



Contact: Tony Boyden (Chair)

Dorchester and District Christian Aid Committee

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Chris Loder MP  
MP for West Dorset  
House of Commons  
SW1 0AA

25 June 2021

Dear Mr Loder

I wrote to you on behalf of the Christian Aid Committee in December 2020 expressing our concerns about the projected cuts in the government's foreign aid budget and the anticipated disastrous impact on the lives of the world's poorest people. You kindly replied to this letter expressing your support for the government's position.

Our committee has asked me to write to persuade you to change your position on this matter as we remain gravely concerned about a steadily worsening global situation which will only be exacerbated by the reduction of the government's support.

The projected cuts of £4 billion in the government's foreign aid budget will have a disastrous impact on the lives of the world's poorest people. And opposition to such cuts is not simply a matter of compassion but one of justice.

It will result in people not accessing vital health care during the global pandemic. People will go hungry. Fewer children will have access to vital educational opportunities and their already limited choices will be further diminished. Evidence from so many countries across the globe show that urgent action is required as their problems have further worsened in a relatively short space of time.

There are intangible consequences too. Our global standing as a nation will be further undermined by our failure to keep our foreign aid promises. We remember well a meeting with your predecessor, Lord Letwin, at a time when stringent national austerity policies were being introduced, when he guaranteed that the government would not go back on its financial commitment to foreign aid. Under both the Conservative governments led by David Cameron and Theresa May this promise was sustained.

We fully understand the economic problems caused by the current pandemic but one is given to wonder what our priorities are when defence expenditure was increased by four times the amount by which the aid budget was cut.

This nation has a proud tradition of never turning a blind eye to those in need around the world. The values of fairness and justice and compassion have only recently been shown by the generous response of individuals during Christian Aid Week. They expect a similar response from their government.

We have noted with interest the number of MPs who are pushing for a vote on the proposed reduction in aid. These include many from your own party who are appalled by the proposals. Andrew Mitchell has said that by denying the chance to vote on the issue, ministers have acted like the kind of state we're otherwise quick to attack for lack of democratic practice.

We know from what you have said that your faith is of great importance to you; and you will undoubtedly be aware of the words of Archbishop Tutu that a promise to the poor is a particularly sacred one.

Nobody doubts that these are challenging and difficult times but the government has a moral imperative to keep to or otherwise renege upon: a clear choice between fully honouring its commitment to the world's poorest or not.

Yours sincerely

Tony Boyden (Chair)

Roy Chapman

David Milner

Catherine Goss

Bill North

Tom Goss

Dave Pickard

Peter Green

Helen Pickard

Brother Hugh SSF

Gay Pusey

Malcolm Lewis

Julie Stacey

Gaynor Luther

Phil Stacey

Tony McDougal

Colin Tizzard

(Members of Dorchester and District Christian Aid Committee).