



Department
for International
Development



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

James Duddridge MP
Minister for Africa

Chi Onwurah MP
Chair, APPG for Africa
c/o The Royal African Society
21 Russell Square
London
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Our ref

202236

30 April 2020

Dear Chi,

Thank you for your letter of 1 April to the Secretary of State on behalf of Lord Chidgey and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Africa, regarding actions DFID is taking to support efforts to respond to the escalation of COVID-19 in Africa. I am responding as the Minister for Africa.

The UK is helping to lead the worldwide effort in partnership with other countries to tackle the outbreak of COVID-19. As of 15 April, we have announced £744 million of UK aid to support international efforts to combat the outbreak. Supporting others to tackle the virus overseas is an important part of combatting its effects in the UK. I can assure you we will use every tool at our disposal to help end the pandemic and mitigate the health, humanitarian and economic impacts on the poorest and most vulnerable. This includes our £250 million support to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). This is the biggest contribution any country has made to support research on the development of a coronavirus vaccine.

The UK's international response includes:

- £150 million to the International Monetary Fund to help developing countries, including in Africa, deal with the short-term economic disruption caused by the pandemic
- £130 million for UN agencies in response to their urgent appeal. Of this, £65 million has been pledged to the World Health Organisation (WHO) which is co-ordinating international efforts to end the pandemic
- £50 million for the new International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals
- £50 million contribution towards a global handwashing campaign in partnership with Unilever in the most vulnerable countries
- £20 million for international NGOs, including UK charities, to tackle the virus

As well as committing new UK aid funds to this crisis, we are urgently redirecting existing support and programmes in Africa to be more responsive to coronavirus.

Above all, we will deliver an even greater focus on an effective humanitarian and health response, strengthening fragile health services in the world's poorest countries and where the chance of the disease spreading rapidly is the highest. We will also prioritise investments in social protection, economic stability, education and nutrition across Africa - these are vital components of an overall response, supporting country recovery.

Thank you for sharing the report "Lessons from Ebola-affected Communities: Being Prepared for Future Health Crisis". We recognise the vital importance of learning lessons from previous outbreaks. Whilst COVID-19 presents different challenges to Ebola and lessons may not always be directly transferable, there are, of course, a number of lessons from previous Ebola responses that have relevance to wider infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19. These include:

- The importance of using and strengthening existing systems where possible, rather than creating parallel ones, supporting national ownership and leadership of a response
- Addressing existing community needs alongside any new specific response needs; and
- The importance of community engagement and effective communication from the outset; and ensuring a wide/multi-sector approach allowing for adaptive learning in real time

In applying these lessons to ensure a localised response to COVID-19, rooted in community mobilisation, one example is our funding to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. This leverages their federated network of national societies to deliver context specific community engagement and mobilisation at scale. DFID is also a major donor to the START Fund, providing rapid funding to local organisations to respond to emergencies.

We are also drawing on lessons learned from health emergencies to help us pre-empt and mitigate the secondary impacts of COVID-19 on other priorities. DFID is taking action to support countries to continue to provide essential health services, including for sexual and reproductive health, in a way that protects patients and health workers from being infected with COVID-19; prioritises prevention services as far as possible for both COVID-19 and other diseases; plans for disruptions to some forms of vaccination and treatment for non-fatal diseases; and thinks ahead to build back stronger health systems once the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

Your letter highlights quite rightly the importance of countering misinformation with clear, accurate and frequent communication from trusted sources. Effective risk communication and community engagement is at the heart of DFID's response to COVID-19, countering misinformation and empowering individuals with the knowledge they need to protect themselves and others. Our contribution towards a £100 million partnership with Unilever

will tell one billion people around the world about the importance of hygiene and distribute over 20 million hygiene products, including in areas where there is little or no sanitation. DFID's recently announced £500,000 support to the H2H Network is supporting a range of specialist organisations to counter misinformation. For example, Translators without Borders is monitoring the spread of false information in a range of languages and grants to BBC Media Action and Internews are helping to create verified information to tackle specific mistruths spreading in Southeast Asia and Africa.

Finally, we share your concern around the likely economic impact of COVID-19 on African economies and citizens. DFID is working closely with international financial institutions to provide urgent support to country governments. Economic disruption hits the world's poor the most and would deepen a global recession, making it harder for all of us to bounce back and prosper. We will prevent the poorest countries, which represent a quarter of the world's population, from collapse by supporting their economies and access to skills and education, including through the £150 million contribution noted above to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT). The UK was the first country to support this fund when it was created in 2015 and remains one of the largest funders.

The UK is also partnering closely with the World Bank in their work to improve health systems and support the emergency response. This includes \$14 billion of fast track financing and \$150 billion of total financing over the next 15 months by the World Bank group. The IMF will also make \$50 billion available through rapid-disbursement emergency financing for low income and emerging markets.

I am proud that the UK is supporting international efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19 in Africa. Protecting others plays a key role in ensuring we protect our own citizens. DFID is fully committed to using our foreign aid budget and British expertise to stop the spread of the global COVID-19 outbreak, develop a vaccine and save lives around the world.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet remotely and to update you further on DFID's response. I look forward to discussing our approach with you further. Please could you kindly contact my Diary Manager at PSduddridge@fco.gov.uk to arrange a mutually convenient date.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Duddridge', with a horizontal line underneath.

James Duddridge MP
Minister for Africa