

Be a Development Champion!

Sparking conversations this summer about international development

UK aid alleviates poverty and contributes to sustainable development around the globe. It is widely seen as highly effective, and DFID's programmes are among the most transparent in the world. Most people in the UK believe that we have a moral duty to stand alongside people in developing countries, and in 2015, we signed up to the Global Goals, promising to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. Aid won't achieve that by itself, as big global changes are also needed, including reduced inequality, fairer economic systems, and action on climate change. Yet since 1990, nearly 1.1 billion people have lifted themselves out of extreme poverty. Official development assistance from donors such as the UK has made a big contribution to the social and economic development of many countries. Yet many people believe that aid doesn't make a difference. Fuelled by attacks on international development in the media, scepticism of aid could increase to a level that puts the existing mainstream consensus on UK aid at risk. This could threaten aid programmes that RESULTS has advocated strongly for, such as nutrition and immunisation programmes, inclusive education, and the fight against infectious diseases. This summer, we're asking RESULTS campaigners to take on a mission to show the public in their local communities that aid works; and that it is the right thing to do. Demonstrating that there is strong local feeling on the issue will help build the political will needed for an ongoing, world-class UK aid programme that focuses firmly on poverty reduction.

We've seen great progress on global poverty.

In recent years, the world has been making huge strides in eradicating extreme poverty. We achieved the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target – to cut the 1990 poverty rate in half by 2015 – five years ahead of schedule, in 2010. According to [recent estimates](#), in 2013, 10.7% of the world's population lived in extreme poverty (people living on less than \$1.90 per day) down from 35% in 1990.

But progress isn't inevitable.

But progress on the Global Goals, which replaced the MDGs in 2015, is very mixed, and is [too slow and uneven](#). For example, 300 million children still die each year from malnutrition. The number of hungry people in the world has increased for the first time since the turn of the century, sparking concern that conflict and climate change could be reversing years of progress.

The world is not on track to eradicate TB by 2030, nor will we meet Global Goal 4 ('inclusive and quality education for all') this century. With 263 million young people currently out of school, and 1 in 10 infants [missing out on essential vaccines](#), much more effort is needed to make the Global Goals a reality.

In addition, as countries get richer and "transition" away from donor support, there is a real risk that vital services such as health programmes could be reduced, if funding from domestic and other sources fails to keep up with demand and with reduced or poorly managed changes to aid funding.

The vital importance of UK aid.

UK aid is making a real difference to the lives of the world's poorest people. Since 2011, UK aid has supported 11.3 million children into primary and lower secondary education, ensured 5.6 million births are attended by skilled birth attendants, and with the UK's latest pledge to the Global Fund, will help save 8 million lives from AIDS, TB and malaria.

We know there's a lot more still to do to ensure no-one is left behind. Good quality UK aid is a vital part of achieving this. Aid won't achieve the Global Goals by itself, and big global changes are also needed, including reduced inequality, fairer economic systems, and action on climate change. But official development assistance (ODA) from donors such as the UK has made a big contribution to social and economic development in many countries, helping people gain access to health and education services and to make the most of economic opportunities.

Aid is under attack.

Yet over the past 18 months or more, UK aid has faced regular attacks in the national media, with calls for the UK's target of spending 0.7% of our Gross National Income on overseas development to be scrapped and the aid budget to be massively reduced. Negative coverage has focused on accusations of waste and corruption, as well as presenting false choices between helping the most vulnerable people in the world and helping people here in the UK.

While most of the UK public [think helping people in developing countries is the right thing to do](#), they need to be certain that aid is effective, and know a bit about what it achieves. Yet many people believe that aid doesn't make a difference. It's natural that in the absence of information to the contrary, people may not see anything changing, feel that aid money is wasted, or that we can't help improve people's lives.

Attacks in the media could increase scepticism of aid to a level that puts the existing mainstream political consensus on UK aid at risk. This could threaten aid programmes that RESULTS advocates strongly for, such as nutrition and immunisation programmes, inclusive education, and the fight against infectious diseases.

Aid must be effective.

To achieve the Global Goals, and to gain and maintain public support, we need to make sure that all UK aid is effective, transparent and of high quality. It must focus on poverty reduction and sustainable development, delivering the maximum impact for the most disadvantaged people in the world.

[UK aid delivered by DFID is among the most transparent in the world](#), but increasingly, aid money is being spent by other government departments (OGDs) such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health and Social Care. This brings new challenges to ensure this same level of quality and accountability. Currently DFID is responsible for 74% of UK aid spending, with 14 OGDs or cross-government funds also spending aid money. While this could promote more joined-up working, it also brings potential problems if money spent by OGDs is less transparent, or if there is a risk of diluting its focus on reducing poverty.

Sustained political commitment is needed.

The UK is committed to spending 0.7% of our Gross National Income on overseas development, a promise that has been enshrined in law since 2015.

On 12 April, Secretary of State for International Development Penny Mordaunt [spoke of](#) "a Britain which promotes and defends national interests effectively" through a "development offer [that] must be something that we can be really proud of." And at the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in London, the UK and other Commonwealth countries [made a number of announcements](#) demonstrating a continued focus on poverty reduction – such as promoting girls' education, and combating malaria. This ongoing political commitment is very welcome, and this focus on poverty reduction must be retained.

If you took action on aid last year...

If you took part in our 'postcard' action last summer, thank you! Your postcards and messages reminded MPs over the holiday season that people in their constituency care about the great work that UK aid does around the world. Or maybe you wrote to your local media in October, celebrating progress towards the Global Goals on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

What should the UK do now?

The UK should go on spending 0.7% of our gross national income on international development, remaining focused on poverty reduction, in line with international rules on how ODA is spent. It must ensure that DFID remains an independent government department responsible for spending the majority of UK aid.

You are a development champion!

With ongoing negative press coverage, it's easy for politicians to think that there is little support for UK aid. That's why your MP needs to know that the public in his or her constituency supports what UK aid achieves. This needs you to champion UK aid and to demonstrate that there is strong local feeling on the issue. This will help build the political will needed for an ongoing, world-class UK aid programme that focuses firmly on poverty alleviation.

Take action

- 1. Please plan a stall or a public event in your community over the summer, helping people understand the achievements of UK aid, and how international development helps people around the world to stand on their own feet. Try gathering messages from the public about how your conversations have helped them understand how aid makes a difference.**
- 2. Let your MP know there is strong public support for poverty reduction and achieving the Global Goals. If you collect messages from their constituents at your event, these can be a powerful reminder that the issue matters to ordinary people.**