

Policy brief:

Evaluation of sustainable growth and investment
partnerships between the UK and Tanzania

February 2026



Introduction and strategic context

This brief summarises the findings of an independent evaluation commissioned by the British High Commission (BHC) Tanzania under the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).¹ The primary objective was to generate learning to strengthen the UK's approach to economic development by assessing the coherence and effectiveness of combining programmatic (e.g., traditional programme support and technical assistance) and non-programmatic (e.g., diplomacy, UK expertise, convening and partnership facilitation, and catalytic finance) interventions. The evaluation, which utilised an outcome harvesting methodology², covered the period from 2020 to April 2025. The findings and conclusions reflect the period prior to the October 2025 general election.

The BHC Tanzania has operationalised a whole-of-government approach centred on partnerships to support sustainable growth, investment, and trade. The evaluation engaged over 60 stakeholders across government and the private sector to validate key UK contributions. It demonstrates how outcome harvesting can serve as a useful method for assessing diplomatic influencing efforts that extend beyond traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Main findings

Enhancing strategy

The UK effectively supported the Government of Tanzania in its strategic planning processes by helping to strengthen Tanzania's long-term development strategy, Vision 2050. The UK helped strengthen Tanzania's long-term development strategy (Vision 2050) by convening partnerships and providing supplier expertise to align the Government of Tanzania's priorities on growth, investment, gender and climate with global goals. Combining UK-funded research and analysis, convening and partnership facilitation through trusted relationships and UK diplomacy and convening power, including with other development partners, worked well in supporting Vision 2050. Key enablers of UK strategic influence included close partnerships between the Tanzanian government and UK suppliers.

Supporting tax reform through diplomacy

Building on a legacy of long-standing support, the UK shifted its focus from substantial ODA funding toward diplomacy, convening, and technical inputs (e.g., studies). This approach helped drive momentum for evidence-

based reform and shifts in tax practices. The sequencing of private sector diagnostics, combined with UK expertise from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and UK-led diplomacy and convening, proved very effective. The evaluation noted that embedded advice was more effective than 'fly-in-and-out' technical assistance.

Catalysing infrastructure

The UK made catalytic contributions to infrastructure development at the Dar es Salaam Port, and through UK Export Finance (UKEF) guarantees for investments in Zanzibar. By combining technical studies and transaction advice with the UK's convening power, the UK helped unlock significant additional finance from the World Bank and private finance through UKEF guarantees. The strategic shift toward risk-backed, commercially oriented instruments successfully crowded in public and private capital.

Promoting investment

Through high-level dialogue and coordination between FCDO and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the UK facilitated concrete investment outcomes. The combination of catalytic financial instruments to signal confidence, reinforced by diplomatic engagement to build relationships, proved pivotal. However, investment deals remain complex and require patience, often involving significant time lags. The evaluation also highlighted substantial competition from non-traditional partners such as China, Turkey, and India, necessitating active diplomatic and commercial representation.

Leveraging finance

The UK's Partnership for Prosperity Programme (P4P) supported Aceli Africa – a market catalyst initiative – in using blended finance tools to encourage lending to small and medium agricultural enterprises. Aceli mobilised over USD 20 million in private capital for high-impact small and medium agricultural enterprises, who commercial banks typically avoid, achieving a 1:5 donor-to-private capital ratio. This model demonstrated that limited programmatic ODA has the potential to unlock substantial commercial investment.

Strengthening cross-government working and partnerships

The BHC has made notable progress in operationalising a whole-of-government and partnership approach, including through improved coordination between the FCDO and DBT, but more could be done. The BHC has played a pivotal convening role in fostering strategic partnerships with the Government of Tanzania, development partners, and the

¹ Agulhas Applied Knowledge (forthcoming), British High Commission Tanzania: Sustainable Growth and Investment Partnerships Evaluation – Evaluation Report

² INTRAC (2017) [Outcome harvesting](#)

private sector, anchored in trust, local presence, and technical credibility. The Tanzania-UK Mutual Prosperity Partnership (MPP), launched in 2024, articulates shared objectives on trade, investment and SME growth through to 2030. As ODA resources decline, the UK's ability to achieve impact increasingly depends on working across government and through partnerships.

Conclusions

The evaluation concluded that a targeted, adaptive approach using non-programmatic levers – such as diplomacy and convening alongside programmatic support – can deliver meaningful outcomes even with limited resources. Combinations of different levers (e.g., technical assistance, diplomacy, convening, etc.) were most effective when strategically sequenced and layered, and when well-timed, credible, and directly addressing government priorities. However, with the shift toward non-programmatic levers, cross-cutting issues (such as gender, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion) may be at risk. This was evident in investment promotion and infrastructure work. Finally, UK influence is contingent on credibility and consistency. With smaller ODA envelopes, securing meaningful engagement is becoming more difficult where UK contributions are not backed by finance or sustained technical know-how and engagement.

Overall lessons

Several overarching lessons emerged from the evaluation. First, catalytic influence matters – modest but well-deployed inputs can shift policy and unlock investment. Second, mutually agreed objectives, flexibility and sequencing are key. Third, cross-cutting issues require explicit integration into intervention design, particularly for capital-intensive projects. Finally, relational capital is critical – in the absence of significant financial resources, credibility, consistency, and technical expertise become essential currencies of influence through trusted relationships, neutral and visible technical capability and consistent follow-up.

This Policy Brief was written by Liz Turner (Senior Manager, Agulhas Applied Knowledge) and Johanna Polvi (Evaluation Team leader, independent consultant). Any views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the UK government.

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Summary recommendations

Refining the UK's value proposition

As the ODA environment becomes further restricted, the UK should focus on fewer, deeper themes where it holds a unique value proposition. The BHC should clarify and communicate its offer in sectors of long-term engagement, such as strategic planning and tax, or areas of specific expertise like finance. It is crucial to be deliberate and realistic, avoiding spreading efforts across too many areas. Furthermore, given the risk of deprioritising gender and climate issues in non-programmatic levers, the UK should take deliberate steps to ensure these cross-cutting commitments are safeguarded.

Strengthening cross-government working and partnerships

Long-standing trusted relationships with suppliers and partners are key to effectiveness. The BHC must foster and further institutionalise these relations (e.g., with the government, private sector, development finance institutions, and development partners) to mitigate the risks associated with declining ODA. There is a need to prioritise high-value, high-trust partnerships that have shown traction and to deliver expertise in ways most appreciated by the government (e.g., combining short-term international expertise with embedded national experts).

To ensure sustained results, the UK should strengthen country-level alignment and delivery across all UK government departments, especially through mutually agreed objectives and plans, such as the Tanzania-UK MPP. This requires further institutionalisation of cross-government working at the BHC, including deeper integration of British International Investment (BII), UKEF, and the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG) where appropriate and feasible. With fewer ODA resources and staff, UK influence now depends on strategic focus, responsiveness, credibility and visibility.