

UAMH Response to International Development White Paper Questions

Partnerships

International development efforts face considerable challenges. Seventy million people have fallen back into poverty after the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN has reported the first fall in human development on record. Many in the Global South are growing frustrated with the slow progress on climate action and on development progress. Evolving global challenges and continuing volatility are also affecting progress.

The progress that is needed will not be achieved by the UK acting alone. It is vital that we work with a wide range of partners, including: civil society in the UK and internationally, the private sector, academia, partner governments, multilateral and international organisations, and local communities and citizens. We recognise the need to engage much more seriously with the expertise and experience in the Global South, not only in government, but also and in civil society and in the communities involved. We recognise that we must take a long-term, principled approach. An approach based on solidarity, patience, and mutual respect. An approach that listens, learns, and builds trust.

Question 1

- How do partnerships need to change to restore the credibility of international development and the multilateral system and regain the trust of Global South?
- What role should the UK play in this and what specifically should we do differently?
- What should we do to ensure we are listening better to those most in need?

In his Chatham House speech in March 2023, the Minister for Development and Africa addressed the challenge of restoring the trust of the global south in international development efforts and pledged to “reinvigorate Britain’s development leadership which has been sorely missed by our friends and allies across the world.”

This proactive approach is welcomed by *United Against Malnutrition and Hunger*. We recognise that development resources are constrained and that this will require the UK to focus its leadership on areas where it can maximise its impact, through partnerships which embrace innovative approaches and leverage UK expertise.

We believe that global malnutrition and hunger is just such an issue, and we welcome the fact that the Integrated Review Refresh and subsequent statements from ministers have identified it as a key development priority for government.

As nutrition is foundational to the achievement of our wider development goals, so investment in access to good nutrition has a double benefit, not only helping tackle the malnutrition and hunger crisis but also accelerating progress across the SDGs.

The UK’s historic role and expertise on global nutrition means that partner countries would welcome reinvigorated UK leadership and investment in this area. To deliver this, the UK will need to forge new long-term partnerships on global nutrition based on three pillars: sustained high-level engagement with global south partners; policy consistency and respect for local knowledge; and commitment to long-term funding mechanisms.

The UK should commit to sustaining genuine long-term nutrition partnerships which draw on local knowledge and develop programmes together. Long term nutrition contracts should be developed, which commit to shared outcomes with partners, provide guarantees that funding will not be

abruptly withdrawn, and underpin policy consistency. New approaches to partnerships should utilise match funding mechanisms including the Child Nutrition Fund to leverage in additional funds and crucially to align priorities with partner countries.

To aid high-level engagement, consideration should be given to the appointment of an FCDO Special Envoy for Malnutrition and Hunger to develop and sustain these nutrition partnerships and ensure the FCDO's global health and food and agriculture programmes are focused on bringing high-impact malnutrition programmes to scale, in conjunction with partner countries.

Significant UK funding for CNF, combined with a sustained UK nutrition investment plan in partnership with FCDO priority countries, has the potential to make a major contribution to the reinvigorated development leadership to which the UK aspires, while delivering lasting development impact and a legacy of which the UK could be justifiably proud.

The UK public have demonstrated their active support for action to tackle malnutrition and hunger over many decades, which suggests that UK focus on this area may also help build wider public support for international development. It is an area where significant progress has been made in the past and with sustained action, can be made again.

Big ideas and innovations

A reinvigorated approach requires new ideas and new ways of working. Advances in science can point to new solutions to old problems. New technologies from digital to artificial intelligence offer new opportunities, as well as additional challenges. The much more diverse range of countries, institutions and actors involved in global development cooperation offer new perspectives and experience. The sources of finance potentially available for global development cooperation, go far beyond official development assistance. Additional sources include the large volume of remittances sent around the world each year, and the many sources of private investment capital and the profits from business.

Question 2

- What are the specific innovative proposals that can accelerate progress in international development?
- What initiatives, policies, partnerships, or technologies could result in accelerated progress?
- Are there big ideas on which the UK is particularly well placed to play a role?

Accelerated progress in international development goals require foundational issues such as access to nutrition to be addressed. The UK is uniquely well placed to play a key role in this area as a leader on research and innovative practice in food systems and next-generation agriculture; a global hub for financial innovation and a centre of nutrition expertise.

Food and agricultural research: By prioritising malnutrition in its food and agricultural research and innovation agenda, the UK could identify and fast-track game-changing technologies and science, such as next-generation crops and innovations in livestock farming. Key areas for UK focus should include:

- **Crop production practices.** Climate-resilient and nutrient-rich (including biofortified) varieties of staple crops which can deliver triple impact for climate adaptation, better diets, and improved livelihoods.

- **Animal production.** Animal-source foods are likely to play an important role in enhancing the nutritional value of diets around the world, but production can have negative environmental impacts. More research is needed to develop appropriate climate mitigation and ensure that the lowest-income households can access the benefits.
- **Food processing, including large scale food fortification.** Ultra-processed foods are widely consumed across the income spectrum, but often have low nutritional value. Large scale fortification, alongside other key efforts, can be a cost-effective way to improve micronutrient intake. Disseminating knowledge on food fortification could reduce prices and bring more nutritious foods to a wider set of people, while additional research on small scale food processing could help enhance diets and consider local food preferences.
- **Market linkages, including reduction of post-harvest loss.** More effective and efficient storage and transportation for perishable nutritious foods would reduce wastage of nutritious foods and associated carbon emissions. Some technologies are ready; additional innovation, and evaluation of the ultimate impact on nutrition outcomes, could generate more tailored solutions and inform further investments.
- **Demand generation for nutritious foods for low-income households.** Expanded research is needed to understand decision-making among low-income households and design appropriate demand-side interventions to complement supply-side expansion of nutritious food options, which may otherwise prove ineffective.

Financial Innovation: The UK should utilise The City, a world-leading financial centre, and London's reputation as a leading global hub in innovative financing, to attract more investment into tackling hunger and malnutrition. Significant potential exists for innovative financing in nutrition but unlocking it is not straightforward. To do so will require the government to create a proactive and supportive policy environment and get behind efforts to bring together the specific set of technical skills in finance and nutrition which are required.

Centre of Expertise: The UK has unique expertise in areas critical to tackling malnutrition and hunger through its INGOs, research, academic, business and finance sectors which could be brought together in a Centre of Expertise modelled on existing Centres of Expertise on Technology; Democratic Governance; Education; Green Cities; and Inclusive Growth. The Centre could build on the momentum created by the UK's Global Security and Nutrition event in November and ensure that the expertise it assembled continued to be accessible and have impact.

Question 3

- What new ideas for development cooperation would make the biggest impact in, or for, low income countries?
- What are the best ideas to accelerate progress for middle income countries which still have large numbers of poor people?

Undernutrition is a major issue in both low and middle-income countries, blighting the lives of millions of people, constraining economic development, entrenching inequalities and generating instability. Given the foundational nature of access to nutrition, tackling undernutrition is a prerequisite for low and middle-income countries if they are to make progress on other development goals. As such the UK should support a long-term programme of action against malnutrition and hunger in partnership with, and tailored to the needs of, low and middle-income countries.

By committing to sustained investment over a period of five years, real progress could be made in reducing levels of malnutrition while maximising impacts on wider development goals. Partnerships will need to be tailored to individual country needs and factor in their ability to mobilise domestic resources. Key areas of focus should include:

- **Treatment and prevention:** Scale up treatment of severe malnutrition with therapeutic foods, and support global efforts to streamline the global malnutrition treatment process including by investing in community health workers. In addition, prevent more cases of malnutrition from occurring by expanding coverage of life-saving and cost-effective interventions for mothers and children. This includes scaling up the “power four” interventions: emergency therapeutic food, prenatal vitamins, breastfeeding support, and vitamin A supplementation. To scale up the Power Four the UK should: set ambitious coverage targets in collaboration with bilateral partners; offer UK ODA to support the delivery of the Power Four through routine health systems, including through community health workers; and support Ministries of Health to ensure that the relevant commodities are included in national health budgets.
- **Investment in more sustainable, climate-resilient food systems:** Increase research and development into affordable, nutritious, and climate-resilient crops in collaboration with partner countries and where appropriate their research institutes and food manufacturers. Such collaboration would recognise the importance of drawing on knowledge generated by on the ground experience and finding context appropriate solutions to address the root causes of malnutrition.

Levers: ODA and ‘beyond aid’

Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains a vital element in international development. It is essential for action to reduce poverty, address climate change, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss, particularly where there is no market alternative to concessional financing. But the scale and pace of action required means that concessional ODA financing, and a ‘traditional’ development policy agenda, will be insufficient. We want to consider how science and technology, private finance and the private sector, trade and investment, and diplomatic effort can contribute. We want to consider the policies and regulation, in those broader areas, that will enable progress.

Question 4

- How can Official Development Assistance (ODA) be most effectively targeted and built upon?
- How can non-ODA financing be mobilised to ensure ambitious, innovative, and transformational international development?

As this submission has emphasised, access to good nutrition is foundational to development and achieving the SDGs. It makes vaccines more effective and reduces the risk of obesity, and non-communicable diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular disease. Women who are well nourished are more likely to give birth to healthy babies. Adequate nutrition is critical for mental and physical development, directly affecting a child’s learning capacity and in turn their future earning potential. Studies have shown that reducing malnutrition can raise per capita gross domestic product (GDP) by up to 11% and break the cycle of poverty, inequality, and food insecurity.

Investing ODA in a targeted five-year plan to fight malnutrition and hunger, which mobilises match funding, leverages funds from other donor governments and draws in innovative finance, would save lives, improve education outcomes, amplify investments in health and food systems, promote security, and equality, and combat the effects of climate change. At a time of constrained finances, a concerted investment in global nutrition represents a best value intervention which would deliver lasting development impact.

Match funding mechanisms including the Child Nutrition fund offer opportunities for international partners to work together to leverage ODA spending to maximum effect by mobilising domestic resources in partner countries and aligning policy priorities.

Beyond ODA, the international community should collaborate to reform the global finance system to leverage additional resources for the Global South. The UK should continue to support Global South led initiatives such as the Bridgetown Agenda and use its voice in international organisations to champion initiatives led by high burden countries to unlock resources to tackle hunger and malnutrition.

The UK should also work with partners to draw in additional resources for malnutrition and hunger, drawing on London's role as a major financial centre and its reputation as a global hub in innovative financing. Trillions of dollars have flowed into ESG 'Environment, Social and Governance' investments in recent years, with sectors developing across a range of innovative financing categories, including impact investing, results-based financing, blended finance, insurance, guarantees and capital market bonds.

Some sectors in international development, especially health, education, and environment, have made progress developing instruments and mechanisms that have led to additional financial resources beyond traditional grant aid. However, analysis conducted by Palladium for The Power of Nutrition concluded that the nutrition sector lags behind others in accessing innovative finance. For example, there have been more than 650 capital market Green Bonds launched but only two nutrition-related bonds. There are five impact funds in global health, accessing more than \$285m but only one in nutrition (GAIN's Nutritious Foods Financing (N3F) Fund).

- <https://www.gainhealth.org/impact/programmes/nutritious-foods-financing-n3f>).

Significant potential clearly exists to exploit innovative financing for nutrition but unlocking it will require a proactive and supportive policy environment and considerable focus to bring together the specific set of technical skills in finance and nutrition which are not usually found together.

Question 5

- How should scientific and technological expertise, private finance and the private sector, trade and investment, civil society networks and diplomacy be engaged to support global development action and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

The UK should use the opportunity of UK expertise coming together at the Global Food Security and Nutrition event to establish a UK Centre of Expertise on Hunger and Malnutrition based on the model of the existing Centres of Expertise on Technology; Democratic Governance; Education; Green Cities; and Inclusive Growth. The Centre could bring together expertise in INGOs, research, academic,

business and finance sectors to create partnerships between sectors within the UK and with Global South counterparts. It would gather insights into the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions, create partnerships of expertise, for example between finance and nutrition sectors and advise government accordingly.

The Centre of Expertise could be twinned with a research institution in a high burden country (for example, Kenya) to foster research and innovation as well as strengthen and deepen partnerships in the Global South. The Centre would carry forward the momentum of the Global Food Security and Nutrition Summit hosted by the UK Government in November 2023. The UK is well placed to host a hub of research and innovation building its past track record as a leader on global nutrition.

Climate and development

There is a clear need to accelerate and scale up support for action in the face of climate change. This includes work on adaptation and resilience, but also mitigation and sustainable growth in relation to countries' development pathways. While development and climate action must be coherent, challenges, limits and barriers remain. Green and clean energy transitions pose considerable challenges for many developing countries. The drive for economic growth and an end to poverty does not necessarily align with environmental concerns or protecting biodiversity. For sustainable development, we must find ways through the tensions and trade-offs.

Question 6

- How can progress on tackling ending poverty, economic growth, and the challenges of climate change be best brought together, in the context of Agenda 2030 (including building resilience, adaptation, and sustainable growth)?
- How can the opportunities be maximised? How can the limits and trade-offs be managed?

The crisis of malnutrition and hunger is intricately interwoven in both and cause and effect with the challenges of climate change, poverty, and generating economic growth. Prioritising action against hunger and malnutrition alongside climate change offers an opportunity to turn the tide against ever greater food insecurity. The UK could play a significant role in this by tackling nutrition in a holistic way, ensuring that nutrition-sensitive interventions and the climate agenda are aligned. For example, investing in climate-resilient and nutrient-rich (including biofortified) varieties of staple foods can deliver triple impact for climate adaptation, better diets, and improved livelihoods. Improved crops can better tolerate fluctuations in temperature or water availability; nutrient dense crops can translate into improved diets; and higher value crops can also support nutrition indirectly through improved farm incomes. Good nutrition helps communities by making them more resilient in the face climate shocks, while efforts to improve climate change adaptation in a nutrition-positive way, focused on the poorest and most marginalised communities, can improve nutritional outcomes. The UK should implement the OECD recommended nutrition policy marker across its ODA portfolio. The UK has already committed to the marker, which is a welcome initiative, but now it should ensure that the marker is implemented across the board. This would ensure that nutrition objectives are central to all climate related funding.

The UK Government has stated that generating the funding needed to tackle climate change and reasserting the primacy of purpose of reaching the SDG's is "at the heart of everything we need to do". Ensuring that we and our international partners live up to our commitments will be vital to rebuild a sense of trust and partnership with the Global South but the scale of funds required go far beyond what governments can offer, so private sector investors such as pension funds will to be mobilised to play their key role. The UK should also continue to support calls for multilateral development banks to explore options, including borrowing against loan portfolios, to expand their lending capacity to respond to climate change and related crises, including hunger, even without large capital increases.

The UK should also explore further creative use of the International Monetary Fund Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), additional to ODA, and encourage other bilateral donors to do the same to support multilateral lending for food and nutrition security projects and broader needs, including climate change mitigation and adaptation. Following the recent commitment by UK Export Finance (UKEF), which allows partner countries to defer debt repayments if hit by climate catastrophes, the UK should play a leading role in sharing learnings and deploying wider risk-sharing tools.

Question 7

- What are the top priorities for strengthening multilateral effectiveness in international development?
- What are the issues and challenges most suited to bilateral cooperation (considering all levers)?

Access to good nutrition is foundational for achieving progress against all other SDGs, making it a key priority for action at both multilateral and bilateral levels.

Multilateral institutions such as the WHO, UNICEF and WFP have a critical role to play in streamlining treatment protocols, developing financing mechanisms such as the Child Nutrition Fund, and ensuring that life-saving interventions such as RUTF and vitamin supplements are included in medical schedules. Co-operation on agriculture and food systems strengthening should be pursued at multilateral level through the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's Agriculture Centre, the African Union's Agriculture and Food Security Division, and initiatives such as the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme.

Multilateral organisations are also best placed to leverage significant finance, as well as learnings and best practice from programmes and policies across the world. For example, multilaterals are essential in reaffirming commitments to rule-based, open, fair, transparent, predictable, and non-discriminatory trade to help countries avoid food crises which have been seen when governments impose unhelpful and strict export restrictions. The UK should also use its position on the global stage to support the creation of national Food Security Crisis Preparedness Plans, using support from the World Bank and other stakeholders to share best practice and relevant research, including under the Global Alliance for Food Security framework. This will enable national governments to mitigate the impact of food crises and support resilience building. In addition, the UK should support reform of the World Bank's Early Response Financing for the prevention of malnutrition, including expanding the financing ceiling, providing greater flexibility, and reforming the triggering mechanism so that countries do not need to descend to crisis levels before being able to access funding.

Bilateral partnerships will also be critical in securing access to good nutrition for all. Effective partnerships will be mindful of countries' own priorities, challenges, and targets and will work in concert with them, drawing on the knowledge of national ministries of health and other local partners

who will be aware of the needs in their own systems, hardest to reach areas, and key challenges to delivering emergency assistance and strengthening health systems. Equally, national governments and local partners are likely to have the greatest insights into opportunities for innovation and impact. For example, the most effective foods to fortify and the most culturally appropriate formulations for therapeutic food.

Strong bilateral relationships would enable the UK to share tracking and markers which measure the impact of health and nutrition interventions. For example, the UK could use its bilateral partnerships to share the learning from implementing a gender marker and gender-sensitive development across its development portfolio. In particular, the UK should strive to ensure 80% of its nutrition spending contains a gender policy objective and can encourage national governments to aim for the same. By building strong bilateral relationships the UK can ensure its support can have the most impact.

Call for evidence link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-international-development-white-paper-call-for-evidence/uk-international-development-white-paper-call-for-evidence>

Link: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/EQVOZW/>

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