



Department  
for International  
Development



**Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP**  
Secretary of State

**Department for International Development**  
22 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2EG

**Tel: 0207 023 0000**

**Email: [PrivateSecretary@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:PrivateSecretary@dfid.gov.uk)**

**[www.gov.uk/dfid](http://www.gov.uk/dfid)**

Jessica Woodroffe  
Director  
Gender and Development Network

Our ref: 202343

By email at: [jessica.woodroffe@gadnetwork.org](mailto:jessica.woodroffe@gadnetwork.org)

11 May 2020

Dear all,

Thank you for your letter of 9 April, regarding the importance of taking a gendered approach to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UK is helping to lead a worldwide effort in partnership with other countries to tackle the outbreak of COVID-19. To date, we have announced £744 million of UK aid to support international efforts to combat the outbreak and mitigate its wider impact. As well as committing new UK aid funds, we are adjusting existing support and programmes to be more responsive to COVID-19. There has never been a more important time to deliver our UK aid commitment and use the best of British expertise, science, businesses, charities and influence to combat this virus.

DFID is committed to ensuring that, through all channels of support, our assistance reaches the most marginalised and vulnerable people who will be the worst affected by this crisis and who are seriously at risk. We are deeply concerned about the significant impacts of this crisis on gender equality and are engaging across government and internationally to push for greater explicit consideration of, and support to, women and girls across the COVID-19 response. We also recognise that women and girls have a critical role to play in both the response and recovery processes. My ministerial colleagues and I have been very clear that we expect the needs of women and girls to be addressed throughout our response, and that the UK continues to show global leadership on progressing gender equality at this critical time.

As you note, evidence from other global crises tells us that gender inequalities are exacerbated in times of crisis. It is likely to significantly impact our global ambitions for girls' education and improving access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, while increasing the risk to women and girls of domestic violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Girls' education is crucial for a safer, more prosperous, healthier world, which is why the Prime Minister and I made it our key development priority earlier this year. My Department will continue to stand up for the right of every girl in the world to access and benefit from 12 years of quality education during this pandemic. We have recently committed £20 million to UNICEF, including £5 million to Education Cannot Wait, to help keep children in developing countries safe and learning throughout the crisis.

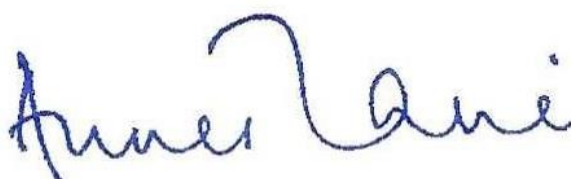


Like you, I am concerned about the surge in violence against women and girls. DFID is working across the UK Government and with global partners to prevent violence and ensure access to vital services. This includes producing evidence to inform the response, including through a Violence Against Women and Girls guidance note, which has been shared with our country offices; adapting our programming to mitigate the risks to women and girls; and supporting scaled up reporting, protection and support services for women and girls affected by gender-based violence in the world's poorest countries.

I agree that sexual and reproductive health and rights are vital during this pandemic, including access to relevant health services. Recognising this, I have announced £10 million of emergency funding to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to ensure access to vital life-saving sexual health and gender-based violence services. DFID is also working through Amplify Change, a multi-donor fund which supports civil society organisations to advocate for improved sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and share resources with women's rights organisations on heightened SRHR risks during COVID-19. Our funding to the World Health Organisation (WHO) will also support countries to maintain essential health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, to ensure people can access the essential care they require.

Social protection can help safeguard the well-being of individuals, families and communities affected by COVID-19 by helping to meet immediate basic needs, compensate for loss of income, and support a faster, more resilient and inclusive recovery. Maintaining existing social protection systems and, where possible, scaling these up to respond to the crisis is critical in mitigate the negative impacts of the crisis and protect development gains. My Department is also providing expert advice to governments and international partners to assess how and where social protection or humanitarian cash systems could be best used to support an efficient, coordinated response. We are making the needs of the most vulnerable, particularly women and girls, central to these discussions. This includes working with partners to prioritise financing for social protection and coordination between development and humanitarian actors to ensure the most vulnerable are prioritised.

I look forward to continuing DFID's close collaboration with civil society partners on this important issue, sharing our learnings about the barriers women, girls and other marginalised groups face as a direct impact of COVID-19, both in the immediate response and in longer-term support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anne Marie Trevelyan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A'.

**Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP**  
**Secretary of State**