

Correspondence

Thousands protest against UK cuts to SDG funding

We spearheaded the writing of two open letters demanding the reversal of a 70% cut to UK Research and Innovation's Official Development Assistance funding, from £422 million (US\$580 million) in 2020–21 to £125 million for 2021–22 (see go.nature.com/3fssqrg). Grants from the fund support work on urgent challenges linked to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). More than 800 projects worldwide could be truncated or terminated, taking with them trust in the United Kingdom as a partner. The timing could not be worse.

One letter has been signed by more than 5,000 people (see go.nature.com/3ckpwpw); the second, on global health (see go.nature.com/2pt87kt), has been signed by 4,000. Signatories come from 160 UK universities, 71 UK organizations and some 270 international organizations. They include scientific leaders, such as academy presidents and members of the UK government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies. Also significant are the early-career scientists, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, who face abrupt termination of their contracts and an uncertain future.

Both documents reflect the groundswell of rage and concern for the damaged and abandoned projects, and the partnerships they represent. These cuts will not just affect researchers like us: they will hurt the marginalized communities with which we work.

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*On behalf of 4 correspondents; see go.nature.com/3dckmep

Social and political justice hit by cuts in UK aid

Funding cuts at the United Kingdom's Global Challenges Research Fund imperil the Rights for Time Network. This supports studies of humanitarian protection in developing nations and in Britain. It informs decision-makers about 'what works' in conflict resolution, for social and political justice, and in mitigating forced displacement. It also builds capacity for in-country research that aligns with global challenges and engenders good practice in safeguarding and equity.

The network catalyses South–South knowledge transfer. It helps researchers like us to learn from each other, rather than reinventing the wheel. Scholars in Jordan and Palestine are studying initiatives that protect refugees, children and families from the intergenerational impacts of forced displacement and conflict. In Kenya, led by survivors of sexual violence, researchers are investigating the cumulative harms suffered as people struggle to access crucial medical care and security services, and to seek justice. In Rwanda and Lebanon, researchers are studying the histories of violence and discrimination.

Cutting aid to the network and its partners – possibly by up to 85% – will undermine the United Kingdom's leadership in forging equitable partnerships with researchers in developing countries to solve global challenges. This will damage trust, destroy relationships and leave vulnerable people more so.

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The Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon in the eastern Himalayas is the deepest canyon in the world, and one of the longest.

Add Himalayas' Grand Canyon to China's first national parks

As China sets about designating its first national parks, we propose that the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon in the eastern Himalayas on the Brahmaputra River, close to the Indian border, should be included. The canyon's unique biodiversity is currently under threat from tourism, climate change and construction projects that could include several hydroelectric dams.

The canyon is the deepest and one of the longest in the world. It runs through sacred Tibetan land and is a biodiversity hotspot (L. Deng *et al. Sci. Silvae Sin.* 47, 1–6; 2011), accounting for 65% of the vascular plants and 50% of the mammals found on the Tibetan Plateau. Species include the white-cheeked macaque (*Macaca leucogenys*), which was first described scientifically as recently as 2015 (C. Li *et al. Am. J. Primatol.* 77, 753–766; 2015).

We consider that the region would benefit from an evaluation of the environmental costs of further development, from a land-management plan

and from stronger cross-border collaboration. Protecting the site by making it a national park would demonstrate China's commitment to conservation targets, which will be discussed at the next United Nations' biodiversity conference, to be held in Kunming, China, in October. In our view, the park should encompass an area of about 40,000 square kilometres to take in the region's main watersheds.

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