# Concerns grow over UK's drastic foreign aid cuts as millions face deprivation



Significant cuts to the UK's foreign aid budget have triggered extensive concern and criticism, with reports indicating that approximately 55.5 million of the world’s poorest individuals will be deprived of basic resources. An analysis conducted by Save the Children has revealed that the government's planned spending cuts will reduce foreign aid to just 0.3 per cent of gross national income (GNI), marking the lowest allocation in 25 years.

The report identifies vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls, as likely to bear the brunt of these reductions, which threaten to scale back vital programmes related to global education, family planning, water access, and food aid. In nations like Nigeria, British aid for maternal healthcare has historically played a crucial role in combating pregnancy-related fatalities.

With the anticipated budget cuts, an estimated 12 million people could lose access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, and around 2.9 million children may miss out on education opportunities compared to 2019, a year when aid expenditure stood at a higher 0.7 per cent of GNI. Save the Children has cautioned that these cuts could "devastate lives across the world," a sentiment echoed by various Members of Parliament across different political factions who have denounced the government's actions as detrimental to the world's most impoverished populations.

Labour MP Sarah Champion, who chairs the Commons International Development Select Committee, voiced strong disapproval of the cuts, describing them as “nothing short of savage.” In remarks to The Independent, she noted, “The prime minister told me at the liaison committee that his recent decision to slash the aid budget even further wasn’t a choice he wanted to make. But is he fully aware of the true cost of that decision?”

The announcement of these cuts — made by Chancellor Rachel Reeves — is intended to facilitate an increase in defence spending, reducing the foreign aid budget to approximately £9.22 billion by 2027, down from £15.3 billion in 2023. The situation is complicated further by the stipulation that costs associated with housing asylum seekers will also be drawn from this same budget, further limiting the funds available for international aid.

The recent cuts follow a Labour manifesto commitment to restore aid spending to 0.7 per cent of GNI, a pledge faced with constraints stemming from public financial pressures linked to the pandemic. The new decisions have sparked considerable backlash from within the Labour Party, with individuals like Anneliese Dodds, the International Development Minister, resigning and highlighting the impossibility of maintaining critical priorities in light of such financial reductions.

When the Labour plans were initially announced, leader Sir Keir Starmer assured that aid commitments to nations in crisis, including Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan, would be preserved. However, this stance now poses challenges as approximately £6.98 billion of the budget has already been earmarked to fulfil these commitments. This includes £520 million for aid directed towards the aforementioned nations and significant allocations towards global health initiatives and climate change projects.

The Centre for Global Development estimates that the costs for supporting asylum seekers in the UK — also falling under the foreign aid budget — could reach around £3 billion by 2027. This is projected to account for a third of the total aid budget, raising significant concerns over how the remaining funds could be allocated without negatively impacting other essential aid programmes.

Dan Paskins, Director of Policy at Save the Children, addressed the consequences of these cuts, stating, “Breaking promises is baked into slashing the aid budget.” He warned that even the pledges made simultaneously with the announcement of cuts could ultimately prove unfeasible. The charity's analysis further indicates that 32.8 million women and girls could face a lack of access to family planning support due to reductions in sexual health initiatives, potentially reversing progress in maternal health and contributing to population and health crises.

In response to these developments, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) acknowledged the cuts but did not dispute the findings of Save the Children, signalling that detailed decisions regarding cuts would be finalised in conjunction with the government’s upcoming spending review.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper is reportedly seeking solutions to manage the asylum backlog and reduce the expenses associated with housing asylum seekers, though the timeline for achieving lower costs remains uncertain. Current expenditures stood at £4.3 billion in 2023, and reducing this to the forecasted £3 billion by 2027 seems unlikely.

Critics, including development charities and political figures, have argued that the expenditure related to asylum seekers should not come out of the foreign aid budget. David Lammy, the Foreign Secretary, has previously described reallocating these costs as misusing taxpayers’ money.

Sarah Champion called for transparency regarding the implications of the cuts, stating, “We urgently need more detail on how these cuts will fall. Which programmes will be cut, which will be protected, and who is ultimately holding the reins?” Concerns have also been raised by former International Development Secretary Sir Andrew Mitchell, highlighting that the cuts could undermine the UK’s global standing and exacerbate humanitarian crises by failing to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

Liberal Democrat spokesperson Monica Harding characterised the reductions as a “staggering withdrawal of the UK’s global responsibilities," warning that this course of action would inevitably lead to increased deprivation among millions worldwide.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2025/02/25/uk-aid-budget-cuts-threaten-climate-finance-pledge-to-vulnerable-nations-experts-warn/> - This article supports the claim that the UK's decision to cut its aid budget from 0.5% to 0.3% of national income could significantly impact its ability to meet climate finance commitments to developing countries.
* <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/03/first-usaid-closes-then-uk-cuts-aid-what-western-retreat-foreign-aid-could-mean> - This piece explains the broader context of Western aid budget cuts, including the UK's reductions, and their implications for global development and humanitarian efforts.
* <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2025/02/25/uk-aid-budget-cuts-threaten-climate-finance-pledge-to-vulnerable-nations-experts-warn/> - It highlights international reactions and concerns regarding the cuts, including their impact on vulnerable nations reliant on UK aid.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides general coverage of the UK's aid budget cuts and their impact on global aid and humanitarian efforts, although specific details may not be available without access to the article content.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/03/uk-foreign-aid-budget-cuts-danger-for-worlds-poorest> - While not directly linked in the search results, similar articles could discuss past concerns about UK aid budget cuts affecting the world's poorest and vulnerable groups.