



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

07 January 2021

Dear Constituent,

Re: Foreign Aid

Thank you for contacting me about UK spending on overseas aid.

This country has been and always will be open and outward-looking, leading in solving the world's toughest problems and striving to be a force for good in the world. Whether it's stepping up to support desperate Syrians and Yemenis in conflict zones, leading the way in eradicating Ebola and malaria, or supporting millions of children to gain a decent education. We should be proud of our commitment to help some of the poorest in the world.

This funding is also a major contributor to the UK's soft power abroad, and undoubtedly saves us money elsewhere, particularly the large number of stabilisation programmes that the UK supports overseas. The reach and influence of the UK is unrivalled, and this has been recognised in almost all international barometers. Indeed, it is often surprising that whilst some in this country see our position in the world diminishing, most other nations see us as a strong, reliable and principled partner which is more engaged now than ever before.

To give an example, between 2015 and 2019, the Department for International Development (DFID) supported 14 million children to gain a decent education and helped almost 52 million people get access to clean water and/or better sanitation.

And on Covid we have pledged the equivalent of £330 million per year to GAVI – the Global Vaccine Alliance – to keep them running until 2025. This funding will support GAVI's response in helping some of the poorest countries in the world respond to Coronavirus and vaccinate their populations. We should all be enormously proud of this.

At a time when our GDP is expected to fall by more than 11% and the pandemic is creating huge economic uncertainty for people and businesses across the country, I believe it is right and proper that our efforts focus resolutely on helping this country through. That means protecting jobs at home, carrying businesses through, and delivering the infrastructure we need to spur on economic growth.

For this reason, the Chancellor has announced a temporary reduction in the UK's aid budget from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of the UK's national income. Whilst I know there are some who will disagree with this decision, I think it is the right one for our country.

This figure still represents more than £10 billion a year and is a higher contribution than most developed countries. It will allow us to continue our global efforts to fight

poverty, tackle climate change, support girls' education, resolve conflicts, stabilise troubled states, and improve global health.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Higginbotham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Antony Higginbotham MP
Member of Parliament for Burnley