



## **UK Coalition against NTDs statement on cuts to UK Official Development Aid**

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The UK Coalition is a collaborative partnership between 16 UK based organisations and entities actively engaged in research, implementation and advocacy for effective sustainable control and elimination of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) - a diverse group of diseases affecting over one billion of the world's poorest populations.

We are proud of the legacy of UK investment in NTDs and the impact that has been achieved not only in terms of reaching the world's poorest communities with healthcare services, but also in enhancing the UK's influence and leadership in research, innovation and business partnerships.

We are gravely concerned by the recent decision by the UK government to significantly cut official development assistance, and as part of this decision, to withdraw UK support to NTD programmes.

The current crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of resilient health systems in weathering future threats and preventing dire economic consequences. Investments in NTDs have paid dividends in terms of strengthening local system capacity, improving programme effectiveness, and reducing long-term reliance on donor aid - precisely the measures needed to address current and future crises. As we take on the leadership of the G7 we are also the only G7 nation to cut aid, which is a retreat from our moral duty and will weaken our position on the world stage.

The UK has been a global leader in the fight against NTDs not just in terms of significant investment but in driving value for money, integration and good practice. These efforts have supported several countries to reach the brink of disease elimination - a chance also to end the need for continued external support. Ending this investment now, before gains have been fully realised, and while resurgence of disease remains a risk, is tantamount to a waste of taxpayers' money. Additionally, withdrawing from programmes before the end goal has been reached may mean that UK support is not acknowledged for such achievements.

The UK government's vision of a Global Britain, a "soft power superpower", is underpinned by the UK's capacity to invest in global development and research innovation that has also been the direct object of the recent cuts. It is in the interest of the UK taxpayer to sustain these investments that directly underpin the UK's own safety, security and economic success. This is borne out by the consistently strong support by the UK public to international development aid, with 95% of Red Wall voters approving of life-saving humanitarian aid.

The UK government committed to investing in NTDs to protect people most in need from debilitating diseases. On World NTD Day in January 2021, The Prime Minister stated that the 'UK fully supports the World Health Organization's Roadmap to 2030 and its ambition to protect everyone from pain, disfigurement and poverty caused by NTDs'.

We urge the government to reconsider the decision to end its support to NTDs at this crucial point. We ask that current levels of spend on NTDs are maintained as committed, to secure the return on investment that has been promised to the UK public and communities in endemic countries.