Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment

Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy

Submission to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Call for Evidence on the International Development Strategy

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About this submission

In July 2021 the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) launched a call for evidence to inform its forthcoming International Development Strategy. The Strategy is expected to set out the Government's approach to international development and align UK development activity with the objectives in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, to cover 2022 to 2030. More information on the call for evidence is **www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-development-strategy-call-for-evidence/international-development-strategy-call-for-evidence**.

This paper consists of a submission to the inquiry written by a team led by Rob Macquarie on behalf of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics and Political Science. The submission has been lightly edited to summarise the recommendations in an additional section not included in the original document submitted to the call for evidence. This version of the submission was copyedited by Georgina Kyriacou.

Authors' note

The Grantham Research Institute welcomes the opportunity to assist and support the work of the FCDO in shaping the UK's approach to global development in this critical decade. The evidence provided in this submission is based on work from across the Institute, including: a **report prepared for the G7 Carbis Bay Summit**; collaboration within the **Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance**; and projects including Pathways to Resilience in Semi-arid Economies (**PRISE**), Uncertainty reduction in Models for Understanding Development Applications (**UMFULA**), and Women Entrepreneurs in Climate Change Adaptation (**WECCA**). The Institute works closely with development practitioners among donors, development banks, and national and local decision-makers in many lower-income countries, and these experiences and engagements have also informed the content of this submission.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report represent those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the host institutions or funders. No conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Summary

Pressing global needs in both the near and longer term warrant a new model for development assistance. At the core of a revised approach must be the ***integration of development with the pursuit of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and resilience against climate change***, to drive higher living standards that are more sustainable, inclusive and robust to 21st century challenges.

The effective delivery of the new approach will rest on ***multilateralism***, including making the most of the great potential of the international financial institutions (IFIs) and the basic multipliers they embody. This would build on the UK's history of support for internationalism and these institutions and is where the notion of 'Global Britain', effective on the world stage, would carry real meaning.

To achieve this, the International Development Strategy should set out steps to:

- Work with emerging market *and* developing economies to coordinate plans for investment in physical infrastructure and natural, social and human capital. Country platforms can provide frameworks for collaboration with clear structures and objectives. National and local level governance are important, ensuring programmes and investment are responsive to development agendas and people's real needs.
- Target the integrated pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as combining climate action with a focus on gender equality, health and wellbeing, and education. Paying heed to the interactions and overlaps between different SDGs – and recognising where trade-offs must be made – is critical to foster every form of capital and to deliver genuinely sustainable development.
- Drive international cooperation and dialogue to clarify and enhance rigorous standards for investment, promote a shared strategy for a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and develop mechanisms to address loss and damage from climate change and environmental degradation.
- Support the international financial institutions, particularly the multilateral development banks (MDBs), to increase the scale of their interventions. Raising paid-in capital for the MDBs creates a strong multiplier effect, thanks to their capital structure. To leverage this, shareholders should agree to increase commitments on the condition that these institutions work more effectively as a group and with other development finance institutions.
- Raise the level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of GDP as an urgent priority, and increase the share of development finance that targets adaptation to climate change.
- Foster partnerships in research and use the capabilities of the UK's leading higher education sector, to help decision-makers and communities in lower-income countries to access the technology and knowledge they need to interpret and solve specific challenges they face.

Responses to questions in the Call for Evidence

Question 1: How might progress on international development to 2030 be impacted by the trends identified in the Integrated Review? How should the UK respond?

The Integrated Review is right to highlight transnational challenges, especially climate change and biodiversity loss. To support robust global development, the immediate priority must be a strong and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, which has hit the worst-off hardest, threatening to reverse the gains of previous decades. An estimated additional 150 million people have fallen into extreme poverty; the number of people facing acute food insecurity has increased by a similar number (World Bank, 2020; FAO et al., 2021). Up to half of the poorest countries are in severe debt distress or at high risk of debt distress (World Bank, 2021). Without concerted support, long-term scarring may result in a 'lost decade' for development. The crisis has demonstrated how vulnerable the world is to climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss; preventing their worst effects is paramount to progress on all SDGs. Strong, innovative and sustainable investment will both drive the recovery and set the world on a new path of development. Collaboration on finance and management of debt will be crucial to realising that investment.

Geopolitical and geo-economic shifts, as well as systemic competition, will affect delivery of sustainable development and mitigation of environmental breakdown. While the politics are inevitably complex, success will require cooperation between the major players. Intensive engagement, especially between members of the G7 and G20, is necessary if commitments to net-zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 are to be backed up by credible pathways. How those pathways are met will have a significant influence on development outcomes: an estimated 70% of the cost of global infrastructure requirements to 2030 will be in emerging and developing economies (Bhattacharya et al., 2016). This implies that *effective action must involve the UK working with both emerging market economies (EMEs) and developing countries.*

This is not a zero-sum game. To portray support for EMEs as detracting, one-for-one, from support for the poorest developing countries is an analytical, practical, development, environmental and political mistake. For example, the environment in Africa depends particularly on investing in Asia. The UK should work with EMEs, including in collaboration with China, to direct ODA effectively towards the investments that will drive development and raise living standards. This includes investing in countries of the Belt and Road Initiative. Key guidelines for action will come from support for the SDGs (Gannon et al., 2020a). The IFIs will have a vital role to play, both in helping create the conditions for sustainable investment, and in its financing.

Rapid technological change offers a wide and growing range of effective responses to many of the challenges countries and communities face. Innovation, as well as benefiting mitigation technologies like batteries, sustainable fuels, and certain practices in land use and agriculture, benefits adaptation to climate change. For instance, the monitoring, remote sensing and geospatial mapping of risks using big datasets increase countries' and communities' ability to manage climate risks (Conway and Vincent, 2021a). However, to benefit those most in need, new technologies must be disseminated effectively so that poorer countries are not left behind. In this regard, the UK can collaborate and partner to share technologies, knowledge and skills that can advance decarbonisation and resilience. There are great opportunities in combining development, mitigation and adaptation: from restoring degraded land to improving public transport, providing decentralised solar power, and tackling congestion and pollution in cities. The focus should be on combining development with sustainability and the opportunities that come with rising living standards.

Question 2: What could success in 2030 look like in terms of meeting the needs of the poorest and most marginalised and increasing opportunities for countries to become self-sustaining?

Building resilience to climate change and to processes of wider environmental degradation is essential to improving the wellbeing of poor and marginalised people, as the world's most vulnerable are often also the most exposed to climate and environmental risk (UNDRR, 2019). Low-income and vulnerable countries, as well as poor people in lower-middle-income countries, need support and assistance to manage and reduce the risks. Adaptation is currently under-prioritised in both ODA flows and wider climate finance mobilised by developed countries (OECD, 2020); the share devoted to adaptation must increase.

Success in this endeavour would mean that interventions generate several co-benefits, while keeping costs low and mitigating unintended consequences. One example is how investments in resilience can yield multiple dividends for communities, societies and economies (Surminski and Tanner, 2016). First, disaster risk reduction and the ability to endure declining environmental integrity saves lives and reduces economic losses. Second, projects for resilience, provided they are implemented with sensitivity to community and biodiversity needs, can have strong economic multipliers: stimulating economic activity by reducing risk and supporting growth and jobs. Finally, investments have the potential to promote the SDGs more broadly through wider social and environmental co-benefits (Rözer et al., 2021). Investments in power, water and transport all contribute to multiple SDGs, from health to environment, education and income.

Investments will need to be spread across four types of capital – physical, natural, social and human (Stern, 2021). Sustained improvements in living standards require developing all four forms, as well as their interactions. For instance, improving natural capital through, for example, conservation and restoration of ecosystems such as forests, wetlands and mangroves, can deliver adaptation benefits for human societies as well as improving biological integrity. Meanwhile, effective management of these resources is also a function of social capital: societal capacity, cohesion and collective willingness to respond, which require public, private and community knowledge and practices (Dicker et al., 2021). Developing investment vehicles to finance action, from nature-based solutions through to small-scale agriculture, micro solar, and large infrastructure projects, is very important.

In many cases, adequate adaptation and protection for the poorest and marginalised will involve transformation of systems – such as food or urban planning – or disrupting and challenging wider social vulnerabilities. For example, in many developing and emerging economies, women face heightened vulnerability, including more limited access to land, finance, mobility, educational opportunities, and other assets. In addition, they are often particularly exposed to climate risk, through, for example, being confined to more marginal and flood-prone areas for agricultural work. Targeting and supporting female entrepreneurs' employment and business ownership may play a key role in increasing resilience (Grantham Research Institute, 2021). The importance of applying a strong gender lens to all climate action demonstrates that a successful development strategy will integrate overlaps and interdependencies across all the SDGs.

Again, the future of climate, biodiversity and the environment, especially for the poorest countries, depends in large measure on the nature of infrastructure investment in EMEs over the next two decades. To repeat: protecting the poorest requires participating in and influencing investments in EMEs.

Question 3: How and where can wider UK government international policy and activity best support long-term international development outcomes?

The UK's influence in IFIs provides an opportunity to raise their ambition and to help them lead in shaping and financing the major investment programmes needed to achieve climate goals and the SDGs. The UK's track record and respect are strong in these institutions. Action through the IFIs presents extraordinary value for money through the leverage they bring.

Working through the IFIs, the UK can also promote effective approaches to managing risk, and rigorous sustainable standards. The absence of internationally agreed standards for assessing projects and investments can create confusion and lead to delays, with the result that funders and investors are incentivised to cut corners in lower-income countries, undermining development. In a rapidly changing landscape, there are open questions regarding how to interpret the balance between economic development and environmental sustainability in national, regional and local programmes and plans. To make sure plans are coherent and avoid fragmentation, the UK can encourage more dialogue on these issues; in particular, inviting the governments of lower-income countries to clarify their own understanding of the choices they face and the structuring of objectives (Surminski et al., forthcoming). In this context the UK should press the IFIs to work better together as a group, to help countries create 'country platforms' for shaping investment and to improve their local investment climate. Importantly, plans and programmes should recognise local needs and ensure that funds and activities are geared towards meeting those needs.

Under its 2021 Presidency of the G7, the UK can work closely with the Italian G20 Presidency and reach out to the Presidencies that will follow in 2022 and 2023 to facilitate these strong steps. Collaboration across and within both Groups provides a real opportunity for creating a long-term strategy for sustainability, development and resilience, and to create a strong drive out of the COVID-19 crisis (Stern, 2021). Another important priority is to support the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage, to enable that body to act as an impartial convenor, monitor and finance facility, for the greatest possible chance to protect lives and livelihoods (Byrnes and Surminski, 2019). Furthermore, the UK can engage public policymakers and private investors, seek to promote collaborative action, and raise standards through its contribution to international initiatives, such as the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action and the Taskforce on Scaling Voluntary Carbon Markets. Trade deals are another opportunity to advance these issues.

Question 4: How and where can government work on development best support the UK's wider strategic objectives set out in the Integrated Review?

The International Development Strategy and wider strategy for the FCDO must embed support for net-zero objectives and resilience to climate change in order to be future-proof. This is a prerequisite to support the fourth objective, 'building resilience', and the third, 'strengthening security'. The physical impacts of climate change and environmental degradation will affect food supply chains and patterns of human mobility; knock-on effects can create or amplify conflict (Chalinor and Benton, 2021). Economic development, poverty reduction and rising living standards can be advanced and protected by orienting investment to create more productive, sustainable and resilient capital and towards achieving net-zero in all countries. This will avoid lock-in of assets that may be rendered devalued or stranded in the future with negative consequences for financial stability, employment and livelihoods (Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action, 2021).

The Integrated Review rightly pledges to align all ODA with the Paris Agreement. All investments should be resilient to climate change impacts and net-positive for nature and other environmental processes. Rigorous and robust environmental assessment processes are essential to ensure this. However, mobilising investment also requires creating a positive investment climate to foster opportunities, reduce obstacles and manage risk. Investment will be greatly facilitated by country platforms with clear objectives and structures for collaboration – public and private, domestic and international. It requires helping to create a pipeline of projects aligned with sustainability criteria, and financial flows that can support and de-risk aligned investments. To foster these pipelines, countries will need to cooperate on setting objectives, plans and policies, building the investment climate and country platforms, and harmonising and raising standards.

The modalities of investment are also important. Most lower-income countries lack the financial capacity to take on high upfront costs and have limited domestic funding options or international market access. In particular, for effective adaptation, increasing the scale and catalytic use of international climate finance should involve an increase in use of grants rather than loans. Concessional finance is a strong instrument for supporting policy formation, project preparation and risk management for vulnerable communities (Stern, 2021). The UK can play a powerful role in facilitating the key necessary infrastructure investments by working through the IFIs, including in helping with de-risking and 'just transitions', including away from coal. A new approach should avoid too much emphasis on discrete time-bound projects driven mainly by funding cycles for ODA; instead, the UK should focus on supporting *processes*, in partnership with many other actors, that can deliver benefits over time (Dicker et al., 2021). The recent evolution in the UK's development approach, towards improving and facilitating services in lower-income countries, is in this vein (Surminski et al., forthcoming). However, all investments, regardless of climate focus, should integrate local needs and requirements through consultation and co-design with national or sub-national stakeholders where possible. The country platform, working with recipients and other donors, should be a key part of this approach.

Question 5: In what area of international development does the UK have comparative advantage, particular interests, or is best placed to deliver?

The UK's climate-related legislation, policy expertise, thought leadership and diplomacy are all very strong. As host country of COP26, the UK has the opportunity to shape the core of the agenda on climate change. Based on the track record of the Department for International Development (DfID), the UK is able to draw on a wide network of advisors to work with developing country partners to implement effective development measures. Furthermore, it has strong influence in multilateral institutions, such as the IMF, World Bank and other multilateral development banks (MDBs) (Stern, 2020). Raising investment through the MDBs provides extraordinary value for money and is a high economic multiplier, thanks to an efficient capital structure from the perspective of shareholder countries. For example, a ***one-off*** capital injection into the MDB system of around $40bn could more than double annual financial ***flows*** from around $70bn to around $150bn a year. It is extraordinary ***value for money,*** which is not sufficiently well understood (Bhattacharya et al., 2016).

Capital increases to the MDBs should be made on condition that the institutions increase their active cooperation (Stern, 2021). Multilateral finance and initiatives can reflect a new internationalism based on a shared response to common threats – this is a more potent paradigm for tackling climate and environmental challenges. The UK can promote this model through measured and collaborative diplomacy (Stern, 2020). To complement this, bilateral funding, as a more flexible tool, can direct finance to innovative approaches at the community or sub-national level and seek to leverage private sector finance, including by helping to manage risk (Dicker et al., 2021).

Research, science and technology are also among the UK's greatest comparative advantages, based on the exceptional output of its leading universities and other research institutions relative to the country's size. Higher education is an important tool for the dissemination of knowledge, practice and technology, through the subjects taught in the UK to international students and engagement with institutions in poorer countries via partnerships with UK universities (Conway and Vincent, 2021b). Skills gaps in developing countries can be filled over the longer term by establishing interdisciplinary teaching on science, energy, natural resources, societal and economic change, and policy.

These areas are all important facets of the UK's soft power as well as powerful tools to make a positive impact on lives around the world. They are reinforced by a strong and stable level of development spending in the UK's fiscal budget. Conversely, cuts to funding undermine these same assets and capabilities. For instance, reduced contributions of shareholder capital correspond to reduced influence in the MDBs. Research capacities and partnerships (see below) funded through the Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund have been disrupted by the drop in ODA from 0.7% to 0.5% of GDP, including through cuts to active programmes while in progress (Universities UK, 2021). Stability in funding is crucial for effective, collaborative and trusting relationships. Raising ODA back up to 0.7% of GDP is an urgent priority.

Question 6: How should the UK's approach evolve to build partnerships with new actors and strengthen existing ones?

Ongoing experience in lower-income countries shows that the UK needs to engage with a wide range of actors, including national governments, the private sector and civil society. This can catalyse greater finance and leverage existing capacities more effectively (Gannon et al., 2020b). Currently, responsibility for implementation of development measures in recipient countries is fragmented in places. Broad and multilateral partnerships can help to avoid negative externalities or uneven impacts that exclude vulnerable populations, in line with the SDG mantra to "leave no one behind". The UK should coordinate with action by national governments and funding from other development partners, to ensure mutually positive infrastructure overlaps and co-benefits (Gannon et al., 2020a). This includes facilitating dialogue between companies implementing measures and local stakeholders.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) can be used to overcome fragmentation and can facilitate 'softer' forms of collaboration, including knowledge exchange, research and development, and lobbying. These can involve different types of actors (such as smaller, informal and women-led enterprises), although typically require longer-term support and monitoring to address changing stakeholder needs and to make sure they continue to be inclusive (Gannon et al., 2021). Furthermore, MSPs have typically been less effective at implementing projects than raising awareness of an issue, and should not be relied on to the detriment of meaningful action. It is good practice to first seek a clear understanding of the decision-making process affecting development and climate outcomes, which in turn can help to be realistic about the influence and impact of MSPs' activities (Surminski and Leck, 2017).

Track 2 dialogues can be very constructive (LSE is co-chairing a Track 2 dialogue with India on energy and climate), while collaborations between universities can be politically much smoother and stable than between governments (LSE is co-chairing the Global Alliance of Universities on Climate: 15 of the best universities, across all continents, with strong research on climate). Research partnerships can also produce climate or environmental information that can be useful for community- and national-level users to address knowledge gaps that are preventing effective action. Transdisciplinary partnerships can bring onboard knowledge 'brokers' who can interpret and communicate complex information across different communities of people (Conway and Vincent, 2021a). Initiatives should be locally-led so that questions are framed to meet local needs, but the UK can support through knowledge-generation and -sharing. Careful consultation helps decision-makers in lower-income countries to better understand the consequences and choices their actions face, and to plan accordingly (Geressu et al., 2021).

A new approach will require building and maintaining trust to ensure the UK is considered a legitimate development partner. Effective cooperation to promote development is a two-way process. Partnerships for investment, policy development and information-sharing all rely on respect, trust, time and stability. For instance, existing relationships between UK-based researchers and developing country practitioners have been weakened by the rollback of the Global Challenges Research Fund, which has been at the expense of projects, partners and commitments. Most of all, for new programmes and investments to deliver real and sustainable benefits for those in need, the UK's new International Development Strategy needs to demonstrate credible commitment over the long term.

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