

Royal Society response to UK Government consultation on the International Development White Paper

FCDO Consultation Questions	Royal Society Response
<p>Question 1.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<p>Scientific research is fundamentally an international endeavour and through partnerships across the globe, science has a critical role to play in delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals^{1,2,3}. Better integration of the role of science into the multilateral system to inform policy making could therefore significantly strengthen the effectiveness of delivery of the SDGs. For example, the UK could focus further effort to integrate the outcomes from the S7 and S20 (the science tracks of the G7 and G20) into leaders' summits, as it did effectively during the last UK G7 Presidency⁴.</p> <p>It is also critical that the impact of science across the Global South is properly recognised and supported. This includes long term and broad financial support for science through both ODA and other sources of funding. Listening to research outcomes and ensuring development policy is research informed, including research from across the Global South, will also help to rebuild trust in multilateral development efforts.</p> <p>1 - https://council.science/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Flipping-the-Science-Model-1.pdf 2 - https://council.science/publications/a-guide-to-sdg-interactions-from-science-to-implementation/ 3 - https://royalsociety.org/~media/about-us/international/supporting-sustainable-development-goals-iap.pdf?la=en-GB 4 - https://royalsociety.org/blog/2021/12/s7-presidents-meeting-march-2021/</p>
<p>Question 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the specific innovative proposals that can accelerate progress in international development? • What initiatives, policies, partnerships, or technologies could result in accelerated progress? 	<p>The recent S7⁵ and S20⁶ communiqués highlight a number of innovative policies which nations could take forward in their approaches to international development. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing systemic risks in a changing climate through developing national roadmaps to net zero and to promote cross-disciplinary collaboration on local and global scales. This includes combining scientific and indigenous knowledge through expert advisers; promoting

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- Are there big ideas on which the UK is particularly well placed to play a role?

globally coordinated activities to increase data accessibility; and enhancing financial support by repurposing funds, especially for the most vulnerable countries with a large resource deficit [S7 and S20 2023].

- Developing a roadmap for decarbonisation and the sustainable management and protection of the ocean and its biodiversity. This includes raising awareness of climate change and biodiversity in society and increasing scientific knowledge of the ocean and marine life; increasing funding for field surveys and research while championing students and early career scientists; strengthening fishery regulations; and establishing further protected marine conservation areas. [S7 2023]
- Enhance clean energy access through leveraging the performance gains and cost reductions in clean-energy technologies, especially renewable energy and energy storage [S20 2023]
- Developing a broad-based venue, platform, or organization to bring together experts from governments, international organizations, academia, and civil society from across the G20. The objective is to provide inputs to guidelines for responsible, just, equitable, safe, and sustainable use of emerging technologies (for example, generative AI, gene editing for inheritable traits, and solar geoengineering). [S20 2023]

There are also a number of recent publications by the Royal Society which explore other topics which have direct relevance to a development context. For example:

- On AI a useful summary of the Society's work on AI is in our submission for the United Nations Global Digital Compact. Drawing upon various reports related to data and digital technologies, the Society's submission provides input on the thematic areas of 'protect data'; 'accountability for discrimination and misleading content'; 'regulation of artificial intelligence'; and 'digital commons as a global public good'.⁷
- The Society has also produced extensive work on the use of data in emergencies, which has particular relevance for an international audience, including in the Global South. The Society's work includes a set of high level recommendations to government on the creation of

resilient and trusted data systems. ⁸

- The Royal Society also has a range of work which can assist countries in pandemic preparedness, including a very recent analysis into the effectiveness of non-pharmaceutical interventions during the Covid-19 pandemic⁹.

5 - <https://royalsociety.org/news/2023/03/g7-climate-change-conflict-global-health/>

6 - <https://royalsociety.org/news/2023/08/g20-communique/>

7 - https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/Publications/2023/The-Royal-Society_UN-Global-digital-compact.pdf

8 - <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/data-for-emergencies/>

9 - <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/impact-non-pharmaceutical-interventions-on-covid-19-transmission/>

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?

Sustained, long term funding for capacity strengthening work across science systems in the Global South could have a transformational impact on these countries development trajectory and promote economic growth¹⁰.

Research has also demonstrated that strong research institutions and skilled researchers are essential for low-and-middle-income countries to generate evidence for their own policies and to make progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals¹¹.

Investing in research and innovation represents value for money in building future capacity in research talent, catalysing networks and partnerships, and leveraging further research funding.

UK-funded research and innovation has contributed to significant global advances, including a dramatic reduction of child deaths from malaria, eradication of the devastating livestock disease rinderpest, reduction of gender-based violence and building the case for climate action. These contributions demonstrate the critical role of research and innovation in supporting the objectives of the integrated review, especially the objective of the UK to become a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation with a global perspective.

For example, historical ODA investment delivered through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) to build scientific capacity in South Africa has supported greater research and innovation activity and developed, attracted and retained skilled people who have chosen to undertake cutting-edge scientific research in that country. This scientific capacity both benefits the local economy and its citizens, but also ensured the rapid identification of the Beta COVID-19 variant within South Africa, informing responses around the world. The GCRF and Newton Funds have also played a role in developing technologies and education to reduce HIV transmission in sub-Saharan Africa and helping and empowering Brazilian researchers understand and mitigate the impact of Zika virus

10 - <https://royalsociety.org/~media/about-us/international/g-science-statements/2017-may-3-new-economic-growth.pdf?la=en-GB>

11 - [El Hajj T, Gregorius S, Pulford J, Bates I (2020) Strengthening capacity for natural sciences research: A qualitative assessment to identify good practices, capacity gaps and investment priorities in African research institutions. PLoS ONE 15(1): e0228261. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0228261>]

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?

The research and innovation community has spent years building and maintaining significant and deep international partnerships with science and humanities partners all over the world, enabled by government funding. However, research partnerships are only successfully built where funding is consistent and long-term (at least 5-10years+) in nature.

The cliff-edge reduction in investment to ODA programmes, and last-minute nature of this communication in previous years damaged the UK's credibility and trustworthiness as it has forced the Society and many other organisations to break hard-won partnerships, especially where our international partners are also contributing financially and will be unable to proceed without the UK as a partner.

Ensuring the UK is a partner of choice should be a focus moving forward. The recent cuts have damaged that reputation with all our partners worldwide, not simply those in developing countries. An objective of building the UK as a research and innovation superpower by 2030 requires that the UK is an attractive partner for all our partners internationally and that funding for international research and innovation,

including international development, is resourced fully, sustainably and with trust that it will be maintained and delivered by government.

The UK government should affirm recognition to the value of inter-disciplinary research and development programmes within its overall international development strategy as a means to both building scientific capacity which benefits all in the face of global challenges and delivering against the ambition of the Integrated Review more broadly. In delivering the strategy, the FCDO should manage the allocations process in such a way that gives confidence to international partners that the UK is a reliable and long-term partner.

The 10-year vision of the Integrated Review should be matched by a similar at least 10-year international development funding commitment, including for research and innovation. If a research project is cancelled mid-way through it will not be able to deliver its intended benefit, so ensuring a reliable, multi-year funding stream is essential for the UK to realise its goals (see for example this analysis by UKRI on the impact of ODA cuts on research projects¹²). This is especially key to ensure that we are able to support genuinely equitable partnerships with our partners internationally. Our programmes up to now have helped to spearhead significant changes in UK and international research culture and skills development with the UK well-placed to continue this leadership if funding is restored and maintained.

12 - <https://www.ukri.org/publications/consequences-of-the-2021-oda-budget-cuts-key-findings-report/>

Question 5.

• How should scientific and technological expertise, private finance and the private sector, progress toward the SDGs. Our earlier answers highlight some of the examples and evidence base for the trade and investment, civil society networks and role of science and research in development^{1, 10}.
diplomacy be engaged to support global development action and accelerate progress towards the SDGs?

Scientific and technological expertise has a critical role to play in global development and in delivering progress toward the SDGs. Our earlier answers highlight some of the examples and evidence base for the trade and investment, civil society networks and role of science and research in development^{1, 10}.

The two key principles which should be embedded to ensure this approach is successful are:

1. Ensuring the voice of science is embedded in multilateral decision making, including through effective use of the S7 and S20, through the international science bodies like the International Science Council and InterAcademy Partnership, and through recent welcome developments like the Science Advisory Board for the UN Secretary General¹³ ; and

2. Through long term and consistent funding for capacity strengthening for science systems across the Global South (as highlighted in our previous answers above)

1 - <https://council.science/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Flipping-the-Science-Model-1.pdf>

10 - <https://royalsociety.org/~media/about-us/international/g-science-statements/2017-may-3-new-economic-growth.pdf?la=en-GB>

13 - <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sga2223.doc.htm>

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)?
A systems based approach, focused on capacity strengthening across multiple aspects of how science systems work and how they can support development work would be a particularly effective approach. Care is also needed to ensure proper recognition is given to how different science systems work in different countries and continents. This includes considering policy areas beyond science including education, employment, and wider government policy and how these aspects work effectively together.
- How can the opportunities be maximised?
The Royal Society has had a number of previous initiatives that have taken this approach in the past, including our Africa Capacity Building Initiative (ACBI)¹⁴ and Future Leaders – African Independent Research (FLAIR)¹⁵ Fellowships.
- How can the limits and trade-offs be managed?

The Royal Society also has a range of policy publications¹⁶ which explore potential solutions on energy and climate change challenges. The Society has also explored interlinkages and policy options around climate change and biodiversity¹⁷ which includes a number of aspects relevant to a development context.

14 - <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/grants-schemes-awards/grants/africa-capacity-building/acbi-case-studies/RS-FCDO-ACBI-Funder-Practises-Supporting-RCS-Case-Study.pdf>

15 - <https://royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/grants/flair/>

16 - <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/low-carbon-energy-programme/>

17 - <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/projects/bio-climate-interlinkages/interlinkages-between-climate-change-and-biodiversity.pdf>

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)?

In line with our submission for question four, a key priority here is ensuring long term support is available which will strengthen the effectiveness of any multilateral or bilateral intervention. As the FCDO review of the ACBI programme¹⁸ recommended:

“The long-term commitment from FCDO across spending reviews (i.e., the longitudinal aspect of ACBI over a 10-year period) was considered invaluable and fundamental for the success of the programme, particularly in the climate and context of the usually shorter funding cycles. The embedded ME&L project run by the CCR also benefitted from this long-term commitment.”

In addition to this, ensuring that the voice of scientists across the Global South features prominently in development and policy discussions will serve to strengthen multilateral effectiveness, as will ensuring development assistance takes a systems approach to capacity strengthening - i.e. focusing support on a range of areas from individual researchers through to researcher funders and academies.

18 - <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-203041/documents>