

We need business to help us get girls learning – and change the world: article by Baroness Sugg

Coronavirus has changed the world. We are facing the biggest triple threat of our lifetimes, with unprecedented economic, health and education crises.

While there has been much focus on the first two, the latter cannot be overlooked. At the height of school closures due to coronavirus, 1.6 billion children were out of school globally with girls disproportionately affected.

Millions of girls across the world are now at risk of never returning to the classroom.

This educational catastrophe has economic implications too. Lost learning due to the pandemic could result in students around the world missing out on around £12,000 in reduced wages over their lifetimes. Altogether, we could lose one-tenth of global GDP.

That would be catastrophically detrimental to the next generation of families, businesses, and nations everywhere. It would threaten our ability to end poverty, support entrepreneurs, and boost economic growth.

And without action, it will get worse.

As the future employers of the next generation of women and drivers of growth in vulnerable countries, businesses have a vital role to play in confronting this challenge, tearing down obstacles that keep girls from learning and achieving their potential.

In many of the world's poorest and most unstable countries, girls' education is threatened by risks, which include child marriage, violence, the need to take on domestic work and lack of access to quality learning.

Remove the barriers and a powerful force is unleashed: a child whose mother can read is 50 per cent more likely to live past the age of five, twice as likely to attend school themselves and 50 per cent more likely to be immunised against common diseases. A girl with one year of additional schooling will increase her earnings by a fifth.

For businesses, giving girls quality education is not just the right thing to do – it is the smart thing to do. Educating girls creates thriving and diverse workforces. It creates the leaders of the future: scientists that will fight climate change and engineers that will develop cutting-edge technology. It prevents child marriage that keeps women out of the workplace. It boosts incomes, builds productivity and strengthens economies.

That's why we are calling on businesses to join us in this fight. We've already seen the impact that can be made.

British satellite communications company Avanti has partnered with Project iMlango, an e-learning programme in Africa, backed by UK aid, to deliver broadband connectivity that ensures education content can reach 245 remote and rural schools across Kenya. Since the coronavirus outbreak, the iMlango project has given more than 68,000 girls an opportunity to keep up with their learning while schools were closed.

We have also partnered with Unilever, one of the largest companies in the UK, to launch an information campaign in 37 countries, from Syria to South Africa, to make sure people wash their hands with soap regularly to stop the spread of coronavirus.

When businesses take action, we can educate more girls, more quickly and more effectively. That's why next year – during our G7 Presidency – the UK, Kenya and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) will co-host a Global Education Summit which will unite businesses, world leaders and charities in a shared endeavour to educate more children and build back better from coronavirus.

As part of this, the UK and GPE are launching a series of events from this week to bring together business leaders from British, African and international companies, alongside Education Ministers from developing countries, such as Kenya and Nigeria, to establish how we can work together to tackle the global learning crisis.

The UK, as a world leader on championing girls' rights, is joining forces with major, influential brands such as HP, PWC, Ecobank and Econet, to discuss aligning companies' sustainability initiatives with national education strategies of developing countries. This includes commitments from businesses to boost women and girls' skills, empowerment, and financial education. Together, we'll get more girls learning to unlock opportunity.

If we educate one child, we can change one life. If we educate millions, we can change the world.

Further information

[HS2 land and property review](#)

High Speed Two (HS2) is at the heart of our plans to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, creating 1000s of skilled jobs, boosting connectivity between our towns and cities and helping to rebalance opportunity across the country for years to come.

However, as part of that commitment to build back better, it's crucial that we deliver HS2 in a way that is as considerate as possible of those disrupted by the project, who may face losing their homes and relocating their

businesses.

In confirming HS2 would go ahead in February 2020, the Prime Minister also committed to a step-change in HS2 Ltd's performance and to drive improvements in transparency, accountability and value to the taxpayer. This included a renewed focus on placing people – the communities and individuals who will be impacted by HS2 – at the heart of everything the government does.

So following my appointment as the Minister for HS2, I initiated a review of the HS2 land and property acquisition programme, to ensure that those most directly affected were placed at its heart.

The review examined HS2 Ltd's operational acquisition processes and, where the evidence demonstrated it, associated wider-government policies. It focussed on 4 areas. How to:

- deliver a step-change in community engagement on the land and property acquisition programme
- protect the interests of those impacted
- improve process efficiency and delivery by HS2 Ltd
- drive a better tone, showing conspicuous respect, courtesy and understanding

Today, I'm pleased to [publish the findings of this review](#). Copies of the report have been laid in the Libraries of the House.

The government is grateful for the contributions made by Members of the House and their constituents, external stakeholders, the HS2 Residents' Commissioner and the HS2 Construction Commissioner. The review also considered lessons from Phase One of HS2 and examined compensation regimes employed on other UK infrastructure projects and abroad.

The review generated a number of proposals that are designed to speed up property valuations and disturbance payments, settle cases and disputes more quickly and build on the improvements HS2 Ltd have been introducing to engage more effectively with people.

The focus now will be on how the government and HS2 Ltd turn these proposals into long-lasting changes that not only improve the delivery of HS2, but also the experience and well-being of individuals, businesses and communities impacted by them.

The government wants to ensure that those living near the route receive the right support at all stages of the project. Importantly, it remains committed to ensuring that those affected are properly compensated and treated with compassion, dignity and respect.

UK-Kenya Economic Development Forum: New UK funding for prosperity

The UK and Kenya held the second Economic Development Forum where KES 131 million of new British funding was announced to increase trade and investment opportunities.

The virtual Forum – co-chaired by UK Minister for Africa, James Duddridge and Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Trade, Betty Maina – saw the UK announce new funding to boost investment into Kenya, including:

- KES 6 million to catalyse early stage investment, or 'angel investment', into Kenyan start-ups to help budding entrepreneurs navigate from business ideas through to scalable and investable businesses. Applications for the angel-investing programme opens next week
- funding of KES 125 million to attract investment and grow key sectors, such as agro-processing and pharmaceuticals, safeguarding Kenyan jobs and livelihoods

The Forum also noted significant UK support to Kenya's post-COVID-19 economic response with KES 225 million to:

- help to keep supply chains operating and trade flowing
- support businesses to open up in a COVID-19 safe way
- help retain investment in Kenya

British High Commissioner to Kenya, Jane Marriott, said:

Today's Forum is helping our countries trade more, invest more and create more jobs. It builds on the initialling of the UK-Kenya trade agreement earlier this month, which will ensure trade continuity between our countries. I am delighted to see so much momentum to strengthen our economic partnership, and today's announcement of new UK support for entrepreneurs and businesses shows our deep commitment to building our mutual prosperity.

The UK has been working with Kenya to increase its attractiveness for international investment. UK companies are already major investors and employers in Kenya, and more UK companies want to invest in Kenya. At the Forum, both governments discussed how they could cooperate to unlock significant investments from UK companies to help boost Kenya's growth.

The UK is also providing support to the landmark Nairobi Railway City development, as agreed between Prime Minister Johnson and President Kenyatta.

A consortium of UK firms is delivering world-class advice on the technical and commercial aspects of the development. The longer-term benefits of this project are likely to include: increased transport capacity that will help Nairobi sustain future growth; stimulated inward investment that will create new jobs; and opportunities to pursue green solutions for city development.

Both Ministers also noted remarkable progress on the trade deal negotiations between the UK and Kenya and which was initialled on 3 November, 2020.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson and President Uhuru Kenyatta agreed a five-year Strategic Partnership, which includes Mutual Prosperity between the UK and Kenya on 21 January 2020, following the UK-Africa Investment Summit.

Notes to editors

The UK-Kenya Trade Agreement aims to:

- provide the strongest possible platform for the United Kingdom, Kenya and, ultimately, the whole East African Community, to expand our trade relationship in future
- promote increased trade and investment by putting our trading relationship on a more equitable, mature and business-like footing, supporting sustainable growth and poverty reduction
- act as a catalyst to deepen our mutual prosperity alongside the other areas of cooperation in the UK-Kenya Strategic Partnership that includes security and stability, sustainable development, climate change and people-to-people pillars
- provide a major boost for the businesses and investors in Kenya and the UK and deliver a much-needed stimulus for economic development to counter the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

The Economic Development Forum is the delivery mechanism for the Mutual Prosperity commitments, and today's Forum agreed the Implementation Plan to drive forward progress and build stronger trade and investment links between both countries. Both Governments confirmed their commitment to biannual follow-up meetings to review progress on the Strategic Partnership commitments, and continue to discuss how to boost economic growth and job creation.

[Statement on Social Housing White Paper](#)

News story

Response from the Chief Executive of the Regulator of Social Housing



In response to the publication of the [Social Housing White Paper](#), Fiona MacGregor, Chief Executive of the Regulator of Social Housing said:

We welcome the publication of the White Paper and its vision for a social housing sector which values and responds to the voices of tenants.

We will maintain our robust approach to economic regulation and look forward to working with tenants, landlords and other stakeholders to implement the changes to the consumer regulation framework.

Notes to editors

1. The Regulator of Social Housing promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.
2. For press office contact details, see the [Media enquiries page](#). For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

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Across borders: the UK's multilateral response to a global health crisis

2020 has set unprecedented challenges for countries across the globe. But more importantly, it has emphasised the importance of global partnerships to tackle this pandemic. Against the challenges of COVID-19, the UK has pooled its existing assets, expertise and resources to contribute to a massive, collective effort against this pandemic. More importantly, we have championed a multilateral approach to develop vaccines and treatments while promoting transparent development and equitable access. This 'vaccine multilateralism' means we will need to reach across borders and recognise that a global pandemic calls for global cooperation.

Contributing to the global effort against COVID-19

The UK has actively engaged with an unparalleled alliance of countries to accelerate vaccine development through the UN-led COVAX facility, where we have committed £571 million to support equitable access to a vaccine, especially for developing countries. We are pleased to note that the Philippines has partnered with COVAX as a beneficiary of the Advanced Market Commitment. Great progress has been made by clinical trials being undertaken by the University of Oxford and Imperial College London, supported by £130m of UK government funding. These scientific and academic innovators are complemented by British firms providing significant private sector contributions.

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) has several scientific collaborations globally, providing innovative vaccine adjuvant technology.

AstraZeneca has partnered with the University of Oxford, and while they await phase 3 trials within the year, their initial data showed encouraging results. They have committed to broadly and equitably supplying their vaccine candidate at no profit to make it more affordable. And the anticipated storage temperatures of 2 to 8 degrees Celsius are similar to those you would see in domestic refrigerators.

In ASEAN, £6.3million of additional UK funding has been announced to tackle the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 across Southeast Asia. Cooperation with the Asian Development Bank and ASEAN bodies will support economic recovery, health education and training, and the development of a regional pandemic alert system to communicate real-time COVID-19 risks in the region.

UK-Philippines enhanced partnership as a force for good

Ahead of marking 75 years of diplomatic engagement next year, bilateral cooperation between the UK and the Philippines remains a force for good.

COVID-19 shaped the discussion of the second UK-Philippines Economic Dialogue in August, where both countries set an ambitious agenda towards an inclusive, green and sustainable economic recovery. Since then, we have mobilised our partnerships to contribute to local pandemic response.

The British Embassy is working with the UP College of Public Health to pool technical expertise from the UK and the Philippines for a COVID-19 learning series supporting public health workers and local governments, including the Doctors to the Barrios Programme. Strategic learning exchanges supported by the Prosperity Fund Better Health Programme (BHP) have enabled Pasig City, Iloilo City, the University of the Philippines and the Department of Health to engage with public health bodies in the UK part of BHP's Strategic Partner network including the NHS, Public Health England and NICE International. Re-adapted elements of the Prosperity Fund and the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund will continue to contribute to local health responses, including in the Bangsamoro region.

Looking ahead: the case for a multilateral response

Our work to respond to COVID-19, including our on-going discussions with the Philippines on vaccines, remains an important priority – which Nigel Adams, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Minister for Asia, will take forward in his visit to Manila later this week.

The COVID-19 pandemic will continue to test our resolve for international cooperation to save lives and build back better. But there is hope – unparalleled breakthroughs in vaccine research and development at a record pace have been made possible because of global cooperation and strengthens the case for such a collective, multilateral approach to combat this pandemic.

As Ambassador, I consider it my personal duty to do all I can to ensure fair and equitable access to a safe and effective vaccine, that has been developed transparently.

This is not a race which pits country against country, or company against company. We are all racing against the virus. And only by working together can we bring an end to the pandemic for everyone, everywhere.