



Department
for International
Development



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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Supporters of the Action Aid campaign

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Thank you for your emails about the merger of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to create the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Merging DFID and FCO will allow the UK to bring together its international effort to maximise our influence around the world and ensure we are in the best position to confront the challenges and make the most of opportunities that lie ahead. This decision comes ahead of a critical time for the UK: next year the UK will be President of the G7, and host both the crucial COP26 climate summit and the UN's 75th anniversary celebrations. Alongside this, Covid-19 has demonstrated just how important it is that our development and diplomatic efforts are brought together more closely. It has also shown that a whole-of-government effort is as important abroad as it is at home.

This Government is committed to protecting vulnerable children and helping them to grow up free from violence. We help to keep children safe through dedicated investments in child protection and interventions embedded in development and humanitarian programming. For example, the UK committed £10m to Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children to drive international progress on tackling violence against children and to deliver the Safe to Learn campaign to end violence in schools. We have also provided £10m to UNICEF to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, and exploitation of children on the move in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan.

Advancing gender equality and women's rights are a core part of this Government's mission, and vital to fulfilling every girl's right to 12 years of quality education. The Government remains steadfast in its commitment to this agenda. The Strategic Vision for Gender Equality is DFID's guiding document on gender equality, but it reflects and responds to the UK Government ambitions on gender equality. The FCO and DFID already work closely together to realise the ambitions of the Strategic Vision and share objectives on gender equality. As part of the merger discussions, we will refresh and build on existing strategies, as well as develop new approaches. We do not see the core ambitions of the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality changing. The challenges of advancing girls' education, sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), women's political empowerment, women's economic empowerment and ending violence against

women and girls (VAWG), are as acute now, if not more so, as when we published the strategy in 2018.

The UK Government remains resolute in our commitment to end child marriage. Through our flagship investments, DFID committed a total of £39 million over 5 years (2015-2020) to support international efforts to end child marriage, in 12 high prevalence countries across the world. Since 2015, the programme has reached over 7.7 million girls with schooling initiatives, skills training and girls' clubs to prevent and respond to child marriage. DFID also tackles child marriage through a range of other programmes, including on women and girls' empowerment and girls' education. Getting girls into school and keeping them there is a top priority.

The merger of DFID and FCO is about ensuring our development and foreign policy are aligned and that decisions on development spending take into account a coherent and unified set of priorities for our international policy. The work of UK Aid to reduce poverty will remain central to the new department's mission. Our commitment to spending 0.7 percent of our national income on aid is enshrined in law and we will continue to be guided by our responsibilities under the International Development Act, including a commitment to poverty reduction. It is right in itself and it serves the national interest. We remain committed to full transparency in our aid spending and there will continue to be parliamentary and independent scrutiny of the aid budget.

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