

Dear colleagues,

The UK has faced severe financial pressures as a result of COVID-19 and its impact on the economy. Earlier this year the UK government reduced the funds available for Official Development Assistance (ODA) during the 2021/2022 financial year, significantly impacting the work UKRI funds under ODA, including all the GCRF Interdisciplinary Research Hubs (Hubs).

Given the fiscal situation and the scale of the Hub programme, UKRI's parent department the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) requested a formal review of the Hubs, in order to support evidence-based decision making on future funding for this programme from April 2022 onwards. UKRI is grateful to colleagues for their engagement with the review process on a tight timescale and their patience whilst the outcomes of the Hub review and corresponding budget were resolved.

The review highlighted the very high quality of the Hubs programme, the breadth of partnerships developed, and the impacts delivered to date despite the significant challenges posed by the on-going pandemic. It also considered all Hubs to demonstrate strong alignment to local, national and international priorities, including the UK HMG Strategic Framework for ODA and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The review also highlighted the speed and effectiveness with which many of the Hubs responded to the changing global context and the significant contributions made to addressing challenges associated with the pandemic.

The programme was considered to represent good value for money, and it was recommended that if possible, the programme should continue for the remaining duration. Based on the recommendation from the review BEIS have allocated a programme budget which allows the continued support of all 12 Hubs and covers the full legal commitment for financial years 22/23 and 23/24. Unfortunately, it is not possible to reinstate the funds cut from the 20/21 and 21/22 budgets.

We recognise and acknowledge that this has been an extremely challenging time for all colleagues working in and with the Hubs, managing both the direct impacts of the pandemic and the related financial challenges.

We remain committed to the principles and aims of the GCRF Interdisciplinary Hubs programme and look forward to working closely with the Hubs, their partners and stakeholders as we move forwards with this next stage of the programme.

Yours sincerely,

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