

0.7% Bill Act: We Did It!

Celebrating and Making the Most of It

Development campaigners in the UK last month received possibly the most exciting news for the past 45 years: spending 0.7% of UK national income on overseas aid has now become law after Parliament passed the 'International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act'!

This is a fantastic achievement. It takes the question of how much the UK **should** spend on aid off the table and allows Parliamentarians to focus on how **best** to spend that 0.7% to save lives and end poverty. This means more **effective and efficient** aid, reaching those who need it most, and the continuation of **UK leadership on global development**. Our job as campaigners now is to make the most of this historic announcement! That's why this month we're asking you to **tell your candidates the good news, highlight the success at Hustings and raise the profile of international development in your local media**. This is a fantastic opportunity to showcase just how important UK aid is and how proud we are that MPs and Peers came together to commit to its continuation. **Let's make the most of it!**

What is the new 0.7% Act?

Its official title is the 'International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act (2015)'. It was among the last pieces of legislation to receive the Queen's Royal Assent on Thursday 26th March, just a couple of days before Parliament was officially dissolved to herald the final 'short campaign' countdown to the General Election on 7th May.

The legislation was a 'Private Member's Bill' introduced to Parliament by Michael Moore MP and was supported by the Government. It enshrines in law a commitment first made at the United Nations in 1970 (45 years ago) that all nations would move towards the target of spending 0.7% of their income on overseas aid. Since then, several countries have reached the target, including Norway, Sweden, Denmark and, as of 2013, the UK. Enshrining the 0.7% commitment into law was in the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour manifestos for the 2010 General Election, and was then reaffirmed in the Coalition's Programme for Government.

More specifically, the Act places a duty on the Secretary of State for International Development to ensure that the 0.7% target is met by the UK in the year 2015 and each subsequent calendar year. The Secretary of State must also make arrangements for the independent evaluation of the extent to which UK overseas aid represents value for money, and is held to account by Parliament for meeting the target.

Why is it important?

For lots of reasons – here's a few:

- It shows that, contrary to what we sometimes feel, our political leaders can and do keep promises;
- It means that, whatever the outcome of the election in May, the UK will continue to be a world leader in international development;
- It means our partner developing country governments know that they have the long-term support of the UK Government and British public – enabling them to plan for real, transformational changes that will help them to develop, prosper and end poverty within a generation. With the UK's commitment, developing country governments can plan with confidence for long-term expenditures – things like the recruitment of teachers and doctors.

- Now, the public, the media, our MPs and Government can focus on what matters – ensuring that our development programmes are making a transformative difference in the lives of the people who need it most. Here at RESULTS, we don't pretend that all aid is good, or that all UK aid programmes are perfect. It is absolutely right that the British people should expect transparency, value for money and high quality aid programmes that support the most marginalised and vulnerable people in the world. Making 0.7% law allows our Department for International Development to plan better for the long term, to ensure that aid is the most effective that it can possibly be.
- The UK can use this legislation to influence other donor countries to step up their support to ending global poverty – the UK is the first of the G7 to reach the target;
- It puts the UK in a well-respected position to lead crucial negotiations this year towards new 'Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) that aim to end extreme poverty, tackle climate change and reduce inequality by 2030.

Here are the actions we're asking you to take this month in light of this achievement:

- 1. Tell your candidates the good news!** If you haven't already met your local election candidates, the 0.7% Act is a perfect topic to bring up in your meeting. It's a great way to introduce the importance of UK Aid and highlight the **cross-party support** that exists for UK leadership on international development. Ask the candidate how they feel about the outcome; you already know how they would've voted had they been an MP from their answer on the questionnaire, but it's good to ask in person too. If it is your MP you are meeting, you can find out if they voted for the bill here: <http://www.turnupsavelives.org.uk/latest>, then either thank them (if supportive) or ask them about their opposition to the bill (if against).
- 2. Highlight the success at local Hustings events.** Hustings are helpful for both gaining candidates' perspectives on issues in a public forum and raising awareness for the things about which you are passionate. You could do both by framing your Hustings question around 0.7%! Consider asking something like *I am proud that Parliament has just passed into law the UK's commitment to spending 0.7% of national income on Overseas Aid. UK aid saves millions of lives. Do you support this? And how would you as my MP ensure that UK aid is used to reach the people who need it most?*
- 3. Write a piece for your local media.** There are a few different messages you could promote with your article: 1) **MPs have the power to save lives: that's one of the reasons it's so important that citizens get out and vote on 7th May;** 2) **Campaigning matters: this bill is the product of 45 years of campaigning. It may have taken a long time, but Civil Society and grassroots campaigners make a difference!** 3) **We should be proud of our government's commitment to UK aid: the 0.7% law means we will continue being a world leader in development.** Highlighting the importance of being part of the democratic process, showing that campaigning really works, and informing readers of the impact of aid and the UK's leadership on development are all great takeaway messages from this fantastic news! See **Background Sheet 1** for guidance on how to go about writing your piece, and **Background Sheet 2** for some great examples of UK aid changing lives that you could share.

Now take action!

Get out there and meet your candidates, ask questions at Hustings, and write to your local newspaper. We should all be proud of our Parliamentarians for their hard work; let's show it by making the most of this historic achievement! And if your MP voted in support of the 0.7% bill, don't forget to thank them (even if you've already met them). You can tweet, email or even write a letter to them; just make sure they know that you are proud of their commitment to UK leadership on aid and development.