

# PETER GIBSON MP



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

June 2021

*Dear Constituent*

Thank you for your email about UK spending on foreign aid, otherwise known as Official Development Assistance (ODA).

I am proud that this country has been and always will be open and outward-looking, leading in solving the world's toughest problems and striving to be a force for good in the world. Whether it is stepping up to support desperate Syrians and Yemenis in conflict zones, leading the fight against Ebola and Malaria, or supporting millions of children to gain a decent education. As we emerge from the pandemic, I am glad that this Government is committed to delivering for the most vulnerable with much greater transparency and accountability so my constituents know where our aid budget is being spent – ensuring that we achieve value for money and ensuring that our aid spending is actually having a positive impact.

Nevertheless, we must be honest about where we are. The UK is currently experiencing its worst economic contraction in 300 years because of the pandemic, with a budget deficit double that caused by the 2008 financial crisis. At this time of unprecedented crisis, tough choices must be made, which is why the Chancellor announced a temporary reduction in the UK's ODA budget from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of the UK's Gross National Income (GNI).

I was encouraged to learn that, despite this cut, the UK will be spending more than £10 billion in 2021 on its seven ODA priorities, as set out by the Foreign Secretary – climate change and biodiversity; global health security, including Covid-19; girls' education; responding to humanitarian crises, such as those in Yemen and Syria; science and technology; resolving conflicts and defending open societies, including human rights; and promoting trade.

As one of the most generous aid donors in the G7, with a commitment considerably higher than the OECD average, and coupled with our expertise and convening power, the UK remains a development superpower. Indeed, the UK will be the third largest donor, as a percentage of GNI, among G7 countries as well as the third largest bilateral humanitarian donor spending £906 million globally.

*Member of Parliament for Darlington*

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The UK is, for example, the biggest bilateral donor to the Global Partnership for Education, the largest fund in the world dedicated to improving education in developing countries; and the World Bank International Development Association, which works to accelerate progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Likewise, our contribution to the COVAX AMC is amongst the largest, and will contribute to the supply of at least 1.3 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines in 2021, already reaching 125 countries at a cost of £548 million, while taxpayer funding has developed the Astra-Zeneca vaccine, which makes up 96% of the COVAX programme.

With this in mind, I support the Government's decision to temporarily reduce the ODA's budget, however, I welcome firm commitments from Ministers that the UK will return to 0.7 per cent as soon as the fiscal situation allows. Under existing legislation, Ministers have a duty to report regularly to Parliament on this, and I will of course scrutinise their decisions at every stage.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours Sincerely  
Peter Gibson

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