

UK supports Indigenous Maya Girls to create transformational change in Guatemala

The project reached over 230 adolescent Maya girls aged 11 to 18 residing in more than 40 rural villages in Sololá where the MAIA school is located. The project also had a holistic approach, which included the families of each student. The total of indirect beneficiaries was approximately 2,000 people.

The project had three main aims in order to deliver quality education to these young indigenous girls. First, a series of courses, which included women's empowerment, critical thinking and civic participation.

The second aim of the project was around media freedom in which more than 30 girls participated in 14 journalism workshops to gain skills and public speaking tools that they will be able to use in the future as active members of their communities.

Lastly, the girls designed, produced, and led 9 virtual and 2 in-person interviews using the tools they gained to discuss critical issues facing girls and the Maya community with international and local public figures.

In addition, around 236 girls received quality education on sexual reproductive health, physical and emotional wellbeing, leadership, body positivity and self-esteem.

By engaging with families and communities, the project had a positive impact in the cultural and societal norms that usually prevent women and girls from engaging in decision-making and public spheres.

During the closing of the project, the British Ambassador to Guatemala, Nick Whittingham said:

Empowering girls is the best resource to slowly address and change certain cultural norms that prevent girls from reaching their full potential. I am thrilled to see how empowered these girls are, ready to advocate for more equitable access to quality education and women and indigenous girls' rights.

PM call with President von der Leyen: 15 February 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen this afternoon.



The pair discussed the grave situation on the Ukrainian border, and agreed that the world needed to remain vigilant in the coming hours and days.

The Prime Minister thanked President von der Leyen for her close cooperation on sanctions to date, and said that the UK and the EU should continue to work with allies to prepare a package of economic measures that would punish Russia if they breached Ukraine's sovereignty.

He welcomed the unity of allies, but said more could be done to strengthen coordinated measures at pace.

The Prime Minister also raised the growing issues around the Northern Ireland Protocol, and the need to take action to safeguard the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all its dimensions.

The two leaders agreed to stay in touch on both matters.

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UKHSA review shows vaccinated less

Likely to have long COVID than unvaccinated

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has undertaken a rapid evidence review looking at the effects of vaccination against long COVID or post-COVID symptoms. The [review includes 15 UK and international studies](#) that were undertaken up until January 2022.

An [estimated 2% of the UK population](#) have reported symptoms of long COVID or post-COVID syndrome, which can last for more than 4 weeks after their initial infection. The 3 most common symptoms are fatigue, shortness of breath and muscle or joint pain.

Eight of the studies in the review looked at the effect of vaccinations administered before infection. Most of these studies suggest that vaccinated people (one or 2 doses) were less likely to develop symptoms of long COVID following infection compared with unvaccinated people – in the short term and long term (4 weeks up until 6 months after infection).

The data from some of the studies included in the review suggests that:

- people with COVID-19 who received 2 doses of the Pfizer, AstraZeneca, or Moderna vaccines or one dose of the Janssen vaccine, were about [half as likely](#) as people who received one dose or were unvaccinated to develop long COVID symptoms lasting more than 28 days
- vaccine effectiveness against most post-COVID symptoms in adults was highest in people aged 60 years and over, and lowest for younger participants (19 to 35 years)

The remaining studies looked at the effects of vaccination among people who already had long COVID symptoms.

Four studies specifically compared long COVID symptoms before and after vaccination. Three of these studies suggested that more people with COVID-19 reported an improvement than a worsening in symptoms after vaccination, either immediately or over several weeks.

Another 3 studies of unvaccinated people with long COVID compared ongoing symptoms in those who either went on to receive a vaccination or remained unvaccinated. These studies suggested that those who were vaccinated were less likely to report long COVID symptoms after vaccination than people who remained unvaccinated over the same period.

One study looked specifically at the timing of vaccination after COVID-19 infection and suggested that people with COVID-19 who were vaccinated sooner after diagnosis were much less likely to report long COVID symptoms than people who were vaccinated later after diagnosis. All studies were observational, so results may be from differences other than vaccination.

In one study, of those participants who reported having long COVID, a greater

proportion of vaccinated participants said their symptoms improved compared to unvaccinated participants ([23.2% compared to 15.4% respectively](#)).

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at UKHSA, said:

These studies add to the potential benefits of receiving a full course of the COVID-19 vaccination. Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself from serious symptoms when you get infected and may also help to reduce the longer-term impact.

For most people symptoms of long COVID are short-lived and resolve overtime. But for some, symptoms can be more severe and disrupting to their daily lives.

If you're experiencing unusual symptoms particularly for longer than 4 weeks after infection, you should consider contacting your GP.

The review concluded that people who received 2 doses of a vaccine against COVID-19 were less likely to develop long COVID symptoms or experience symptoms for a shorter time, compared with those unvaccinated.

Individuals who received a vaccination after being infected with COVID-19 also reported that the duration of post-COVID symptoms was less than for those who were unvaccinated. Two doses of the COVID-19 vaccination provide a high level of protection against long COVID, compared to one dose or no doses.

[Environment Agency warns communities along Severn and Wye estuaries to prepare for flooding from Storm Eunice](#)



- Risk of flooding to homes and businesses along the estuaries from

Avonmouth to Gloucester

- Residents urged to take action to prepare for flooding

The Environment Agency is urging people living in flood risk communities in the Severn and Wye estuaries to prepare for flooding from a forecast tidal surge caused by Storm Eunice this Friday.

The tidal surge is possible Friday morning, and the Environment Agency is urging people to take steps to protect themselves and their property from the risk of flooding.

Flooding is possible from Avonmouth and up the Severn into Gloucestershire and along the Wye from Chepstow to Monmouth.

Residents are urged to sign up to Environment Agency Flood Warning messages and to make sure they are prepared for flooding by following the 'Prepare, Act, Survive' guidance:

- prepare a bag that includes medical and insurance documents
- check the latest flood situation online
<https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/warnings>
- know how to turn off your gas, electricity and water
- check your insurance to make sure you are covered for flood damage. If you rent your home, it is your responsibility to have insurance for your belongings.
- if you are flooded, call 999 if in immediate danger and follow advice from emergency services

Gary Bywater Area Incident Duty Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

Strong winds from Storm Eunice could cause a storm surge and large waves, bringing a risk of flooding to homes and businesses along Severn and Wye estuaries.

We're seeking to give early warning to communities to prepare. We will issue flood warnings if necessary and we have teams out on the ground taking action to reduce the impact of any possible flooding.

You can check your flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest situation at <https://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk>, call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or follow @EnvAgency on Twitter for the latest flood updates.

A Met Office weather warning is in place for Storm Eunice, so people should take extreme care near the estuary and any coastal areas. We urge people to stay safe and warn wave watchers against the unnecessary danger of taking 'storm selfies'.

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[UK Provides Additional Funding to Boost Port Development in Montserrat](#)

Press release

The Government of the United Kingdom has approved a significant increase in grant funding for the Little Bay Port Development Project in Montserrat.



The Government of the United Kingdom has approved a significant increase in grant funding for the Little Bay Port Development Project in Montserrat totalling approximately £28.3m to provide a safe, climate-resilient harbour, improve accessibility to the island, and substantially expand economic, trade, and tourism opportunities.

This additional funding of approximately £13.9 million builds on existing UK aid of £14.4 million already allocated to the port development project under the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Fund (UKCIF).

The Minister responsible for the Overseas Territories, the Rt Hon Amanda Milling MP said:

This increased support to Montserrat is a tangible demonstration of the UK's continued commitment to the Caribbean and to UK Overseas Territories. We see this as an investment in Montserrat's recovery and revitalisation after suffering devastating hurricanes and volcanic eruptions in recent decades.

We are pleased that the new port will include environmentally sound and sustainable climate-resilient measures and look forward to the

many ways this pivotal project will improve lives of people in Montserrat.

The Little Bay Port Development Project is delivered through the Government of Montserrat, and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) which manages all UKCIF projects, now totalling almost £350 million.

CDB President Dr Hyginus 'Gene' Leon said:

The Caribbean Development Bank welcomes the additional funding for the Little Bay Port Development Project which will bolster tourism and commerce for the benefit of Montserrat's economy and people.

We are grateful to the United Kingdom for their strong commitment to Montserrat and the Caribbean and we will continue to work in partnership with the UK to achieve our common objective of facilitating sustainable development throughout the region.

The project which is expected to be completed by 2024 includes the construction of an offshore jetty, new access road, dredging works, and slope stabilisation design. The project will also provide employment of skilled and unskilled men and women and promote the participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities in the transportation, tourism, and infrastructure sectors. Safeguards are in place throughout the design and delivery of the project to ensure UKaid funds are spent as intended.

Notes to editors

- Montserrat's economy depends on tourism and the ability to provide safe harbour for both tourist and cargo vessels. Currently, there is no sheltered harbour and access by sea is restricted by sea conditions and the size of the vessel that can be accommodated by the existing jetty in Little Bay.
- The original capital grant for this project was first approved in December 2017 for £14.4 million and has now been increased to ensure the development of a viable port that meets the need of the people of Montserrat and contributes to sustainable economic development for the UK Overseas Territory. The total project cost is now over £35 million and includes £7.1 million from the European Union through the 11th European Development Fund.
- The UKCIF is providing almost £350 million in grant funding for nine ODA-eligible Caribbean Countries/Overseas Territories including Montserrat. UKCIF includes 15 critical economic infrastructure projects which aim to set the foundations for growth and prosperity, reduce poverty, promote gender equality and inclusion, and increase resilience

to climate change.

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