

[Press release: International Women's Day: Penny Mordaunt pays tribute to Jo Cox and calls for gender equality to be made a reality](#)

Jo Cox pictured working as a humanitarian aid worker. Photo: Oxfam

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has paid tribute to MP Jo Cox's humanitarian work and called for everyone to "raise their game" to make gender equality a reality, ahead of this year's International Women's Day.

Speaking today (7 March) at the headquarters of mobile technology industry association the GSMA, in the City of London, Ms Mordaunt will announce new UK aid support to help grassroots organisations working on issues that were close to Jo's heart.

Ms Mordaunt will also call for everyone to step up and make gender equality a reality, as part of the Department for International Development's (DFID) new vision to make sure the voices of women and girls in the world's poorest countries are heard.

The International Development Secretary will say that if progress on gender equality is not sped up, the Global Goals will not be met by 2030.

Ahead of her speech, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

Jo was a dedicated humanitarian who fought for gender equality at home and in developing countries and her passion and commitment will continue to support the world's most disadvantaged and disenfranchised women through these new UK aid grants.

The MeToo movement has sent shockwaves around the world and given a voice to millions of women, but the majority of women and girls in the poorest countries are still not heard.

We all have the power to change this injustice and that's why UK aid is keeping girls in school, stamping out violence and giving a voice to women both at home and in shaping the future of their countries.

It is only by everyone raising their game and making gender equality a reality that we will build a more peaceful, safe and prosperous world for us all.

The Jo Cox Memorial Grants will be given to projects in developing countries that are working to get the voices of girls and women heard when holding power-holders to account, helping them find jobs and become financially independent and making access to family planning services easier. The fund will also help strengthen grassroots organisations' capacity for predicting identity-based violence earlier.

Jo Cox's sister Kim Leadbeater said:

It's wonderful to have the Jo Cox Memorial Grants being launched today – for every life that is touched by these grants, they will make a real difference and they will be money well spent.

It's so fitting to have these grants created in Jo's name, which will reach a range of different countries and projects that encompass Jo's passion for both women's empowerment and bringing local communities together.

Jo spent 20 years working in the voluntary sector and working overseas. These grants are a reminder of that and a reminder of her passion and her determination to hopefully inspire others with similar desires. Jo would be over the moon.

In her speech, Ms Mordaunt will set out that DFID has taken the lead in tackling sexual abuse and exploitation within the aid sector and acknowledge that these incidents would not be so widespread if women and girls had an equal place at the table.

There are three areas in Ms Mordaunt's call to action that DFID will focus on through the new Strategic Vision for Gender Equality:

- Reaching those women and girls most at risk of being left behind, whether that is because of their ethnicity, their disability or simply because of where they are.
- Stepping-up for women and girls caught-up in conflict or crisis. To ensure that as well as protecting them, women and girls are also empowered, so they have a seat at the table when it comes to finding the solutions to a lasting peace. Studies show that when women are at the negotiating table, peace treaties are a third more likely to work.
- Doing more to increase women and girls' political participation so their voices are heard, and they're able to influence decisions that affect their lives, whether that's at home or in government.

Ms Mordaunt will deliver her speech at GSMA to highlight that technology will be vital in making sure the voices of women and girls in the world's poorest

countries are heard.

DFID is supporting the GSMA to narrow the gender gap on mobile phone ownership in order to unlock the benefits that mobile and internet can bring, for example giving women access to financial services, educational resources and digital health services.

Jo Cox Memorial Grants:

Gender data:

- Ms Mordaunt will also today announce funding for the UN Women-led flagship programme initiative on gender data, to improve the quality of gender data so the global goals can be effectively monitored. UK aid support will be up to £6 million over 4 years.

New Strategic Vision for Women and Girls:

- The new Strategic Vision re-affirms the UK's position as a world leader on gender equality. Focuses of the vision include strengthening work on gender equality in conflict and crisis contexts, women's political empowerment, and ensuring that no women or girls are left behind. It is an update of DFID's 2011 Strategic Vision for Girls and Women. DFID has compiled the new vision after a process of wide consultation with NGOs and civil society, both in the UK and abroad.

GSMA:

- Specifically DFID is supporting women and girls through the GSMA by working with the mobile industry to ensure their services are designed with women and girls in mind. For example in Rwanda the local mobile operator is training and employing female Mobile Money agents, who are better able to reach women with financial services, allowing them to save money and support their families.