withholding this information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it at this point in time.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on gov.uk in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

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If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may then apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF, or online at: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

Yours sincerely

Sandy Docherty
Information Rights Unit