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The FCDO's reply to the IDC's report on Racism in the aid sector: Gender and Development Network's response

On Monday 23 January 2023, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) released its [response](#) to the International Development Committee's (IDC) report on [Racism in the aid sector](#).

The IDC report's findings, based on a year's worth of written and oral evidence, recognised the way in which Britain's colonial legacy has shaped the aid sector. It covers a range of issues including, working with partners in-country, communication and story-telling as well as racism and diversity in the aid sector. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for both the FCDO and the UK aid sector.

As the [Gender and Development Network](#) (GADN), we are pleased to see the Government finally respond to the report after a lengthy delay that appeared not to recognise the urgency of addressing systemic racism within the aid sector. We welcome the FCDO's ongoing and intended measures to address some of the concerns raised in the report, including the greater representation of Black people and people of colour. However, overall, it is clear that more work is required to fully comprehend and sufficiently respond to the scale of the problems identified within the IDC's findings. Crucially, the FCDO's response does not acknowledge the analysis in the [IDC's report](#) that:

“the structure of the aid sector as a legacy of the colonial era, which continues to replicate imperial power imbalances...[and] that the UK's involvement in the slave trade and wealth extraction from around the British Empire contributed significantly to the economic development of our nation, at the direct expense of others”.

Such recognition is a critical first step for addressing racism in the aid sector.

As outlined in the IDC's report and in the Government's response, the FCDO has considerable convening power. Given the extent of the problem outlined in the report, the Government should therefore use its position to facilitate meaningful and fully-resourced sector-wide discussions on anti-racism and the wider reforms required to address Britain's colonial legacy. This is clearly just the start of what will be a challenging, but essential, process in addressing these problems that run deep across the aid sector. In doing so, GADN highlights the need to go beyond more narrowly focused efforts of 'localisation' to [decolonising development](#) – a process that requires the UK Government and the wider aid sector to recognise, make visible and work to address the legacies that colonialism, empire, and racism continue to have to this day. We hope that the IDC will continue to hold the UK Government to account on this critical issue, as understanding within the sector continues to grow and evolve.