

# [Africa Minister champions UK leadership to help educate girls and end preventable deaths](#)

Joint FC0 and DFID Minister for Africa James Duddridge meets Sahel leaders and international partners, championing the UK's leading role in ensuring girls can go to school and ending preventable deaths.

Minister for Africa James Duddridge has visited Mauritania for the first time since taking up his role. He attended the first General Assembly of the Sahel Alliance and the sixth Summit of the Leaders of the G5 (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger). The visit highlighted how the UK is supporting countries in the Sahel to improve girls' education, through enabling those affected by conflict to go to school, and helping to end preventable deaths.

Studies show that of children who live in countries affected by conflict and humanitarian crises, 1 in 4 are not in school, with girls more than twice as likely to be out of education. Sahel countries make up one of the world's poorest regions with high rates of child marriage restricting girls' education and economic empowerment. It also has some of the highest maternal mortality rates globally.

The Minister met global leaders in Nouakchott, the country's capital, including Heads of State from the Sahel and major international partners, to discuss how the UK can support the fragile region in key sectors such as health and education, and help to build peace and security for millions.

Following his visit, the Minister for Africa James Duddridge said:

"Increasing conflict in the Sahel has disrupted access to vital basic services for some of the world's poorest communities. We are committed to work with Sahel leaders and the international community to change this and are boosting our efforts in the region.

"To make our world safer, healthier, more stable and more prosperous, we need girls to go to school, stay in school and have a quality education.

"Through UK aid, we are educating children living in conflict zones, like those in the Sahel, to help transform the world of tomorrow and ensure future generations thrive."

During his visit he met with the Mauritanian Minister for Education and National Education Reform, Adama Bocar Soko. He welcomed the Mauritanian government's focus on education and discussed how the UK can help improve education systems in the Sahel and break down barriers to girls attending school.

He also used meetings to press for more international focus on ending preventable deaths of mothers, new-borns and children in the region by 2030.

UK aid is helping to build reliable healthcare systems, providing vaccinations for preventable diseases, supporting mothers and children affected by malnutrition, and delivering family planning and reproductive health services around the world.

The Minister went to see a project, backed by UK aid's Women's Integrated Sexual Health (WISH) programme, which is delivering sexual and reproductive health advice and services for marginalised communities in Mauritania. The UK is working with the country's Government to improve healthcare, address gender-based violence and end harmful practices.

At the Assembly, he met Axel Van Trotsenburg, World Bank Managing Director of Operations, and talked about how the UK and World Bank can help the Sahel to cope with climate change and extreme weather. He discussed the UK's security support to the region with the Malian Defence Minister Ibrahima Dembélé.