

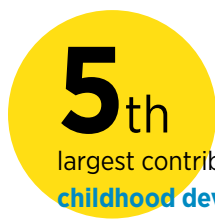


LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

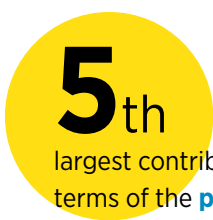
Invest in the early years

The United Kingdom (UK) is a **very influential bilateral donor**. In quantitative terms, it is the **third-largest bilateral donor** providing aid directly to countries worldwide, and the only Group of Seven (G7) country, to meet or exceed the 0.7% target for aid spending by gross national income (GNI).¹ Members of the G7 include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the United States (US). **Disability inclusion is high on the agenda of the Department for International Development (DFID)**, the government department responsible for administering overseas aid.

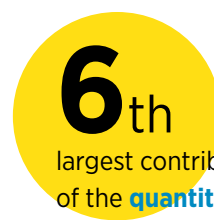
A review across 10 donors showed that in 2017 the UK was the:



largest contributor to **early childhood development (ECD)**, relative to the overall overseas development assistance (ODA) portfolio (i.e. 4.0% of ODA is spent on ECD).^A

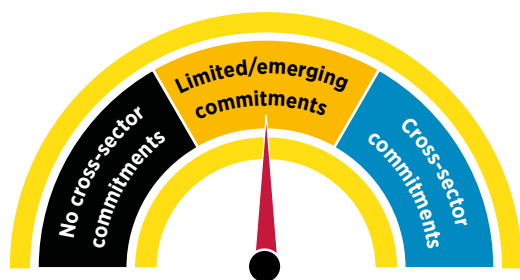


largest contributor in terms of the **proportion of education aid disbursed to early childhood education/pre-primary** (i.e. 0.46% of education aid spent on pre-primary).^B

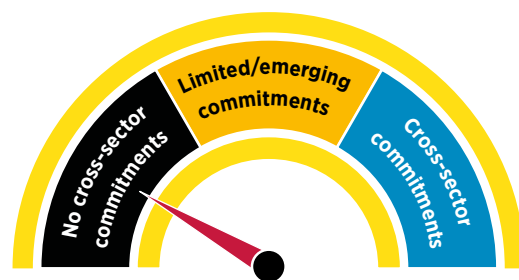


largest contributor in terms of the **quantity of education aid disbursed to early childhood education/pre-primary**.^B

Strategic commitment to early childhood development



Disability-inclusive early education investment commitments



^A The table looking at the comparative levels of spending on ECD for the donors in this report can be found in the corresponding global report.

^B In this report, two aspects were looked at in order to draw a comparison between the aid given to early education by various donors. Firstly, the total (quantitative amount) amount spent on aid to early education, and secondly, in an attempt to measure donor 'effort', the authors of this report compared the ratio of aid disbursed to the early education subsector to overall aid to the education sector. The comparative table can be found in the corresponding global report.

Integrated and inclusive early childhood development

The UK government's 2015–2020 development assistance strategy² commits it towards 'striving to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030' for the world's most vulnerable people – with a particular focus on rights of girls and women – by meeting basic needs through investments in services such as education, health, or nutrition.

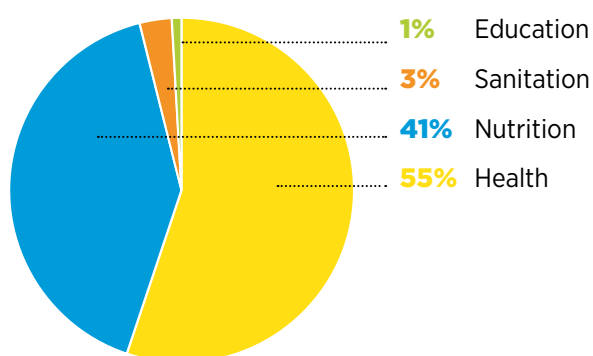
There is no overall ECD multi-sectoral commitment in the UK's development strategy; however, its aid disbursements do demonstrate strong commitments to areas important for supporting ECD. Of the 10

donors reviewed for this report, in quantitative terms, the UK was the largest bilateral donor to areas likely to benefit ECD. More than 90% of the UK government's investments are within the health and nutrition sectors (see Figure 1). In some respects, this is a consequence of the UK's overall aid commitments (i.e. it is a large donor). However, it is also the result of clear commitments made to spending on areas that support ECD (most notably in child and maternal health and nutrition).

Despite the UK's high proportion of funding committed to health and nutrition (particularly in child and maternal health and nutrition), more could be done about the ratio of aid that the UK allocates to ECD. Therefore, the UK was placed only fifth out of nine of the 10 donors surveyed for this report.

However, the UK's emerging commitments to ECD hold much hope. For instance, the UK's current commitments (i.e. newer commitments) within the DFID portfolio show an emerging picture of greater support

FIGURE 1 Breakdown of early childhood development ODA across different ECD domains. 2017 constant US\$ disbursements, based on DAC figures



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System. Accessed May 2019

to ECD. A search of all current active and recently completed projects identified programmes specifically supporting an ECD approach and focusing on improving development outcomes in 13 countries.^c Moreover, DFID was shown to be explicitly investing in multi-sectoral approaches to ECD (i.e. investments which straddle multiple sectors) – it was one of the few donors examined for this study to do so.

The majority of these newer programmes are focused primarily on supporting early education as a primary focus, but with a strong ECD lens. All the

projects focus on supporting vulnerable groups (i.e. refugees). Moreover, the UK government was shown to be one of the few donors in this study with projects which explicitly aim to support scaling-up inclusive approaches, and targeting children with a disability in low-income countries in their ECD country-level investments.^d In addition to country-level investments, DFID also had a number of global or multi-country projects supporting ECD.^e

DFID is clearly poised to play a far more prominent role in ECD. There are currently a number of pilot projects, both active and in the pipeline. ECD was identified as a priority interdisciplinary research area under DFID's Research Review, and this includes current research underway to inform future work. As this initiative states: "There is global agreement on the importance of ECD and there is strong UK interest in catalysing a new, first-of-its-kind interdisciplinary research centre to tackle this evidence challenge."^{3,f}

Supporting early education and pre-primary

The UK government's overall spending on early childhood care and education remains low within their education spending. It is promising, however, that the House of Commons' International Development Select Committee has recently issued a call for the DFID to prioritise early education: "DFID does not apportion

^c Ethiopia, Lebanon, Syria, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Uganda, Nepal, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Haiti and Pakistan.

^d Refers to inclusive ECD as multi-sectoral interventions, which specifically aim to support the development of children to reach ECD goals, targeting children with disabilities and/or specifically including children with disabilities into ECD service delivery.

^e For instance, DFID has grants to the Early Learning partnership (ELP) and UNICEF. They are also supporting pilot programmes across a few sub-Saharan African countries on ECD.

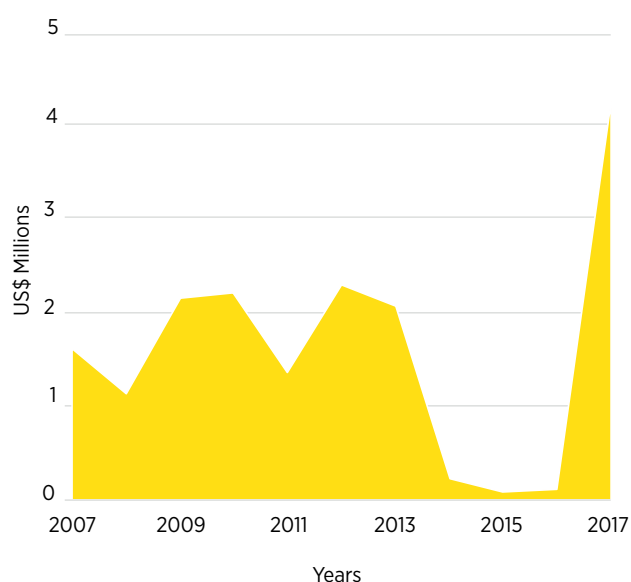
^f In 2017, DfID awarded a two million British pound grant as part of their multi-disciplinary research programme to build evidence on what works for ECD in low- and middle-income countries. See: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/programmes/early-childhood-development>.

enough of its budget to pre-primary education, and needs to do more work in this area”.⁴

However, of all the education aid disbursed by DFID in 2017, only 0.5% was spent on supporting early childhood education and care. As a result, the UK was ranked 13th out of the 30 Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) country members, according to the ratio of its education aid being allocated to early childhood education and care. That means it is trailing behind smaller donors. Moreover, when compared against spending targeting the early years in other sectors, education allocations to the youngest remain low (see Figure 1).

Since 2017, the prospects for early childhood care and education appear to be changing. As Figure 2 shows, there has been a sharp increase in spending on early childhood care and education from 2016, which represents early education becoming an increasing strategic priority for DFID. Indeed, DFID’s Education Policy (2018), *Get Children Learning*⁵, while accepting a continual focus primarily on primary and secondary, also commits to expanding their overseas development assistance to early education. As noted in the strategy: “We already support children in the early years of primary education...We will build on this by gradually expanding our research-led approach where there is government and parental demand”.⁵

FIGURE 2 UK aid to Early education, 2007–2017 (disbursements, US\$ constant 2017)



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System. Accessed May 2019

DFID’s education policy commits to working with governments in identifying cost-effective, scalable early-education interventions; sharing UK expertise on how government can ensure better quality pre-primary education, and for improving the supply of skilled and motivated teachers. Significantly, the strategy also explicitly prioritises providing assistance for the scale up of support to early education for highly marginalised groups, such as children with disabilities. The analysis of DFID’s current support and commitments (since 2018 and active in 2019), which shows inclusive early-education programming in a number of countries, clearly reflects this strategic imperative.

Given DFID’s ongoing prioritisation of children with disabilities in education⁶, notably to ensuring the inclusion of children with disabilities within mainstream schools, the commitment to expanding their work to increasingly support the early years is significant.

Health, nutrition and sanitation

The health and nutrition sectors received 97% of UK spending on ECD. Because the UK channels its aid contributions mainly into health and nutrition, it is important to understand how spending within these crucial areas supports ECD explicitly and, in particular, whether the most marginalised children are benefitting. Analysis carried out for this profile found that:

- The UK government has a strong commitment to basic nutrition and health in support of young children, and their families. For instance, the strategy commits to saving 1.4 million children’s lives through immunisations, and improving nutrition for at least 50 million people, with a large focus on women and their young children.²
- DFID’s Framework (2015), *One Year On Leaving No One Behind*, also commits to support the strengthening of “health and nutrition interventions that reduce the onset of disability, including tackling polio, neglected tropical diseases, sexual and reproductive healthcare and early childhood nutrition.”⁶ As such, DFID makes commitments in their nutrition and health commitments both to children in their early years and to protecting children from preventable disabilities.

⁶ DFID’s education policy commits to providing the necessary supports. DFID also provides support to national governments to ensure this happens. DFID commits to increasing accessibility for children with disabilities in schools including: “screening, assistive devices, teacher support, adaptive textbooks and parental and wider community engagement”.

As the UK government moves increasingly towards a more explicit multi-sector approach to ECD, these commitments will be important to focus on supporting young children. As DFID's Education Policy (2018), *Get Children Learning* noted: "A holistic approach to early childhood can achieve a significant impact in developing countries, particularly during the most critical stage of a child's brain development – before birth and during the first few years of life. Through our nutrition investments, we support governments to ensure that children get the basic nutrients they need in the first 1,000 days... Where possible, we will integrate early education interventions within DFID's complementary investments in nutrition – as well as women's economic development, social protection, and maternal and new-born health".⁵

Conclusions

UKAID's research programme clearly outlines the business case for ECD as critical to delivering the UK government's four strategic objectives within the government's development assistance plan.³ It is hoped that the emerging body of research on the importance of ECD for delivering equitable and inclusive development informs future investments, especially as DFID begins to develop their new development plan.

The UK has the potential to become a lead donor in scaling-up investment in inclusive ECD. This is evident from its commitments towards the following: increasing investment in multi-sectoral ECD; building a strong evidence base for how this approach can meet the needs of the most vulnerable, especially children with a disability; and ensuring disability and inclusion within the government's multi-sector investments. Moreover, their strong focus on inclusive education could see them become leaders in the field of supporting inclusive early education in low- and middle-income countries in future.

COMPENDIUM OF ADVOCACY TOOLS

This Donor Profile is one of 10 advocacy briefs for ODA advocacy. There are also four recipient country profiles for national advocacy, as well as a Global Report and a user-friendly checklist to support the design of inclusive ECD programmes which seek to support the most marginalised children.



A Methodology Note providing more information on the process of analysis along with all the tools may be accessed at: www.light-for-the-world.org/inclusive-eed-investment

Recommendations

The UK government in their development assistance should:

- Play a leading role in scaling up funding to early education by increasing early education and pre-primary funding, aiming towards achieving 10% of the total education aid sector budget in the longer term.
- Become a leader among donors in inclusive ECD and early childhood care and education which explicitly targets the most marginalised and vulnerable children, including children with a disability.
- Incentivise equity by ensuring that early years' allocations include attempts to target the most marginalised, including children with disabilities.
- Support greater understanding and evaluation of 'what works' by disaggregating spending data by vulnerable groups, and building the overall knowledge of effective ECD for the most marginalised through their evidence-for-action research agenda.
- Encourage other donors to use the OECD DAC marker on disability.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REPORT AND DONOR PROFILES

Light for the World and their partners conducted a detailed analysis of the aid disbursements, which 10 donors have committed to support early childhood development. Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, UK and USA are the six bilateral donors reviewed for this report together with four multilateral donors namely, the European Union, World Bank, UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education. Particular attention is paid in the research to donors' commitments towards children who are vulnerable or at risk of being marginalised or delayed in learning due to a disability. For this reason, donors' strategic frameworks were also analysed, in addition to their aid spend.

Light for the World and their partners have provided input to the donor profiles.

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