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**I support women leaders**  
and call for a 20% UK aid target for gender equality

NEWS

## UK Aid Cuts: More Than 90 Activists And Advocates Call On UK Government To Back Women With UK Aid As Polling Shows Public Support



By Editor\_wr

On Mar 9, 2025

Club de Madrid supports CARE's campaign ahead of International Women's Day, joining activists, advocates, and global leaders in urging the UK Government to allocate at least 20% of its aid budget to gender equality.

Following newly announced aid cuts, the UK Government is at risk of backtracking on its promise to put women and girls at the heart of its foreign policy, a group of activists, advocates, and celebrities warn today.

In an open letter to Foreign Secretary David Lammy ahead of International Women's Day (March 8th), the group calls on the government to allocate at least 20% of UK aid directly to achieving gender equality. The signatories include the CEOs of CARE International UK and Oxfam, as well as several members of Club de Madrid: Eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon, former President of Mongolia (2009-2017) Tsakhia Elbegdorj, former President of Mexico (2000-2006) Vicente Fox, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea (2008-2009) and Vice President of Club de Madrid Seung-soo Han, former President of Croatia (2010-2015) Ivo Josipovi?, former

President of Sri Lanka (1994-2005) Chandrika Kumaratunga, former President of Albania (1997-2002) Rexhep Meidani, former President of Nigeria (1976-1979; 1999-2007) Olusegun Obasanjo, former Prime Minister of Senegal (2013-2014) Aminata Touré, and former President of Switzerland (2010; 2017) Doris Leuthard.

This warning and call to action come after the Prime Minister announced that the UK's already-reduced aid budget would be cut further to support an increase in defense spending. Research from CARE International UK shows that previous aid cuts failed to consider the impact on women and girls, who were disproportionately affected.

"Women are already leading efforts to tackle today's greatest challenges – from humanitarian crises to grassroots movements and international negotiations. Yet their vital work is held back by attacks on their rights and a lack of investment in their leadership," the letter states. "We cannot wait generations for equality, prosperity, or peace."

A survey commissioned by CARE International UK reveals that:

- 65% of the British public believes it is either very or quite important that the UK government uses its aid budget to protect women's and girls' rights around the world. This includes more than half of 2024 Conservative (64%), Labour (77%), and Reform (50%) voters. Only 8% of Britons believe it is unimportant.
- 67% of the British public believes that supporting women's and girls' rights worldwide does not come at the expense of economic growth. Only 11% think such efforts slow economic growth.

The letter follows data analysis released by CARE in February, which found that the previous UK Government significantly reduced funding for women and girls worldwide, jeopardizing decades of global progress on gender equality.

The research shows that UK aid spending on gender equality has declined every year since 2019, nearly halving from £6.3bn in 2019 to £3.4bn in 2022. This makes 2022 the joint lowest year on record since the UK began tracking gender equality spending in 2014, with cuts disproportionately affecting programs for women and girls.

Explaining why the group coordinated the letter, Helen McEachern, CEO of CARE International UK, said:

"The Prime Minister has followed the path of other leaders in making the short-sighted and reactionary decision to slash the UK's aid budget – undermining both the progress made and Britain's standing in the world.

“Women around the world are facing a rollback of their rights and are paying the price for decisions made primarily by men. Meanwhile, aid is being slashed on the global stage – and evidence shows that those who need it most will be hit the hardest. Ignoring the vital role of women and international aid in making the UK and the world safer, healthier, and more sustainable is a self-inflicted setback for the Government.

“We stand at a crossroads: what the Government decides to do now with its aid budget could shape the future for women and entire societies for decades to come.”



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