



Department  
for International  
Development



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

Wendy Morton MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Andrew Fryer  
International Manager  
The Royal College of Emergency Medicine

Our ref: 202232

By email to: [Andrew.Fryer@rcem.ac.uk](mailto:Andrew.Fryer@rcem.ac.uk)

18<sup>th</sup> April 2020

*Dear Mr Fryer,*

Thank you for your email of 31 March to the Development Secretary, enclosing a letter from the Royal College of Emergency Medicine Global Emergency Medical Committee regarding their concerns of the potential impact of COVID-19 on countries with weak health care systems. I am responding as the Minister responsible for global health policy at the Department for International Development.

I share your concern about the seriousness of the potential impact of COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable countries and I can assure you that the UK is at the forefront of the global response. We are using UK aid to its full effect to counter the health, humanitarian and economic impacts risks of this pandemic, including collaboration on vital research.

UK aid has a longstanding record of global support to countries to prepare for and respond to large disease outbreaks. DFID provides continued and additional support to the World Health Organization (WHO), and other UN agencies, in its leadership role to provide technical assistance, setting norms and standards and tracking progress to help countries address key bottlenecks in health systems.

Strong health systems are vital to ensuring health security. Through our multilateral partnerships, and our regional and national programmes. We also support low-income countries to make their health systems, including primary healthcare, stronger and more resilient, and able to prevent, detect and respond to health threats, such as COVID-19. With our support, our partners in vulnerable countries are working to ensure adequate supplies and prepare health systems to enable an effective response.

The UK welcomes the United Nation's Global Humanitarian Response Plan and stands ready to support their humanitarian appeal to tackle COVID-19 as part of our leading role to combat the outbreak. We have already provided up to £544 million to support the global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19. Our humanitarian experts are reviewing the appeal and we will communicate our response shortly. In addition to the UK's significant

annual funding to the WHO of around £120 million, the UK has committed an additional £10 million to the WHO's Emergency Flash Appeal through to this month and additional

funding for other international partners who are helping low-income countries develop and deliver their own response to the virus.

The UK Government has also been leading the way on the economic response to COVID-19. This includes up to £150 million UK aid funding which will go to the International Monetary Fund's Catastrophe Containment Relief Trust to help developing countries meet their debt repayments, so that they can focus their available resources on tackling COVID-19. The UK was the first country to support this fund when it was created in 2015 and remains one of the largest funders. This support will enable developing countries to direct greater resources to their healthcare efforts, helping prevent the virus from spreading around the world.

I am proud to say UK aid is also working hand in hand with British businesses, such as Unilever to tackle the virus. Our £100 million partnership with Unilever will educate one billion people around the world on the importance of hygiene in tackling COVID-19, and distribute over 20 million hygiene and cleaning products including in areas where there is little or no sanitation.

There has never been a more important time for us to be out in the world, delivering our 0.7 commitment, helping the most vulnerable in the world's poorest countries and showcasing what the UK has to offer globally in terms of our expertise, our science, our influence to convene an international response.

I hope that this letter will help to reassure you that the UK Government not only shares your concerns, but is responding to them and demonstrating how UK aid is making the world a safer place by tackling disease outbreaks and strengthening health systems.

I would like to wish that you, your staff and wider network stay safe and healthy.

Your sincerely  


**Wendy Morton MP**