

The Rt. Hon Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2 AH

cc. Minister for Africa, James Duddridge MP

12 March 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

As a collective of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations working to support communities in South Sudan, we are deeply concerned about the reports of alleged substantial budget cuts to UK aid at this critical time.

The UK government has publicly committed to tackle seven global challenges through UK aid. There is no doubt that South Sudan - one of the most fragile countries in the world right now - is at particular risk of these challenges. We acknowledge the great needs at home during the pandemic, but no other G7 country is making the level of reported cuts to vital international aid at this time. Severe cuts to support for South Sudan would not only cost lives but be at odds with the UK's stated commitments and risk unravelling UK investment to date. **It is vital that the UK Government ensure South Sudan remains a priority for both funding and diplomatic engagement.**

The humanitarian crisis in South Sudan is reaching devastating new levels, with over 8.3 million now in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.¹ Humanitarian needs across the country have significantly worsened due to a combination of flooding, protracted sub-national violence, and some of the worst food insecurity in recent years. Over 7 million people are projected to be in a crisis state of food insecurity by April 2021 with the situation continuing to worsen. The greatest concern is that over 100,000 people are anticipated over the next several months to be in 'catastrophic' levels of food insecurity, at risk of dying from starvation, malnutrition and related disease. During his visit to South Sudan last year, the Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, saw first-hand areas which have further deteriorated over the past few months, and committed UK support to help mitigate the ongoing risk of famine. Given the recent public commitments, such budget cuts would appear greatly at odds with the UK's key priorities.

Years of civil war have brought about immense hardship, uncertainty, and trauma for the people of South Sudan. Despite decades of marginalisation, bitter conflict, and fear and oppression, South Sudanese communities have persisted in building a better future for themselves, with South Sudanese NGOs, civil society, faith actors and community leaders playing a critical role. The implementation of a peace process has brought the promise of a more hopeful future. But this peace is fragile.

The sustained support of the international community is crucial at this pivotal moment in South Sudan's history, particularly during a time when COVID-19 has already impacted negatively on humanitarian needs and prospects for peace and development. Beyond immediate health implications, the country is facing rising food prices, increased violence against women and girls, and impact on communities coming forward to access an already fragile health system.

¹ [South Sudan NGO Forum Press Release](#), 11th March 2021: "Urgent need to tackle a deteriorating humanitarian catastrophe in South Sudan."

At the same time, the escalation of subnational violence is a stark reminder of how important it is that conflict prevention and peacebuilding work continue. **It remains critical to improve governance, support locally led peacebuilding and address the root causes of conflict in South Sudan - as an end in itself but also as a critical step to achieving food security.** Nick Dyer, the UK Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, has been a leading global voice in emphasising the detrimental impact which conflict has on food insecurity and wellbeing. Additionally, we know that women and girls are disproportionately affected by conflict; it is clear that support for South Sudanese women and girls must be sustained as they continue to challenge gender inequality and overcome sexual and gender-based violence.

The UK must continue to invest in both humanitarian response and longer-term development work to provide support for South Sudan's fragile health infrastructure and ensure that the next generation are able to access education and further enable positive change in their country – building on progress made as a result of the UK's support for the Health Pooled Fund and for girl's education.

The UK has long played an important, historic role in South Sudan, in concerted diplomatic engagement – notably in its role as a member of the Troika - and as an influential donor. There is no doubt that this has made a positive difference; from saving lives with access to food and safe water, to reducing violence through support for locally led peacebuilding, and interventions to reduce gender-based violence. After years of engagement and investment to step back now at this critical time would constitute a crushing blow to the people of South Sudan.

Yours Sincerely,

Jean Michel Grand, Executive Director, Action Against Hunger UK
Christine Allen, Director, CAFOD
Laurie Lee, Chief Executive Office, Care International UK
Amanda Mukwashi, Chief Executive Officer, Christian Aid
Peter Marsden, Chief Executive, Concordis International
Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen, General Secretary, DanChurchAid
Alexandra Angulo, Interim Executive Director, Mercy Corps
Darren Cormack, Chief Executive Officer, Mines Advisory Group
Rose Caldwell, Chief Executive Officer, Plan International UK
Mariana Goetz, Director, Rights for Peace
Paul Murphy, Executive Director, Saferworld
Kevin Watkins, Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children UK
Alistair Dutton, Director, Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF)
Jonathan Brokker, Executive Director, Solidarités International UK
Nigel Harris, Chief Executive Officer, Tearfund
Mark Sheard, Chief Executive Officer, World Vision UK