

## Success in tackling diseases of poverty shows why DFID is more important than ever

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The UK Coalition Against Neglected Tropical Diseases is gravely concerned about renewed calls within Parliament to merge the UK Department of International Development (DFID) with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in order to deliver significant cuts to the UK's international aid spend.

Over the past few years, DFID has become a global leader in the fight against Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs). These 20 diseases affect almost half of the global population. The suffering and debilitation these diseases, including leprosy, trachoma, schistosomiasis and others cause, leads to poverty and by implication, undermines international security and prosperity.

DFID has been at the forefront of innovation, leading by example not only in terms of provision of treatment, but also disease prevention through environmental and behavioural measures, while also supporting the strengthening of local health systems. The results have been unprecedented:

- UK Aid provided through DFID is contributing to investments across research and development for new and improved tools (drugs and diagnostics) and implementation of treatment and prevention programmes for Chagas disease, Guinea worm disease, lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminths, trachoma and visceral leishmaniasis
- In 2016 alone, UK Aid funded NTD projects helped to distribute over 136 million treatments across 27 countries.
- UK Aid contributed to the elimination of onchocerciasis in Uganda and of trachoma in Ghana, and drove the establishment of new government-led disease control programmes in Yemen and Pakistan.

Contrary to the arguments put forward by DFID detractors, the removal of DFID will not deliver the expected financial savings. Experience has shown that only an independent, dedicated department can deliver the expertise and accountability, not only to achieve results but to sustain them over the long term. Any short-term cost savings provided by DFID's merger with the FCO will evaporate as NTDs continue to erode national health budgets and drive further people into poverty. Additionally, the absence of DFID will undermine rather than strengthen the UK's power and influence on the global stage, rather than enhance it, as some have suggested.

Over the past 20 years DFID has emerged as a world-leader in development and gained a world-class reputation for aid effectiveness. If the UK is to uphold its commitments on international development while playing a leading part in a global and secure economy, DFID must remain a central pillar in our government's architecture.

UK Coalition against Neglected Tropical Diseases website: <http://www.ntd-coalition.org/>

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