

Press release: UK aid to protect 7,000 Commonwealth veterans of the British Armed Forces from extreme poverty

Over 7,000 veterans of the Commonwealth who served the British Armed Forces will receive two meals a day through UK aid, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt confirmed today.

The programme will be delivered through the [Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League](#), a charity which has been supporting those such veterans who served The British Crown for almost 100 years.

[Joseph Hammond, 91, a Commonwealth veteran from Ghana who fought for Britain in Burma during WWII](#)

The new Department for International Development (DFID) programme will provide regular cash transfers to Commonwealth veterans and their widows and widowers in more than 30 countries to prevent them from going hungry.

Secretary of State for International Development Penny Mordaunt said:

We owe a tremendous amount to these Commonwealth Veterans. The British public would be shocked to know that those who have served alongside our Armed Forces would be living in such poverty.

It is absolutely right to make this commitment. I think the British public would approve of us pledging this support because of the sacrifices the Commonwealth Veterans have made and because of the debt of gratitude we owe to them.

Today's announcement follows a commitment in June by DFID to design a programme to support pre-independence war veterans.

RCEL Deputy Grand President and former Chief of Defence Staff, Lord Richards of Herstmonceux GCB CBE DSO, said:

We owe a great debt to the service men and women of the Commonwealth who served in the British Armed Forces in the Second World War and afterwards prior to their countries' independence.

This grant will help the RCEL ensure that these brave men and women are sustained and cared for in their twilight years. As important, it will let them know that they have not been forgotten and their service and sacrifice is remembered.

Without this support, the 4,500 veterans and 2,500 widows would be unable to secure the equivalent of one-meal-a-day. UK aid will mean that those who served in the British Armed Forces across the Commonwealth pre-independence will not live their later years in poverty.

Some of the veterans eligible for support through UK aid include:

90-year-old Luc Pierre Achille, from Mauritius, who served in Egypt and Libya with the Pioneer Corps as a firefighter.

90-year-old Luc Pierre Achille. Image: RCEL

95-year-old Sepoy Penhungo Egung, pictured at his home in Nagaland, North India. Sepoy fought in Kohima and Burma during World War Two.

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99-year-old Boto Marong, pictured at his home in The Gambia, served in the Royal Army Medical Corps as a medic in Burma from 1942-47.

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85-year-old Bakoto Jobe, pictured at her home in The Gambia. Bakoto's husband was a corporal in the First Gambia Regiment who fought in Burma.

85-year-old Bakoto Jobe, pictured at her home in The Gambia. Image: RCEL

Notes to editors

- The package, worth £11.8 million, will be awarded to the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League through [UK Aid Direct](#). UK Aid Direct supports small- and medium-sized Civil Society Organisations and charities, based in the UK and overseas, to achieve sustained poverty reduction and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League (RCEL) was established in 1921 as a charity to provide support to those who served The British Crown during The Great War. Over the last century RCEL has continued to support veterans who served in the British Armed Forces and their widows from Commonwealth Nations prior to their country's independence. All those supported are resident in their country of origin and living in poverty.
- The welfare of Commonwealth veterans was previously provided for through grants from LIBOR grants, a means through which the UK government re-directs fines levied for financial manipulation of the LIBOR rate to worthwhile causes. LIBOR is the London Inter-bank Offered Rate or the average of interest rates estimated by each of the leading banks in London to borrow from other banks.
- UK aid will mean the support for veterans is increased from the previous support they received through LIBOR grants and UK service charities, to ensure they receive the equivalent of two-meals-a-day or 2,400 calories (the amount healthy adults should aim to eat everyday) through cash transfers.
- During the Second World War, an estimated 4.5 million Commonwealth

soldiers from the Indian sub-continent, Africa and the Caribbean fought in the British Army for the Allied Forces. Many more Commonwealth soldiers fought in further conflicts.

- Today, around 14,000 thousand veterans are living across the Commonwealth, with 7,000 veterans and their widows in need of support to meet their basic needs.
- The programme will run in more than 30 countries eligible for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA): Antigua, Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Cameroon, Dominica, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Montserrat, Pakistan, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- The requisite years post-independence Commonwealth veterans are required to have served in the British Armed Forces to remain in the UK varies from unit to unit. The average time served to remain is approximately four years.

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[News story: North Star report and flyer published](#)

MAIB's report on a man overboard from the fishing vessel North Star on 5 February 2018 with the loss of 1 life, is now published.

The report contains details of what happened, the subsequent actions taken and recommendations made: [read more](#).

A [safety flyer](#) to the fishing industry summarising the accident and detailing the safety lessons learned, has also been produced.

Press enquiries

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020 7944 4292 / 0300 777878

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[Press release: Elected women from around the world tackle gender equality](#)

Minister for Women and Equalities and International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, will co-host the International Women MPs of the World conference on Thursday 8 November, which will see women parliamentarians come together to fight for women's rights.

120 women from 86 countries around the world – including Peru, Ghana and New Zealand – will sit in the House of Commons. The conference has cross-party support and is backed by former Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Harriet Harman MP, and Leader of the House, Andrea Leadsom MP.

This evening [7 November] the Prime Minister will host a reception for elected women from around the world. She will speak to them about the progress that's been made over the years in ensuring women's voices around the world are being heard. The Prime Minister will call on women from every part of public life to work together, learn from each other and build the networks that will allow them to succeed.

Globally, 800 girls and women die every day through pregnancy and childbirth complications. Girls and women who experience violence are 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV, are at increased risk of maternal mortality, and are less likely to complete their education. Violence against women and girls is estimated to cost economies between 1.2% and 3.7% of GDP.

When girls receive an extra year of primary schooling they can increase their wages by 10-20% when they get a job, most of which is likely to be reinvested in her family and community. When women are meaningfully involved in conflict resolution, peace accords are 35% more likely to last for 15 years or more.

Currently there are the highest number of women in history sitting in the House of Commons, but still only 32% of UK MPs are women, and worldwide just 24% of people elected into international Parliaments are women. One hundred years ago women were not only denied seats in the Chamber, they were also denied seats in the public gallery, in case they distracted the men from the serious business of politics.

In her opening speech, Ms Mordaunt will also set out some of the obstacles female parliamentarians working to provide support, empowerment and services for women are facing, as well as the heroism in overcoming those obstacles.

Minister for Women and Equalities Penny Mordaunt said:

Every woman and girl deserves the right to a safe childhood, to a quality education, to reproductive healthcare and to a life without fear.

But the shocking reality is that for many girls and women across the world this is not the case – women's rights have dropped off the global agenda.

The women attending today's historic sitting in our House of Commons have all overcome challenges in their own countries to become MPs and have their voices heard. Together we will commit to redoubling our fight for women's rights and pledge that we won't be deterred by political barriers.

Our message is simple – women's rights are human rights.

Getting more women into politics gives a voice to women and girls around the world to enable them to fight for their rights, creates female role models and leads to legislation and work which tackles gender inequalities and discrimination.

The conference will also include discussion on the support elected women need to deal with harassment and abuse, balance family and political responsibilities, and help more women to be active in politics.