

UK COALITION AGAINST NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

17 June 2020

Stepping back when we should be stepping up: UK Coalition Against NTDs statement on the merge of DFID and FCO

The UK Coalition Against Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) is gravely concerned following today's announcement that the UK Department of International Development (DFID) will be merged with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office this autumn.

Since its establishment in 1997, DFID has played a leadership role in global development, championing aid effectiveness, equity and inclusion, and setting key measures for strengthening the functioning and resilience of the development sector. Given the strong links between poverty and NTDs, which affect almost half of the global population, DFID's decision to invest in NTDs has been characteristic of its vision and commitment towards equality and shared prosperity. This is more important than ever as citizens around the world are looking to leadership to address inequity and make the world a fairer place for all.

We are further alarmed by the timing of this decision and the lack of consultation around it. Not only does this come at a time when the focus needs to be on the current global pandemic, it also comes at a time in which DFID's expertise and independence is crucially needed to strengthen health systems in low- and middle-income countries. This role is fundamentally in the interest of the UK, as it is in the interest of the global community. COVID-19 has demonstrated the link between global and UK health and why all countries need to invest in health, for all citizens. UK aid from the British people has had a clear impact. UK leadership in global health has consistently used evidence from UK institutions involved in implementing UK aid to foster cross-sectoral collaboration across NTDs, WASH, disability inclusion to reach our global vision to end extreme poverty, in alignment with the 2030 Sustainable Development agenda.

The removal of DFID will not deliver the expected financial savings, nor will it strengthen the UK's position globally - as noted by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact report published last year. It will serve to undo decades of important work, while diminishing the influence of UK expertise. The UK government is under the spotlight to demonstrate its global leadership, merging DFID with the FCO will send the wrong message domestically and globally on the UK government's commitment to driving real change and ending extreme poverty.

We urge the UK government to Reconsider this plan and keep DFID independent.

A previous [statement](#) by the UKCNTD highlighted DFID's role at the forefront of innovation, and the impact achieved through its NTD investments. .