

# WISH2ACTION project launches in Madagascar: speech by Dr Phil Boyle

It is a great pleasure to attend today's official launch of the WISH2ACTION project: a major new initiative supported by the UK's Department for International Development and implemented by a consortium of partners including Marie Stopes Madagascar, Development Media International, Humanity and Inclusion, and Options.

This is part of a major new investment by the UK in Women's Integrated Sexual Health across Africa. £200 million will be spent in 27 countries to ensure millions of couples can reliably gain access to life-saving voluntary contraception in some of the world's poorest nations. In Madagascar we are investing 10 million Euro over three years in WISH2ACTION. And this will prioritise the poorest and most in need, particularly young, disabled and marginalised women.

Why is the UK doing this? We believe that good voluntary family planning, with women's choice at the centre, contributes to development in every sector and every community. Rapid population growth – and it is currently at 2.5% a year in Madagascar – will undermine development if infrastructure, healthcare, education and job creation cannot keep up. But addressing fertility rates and empowering women will unlock economic growth and prosperity.

And it is the right thing to do. Ten Malagasy women die every day following pregnancy and birth complications. And this death rate has barely changed during the last 20 years, and remains one of the highest in the world. Despite this, maternal and newborn health have seen a decline in donor and international interest. This is a mistake. Improvements in maternal health will have far-reaching impacts on the achievement of Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals.

My wife and I were lucky enough to celebrate the birth of our first child a few months ago. We were even luckier, as we received excellent care both here in Madagascar and in the UK. But it is the sad truth that most Malagasy women, especially in rural areas, cannot aspire to even a basic level of care. And this is something that urgently needs to be addressed.

The UK's vision is of a world where everyone can fully exercise their sexual and reproductive health rights. Where the quality services, supplies and information needed for this are available to all. Where no mother or baby dies needlessly before, during or after birth. Where the AIDS epidemic is at an end. Where all girls and women live with dignity, free from stigma, violence and harmful social norms.

We believe that women and girls have the fundamental right to make their own informed decisions about sex and childbearing, to avoid unwanted sexual contact, to decide when and how many children to have, and to face fewer

risks in the course of pregnancy and childbirth.

So we are using our political leadership to make the case for protecting and supporting reproductive rights. And we're supporting countries to ensure those rights, especially for the most left behind, are a key element of their efforts to tackle poverty. That is why the UK is the largest donor to the UNFPA, and the world's second largest bilateral donor for family planning.

This WISH2ACTION programme therefore seeks to improve access to sexual health and reproductive services to couples across Madagascar. Running until September 2021, it will form a major part of the UK's effort to improve and increase the development cooperation between our two islands. And to ensure sustainability beyond the life of the programme, we will work with the government of Madagascar to bolster its own capacity to provide longer-term services. This project is in line with the Malagasy government's Family Planning 2020 goals and will support the demographic dividend. National ownership at the end of the project is key.

We welcome the passing of the new family planning law in 2017, and I would like to underline the importance of implementing it by health providers at the field level to ensure access to services by adolescents.

In addition, a key part of the WISH2ACTION approach is to provide contraceptive advice and products. By necessity, these are imported, and those distributed by Marie Stopes are subject to import taxes. It would be wonderful as a next step if thought could be given, Mr Director-General, to ways in which exemptions on the taxation of family planning products could be provided. This move would be of great support to both this programme and the overall Plan Emergence Madagascar objectives. Even better would be greater engagement by the Government of Madagascar in the supply of family planning products itself.

I'd like to thank you, Mr Director-General, for all your support so far, and I look forward to continuing our work together. And I'd like to thank Marie Stopes and all the other partners for their inspiring work and enthusiasm for this programme. It is their complementing expertise that makes me so confident that this will be the beginning of a partnership in Madagascar that has genuine impact, delivers real results, and makes a strong contribution to a brighter future for this wonderful country.

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## **Robert Chatterton Dickson's speech at Diplomatic Correspondent Association of Bangladesh (DCAB)**

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert Chatterton Dickson delivered a speech at the DCAB in Dhaka on 8 July 2019.

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## Robert Chatterton Dickson's speech at Diplomatic Correspondent Association of Bangladesh (DCAB)

As a long standing friend of Bangladesh and its people, we deeply value the UK's relationship with Bangladesh.

I know you are looking forward to your 50th anniversary in two years' time, and to celebrating your many achievements, from bringing over 50 million people out of extreme poverty since 1990, to increasing life expectancy and reducing infant mortality, to boosting your economy to one of the fastest growing in the world.

We will be celebrating with you, remembering the part our country played in your liberation struggle.

There are around 600,000 people of Bangladeshi origin in the UK. People of Bangladeshi origin play a huge role in the UK including in business, civil society and across the full spectrum of local and central government. There are three British MPs of Bangladeshi origin, one member of the House of Lords and over 100 councillors with Bangladeshi heritage across the UK.

The UK is the third largest export market for Bangladesh. UK-Bangladesh bilateral trade in 2018 was £3.6 billion, with Bangladesh exporting £3 billion of goods and services to the UK and the UK exporting £627 million of goods and services to Bangladesh.

The UK is Bangladesh's second largest source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In 2018, the UK's net FDI into Bangladesh was US\$ 373 million.

The UK is committed to maintaining Bangladesh's duty-free and quota-free market access once the UK leaves the EU. Furthermore, UK Export Finance current credit limit of £750 million for Bangladesh market shows the UK's commitment to support potential business opportunities in Bangladesh.

The UK is the 6th largest source of remittance for Bangladesh, with a value of US\$ 1.1 billion.

Our aid agency DFID continues to work tirelessly to help the less fortunate, and of this I am extremely proud.

DFID's programme in Bangladesh for 2019/20 totals £192m. Our support is improving the quality of basic services and good governance, supporting the private sector, and reducing natural disasters and climate change risks to development.

Since 2015/2016 we have helped 1.5m children gain a decent education; provided 0.9m people with access to clean water/sanitation; supported 360,000 small business with access to finance and reached 5.6m children, women and adolescent girls through nutrition-related interventions.

By 2021 DFID will support 590,000 more children to gain a quality education; provide improved nutrition for an additional 3.7m women and children and support an additional 230,000 people gain access to improved water & sanitation.

The UK is one of the largest donors in Bangladesh, committing £129 million in humanitarian assistance since August 2017. UK aid is making a big difference on the ground, including providing food and nutrition, shelter, health, protection, and water & sanitation, and targeted support for women and girls.

As Bangladesh continues its journey of reaching Middle Income Status it is so vital to allow space for a vibrant civil society, through which the people – and especially young people – can channel their energies, and indeed their frustrations, within the law.

Freedom of expression and the media are essential qualities of any functioning democracy; people must be allowed to discuss and debate issues freely, to challenge their governments, and to make informed decisions.

A free media is vital to creating an active, informed, creative and engaged population. It is an enabling factor for a range of objectives, including good governance, democracy, gender and other equalities, and poverty reduction.

That is why the UK is committed to media freedom and the protection of journalists across the world and will be co-hosting a global Media Freedom Conference.

The conference will look at four areas:

- National Frameworks and Legislation
- Protection and Prosecution including impunity
- Building trust in the media / Countering disinformation
- Media Sustainability.

Six journalists and media activists from Bangladesh are attending this conference. The Bangladesh High Commissioner in London will also be attending.

The conference will shine a spotlight on media repression, and build a coalition of governments committed to a stronger diplomatic response when media freedom is curtailed.

Our co-host Canada is developing a pledge, which we hope participants will sign up to so that they can protect journalists and defend media freedom in their countries.

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## **Open consultation: Flood and coastal erosion: call for evidence**

We're seeking evidence on key flood and coastal issues to help develop a flood and coastal erosion and national infrastructure strategy.

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## **Guidance: Forest reproductive material news**

Sign up to the forest reproductive material (FRM) newsletter – for trade news, including information about any legislation or regulatory changes.