



This week's big news

DID YOU KNOW?

The five countries given the most aid by the UK are Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Yemen.



A British airman delivers aid in Sierra Leone.

UK helps out in Kenya



In 2014, the UK Government promised £143 million in foreign aid to help people in Kenya who were suffering a drought. This drought (a long period without rain) has put millions of people in danger. The money, given over 10 years, has so far helped 600,000 people, including families. The money has been used to set up important health services for pregnant women so that they can have their babies safely. The UK project will end in 2024, and it will then be taken over by the Kenyan government.

UK politicians debate cut to foreign aid

A group of politicians has tried to persuade the UK Government to change its mind about how much foreign aid it gives to poorer countries.

What is foreign aid?

Rich countries give money and support to poorer countries. This is known as foreign aid. Food, money, medicine, training and education all count as foreign aid. Sometimes aid is given on a one-off basis, such as following a natural disaster like an earthquake. Otherwise it is given over a longer period to local communities for projects, such as building schools. In 2020, the UK gave £14.5 billion in foreign aid. This amounts to 0.7% of national income, which was the foreign aid target at the time.

What changes has the Government made?

In November 2020, the UK Government cut the target for the amount the country gives from 0.7% of national income to 0.5%. This means the UK will send around £4 billion less to poorer countries. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, who is in charge of the UK's money, said that the cost of the coronavirus pandemic meant that it was "difficult to justify" sticking to the 0.7% target. He said that the change wouldn't last forever.

Why are politicians against the cut?

A group of around 30 Members of Parliament (MPs) from the Government's own Conservative Party spoke out against the decision. Politicians were not given the chance to vote on the change last year, which the MPs say is against the law. They argue that the Government promised it would spend 0.7% on foreign aid each year when it was elected to run the country in 2019. By changing the target, the MPs say, the Government is breaking a promise. They also argue that it is wrong to reduce foreign aid when poorer countries need the money even more during the pandemic.

What effects will the foreign aid cut have?

Experts and politicians overseas have warned that the cut will hurt the world's poorest people. A group of aid agencies said that 100,000 refugees will be left without water in one of the world's largest refugee shelters in Bangladesh. A refugee is someone who has been forced to leave their country because of wars, natural disasters or the threat of violence.

Money that the UK gives to the United Nations children's fund will be reduced, and funding for hygiene projects, such as providing clean water, could be cut by 80%.

What happened last week?

On 7 June, the UK parliament was due to hold a vote on whether to return to the 0.7% target. The speaker of the House, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, who oversees debates in the House of Commons, did not allow the vote to go ahead. He said the vote was not relevant to what was being discussed by politicians that day. However, he said that the Government should give MPs the chance to vote on the issue. On 8 June, an emergency debate was held, which is a debate that happens at short notice to discuss an urgent issue. The MPs said the Government was behaving unlawfully in not allowing them to vote. They said that if they had the vote, they would certainly win. They also pointed out how badly the cuts would affect people. Still, the Government said that it would not allow a vote on the issue.



Chancellor Rishi Sunak.