



# UNITED KINGDOM

**“ Skyrocketing in-donor refugee costs make the UK the largest recipient of its own ODA for second year running ”**

By BOND

## Main trends

The UK government maintained its temporarily reduced target of 0.5% GNI. 2022 did see some flexibility introduced into their ODA target management. Preliminary statistics put overall ODA spending at 0.51% of GNI.

The biggest story for UK ODA in 2022 was the dramatic increase in use of ODA for IDRC. Following rises in 2020 and 2021, the UK reported EUR 4 billion of IDRC as ODA in 2023, more than triple spending in the previous year. The costs of two bespoke schemes (for Afghan and Ukrainian refugees), uncontrolled housing costs and high levels of asylum applications made the UK the largest recipient of its own ODA for the second year running.

The UK government continues to defend its decision to report all eligible costs as ODA and within the temporary GNI target of around 0.5%. Despite an additional EUR 1.1 bn added to their starting budget, the FCDO had to make EUR 2 bn in cuts to its ODA-funded programmes. The FCDO's own equalities impact assessment anticipated 'severe' impact on programmes fostering equalities, including for those facing acute humanitarian need.

Overall FCDO funding to sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA regions fell by 17% and 9% respectively in the financial year 2022/23. The FCDO also made significant cuts to sectoral ODA spending on gender, education and equality (31%) and health (15%), both strategic priorities. At the same time, Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine saw FCDO's ODA allocation there more than double, making Ukraine the second largest overseas recipient in 2022/23 after Afghanistan.

Reported ODA: EUR 14172 million  
**0.51% GNI** (↑ from 0.50% in 2021)

Non-inflated ODA: EUR 1083 million  
**0.36% GNI** (↓ from 0.46% in 2021)

Total inflated ODA: EUR 4089 million  
**28.9% of total**



## Government's relationship with civil society

Over 2022, stakeholder engagement with FCDO continued to improve from the nadir in 2020 and 2021. The establishment of regular quarterly meetings with FCDO leadership and civil society representatives and the current consultation process for the White Paper are positive manifestations of this improved engagement. Tensions re-emerged during the summer, when the Government suspended all non-essential ODA spending as IDRC skyrocketed. However, lines of communication remained open with FCDO and the government responded to some of civil society concerns (around humanitarian funding, the need for additional funding). There are still issues with transparency and in the long-term, the quality of engagement remains to be seen. There are concerns that with the increase in engagement, the sector is more susceptible to identify where they have access but no significant improvement in influence on decisions.

## The British government should:

- **Deliver on the commitment to 0.7% of GNI as ODA sooner rather than later.**
- **Meet the commitment to spend 0.2% GNI in LDCs and ensure that ODA spending prioritises those further behind**
- **Remove barriers to increased direct funding of local and national actors**