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# **Progressive UK Action for Healthy People and Planet**



Action for Global Health (AfGH) is a UK-based network of over 50 organisations working towards a world where the universal right to health is realised. AfGH acts as the coordinator between the UK government and global health civil society, convening regular meetings and sharing learning from across our network.

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# Progressive UK Action for Healthy People and Planet

## Context

Since 2015, the world has seen a decline in population health outcomes globally. Expansion of access to essential health services has slowed compared to pre-2015 gains and there has been no significant progress in reducing financial hardship in accessing prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and care. Insufficient progress is being made in reducing maternal mortality and expanding universal health coverage (UHC).

Disadvantaged communities continue to face significant disparities in accessing healthcare and related services, coupled with increased exposure to health risks. This was highlighted by the vaccine inequity seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Key shifts



Global childhood vaccinations have experienced **the largest decline** in three decades.



**45%** of deaths of children under five are linked to malnutrition and **45 million** children suffer from wasting.



Deaths from tuberculosis, viral hepatitis and malaria have **increased** compared to pre-pandemic levels.



There was an alarming **145% increase** in 2022 in the number of cholera outbreaks around the world, compared to the previous five-year average.

Realising sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for women and adolescent girls has been an ongoing challenge for many years, which the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic further compounded. Further challenges have arisen as a result of the growing political rollback on SRHR - clearly demonstrated by the overturning of Roe vs. Wade in the USA.

Conflict and climate change have become increasingly important determinants of health. The wars in Ukraine, Sudan and Occupied Palestinian Territories have brought sharply into focus the impact that conflict has on decimating health care - highlighting that it is often the most vulnerable populations, such as persons with disabilities, who are impacted the greatest.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has indicated that climate change is 'one of the greatest health challenges of the 21st century.' As climate conditions change, the world is witnessing more frequent and more intense weather and climate events, such as storms, floods, droughts and wildfires. Extreme weather events destroy critical water and sanitation infrastructure, causing untreated sewage to spill into clean water sources and increasing the risk of cholera. These weather and climate events affect health both directly and indirectly, increasing the risk of death; Non-Communicable Diseases; the emergence and spread of infectious diseases; as well as interrupting the provision of essential health and care services.

At the halfway point to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target date, the world is faced with escalating, shared global health challenges. Tackling these challenges will be central to achieving the UK Government's mission to tackle health inequalities and support people to live longer, healthier lives - both in the UK and globally.

## Where Does the UK Stand on Global Health?

In recent years, the UK's role in advancing global health equity has waned as cuts to the official development assistance (ODA) budget and increased use of ODA for in-country refugee costs have impacted the UK's ODA for health. In October 2024, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves announced further cuts to the ODA budget from 0.58% in 2023-2024 to 0.5% for 2024-2025 and 2025-2026.

The UK's total ODA for health dropped from \$4.2 billion in 2019 to \$3.9 billion in 2021. The total amount of ODA allocated to health also reduced from 16.7% in 2020 to 10.1% in 2022. These reductions contrast with that of other key bilateral donors which are, for the most part, allocating increased ODA to health.

Health programmes have been severely affected, including flagship projects aimed at ending preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths, eliminating neglected tropical diseases, improving access to sexual and reproductive health services, increasing access to water, sanitation and hygiene and tackling non-COVID-19 communicable and non-communicable diseases. This resulted in essential health programmes reducing services and closing programmes in some of the poorest countries. This has undermined trust in the UK Government, and diminished its credibility and influence on the global stage.

Since 2022, the UK Government has launched three global health papers: in relation to ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children, health systems strengthening, and the most recent Global Health Framework (due to expire in 2025). Whilst there are commendable aims set out in these papers, these aims cannot be met without substantially reversing cuts to health programmes witnessed in recent years. These papers also fall short of outlining a comprehensive, cross-government global health strategy and fail to include clear monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

The UK has also historically utilised its role in global health diplomacy, including through the appointment of Dame Sally Davies as the Special Envoy for tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR). And yet, without clear funding or a guiding strategy and goals, the strides these champions and envoys can take in championing global health and achieving the SDGs are limited.

### Critical gaps have also been identified in UK funding and programming areas



**Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)** - an essential component of infection prevention and control, WASH is vital in tackling AMR - with **half of healthcare facilities** worldwide lacking basic hand hygiene services.



**Non-communicable diseases** - affect **41 million** people every year, **77%** of whom are in low- and middle-income countries.



**Nutrition** - a key health equity challenge, UK aid for nutrition was disproportionately impacted by the UK aid cuts, resulting in **60% decreases** to funding.



**Climate and health** - our 2024 assessment found that only **2 out of 217** UK health programmes had started to address the linkages between climate and health.

## Recommendations:

# Progressive UK Action for Healthy People and Planet

There is a distinct opportunity for the UK to rebuild its reputation and show up as a global partner in addressing the highest priority issues impacting global health - from tackling the climate crisis to increasing access to essential health services for the most marginalised. Ambitions set forward must be supported by clear financial commitments, implementation plans and accountability mechanisms.

The UK Government should address key global health equity challenges, through:

1. **Consultatively developing a comprehensive, cross-government Global Health Strategy in 2025;**
2. **Championing an ambitious vision for global health through high-level representation and ambitious financial commitments at key upcoming summits in 2025**, including the Nutrition for Growth Summit, GAVI Replenishment, World Health Assembly, High-Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases, COP30 and Global Fund Replenishment;
3. **Appointing a Special Envoy for Universal Health Coverage;**
4. **Urgently returning to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA** and reversing the impact of funding cuts to health programmes;
5. **Addressing the stark gaps in climate-health financing** and ensuring that all health programming integrates climate considerations;
6. **Developing a Localisation Strategy** focused on increasing financing and equitable partnerships with LMICs;
7. **Linking global health with cross-governmental strategies for marginalised communities**, including women's rights, girls' rights, people with disabilities, older people, and LGBTQIA+ groups;
8. **Taking a cross-sector, One Health approach**, that recognises the interconnected health of people, animals and the planet;
9. **Scaling up focus and action on neglected health equity challenges**, including climate change and global health, the rising burden of NCDs, health systems strengthening in fragile and conflict-affected settings, accelerating action on maternal, newborn and child health, tackling antimicrobial resistance, improving water, sanitation and hygiene, protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights, and strengthening the global health workforce.

## Actions for MPs



**Join an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)** working on global health and development (see list below)



**Amplify our recommendations within relevant parliamentary questions and debates** (we are happy to provide support)



**Connect and collaborate across the APPGs on cross-cutting global health issues to champion their importance**



**Utilise APPG inquiries and reports to create evidence** and hold the UK Government to account on our priority recommendations and neglected health equity issues (eg. climate-sensitive and resilient health systems)



**Encourage cross-government ministerial collaboration and accountability on global health**



**Write an op-ed on one of our priority recommendations** (we are happy to provide support with case studies etc.)

### Relevant All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG)

- APPG for Global Health
- APPG for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- APPG for Nutrition for Development
- APPG for Vaccinations for All
- APPG for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- APPG for HIV/AIDS
- APPG for Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases
- APPG for Population, Development and Reproductive Health
- APPG for Tuberculosis
- APPG for Extreme Poverty

### Additional resources

[Stocktake Review: Assessment and Recommendations for the UK's Role in Global Health Equity](#)

[Health Inequalities and Climate Change](#)

[Health Systems Strengthening in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings](#)

[Climate, Energy and Health Equity](#)

[Climate, Health Systems and Wider Infrastructure Strengthening](#)

[Furthering UK Leadership on Anti-Microbial Resistance](#)

[Embedding Community Health Workers within an Integrated UK Global Health Strategy](#)



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