



Contact: Tony Boyden (Chair)  
Dorchester and District Christian Aid  
Committee  
94 Mellstock Avenue, Dorchester DT1 2BH

01305 268726  
[anthony\\_boyden@talktalk.net](mailto:anthony_boyden@talktalk.net)

Chris Loder. MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
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Dear Mr Loder

### **Reports of potential reduction in foreign aid.**

We, at Dorchester Christian Aid, are dismayed by reports of a potential reduction in the country's gross national income spend on foreign aid from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent.

In common with almost two hundred fellow British humanitarian, development and domestic charities we know that any cut in the £15 billion UK aid spend would be a significant threat to development and could seriously jeopardise the UK's long-term Covid-19 response.

We are fully aware of the challenges and difficulties faced by the British public. Covid-19 has cost more than a million lives and has strained economies around the world, including our own. As Covid-19 threatens to wipe out 25 years of development progress and force many millions back into extreme poverty, we must continue to support the most vulnerable through UK Aid. We are talking in terms of over 115 million people who look set to be pushed back so it is crucial that we find an international, collaborative response to Covid-19 to avoid these disastrous consequences.

Any U-turn on the government's manifesto commitment to maintain the 0.7 per cent target would send out a message that Britain was willing to balance the books at the expense of the world's most marginalised people, many of whom already faced many other problems prior to the impact of Covid-19. Desperate people will bear the cost, and the impact on the poorest countries will last for a very long time to come

It has been shown that no one is safe from the virus until all people are safe. Given the UK's experience and credibility as a leading global development agent, it means we have a critical role to play in strengthening global health systems and peacebuilding, tackling global challenges and reducing poverty in order to cut the risks to all of us from the next pandemic. Naturally we should work to ensure that all countries have equal access to the COVID vaccine when it becomes available; not just the wealthy ones.

Moreover, any argument for reducing our commitment to aid expenditure must sit very uncomfortably with the recently announced huge increase in defence expenditure.. There is a strong strategic argument that aid is a very effective way in exercising what has been described as our 'soft power' in the world. But there is an even stronger and more important moral imperative.

A measure of a nation's values is seen not only by actions in times of plenty, but by resolve during other times, too. Successive governments have done something very significant by maintaining the level of aid even during the darkest days of austerity. It was an inspirational example to set to other nations, and it brought substantive relief to the poorest in our world. As we have emphasised such relief is all the more important in the face of the pandemic.

Indeed, if ever a time called for increased, rather than decreased, engagement by the British government to make the world healthier, safer, more just and more prosperous it is now.

As Christians, we believe it is our duty to stand alongside our global neighbours, and seek justice for the most vulnerable. As we are called to love our neighbours — wherever they might be — we must be committed to at least maintaining the current level of aid .

We would strongly urge you to support our stance and to oppose any proposals for reduction in aid to the poorest and most vulnerable people on the planet.

With all good wishes

Yours sincerely