



SWIDN

South West International
Development Network

October 2024

International Development in the South West

A brief mapping of registered charities in the UK's South West and their international work

Since our inception in 2005, the South West International Development Network (SWIDN) has known that there are hundreds of organisations working across the UK's South West to tackle poverty and inequality in lower income countries around the world. Over the years, we have worked to engage many of these organisations as members, to better support their work through professional training, peer learning and mentorship, and to bring people and ideas together to increase the impact we are having on tackling global challenges.

Working more effectively to support our sector involves understanding it first; the size, scope and strategies of actors involved, as well as their priorities and needs. The purpose of this paper is to provide a snapshot of registered charities in the South West who are working towards tackling global poverty and inequality outside the UK. Based on publicly available data from the Charity Commission for England and Wales, we present key findings on geographical location and focus, impact, funding and areas for change, to provide an overview of international development charities in the South West.

We hope our findings will support our members and wider organisations across the South West to collaborate and partner for greater impact towards the Global Goals and beyond. We hope our findings will support the UK Government and other donors, not just to improve the design and delivery of future funding, but also for better policy and practice that maximises the vast resource of global solidarity in the UK. We know we can accomplish far more when we work together.

A Picture of International NGOs in the South West¹¹

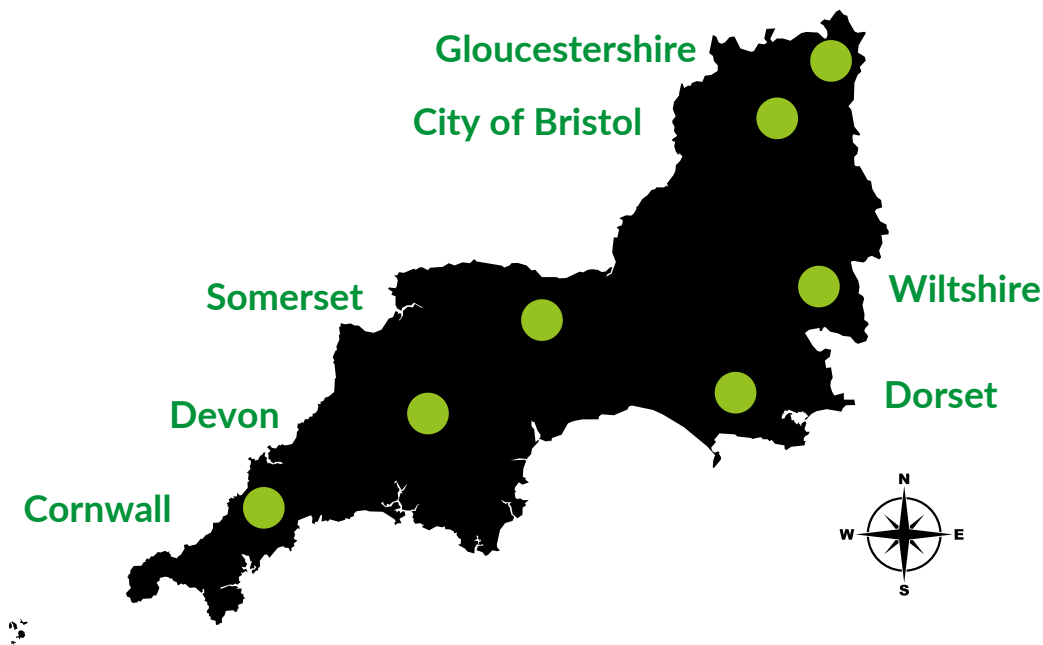
524	Registered charities working in international development in the South West
£267m	Total, combined income of 524 registered charities
£200m	Total 'donations and legacies' by SW-based charities in last annual accounts
£9.8m	Total Government grants to 26 SW-based charities reported in the last year

Where in the world are we? From local...

Each year, SWIDN works to connect South West-based organisations and individuals with each other for peer learning, improved impact and greater collaboration towards a more equitable practice of sustainable development. We believe collaboration is a key part of driving locally-led development as well as increasing global solidarity. Collaboration challenges silos and maximises resources. It also strengthens social cohesion in our communities across the South West, creating new partnerships around shared goals, and driving public narratives of support for UK Government aid funding when these are delivered by local community initiatives.

Our map below shows which areas of England make up the South West, together with the % of charities from the South West located in each of these counties.

Registered Charities in the 7 Counties of the South West



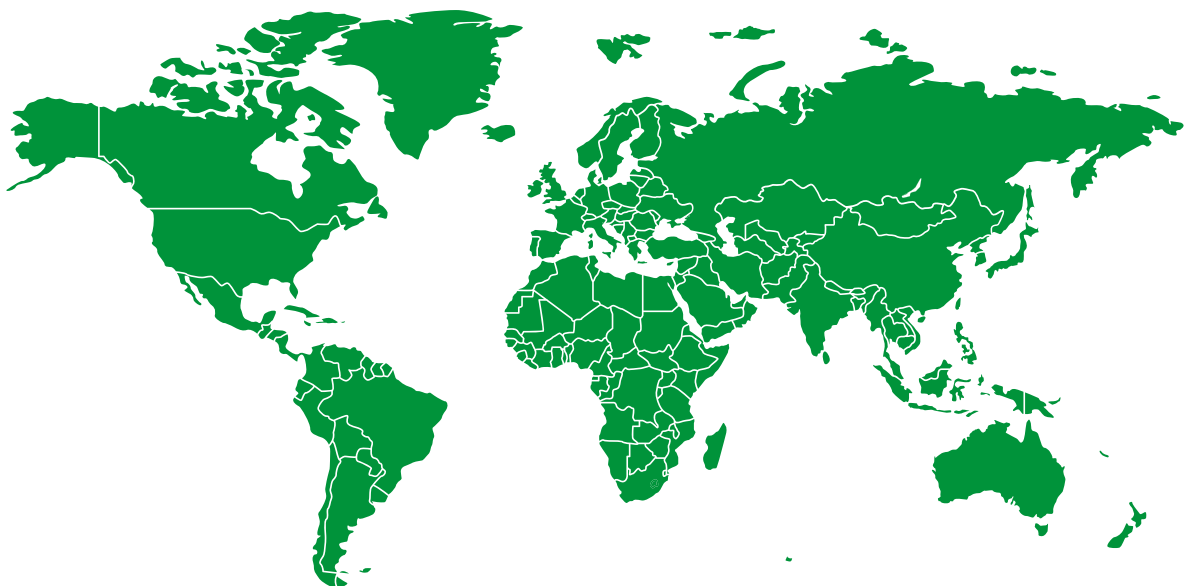
Devon	18%	City of Bristol	14%
Wiltshire	17%	Dorset	12%
Somerset	17%	Cornwall	8%
Gloucestershire	15%		

... to Global

We found that registered charities in the South West were working in 117 countries around the world. Our map below shows the top 10 countries that South West charities are working in, together with the percentage of Westcountry charities who work there.

These are not the most marginalised countries in the world and they do not have the highest comparative rates of poverty and social inequality. Many have strong historical ties to the UK through history and diaspora, and most receive some form of development finance from the UK Government. At SWIDN, we are working for greater collaboration amongst all organisations working for the Global Goals, to increase locally-led development, to join up efforts to tackle poverty and inequality, and to share resources and collaborate for greater impact to end global challenges.

Top 10 Countries in which SW Charities Work



Kenya	18%	Malawi	5%
India	14%	Zambia	5%
Uganda	11%	Cambodia	4%
Nepal	9%	Bangladesh	4%
Tanzania	5%	Ethiopia	3%

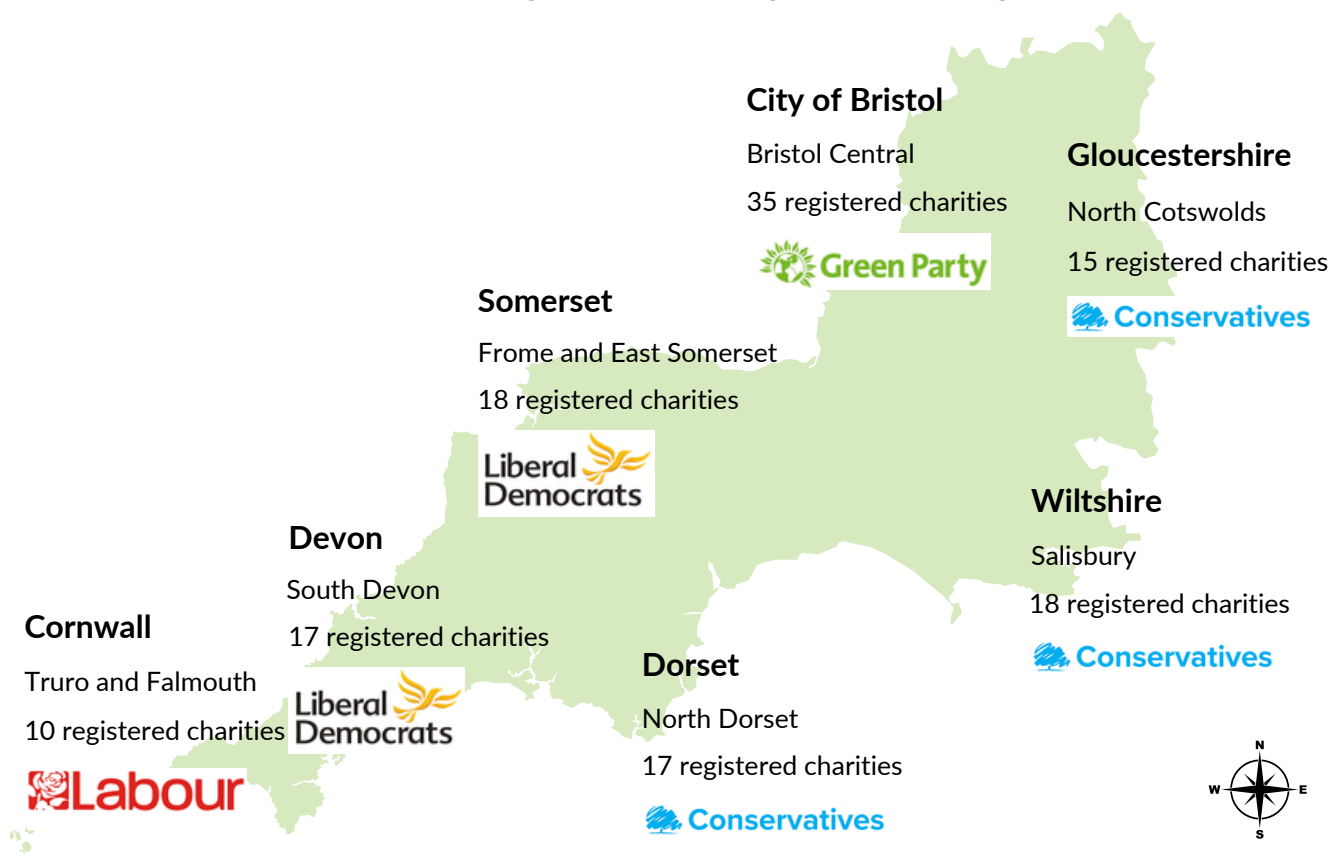
The Local Reach of Global Charities

There is work being done towards the Global Goals across the whole of the South West. From our own experience of the SWIDN community, we know that civil society is spread out, and representative in, every county in the South West. But in our analysis of charity commission data for this briefing, we found a registered charity in every parliamentary constituency in the South West (both before and after the July 2024 constituency boundary changes). Understanding the widespread support and commitment amongst the British public to address the Global Goals is key for politicians of all political parties, in rural and urban areas across the Westcountry, as well as across the UK as a whole.

There are international development charities registered in all 58 parliamentary constituencies in the South West.

Below we have listed the constituencies in each Westcountry county with the highest number of registered charities, together with their current parliamentary representation. Other constituencies with significant numbers of international charities include South Devon (17), Bath (17), North Dorset (17) and Bristol North West (16). Given the widespread support for tackling global inequality across all South West constituencies, issues of international development should be a concern for every parliamentarian.

SW Charities by Parliamentary Constituency



Who is the South West international charity sector?

Our mapping process showed us that the registered charities in the South West are a diverse mix of size, motivation, issue- and country- focus, as well as sources of funding. Here, we highlight the most significant characteristics from our findings.

% of South West Charities by Income Bracket

	% of the total sector	% of funds raised in the sector
Charities - income £10m+	2%	53%
Charities - income £5m+	1%	15%
Charities - income £1m+	4%	18%
Charities - income £500K+	3%	5%
Charities - income £250K+	6%	4%
Charities - income £50K+	19%	4%
Charities - income £50K-	65%	2%

Although definitions of what determines a 'small charity' vary across the sector, we found that the vast majority of organisations in the South West working internationally report an annual income between £100 - £500K. Out of 524 organisations, 65% (340) of these have an annual income of £50,000 or less. Organisations with an income of less than £500,000 account for the significant majority of registered charities at 90%.

90% of South West international charities report an annual income of less than £500,000

As a micro charity ourselves, SWIDN are committed to supporting small and micro organisations. Smaller organisations tend to have a different ideology from large organisations in the sector who are more often focused on large-scale financial targets and high-level policy influence. Their capacity to be locally-led may also be greater, a result both of limited capacity in the UK, agile decision-making within smaller teams, long-term risk mitigation for unpredictable funding sources, and the fact that most diaspora-led charities identify as small.

While small and micro charities may lack income, they dominate in public support. Small and micro charities account for over 58% of people who volunteer as trustees and 77% of volunteers who support international development charities in the South West. We know that volunteering builds social capital;² it can increase confidence, networks and social skills within individuals, and generalised trust within their local areas.² If charity size was determined by capacity rather than cash, many small charities would be considered much larger. Where many funding schemes, including from the previous UK Government, structure their grants as match-funding offers, cash-poor charities lack the opportunity to achieve their best. Changing the way small and micro charities are categorised to include their capacity and not their income could enable them to achieve much more of an impact, delivering greater value for money, and recognising and investing in British public support for tackling global poverty and inequality.

45% **% of charities reporting the support of volunteers**

12% **% of charities reporting employing staff**

Small organisations play a key role in shaping and driving public discourse on global solidarity, often coming from a physical and ideological rootedness in their local communities here in the UK, with loyal supporter bases. Small and micro charities, by their nature, drive a sense of our shared humanity and interconnectedness at a local level in the UK and through their personal relationships in our communities. Greater trust and civic engagement within communities may generate charitable giving³ and contributes to more inclusive societies overall.⁴ Community cohesion around global themes not only enables greater efforts towards tackling inequality outside the UK, but builds social capital here in the UK too.

We found other, generalised characteristics amongst the data. While we removed all charities whose primary objective was to spread religion, we found there were 244 of these. This significant group also identified themselves as working towards achieving the SDGs, although this was not their primary purpose. We also found 125 grant-making charities who give their funds to multiple other organisations and 22 who had moved their registered address out of the South West. We did not include these categories in our datasets.

16% of South West charities identify as faith-based or religious organisations








We did count organisations whose primary purpose was to tackle poverty and inequality, and whose secondary goal was to operate as faith-based, of which we found 86. We also included grant-making organisations who funded one organisation only. Since we first started our analysis, we are aware of at least two charities within our datasets who have been forced to close for lack of funding. We have included these since our data relates to the last annual accounts. More analysis is needed to determine if this is indicative of a wider trend.

The Journey to 2030: Work in the South West

We recognise the many critiques of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), not least for being driven by wealthy 'Northern' Governments rather than by local community priorities in countries that experience the worst of poverty and inequality. Despite this, the SDGs remain the most widely recognised framework to assess work being done to tackle global challenges. With just six years remaining before the 2030 deadline for achieving the UN Global Goals, now is the time to work more effectively together towards eradicating poverty and inequality.

Data from the Charity Commission for England and Wales does not capture work being done on specific Global Goals. When we cross referenced Charity Commission data with the Global Goals, we found multiple gaps, most notably relating to social inequalities. Work being done to tackle gender inequality (Goal 5) for example, is not captured within the categories of work offered for classification by the Charity Commission. As such, our findings are a starting point for discussion and not an accurate picture of work being done towards each Goal by registered charities in the South West.

Below we list the top 6 Charity Commission categories which registered charities identify themselves as working towards, together with the percentage of charities registered under each category. We have shown the relevant Global Goal alongside the category where the overlap is most obvious.

Charity commission category	Equivalent SDG	Percentage of 524 charities working towards this goal
Education/ training		66%
The prevention or relief of poverty		56%
The advancement of health or saving lives Disability		45%
Economic/ Community development/ employment		24%
Environment/ Conservation/ heritage		14%
Animals	 	5%

Greater equity in our sector: tackling historical and ongoing coloniality

A 2022 report by the UK Parliament's International Development Committee found that 'racism manifests in the very structure of international aid'.⁵ It is a critically important report that gathered evidence from across the sector, including from SWIDN. The findings confirmed for many of us that change is necessary within the whole of the UK's international development system, including inside our organisations, externally in our partnerships, as well as how we approach fundraising, communications and inclusion. While the report directed its primary recommendations towards the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, it included clear calls for urgent change within international NGOs too.

SWIDN are committed to shifting our practice away from colonial ways of thinking and doing and towards more inclusive, equitable practice in achieving global justice. We are also committed to advocating for this vital step change amongst our membership, our wider community, and the UK's international development sector as a whole.

A key part of decolonising our sector is shifting the practice of what we do, as well as how we do it. Analysing the data for this report has shown us that there are many organisations who operate outside the organised international development sector and may not yet have begun the necessary process to decolonise their practice. These organisations are often founded and operated by individuals who come from alternative professional backgrounds to international development. Through their own lived experience, they have recognised the need to tackle poverty and inequality outside the UK. We have been amazed and inspired to see the amount of people across the towns and villages of the South West who devote their time, skills and finances towards working to improve the lives of communities across the world.

The disadvantage of fringe organisations such as these, however, is that many are operating with models or approaches that are no longer considered to be best practice. One notable example of this is the number of organisations we found supporting orphanages, children's homes and other children's institutions, which accounted for as much as 12% of international development charities registered in the South West.

12% of registered international development charities in the South West build, fund, or otherwise support orphanages as legitimate models for providing care

Charities supporting orphanages are not eligible for development funding from the UK Government. The UK Government also warns against supporting international orphanages through volunteering.⁶ South West-based organisation *Hope and Homes for Children* call for a move away from an orphanage-model of care for children, a direct legacy of colonialism.⁷ They call instead for a care reform process that enables greater understanding of the root causes of the problem and resources local solutions to build stronger, more inclusive family-based systems of support.⁷

Another recurring theme we encountered in our research was the lack of diversity within organisations. Several reports in recent years document the absence of racial diversity in the UK international development sector in particular.⁸⁸ During our data analysis, we noted many organisations with all-white teams and boards. We also noted organisations with all-male leadership teams. When decisions for communities in aid-recipient countries are made by people who don't have lived experience of the issues those communities are facing, it too easily replicates colonial ways of working and can fall short of meeting the needs of those affected.

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It is imperative that we live by the values we call for, and review as well as reform the aid industrial complex to ensure that it is oriented towards delivering intersectional justice.

Collective Statement on Systemic Racism and White Supremacy in the UK International Aid Sector, GADN's Women of Colour Forum, June 2020

— ”

We know that a diverse board is a stronger, more skilled force for greater impact and more equitable practice. The Charity Governance Code calls for board diversity to create more balanced decision-making and to centre and include the people charities serve, not just to improve impact but also to improve legitimacy.⁹

A 2021 sector report found that people of colour were represented in between 22 - 25% of boards of trustees across different sized organisations in the UK's international development sector, and remain under-represented in the position of both Chair and CEO.⁸ In regions like the South West where some rural areas have less than 3% racial diversity,¹⁰ the challenge to improve racially diverse representation within leadership structures is greater than organisations located in urban centres and other, more diverse regions of the UK. However, we also know that the shift towards online practice has remained consistent since Covid-19 and location no longer needs to be a barrier to diversity if the commitment to change exists.

In smaller organisations, increasing racial diversity within leadership structures including Boards can be a greater challenge where teams have fewer people, organisations have fewer resources to invest in recruitment processes and charities rely on volunteers. We found as many as 27% of registered international charities in the South West have 3 or fewer trustees. A small number of trustees on any one board limits diverse ideas and innovation, and increases the risk of bias and blind spots within practices and processes.

140 organisations in the South West report a board of 3 trustees or fewer

When organisations operate outside organised professional spaces, it can be difficult to access learning opportunities or resources related to current best practice and peer learning. SWIDN hold several free, open access events online each year to resource the international development sector to improve equitable practice. It is also the focus of our annual online conference each autumn, which is open to all and free to attend.

Measuring the impact of international charities in the South West

Just 14% of registered charities in the South West report quantifiable impact figures. We found that reporting the number of people positively impacted is far more prevalent in charities with an income of £10m or higher (75%) than it is amongst charities with an annual income of less than £50,000 (6%). We also found that some organisations report the total number of people they have impacted over the life of their work, while others report an annual impact figure.

We therefore chose to extrapolate the available data across the sector, in order to provide a sense of collective impact, and to include our data sets to show how we did this. Our findings are intended to act as a discussion starter only, since there will be discrepancies and assumptions in any extrapolation of impact data. Projecting the data we have across the South West sector as a whole assumes that all individuals are impacted equally; that organisations of the same income size have comparable impact; and that an organisation's achievement towards tackling global challenges can be quantified in the numbers of people it reports to have positively impacted. We know that none of these are true. Despite these generalisations, the following data can be considered indicative of the global reach of registered charities in the South West.

A Picture of the Global Impact of Registered Charities in the South West

16.4m people

Impact reported by 75 of 524 registered charities in the SW

117.3m people

Extrapolated estimate of social impact by 524 charities

9.9m trees planted

Number of trees planted by a further 7 South West orgs in aid-recipient countries

102.4m trees planted

Extrapolated estimate of trees planted by all SW environmental charities working in aid-recipient countries

To extrapolate the data, we looked at annual or impact reports and collated quantitative data into the most common groups. For example, we found the most common indicator of environmental impact to be trees planted (10% of environmental charities reported this).

There is significant work to be done in our sector to better understand and improve our monitoring and evaluation systems. Sustainability, partnerships and power, for example, are missing from measures of impact that count people or trees as success. We need to move away from prioritising quick-win quantitative data over longer term systemic change, to decolonise methods and processes that locate accountability with donors before the communities, and to collectively consider whether our goals for change are local or global priorities. Improving accountability is a key part of improving locally-led development, since it centres the people we work with and highlights community experience and priorities.

Public support for overseas aid: A generous South West

We know that the British public give generously to charity each year. The CAF World Giving Index¹¹ ranks the UK in the top three countries in the world for donating money, with support for charities stable despite the ongoing pressure on household finances.¹¹ The total amount given to charity overall by people across the UK came to a total of £13.9 billion in 2023. The South West is a comparatively generous region: CAF report high rates of giving across all South West constituencies with the exception of two and in 2023, noted that people in the South West were more likely to give to charity than the national average.¹² The commitment to creating a fairer world goes beyond charity to Westcountry businesses too: B Lab record more B-Corps businesses in the South West than any other region in the UK outside London.¹³

Just 524 registered charities across the South West reported an income of £266,484,493 million in their last annual accounts. It is important to note that some of these registered charities work in the UK as well as internationally, and so this whole sum is not spent on international development. Due to the differences between how charities choose to report their income, it is also difficult to be certain how much of this amount comes from donations and legacies, including grants from Trusts and Foundations, compared with charitable activities, investments or other income sources. Just 9% of registered charities attribute any income to donations and legacies, which accounts for a total of £199.5m. Extrapolating the data reported by this 9%, we suspect that the figure from donations and legacies is closer to £256m a year.

£266m

Combined income of 524 South West charities

£256m

Income raised from 'donations and legacies'

5%

% registered charities receiving Government grants

Charities are required to report funding from the Government, however, including grants and contracts. Government grants account for £9.8m awarded to 26 of the 524 South West registered charities: equating to just short of 5% of registered charities in the Westcountry. As the UK's aid budget continues to decline, funding for international development is increasingly competitive and limited. SWIDN continue to support our sector with professional fundraising training, with the facilitation of collaborative partnerships that enable shared resources and maximise impact, and learning and networking events that build resilience in the UK and encourage a shift of function and focus to local partners.

With a new UK Government in 2024 and a renewed political commitment to international development, we are hopeful that funding to support British civil society will improve in accessibility and availability under our new political leadership. There is much that can be done to engage the public in positive narratives of global solidarity, and in a renewed energy in our role to work for a more just, fairer world for all.

The Wider Picture: England & Wales

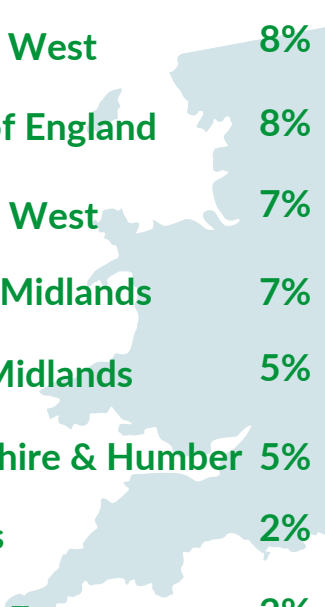
We applied our findings from registered charities in the South West to Charity Commission data relating to England and Wales as a whole, using the regional breakdowns provided by the NGO Explorer Tool to extrapolate our data.¹⁴ We did this to compare our findings with other data as part of our own validation process, but we chose to include these in our report to inform a discussion of the international development sector more widely.

This data does not relate to Scotland and Northern Ireland and so does not cover the UK as a whole.

6880	estimated number of international charities in England and Wales
£7.5b	estimated total income of international charities
35,000	estimated number of trustees supporting international charities in England and Wales
82,000	estimated number of people employed by international charities in England and Wales
121,000	estimated number of volunteers supporting international charities in England and Wales

Estimated Regional Location of Registered International Charities

London	41%
South East	15%
South West	8%
East of England	8%
North West	7%
West Midlands	7%
East Midlands	5%
Yorkshire & Humber	5%
Wales	2%
North East	2%



Our Conclusions

Our research has given us a sense of the number, scope and impact of international development charities in the South West, and across England and Wales more widely. Contrary to popular media narratives, they are widely supported by the British public in time and money, and their work contributes to domestic benefits as well as wins towards the Sustainable Development Goals outside the UK. The hours, skills and money given so generously by the British public to tackle inequality and poverty; the number of charities operating in every Westcountry region and over 100 countries worldwide, and the collaboration and partnerships that we have seen between these that improve impact, have been inspirational. We are also excited to see the number of businesses in the South West for whom global environmental and social justice are priorities.

Just as we champion the work being done across the South West towards global solidarity, we also recognise that there are structural changes required in every area of our sector for it to more effectively do no harm. Improving equity in our sector requires decisive action from individuals, organisations, and donors, including the UK Government. We urge individuals and organisations to engage in reflexive learning and action that results in tangible changes to leadership and practice, to shift our sector away from colonial legacies and towards a more equitable, inclusive practice of solidarity. We urge the UK Government to play a key role in advocating for changes in power dynamics and methodologies that facilitate locally-driven development, to require more diverse racial representation within organisations delivering UK funds, and to centre local accountability in grant management processes.

SWIDN exists to support individuals and organisations locally to better achieve the SDGs globally, to bring people and ideas together to increase our collective impact on tackling global inequality, and to convene civil society towards creating a fairer, more just world. We hope this report contributes to understanding our sector in the South West and beyond, to informing donors and supporters, and to inspiring our community towards working more collaboratively. We look forward to continuing our work to support the valuable resource of British solidarity that we have found so strongly in the South West and beyond.

We welcome feedback and engagement at SWIDN. If you would like to discuss this report further or any of our work, please contact us via info@swidn.org.uk

REGISTERED CHARITY in England & Wales No. 1173320



SWIDN

Endnotes

1 OUR FINDINGS ARE BASED ON DATA FROM THE CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES ACCESSED IN FEBRUARY 2024. WE SUSPECT THAT OUR FINDINGS REPRESENT THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHARITIES REGISTERED IN THE SOUTH WEST. WE HAVE NOT INCLUDED: 1) CHARITIES WHO WERE MORE THAN 12 MONTHS OVERDUE WITH THEIR ANNUAL ACCOUNTS; 2) CHARITIES WHO HAD A REGULATORY ALERT ISSUED BY THE CHARITY COMMISSION; 3) CHARITIES WHO REPORTED LESS THAN £100 INCOME FOR 2 OR MORE YEARS; 4) GRANT-MAKING TRUSTS WHO REPORT GIVING GRANT FUNDING TO MULTIPLE OTHER ORGANISATIONS; 5) CHARITIES WHO ARE NOT WORKING IN FCDO-PRIORITY COUNTRIES; 6) CHARITIES WHO ARE NOT FOCUSED ON DELIVERING THE SDGS; AND 7) CHARITIES WHO REPORTED THEIR PRIMARY PURPOSE TO BE PROMOTING RELIGIOUS FAITH. FOR CHARITIES WHO WORK BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY, WE HAVE NOT DISAGGREGATED INCOME UNLESS THEY ARE AN ORGANISATION OVER £5M. THIS DATA CHANGES DAILY AND OUR FINDINGS ARE A SNAPSHOT IN TIME TO PROMOTE DISCUSSION AND PAINT A PICTURE OF THE SECTOR ONLY.

2 SIXSMITH J, BONEHAM M, GOLDRING JE (2003). ACCESSING THE COMMUNITY: GAINING INSIDER PERSPECTIVES FROM THE OUTSIDE. *QUALITATIVE HEALTH RESEARCH*. 2003;13(4):578-589.

3 WANG L, & GRADDY E (2008). SOCIAL CAPITAL, VOLUNTEERING, AND CHARITABLE GIVING. *VOLUNTAS: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF VOLUNTARY AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS*. 19. 23-42.

4 BONHAM C (2017). "NINE: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THROUGH SOCIAL CAPITAL: THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERING IN REACHING THOSE ON THE EDGE OF COMMUNITY". IN SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH. BRISTOL, UK: POLICY PRESS. RETRIEVED APR 29, 2024

5 HOUSE OF COMMONS INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 2022 'RACISM IN THE AID SECTOR' FIRST REPORT OF THE SESSION 2022-23

6 HOPE AND HOMES FOR CHILDREN

7 [HTTPS://WWW.GOV.UK/GUIDANCE/SAFER-ADVENTURE-TRAVEL-AND-VOLUNTEERING-OVERSEAS](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safer-adventure-travel-and-volunteering-overseas)

8 BOND 2021 'RACISM, POWER AND TRUTH: EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE OF COLOUR IN DEVELOPMENT'; FAIR SHARE MONITOR 2023

9 CHARITY GOVERNANCE CODE 6. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

10 IN MID AND NORTH DEVON, FOR EXAMPLE, PEOPLE IDENTIFYING THEMSELVES AS 'WHITE' IS AS HIGH AS 97.8%. ONS CENSUS 2021

11 CAF WORLD GIVING INDEX 2022

12 UK GIVING: MAPPING GENEROSITY ACROSS THE COUNTRY, CAF

13 'UK B-CORP COMMUNITY REACHES 2000'

14 THE NGO EXPLORER TOOL IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD) AND THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER). IT PROVIDES TOTAL NUMBERS OF INTERNATIONAL NGOS REGISTERED FOR EACH OF ENGLAND'S 9 REGIONS, PLUS WALES. DATA MAY BE HISTORIC.