



**PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO OVERSEAS GIVING:  
DOES GOVERNMENT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

**RICHARD ATKINSON, AMY EASTWOOD**

**ABSTRACT**

To what extent does the UK government influence public attitudes to overseas giving? This question is addressed with qualitative research based on focus group discussions. Knowledge of government involvement in overseas aid was found to be low. The majority of donors and non-donors to overseas causes were cynical about government messages and policies on overseas aid. There were consistent doubts about the effectiveness of development assistance. Existing attitudes towards development are reasonably 'hardened' or engrained. Positive influences on overseas giving – all of which seemed more influential than that of the government – included travel, the interventions of well known non-political figures, and the discovery of more direct and concrete ways of giving (e.g. 'virtual gifts'). Future steps for government involvement in promoting overseas giving more effectively are discussed.

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# **Public Attitudes to Overseas Giving: Does Government Make a Difference?**

Richard Atkinson and Amy Eastwood

2CV Research  
([www.2cv.co.uk](http://www.2cv.co.uk))

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# 1. Introduction

Although many voluntary organisations receive funding from government, a vital aspect of non-governmental public action is the role of individual giving in its financing. This is particularly true of international development which is often not regarded as a first priority for government funding. Individual support for international development has expanded markedly over the last two decades in a context of growing global awareness of need and the uneven distribution of wealth. Yet we understand little about the motives for such donations and the ways in which private giving to benefit the South can be stimulated and sustained.

Greater prominence is being given to the problem of development by the Prime Minister and Chancellor, but we know little about how this affects individuals' responses. Long-running media campaigns such as Comic Relief, and the recent Tsunami disaster appeal, show that the public is clearly willing to give, yet we know little about how the emotion of the disaster response can be converted into long-term support towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals as personal incomes of those in the North continue to rise.

Among the top 500 fundraising charities, the public's donations to international development, its most popular cause, totalled £708 million in 2004-5. This represents as much as a quarter of DFID annual expenditure (Charities Aid Foundation, *Charity Trends 2006*). But the income profile of development charities is quite different from that of other charities. Development charities are particularly dependent on support from the general public and central government, emphasising the importance of understanding what determines the former and the interaction with the latter.

This report explores whether government policy and messages influence public attitudes to charitable giving for the cause of overseas development. And through what channels does any influence come about? The research aims to illuminate these questions by exploring perceptions and attitudes. The approach taken was qualitative, deriving data from focus group discussions both with people currently giving to overseas causes and people who are not donors. The work forms part of a larger project on the determinants of individual giving to the cause of overseas development. Other parts of the project consider the theory of giving to overseas causes and analyse various forms of quantitative data on giving.<sup>1</sup>

Before moving into the main findings, it is worth putting the research in context. The first point to note is its timing. The fieldwork took place in Autumn 2006, with the Blair administration drawing towards the end of ten years of government. There was some cynicism about the prime minister and anger about the Iraq war continued to be expressed. As the results will show, in our discussions this cynicism often influenced people's views of broader foreign policy, including overseas development. They frequently expressed scepticism about both the Blair government's motives for foreign policy and its ability to tackle significant structural problems overseas, including poverty in Africa. It seems very plausible that if we had conducted the

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. A. B. Atkinson, 'The Economics of Giving for Overseas Development', Nuffield College, Oxford, 2007, and J. Micklewright and S. V. Schnpef, 'Who Makes Charitable Donations for Overseas Development?', Southampton Statistical Sciences Research Institute, University of Southampton, 2007.

research at a different point in time – for instance closer to the start of the Blair government – or were we to repeat the study at another point in the future we would find less markedly cynical views. To some extent, then, this study reflects a particular point in time. But the focus group discussions also evoked issues that would seem to be more engrained and more likely to outlive particular political figures and administrations. These were issues such as corruption in developing countries, the UK government's perceived lack of underlying plan or framework for dealing with overseas development and politicians' tendency to focus on economic data rather than practical initiatives when discussing development.

The word 'perceived' in the previous paragraph hints at a second point that should be emphasised at the outset: that this is a study of *perceptions* of the government role in tackling development, and the impact of that on public attitudes. Two important points need to be borne in mind. Firstly, people are often unaware of activity that the government has undertaken. Previous survey data show respondents tending implicitly to underestimate the government's contribution to overseas aid, whilst overestimating those of charities<sup>2</sup>. Ironically given its reputation for image management, the Blair government seems to be given little credit for the action it has taken on development.

Secondly, the study was not able to capture in any great depth the ways in which government policy and messages may have indirectly and unconsciously helped push development to the forefront of people's minds. If we take the 2005 Gleneagle's G8 conference for example, the results of this study indicate most of the credit being given to Bob Geldof and to a lesser extent to NGOs, as well as to a vaguer sense of 'the public will'. The roles of Blair, Brown, or the UK government as a whole, are barely acknowledged – apparently dominated by cynicism about their motivations and competence. And yet if we turn to the newspapers of the time, it would be hard to believe that government had *no* effect on giving the issue a higher media profile, through briefings and statements, as well as behind-the-scenes work to make development a priority issue for the summit leaders<sup>3</sup>. This work was largely left out of people's accounts. But it would not seem far-fetched to argue that it had helped to put the issue in the bulletins and on the front pages – and ultimately into people's minds.

This brings us to the third of our introductory considerations. The starting point for this study was the question of whether government policy 'crowded out' or 'crowded in' individual giving to development. Does increased government aid leave people with a sense that the job has been done for them, and that they don't need to contribute? Or, conversely, does it affirm that development is an important and pressing cause? As the findings of the qualitative research became clear we were obliged to question the validity of our original approaches, since many respondents felt the current government simply did not have enough respect to influence them to give or not to give.

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<sup>2</sup> See Micklewright and Schnepf, *ibid.* Results based on the Office for National Statistics Omnibus survey. Despite government Official Development Assistance being much greater in money value than private donations to overseas causes, people see charities as having a larger impact on poverty in developing countries.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 3 for examples of government statements and media reports from these briefings.

Lastly, the focus on government influence in this project meant that we did not have huge scope to explore the role of other players. A fully rounded picture of what affects public opinion and giving behaviour would require exploration of a wide set of potential influencers such as, for example, the major international charities. The growth in public donations to international charities demonstrates the considerable success of such organisations in raising awareness of need and motivation to help. The results of this study indicate the role played by other players and environmental factors, for example by iconic figures such as Bob Geldof and NGO organisations. These were viewed more positively in comparison with politicians, whilst personal interactions with developing countries – e.g. through travel – could play a significant role in encouraging people to give. With donations to overseas aid currently at a reasonably high level more work on these positive influences would seem timely.

## 2. Summary

### The Influence of Government Policy and Statements

- The salience of government involvement in overseas aid was low across the sample. References to specific policies, messages or initiatives were rare and generally people had to be prompted to discuss them.
- The Gleneagles G8 summit in 2005 was the most widely recalled example. Government donations after the Asian Tsunami of 2004 and the Pakistan earthquake of 2005 were also occasionally referenced. Other initiatives and messages were rarely remembered or cited.
- The majority of both donors and non donors expressed cynicism about government messages and policies on overseas aid. Respondents' instinctive feeling was that government statements and promises could not be trusted.
- Even where government involvement was recognised, it was overshadowed in people's minds by other activity. G8 was dominated by the image of Live 8 and the figure of Bob Geldof in particular. Here, the politicians were seen to have been 'persuaded' or even 'forced' by the campaigning of one individual and the build up of media pressure, rather than acting out of principle. Not only their motivations, but also their achievements were questioned, with many people fearing that the promises made at Gleneagles would not be delivered if left to politicians alone.
- To stimulate more debate in the groups, we introduced a number of actual examples of policies and statements from the UK government (see Appendix 3). Reacting to this material, respondents tended to be just as cynical as they had been in their spontaneous views. There were doubts that the government was genuine about what it was saying, or that it could be trusted to deliver effective action. It was generally felt that Blair and Brown were using the issue to present themselves in a caring light, or to appear as impressive global players, rather than having a genuine or long-term commitment to the issue.
- An important question which cannot be answered by a single study is how far people's cynicism was rooted in negative views of this particular administration. Negative perceptions seemed influenced by an overall mistrust of the Blair government's behaviour, particularly in the foreign policy field. The conduct of the Iraq war and a sense that the government was preoccupied with media manipulation presentation were both regularly cited, and trust in Blair and Brown in this sample seemed low. Whilst this was a qualitative sample, further evidence of a lack of trust are visible in polls in the Spring of 2007, with only 6% associating 'trustworthiness' with Tony Blair (versus 43% who associated 'untrustworthy' and 49% who associated 'too concerned with spin')<sup>4</sup>.
- That said, it was not clear that people had greater faith in other politicians. The cynicism about government ODA policy would seem to stem also from a broader pessimism about any British government's ability to have any significant effects on overseas development.
- Overall, there were consistent questions about how effective overseas aid could be. Whilst non-donors were predictably the most doubtful and donors the most optimistic, many respondents had concerns about the capacity of either

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<sup>4</sup> <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/blair/story/0,,2049824,00.html>

government actions or individual donations to have a significant effect on the major problems of development. The main concerns cited were:

- The spectre of corruption and misgovernment: the recall of negative stories around overseas governments was much, much higher than any positive accounts. Even those who were giving to development could be concerned that corruption was hampering regeneration or even preventing money from getting through. (This was echoed by respondents in the African-born group, who were critical of their own countries' governments and saw corruption as one of the biggest barriers to revival.)
  - The image of development is very generalised in people's minds – predominated with an image of 'Africa' as a general, 'lost cause'. Sadly this overshadows any sense that certain countries are making particular progress, little recall of examples of good governance (e.g. recent elections in Mauritania), or of different countries having different needs which aid adapts to and works around.
  - In addition there can be a depressing sense of the West having 'tried and failed'. Development, particularly in Africa, was talked about by many of the people we spoke to as an 'old' problem. (Even though in many cases the countries they talk about have been independent for less than 50 years.)
  - Government development debate seems intangible: it deals in figures not actions. This not only can make development programmes seem remote, it also creates a sense that money can go missing; that politicians can manipulate the numbers; and that visible results are hard to see.
  - Most in the sample felt there is a lack of a widely-understood government plan or framework for making development successful. Many of the people we spoke to found it hard to envisage a framework that would allow an extremely poor country to take steps towards prosperity. Without this, aid from both governments and individuals can feel like simply "pouring money in".
- It was notable that government involvement in development could exacerbate these negative perceptions around development assistance.
    - Cynicism around the government appeared to infect development views, with people transferring their perceptions of the government as tired and ineffectual onto the broader development problem – *"if they can't deliver on other things, why should I expect them to deliver on something as hard as this"*.
    - The involvement of politicians in development can also evoke the associations with corruption. It reminds people that aid does take place through national governments, many of whom they perceive to be corrupt and or incompetent. *"It's going to be filtered by the politicians there... it's not going direct to the people who need it"*.
    - In addition, when people looked at government policies and statements their attention was often drawn away from the actual issues and stories of development and towards the personal shortcomings of the politicians.
  - With these factors in mind, an argument could be made that government should increasingly seek to depoliticise the working of development, towards more direct

connections between citizens of the UK and citizens of developing countries, as in the role of NGOs.

- In the concluding section of the report we look at both this and a number of ways that the government might be more persuasive in encouraging overseas aid. One of the major themes here is the gap between the language of government statements and policies, with their focus on figures and finances, and the desire for pragmatism and tangible intervention seen amongst the people we spoke to. Initiatives that offered a concrete aspect, such as many of the newer initiatives of NGOs – whether the giving of fertiliser or animals in ‘virtual gifts’, fair trade goods that go straight back to the producer, or appeals that send physical resources like bicycle parts or shoes – could often be welcomed. In comparison the government’s focus on numbers could seem remote, intangible and, not least, open to manipulation. Locating and emphasising the practical elements within government aid – e.g. the number of crops that have been effectively bought, schools that have been opened – could make some difference in increasing its perceived credibility.

### **Role of Reference Groups and Other Influences on Giving to Development**

- From the groups we saw, it would seem that attitudes towards development are reasonably ‘hardened’ or engrained. During the course of the conversations it was rare for anyone to concede much ground or to modify their opinion. When looking at media stories both in the diaries and in the groups, people tended to gravitate very quickly to those stories or details that confirmed their current points of view.
- From this small qualitative piece of research it would seem that people’s current reference points around development largely confirm their already-held perspectives, more than changing or developing their outlook. Non-donors in particular seemed quite intractable in their views and were very quick to isolate stories that illustrated barriers – notably corruption and mismanagement.
- Respondents didn’t talk about discussing development with family and friends and rarely made mention of this in their diaries. It appeared to be an issue that people interacted with privately more than publicly. Hence media stories seemed more important reference points than conversations with family and friends.
- It also appeared that giving for overseas development was an issue that people talked about largely with those who they felt were already ‘on side’. Where there was debate within the groups, it tended to be a little uncomfortable and uncompromising. To some extent the debate came down to a contest between optimism and pessimism. Almost no one disputed the aims of development assistance; what was debated was its effectiveness. The theme that ran through the arguments that did take place was ‘can we really make any difference’ – specifically can we get aid to the people who need it and can aid have a long-term effect? As such, it could be hard for people to have open and progressive discussions – either you had faith or you did not.
- When looking at influences, there were several mentions of ‘inherited’ behaviour and attitudes. Several respondents cited taking on charities such as Oxfam or the Red Cross as family traditions. It would be interesting to understand from the figures how far giving to development is passed from generation to generation.
- Other positive influences on giving to development – all of which seemed more influential than government direction – included travel, NGOs, the interventions



of celebrities and the discovery of more direct and concrete ways of giving such as ‘virtual gifts’. These are outlined in further detail below.

### **3. Objectives and Methodology**

#### **Core Objectives**

The research focused on two sets of questions, described below. The first of these was the main focus and is reflected in the title of the report.

1. What is the influence of the government’s behaviour on individuals’ attitudes towards giving to international development and the action they take (e.g. do they actually give)? By government behaviour, we have in mind a range of policy instruments, including spending on Official Development Assistance (ODA), the provision of tax relief, and, more broadly, other supportive statements and action (such as the 2004-5 Commission for Africa). Does government support for international development ‘crowd out’ (e.g. ‘the government is using my taxes for additional ODA so I will not give myself’) or ‘crowd in’ (e.g. ‘I now recognise more clearly that this is a cause to which I should contribute myself’).
2. What is the role of individuals’ reference groups on their attitudes and action on giving to development, e.g. their networks of family, friends and work colleagues? Does the media have a role here? (From where do individuals get their information?)

#### **The Research Methodology**

##### Qualitative Group Discussions

The mainstay of the qualitative research was six two-hour group discussions. Group discussions – rather than ‘real life’ methodologies such as ethnography – were seen as appropriate for this project, since we were interested in attitudes and perceptions, rather than tracing the intricacies of everyday behaviour.

Talking to respondents in groups, rather than one-to-one, allowed people with different perspectives to feed off and challenge one another. It also allowed us to see how views on development were influenced by discussion with peers.

Respondents were not briefed prior to the group meetings that the subject under discussion would be giving for overseas development and the government’s influence on this. Instead they were told that they would be asked to discuss their views on the broad subject of charitable donations. (The discussion guides, which differed for donors and non-donors, are given in Appendix 2.)

##### Pre-Group Preparation

All respondents were given a diary, which they were asked to complete for ten days prior to the research. The aim was to encourage people to reflect on and note down anything that influenced their perspectives on social issues and charity donations. By keeping a diary, we sought to pinpoint particularly strong influences on attitudes and to see how these attitudes are subtly formed and changed on an everyday basis.

Respondents were asked to keep notes on anything that affected their perceptions of which charities need support and where they should, and shouldn't, be making donations. The instructions explained how: "*There's only so much money that you can give to charity a year. What we're interested in is how you decide where to give your money and what affects your sense of where money should and shouldn't be donated. For the next two weeks please keep an eye out for anything that you notice around charity issues / giving to charity. It could be anywhere – on TV; in the newspapers; talked about at home, at work, or in the pub. And we're interested in every angle. E.g. it could be something that supports what you already think – e.g. reminds you that a cause is worth giving to, or that another issue is less important/even a waste of money. Or it could be something that changes your mind. Or it might be something that makes you feel even more strongly than you did before. Whatever it is, make a note, bring in any examples you can – e.g. a photo or a clipping – and tell us about what it made you think or feel.*"

Of course the fact that people were paying attention to social issues would to some extent have disrupted their typical patterns and behaviour – people would become more sensitised to material on charities/social issues. We believed that the advantages of sensitising people outweighed the disadvantages. The time period is not long enough for significant changes to be likely. We also made sure the scope of what they were asked to look for was left very *open* – there was no mention of overseas development or any specific area of news, nor did we make any mention of government policy. Respondents were therefore left to focus only on messages and material they found interesting. A further simple, but important step was to reassure people that a blank diary entry could be a good entry – that we were as interested in what they didn't see as what they did pick up on.

#### Stimulus material

We were primarily interested in what happens in *the real world* – what effects government messages have on people's *everyday* attitudes and their donations towards overseas aid. We therefore needed to start with and focus on people's spontaneous and natural awareness and recollections. At the same time, we believed it would be useful to have as stimulus in the group discussion a range of recent *media reports, messages and initiatives* from government concerning overseas aid/developmental issues. These were introduced at the *end* of the sessions after we had explored people's spontaneous, unprompted views around this area. By giving people a selection of articles and policy statements we were able to explore how these fit with the themes we had seen in the group up to that point. The stimulus material is included in Appendix 3.

#### **Sample**

The groups were recruited as described in the table on the next page.

#### Sample Rationale: Behaviour Around Giving for Development

We spoke to a mix of people giving regularly and not giving to development charities. Donors were defined as people who either had a standing order/direct debit payment to a development charity (we recruited a mix of different charity organisations) or who regularly gave money in other ways. To qualify as a non-donor, people could

have given to one-off appeals, such as the Tsunami appeal, but were not to make regular contributions. All the non-donors were recruited to not reject outright the possibility of giving to overseas development.

Non donors ranged from one or two near-rejecters of overseas aid, through those who were often quite sceptical, to those who were giving and largely positive. We did not have anyone in the sample, though, who could be described as an advocate or an activist. Hence, even amongst some of the donors concerns about the effectiveness of giving for development could often be expressed. From other research conducted by 2cv for overseas development charities such as Christian Aid and Oxfam we know that there are some donors who are very committed and involved with and informed about development giving. It would be interesting in future work to explore whether *their* views of government policy and statements are different.

Sample Rationale: Citizenship & Ethnic Background

As this project was focused on the role of the UK government, all of the respondents were recruited to be long-term residents, who had lived in the UK for the last ten years. As people’s relationship with the development aid was seen as likely to be affected by whether you had immediate family living in a developing country, we included one group specifically with people who had families from African countries (group 6 in the table). The feedback from these respondents, who could often talk about development from much a more direct experience, was quite markedly different in places from that of the other groups and so is recorded separately alongside the main report. (See Appendix 1.)

Sample Rationale: Other Factors

- Age: Given the reasonably small sample, we sought to narrow our focus, concentrating on the 25-55 age range.
- Sex: The groups each included a mix of men and women, since this is an area where differences of opinion between men and women were unlikely to be very pronounced or sensitive.
- Social Class: We managed to speak to a reasonably broad range of social classes – ranging from B through C1/C2 to D. The highest and lowest social grades (A and E) were not included, given the relatively small sample.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Donor Behaviour</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Social Class</b>	<b>Location</b>
1	Regular donor	40-55	BC1	Outside city
2	Open to donating	25-35	BC1	Urban
3	Open to donating	40-55	C1/C2/D	Outside city
4	Regular donor	25-35	C1/C2/D	Urban
5	Regular donor	40-55	BC1	Outside city
6	Open to donating	25-35	C1/C2/D	Urban

## 4. Background: Broader Social Attitudes

### Introduction

To understand perceptions of overseas aid, it's useful to start by looking at our respondents' broader beliefs and concerns about the world.

Running through the groups was concern about the current state of Britain and an undercurrent of pessimism about the future. This pessimism is worth noting, because it seems to infect people's attitudes to the government and people's faith in the government's ability to solve major scale problems such as international poverty. It was also notable that it seemed particularly strong amongst non-donors. Over the next few pages, we set out some of the factors behind this pessimistic outlook.

There was also, as we explore in the final part of this section, scepticism around British foreign policy in the wake of the Iraq war, which appear to have seriously tainted views of government action on overseas development.

### Fear for and of the young

One of the reasons for people's apprehension about the future was their fear and negative perceptions of young people. It was noticeable how quickly and consistently the problems of youth anti-social behaviour and crime were raised when people were asked to talk about social issues. The language was very often that of decline. For instance:

*"The thing that is missing today is respect"*

*"When children used to be told not to do something, they wouldn't do it. Now they don't listen"*

*"There was always a minority of kids who were out of control, but that minority has grown; the 1% has become 20%"*

Moral panics about young people are certainly nothing new.<sup>5</sup> Yet it was striking how often this bleak picture of youth surfaced. This can be read against the backdrop of a recent report by UNICEF, which ranked the experience of British children at the bottom of 21 of the world's most developed nations, and identified British youth as particularly prone to risk taking behaviour such as drugs and unprotected sex and found that relationships between adults and children were particularly fragile<sup>6</sup>.

This negative perception of young people seemed to feed into a sense of foreboding about the future – that if the generation to come could not be trusted, then things were likely to get worse before they get better.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. for instance Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, (MacGibbon and Kee, 1972) and Albert K Cohen, *Delinquent Boys* (The Free Press, 1955).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. <http://www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/>

### **Fear of crime**

Foremost in many people's minds was a sense of increasing danger, particularly around street crime. This was the case, even in the more suburban/rural locations that we visited:

*"You can't go to our local shop because of hoodies!"*  
*"You see people on xxxx Road dealing drugs; it's so open!"*

Again this reflects the figures in recent polls – with 69% of UK adults believing Britain is 'a more dangerous place in which to live in 2007 than it was in 1997'<sup>7</sup>.

### **Perception of UK as having its own poverty problems**

A number of respondents talked with concern about people, especially, children within the UK who they felt didn't have enough resources and needed their help.

*"We've just done the shoebox thing....But then you think 'hang on a minute; we're sending those to Romanian children. There are children in this country who are not going to get anything'"*  
*"That's true it does make you stop and think doesn't it"*

There was a sense among many people that the UK has its own poverty problems and that it can be hard to look abroad whilst these still exist. It is tempting to make a comparison here with Scandinavian countries where donations abroad are higher and internal poverty lower and it would be interesting to know from future work whether donors in these countries feel 'safer' to give money abroad because of the relative lack of poverty at home.

### **Perception of UK as over-burdened**

As well as crime and poverty problems at home, immigration also added to the sense of immediate, local problems to solve. A number of people we spoke to believed that Britain is being stretched by the numbers of people coming to the UK. This perception seems to be built out of general media stories (no single source was mentioned but it was talked about as 'often in the news') and conversations with friends and family. It was rarely traced back to actual figures or to specific stories. In one of the groups, the moderator asked respondents where they thought the UK stood in terms of immigration numbers. They were surprised when the real place in the rankings was discussed.

It's worth emphasising that people didn't express their views in a heated way. A number in fact tried to present themselves as taking 'the reasonable' line:

*"I think we are tolerant, but it's actually moving towards intolerance because there are people coming over who are getting more. You try to keep tolerant but..."*

*"To some extent we have only ourselves to blame; I know people who employ Polish workers because they can exploit them...They don't pay them over time, they pay them really bad wages".*

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<sup>7</sup> <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/blair/story/0,,2049824,00.html>

This sense, though, that the problems of less developed countries are being ‘exported’ to Britain increased a number of non-donor’s belief that they had to look out for their own country before turning abroad.

### **An ethical foreign policy?**

When thinking about social issues and about government policy, terrorism and the Iraq war loomed large in people’s minds.

*“Iraq is one of the main things that is happening at the moment. And seeing there are lot of people being killed every day. Some people are for; a lot of people are against”*

*“It’s hard for me to think about what Blair does abroad without thinking about the war that he took us into”*

Many of the people who we spoke to were disillusioned and at times angry about Iraq –in line with negativity seen in recent polls on the issue<sup>8</sup>. This could create broader doubts about UK foreign policy, including international development. People often felt that it was hard to trust the government’s motivations on the international stage, even on a positive issue like aid.

*“They go into Iraq, but somewhere like Zimbabwe they won’t intervene even though there are millions of people starving and that guy is a crook, because there is nothing there for us”*

There were also doubts about the ability of the British government to deliver.

*“Their track record abroad doesn’t exactly inspire confidence”*

It is worth noting here that in a recent survey 64% of UK adults said they felt Britain’s international reputation had declined in the last decade - versus 9% who felt it had improved<sup>9</sup>.

### **A world of local problems**

Local concerns were prominent in people’s diary entries and in the spontaneous conversation around social issues. This is consistent with findings in a lot of other research we have conducted recently. Whilst globalisation is experienced daily – with news, crime, media, products, stories and people travelling at speed across countries and continents – a great deal of focus remains on local issues, such as crime, schools, the local environment. To some degree this local focus can be seen as a reaction to global living – since the local gives people something more concrete and more accountable, particularly around charities. For example:

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<sup>8</sup> In an Observer/BPIX survey in April 2007 40% of UK adults said Tony Blair had ‘definitely not’ done the right thing by supporting war in Iraq and 28% said ‘probably not’ – versus 9% saying he was ‘definitely right’ and 17% ‘probably right’.

<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/blair/story/0,,2049824,00.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/blair/story/0,,2049824,00.html>

*“I feel that when someone like the Rotary club comes round with buckets the money will go there but when it goes abroad you can’t be sure it’s going to get there”.*

## **5. Background: Attitudes to Charity**

We look first of all at evidence of how people’s *general attitudes to charities* are filtered. In the next section we will move on to specific examples of how media and other reference points influenced *attitudes and giving to development*.

The diary exercise suggested three layers of influence that people noticed:

- direct appeals for money (the most prominent interaction with charity issues);
- media stories (most direct affect on attitudes);
- friend and family comments (rarely referenced).

### **Direct appeals for money**

We should remember that people were asked to make a note of any material they saw around charity issues during the 10 days leading up to the group discussions. We might therefore expect to find a heightened sense of exposure to charities. Even taking this into account, however, most people felt they had encountered many direct appeals from charities.

*“Every shop you go into there’ll be a box. You go into the Woolwich and they’re trying to get you to buy a badge.”*

*“I go into the DIY place and there’s someone there; I go into Tesco’s there’s someone there”*

*“There are raffle tickets you get through the post...”*

*“There are people in the street, you’re at lunch you haven’t got time to get everything done, but you’ll have someone rushing at you”*

This seems borne out in the figures on the growth in the scale and marketing of charities. Material we have seen from Christian Aid shows that since 1998 the number of charities registered by The Charity Commission rose from 161,243 to 167,752. And the number of charities with an income of £10 million or more increased from 271 to 720.

Whilst these charity appeals rarely directly changed people’s attitudes – e.g. giving them new information or a new argument – they were referenced as the most immediate way that people interacted with charity and did affect their sense of which causes are ‘out there’.

### **Media stories**

Media were referenced much more commonly than ‘real life’ conversations with families and friends. Within the material picked out there are a few themes that are worth noting.

### A network of sources more than clear authority figures

Few people cited a particular newspaper or news programme as their authoritative source on social issue – the one thing you really can trust. Rather people talked in more general terms about a combination of newspapers (The Times, The Mail, The Sun and The Guardian were occasionally cited); “the news” on TV as a general entity (only one or two people picked out a particular programme – Channel 4 news); “the news channels”; and the growth of the internet.

This means it is hard for people to trace opinions, facts or rumours around development – and charity issues generally – back to particular sources. References were typically to ‘on the news’ or ‘in the papers’.

This reliance on a wide-ranging *web* of media was felt to be necessary in an environment where they had declining trust and a heightened awareness of media manipulation. Some felt you needed to consult a bit more widely to avoid being manipulated and misled

*“There are four newspaper front pages each with the same story, but the headlines are so totally different...so blown out of all proportion to try and get you to buy that paper rather than the other one”*

But at the same time, it could feel like there was almost too much information to cope with, particularly with the growth in the number of TV channels and websites

*“You’d find there was 2,400 pages of stuff on global warming out there on the internet”*

### Can be a local focus

A number of respondents talked about local news programmes – for instance *London Tonight* or *Meridian News* – as having a higher level of trust. Notably people didn’t seem to see local news as subject to quite the same level of distortion, bias and mistakes as national/international media.

This seemed to stem from a sense that the two worlds – ‘media’ and ‘reality’ – can be compared and checked against each other; whereas media reports from further a field can’t be corroborated in this way. It also seemed influenced by the smaller quantity of local news – which feels more manageable, less burdensome than national and international coverage.

### Personalisation of stories

Diary entries also focused on instances where there was a clear human figure involved:

*“There was something this morning – a little girl from the Forget-Me-Not charity. And she was a lovely little girl and you think to yourself I’d like to give to that charity, but then you’ve got to go about finding it”.*

Similarly celebrity involvement also brought a human dimension and greater interest to the issue:



*“Westlife came along to see them. Just the fact that they took time out to go and see her...They were so blown away to meet someone like that”.*

### **Friendship and family influence**

It was noticeable that real life conversations were recalled and referenced much less than media stories and charity requests. However, when we move on to look at the specific effects of media on giving to development, we will see three kinds of influence that take place beyond the media

- family tradition
- travel
- local community action

## **6. A Note on Attitudes to Development Assistance**

This research was focused not on people’s attitudes to giving to development, so much as on understanding the *influences* on people’s attitudes. Of course, in reality the two overlap and it is worth making a few short points on current attitudes before we begin to trace influences.

### **Understanding of development**

Most people in the research had a quite clear sense of development as a distinct type of charity. It was normally talked about as “3<sup>rd</sup> world” or “overseas” charities, only rarely as “development”.

This was differentiated from other categories such as ‘Cancer’, ‘AIDS’, ‘other illnesses’ ‘animals’, ‘local charities’, ‘homeless charities’, ‘old people’ and ‘children’s charities’.

When asked to talk about it in more detail, some groups found it helpful to break it down into *development versus disaster* – between “3<sup>rd</sup> world” development charities (e.g. Oxfam) and “disaster” appeals (e.g. Pakistan earthquake, Tsunami).

*“It’s the difference between continual money going in and a disaster that’s affected a particular population”*

### **‘Development’ = Africa?**

Conversations with respondents in the five mainstream groups tended to focus on Africa. Whilst other countries were referenced in relation to disaster appeals (Pakistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka) Africa was seen as the main stage for development and at times ‘Africa’ was used almost as a short-hand for developing countries. As noted below, this can sometimes increase people’s scepticism by creating a blanket, stereotyped image of a continent doomed to poverty.

### **Engrained attitudes**

As noted in the summary of key findings, people’s attitudes to giving to development seemed rather engrained. As such, the influence of media and peers seems to work more to confirm rather than develop or alter people’s perceptions.

## 7. Influences Encouraging Giving to Development

### Celebrities

Bob Geldof was widely referenced as the person doing most to help developing countries and to publicise the issue most effectively. Bono was also occasionally mentioned as a similar, secondary figure.

The level of trust and respect held by Bob Geldof couldn't be more different from their views of the UK government.

*“The other thing is it shouldn't just be about Bob Geldof. He's done a fantastic job. But we need more Bob Geldofs in the world”.*

There was a sense that the views of Geldof could be trusted and that if he speaks out on development people were willing to listen. Key qualities here were his long-term commitment – *“He's been doing it for years”* – and his independence – *“He hasn't got his own agenda”*.

Geldof also combined a connection to the powerful world of celebrity – via events like Live 8 – with a gravitas that a typical celebrity charity appeal might lack. As one respondent put it:

*“You don't even think of him as a pop star any more. He's gone beyond that.”*

Individually Geldof seems clearly a more compelling figure than any politician and much more likely to have an influence on donor behaviour. There was a widespread feeling across the groups that ‘we need more Bob Geldofs’.

### The effect of travel

This was one of the clearest influences that people could trace when talking about what affects their willingness to give to development. Whilst travel is of course rarer than seeing news and media stories, it understandably sticks in the mind. A number of people cited going to a developing country as having a particularly marked and long lasting effect on their attitudes.

*“We went to Goa and it actually affected me quite a bit....You couldn't believe how poor people were and yet how happy they were at the same time”.*

*“With the Tsunami, it was the timing, on Boxing Day and the places – a lot of people had been there themselves. It was much harder to say no”*

*“If you've been to places in Africa and you've met people and you see the resilience it makes it much harder to dismiss it as just a news story”*

### Family tradition

As noted in the summary, most respondents said they rarely talked about development with family and friends. The one exception here was major disaster stories such as the Tsunami.

*“It’s only when a story is that dramatic that it becomes a topic of conversation”*

The other occasions where family influence was referenced was when respondents talked about almost inheriting charities from earlier generations:

*“I always give to the Red Cross and that’s just a tradition. Because my grandparents gave to it, and then my parents. The Red Cross is the Red Cross”*

*“If you grow up with people giving to Oxfam, you in a way take it on yourself”.*

It might be interesting in future research to understand how far giving to overseas development does correlate with giving by parents and other family members.

### **Local community action**

Some people referenced examples of campaigns that they had seen both in the media and in their own local environment, such as the Blue Peter shoebiz appeal.

*“It was on the television, lots of personalities, David Beckham say, has donated shoes, but then obviously the local school is doing it as well.”*

*“Our school has done that as well”*

This collision of national and local could be powerful. A nationally known programme like Blue Peter provided *scale*, whilst schools provided a local dimension that made the appeal more tangible, visible and accountable. It’s worth noting here other examples of charities trying to combine scale and localness – for example the NSPCC ‘be the full stop’ campaign that puts your commitment on the map of Great Britain. This combination of the local and the national may be a useful angle to consider when thinking about how to increase overseas aid donations.

### **Seeing a practical option**

As well as *information* on development, people’s perceptions were influenced by *new ways of giving* to development. ‘More concrete’ types of donation such as virtual gifts (e.g. Present Aid, Oxfam Unwrapped) or appeals that sent physical goods abroad could have a particular attraction. These were seen as rather different to the contributions talked about by politicians, which emphasise *sums of money* being sent, whether as loans, donations or write-offs. Where politically-driven aid was often seen as intangible, hard to measure and liable to be siphoned off, this more concrete type of aid was felt to be more likely to make a genuine contribution. The goods were seen as more likely to get through, donors could envisage how it would be used in real life; and donors felt that the people who received it could use the aid to help themselves directly.

*“I like that you can give something real – there’s the problem with the goats, but you can give other things, whether it’s fertiliser or things for plants... That way it will be making a contribution for years to come”*

*“There was something where they donated old post office bicycles. They had children who had to go 5, 6 miles to get to school and you know that was good because it was something practical”*

*“I’ve noticed on the TV this shoe appeal. We don’t miss a pair of shoes. It’s for children out in Malawi whose parents died of AIDS. It’s through Blue Peter I think. And you collect up all your old shoes and all the local schools are doing it. They’re going to collect something like 500,000 pairs that they’re going to sell and the money’s going out to Malawi<sup>10</sup>”*

This is to some extent a trick of perception – the aid given by government may often translate quickly into tangible help, and virtual gifts in practice don’t always give the physical object people buy<sup>11</sup>. But this is a perception that counts. In a climate of mistrust about the government’s motivations and ability to deliver on ODA, their focus on what are perceived to be ‘intangible’ financial sums can leave their action seeming ineffective, compared with than the smaller interventions of more practical initiatives.

### **Progress reports**

‘Lack of progress’ is one of the major concerns undermining people’s willingness to give to development, as we will explore below. News that gives clear reports of progress through aid can therefore be an influence on people’s attitudes. Some respondents picked out Live 8 and Comic Relief as examples of media coverage that show the *effect* of donations and the *practical*, on the ground changes that have occurred

*“They’ll go back to a particular village and show you how it has changed”.  
“It’s showing you somebody’s individual life and the ways in which things have got better for them personally”*

### **Role of church**

We did not screen people on the basis of religious affiliation and within this small sample religion / religious communities were not widely referenced as an influence on people’s tendency to give. The main exception here was in the African-born group, where a number of people were active members of a local church. It’s worth noting that in other research for Christian Aid we have seen the influence of religion and religious groups play out more strongly and it may be worth investigating further in the broader quantitative elements of the study.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.shoebizappeal.org.uk/>

<sup>11</sup> And in other research, for Christian Aid, we have seen that many of the more sophisticated donors to development causes are well aware of this.

## 8. Influences Discouraging Giving to Development

### Stories of corruption and mismanagement

A fear that developing countries' governments would mismanage or siphon off development money was one of the clearest barriers to people giving to development charities.

*"It worries me about giving to them because there are so many corrupt governments out there. I wonder how much is actually going to get to the starving"*

*"They're supposed to be going to the people, but a lot of it is disappearing. It's not going to the right people".*

It was notable that people regularly referenced seeing 'media stories' of corruption, but didn't pinpoint specific examples of where in the media they had seen them. As the discussions went on, it became evident there were a number of ways in which this perception of corruption appears to be built up.

### On the lookout for corruption

It was striking first of all that when sceptical respondents were asked to look through articles on government action in Africa, people were quick to pick out this aspect in stories.

Moderator: "What have you seen in the articles you've been reading?"

*"Well. There's one bit here about all the corrupt African officials who've been siphoning off all the money"*

*"The thing to notice is this: it says here 'half of all their debt is held by corrupt officials in western banks'"*

Many of the people we spoke to who were not donating regularly seemed to have corruption at the forefront of their minds, meaning it leaped out from the page when looking at media reports of government and other development action.

### Focusing on the extremes

Secondly, it was noticeable that more *extreme* negative stories around developing countries' governments had registered strongly, particularly in sceptics' minds. Media reports of bizarre and destructive comments and idiosyncratic or negligent behaviour had stuck more than stories of administrative success or progressive policies.

*"We can give all the money we want, but if people believe that you can cure AIDS through washing or herbs, or whatever what hope have we got".*

*"You've got people like Mugabe knocking down buildings, taking away land, ruining the economy; you can't believe people can behave like that and stay in government"*

Whilst academic analysts acknowledge both the failures of government in developing countries and their successes,<sup>12</sup> the majority of people that we spoke to were much more aware of examples of the former than the latter.

#### Lack of differentiation between countries

There was a tendency to generalise across countries – talking about particular cases such as Robert Mugabe, or Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand and applying them to developing countries as a whole.

One of the particular problems here is the tendency to lump together all 40 or so African countries under the heading of ‘Africa’. Few of the UK-born groups that we spoke to differentiated much between different levels of poverty, or standards of governance, or progress made. And, where countries did stand out, it was typically for the worse. Zimbabwe, for instance, was one of the few African countries where people talked in detail about the causes of the problems, here pinning the issue directly on bad governance.

*“They stripped the land bare and robbed the people. That country was one of the richest places in Africa. It was self-sufficient in food. It should have been able to prosper. And now he’s completely buggered it.”*

#### **Misinformation and confusion**

The media story that stood out at the time of the research was virtual gifts and the debate about whether giving animals to developing countries was an effective use of money. The press had recently run stories based on complaints by The World Land Trust that virtual gifts were at best well-intentioned but ineffectual, at worst damaging<sup>13</sup>. (See Appendix 3 for examples of these stories)

For the most confident donors, these stories had even when seen had limited effect.

*“Oxfam wouldn’t put their name to something that wasn’t going to work out”.*

But the negative line in these stories had been largely accepted by a number of respondents:

*“Last year I got someone one of these goats from Oxfam; you know I did the right thing. And then this week, I look in the paper and it’s ‘Don’t give these animals! It’s bad news, they can’t feed them, they can’t look after them. Don’t do it’”*

*“It was on this week saying ‘don’t buy a goat’”*

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Collier, Dollar and Stern who acknowledge that many governments “either ignore the problem [of AIDS] or fail to target their programs on the high-risk groups”, but who also reference the exceptions: “a few governments, such as those of Senegal and Thailand, have focused on the problem [of AIDS] and have carried out successful targeted public campaigns to promote these changes.” Paul Collier, David Dollar and Nicholas Stern, “Fifty Years of Development” in Nicholas Stern (ed.) A Strategy for Development, (The World Bank, 2002) p.18.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. <http://www.worldlandtrust.org/news/2006/12/goats-not-to-blame-for-desertification.htm>

*“The reason why you don’t buy a goat is because it eats the shrub land and buggers everything up”.*

Such news had led the respondents to be more suspicious about virtual gifts and, in the more sceptical cases, to paint development charities as naïve and ineffective. Even for some donors, an element of *doubt* did seem to have crept in:

*“I’d still buy one, but a bit of the gloss has come off”.*

The broader point here is how this story reinforced a number of already-held beliefs that could steer people away from giving to overseas aid:

- that it is hard to get reliable information about how to help developing countries;
- that good intentions are often dashed by the difficulties of helping people in such (geographically and culturally) remote places;
- and, for the most sceptical, that ultimately there is little that you can do to help.

These assumptions often seemed engrained. Hence a media story that confirms them is very easily accepted – whereas a media story that challenged them would be approached more sceptically. It was striking to see how non-donors’ attitudes to the virtual gifts reports were so different to their views when assessing the media reports of politicians’ statements. Because the ‘goats’ story echoed their assumptions, it was read as close to a statement-of-fact, rather than deconstructed as one media point of view.

Moderator: “Reading it in the paper, are you convinced that this story is true?”  
*“More than likely. You see I hadn’t looked at the bigger picture when I bought the goat; things like do they have grazing land”.*

### **Lack of visible effect**

One of the differences seen between disaster and development giving was that disaster relief has a more visible outcome as well as visible problem.

*“It’s more immediate. You can see the impact”.*

Development by its nature doesn’t yield such immediate results, leading to the sense that progress is not happening and that therefore donations are not having a real effect. People felt that the number of stories they saw in the media highlighting the *problem* greatly outweighed the number suggesting that aid was having an effect.

Pessimism was also bred by the perceived length of time that Africa has been in the news and the lack of knowledge of positive success stories within the continent. The general impression was one of either decline or stasis – *despite* regular aid and occasional disaster appeal donations. This bred a feeling of impotence, an assumption that the problem might be impossible for outside countries to crack:

*“I don’t want to be nasty about Africa, but you get the sense that whatever is said tends to be hot air. Nothing actually gets done”*

*“We keep giving money. Where’s it all going? How long do you have to keep doing this before it is put right?”.*

There were similarly few references to countries that have started to make clear progress out of poverty. This could be seen as a little surprising given the level of media coverage around India and China. This is an issue that government messages might profit from considering and addressing, as we explore in the final section of the report.

## **9. Views of Government Policy and Messages on ODA**

### **Overall: low awareness / high cynicism**

The first point to note is that people were very slow to recall any role that the UK government has played in promoting or acting on development.

The second overall finding was that most respondents’ attitude to government involvement was so undermined by cynicism it seemed hard for them to be influenced positively by government action or messages.

### **Low salience of government activity**

As in the results of the Omnibus survey, politicians were some way down the list of people/organisations perceived to be helping developing countries. Charities like Oxfam and the Red Cross and high profile individuals like Bob Geldof were both talked about spontaneously. It took longer and more prompting for people to start to discuss government action.

Most people recognised that the government has a budget for overseas aid and expected them to be giving both as part of ongoing projects and in emergency situations, such as the Tsunami or Pakistan earthquake. Beyond this, however, people struggled to identify *particular* policies or initiatives.

When asked directly about what action the government has been taking around overseas development, many respondents found it hard to answer:

*“It’s going to go quiet now!”*

### **What were people aware of?**

As noted in the introduction, the notable exception was the *G8 summit* – talked about variously as ‘Live 8’, ‘G8’ ‘Gleneagles’. The Africa Commission had lower awareness, but was sometimes bundled into the same overall initiative.

Beyond this, Darfur was talked about by one or two as an area where the government was trying to help – via emergency relief. One or two cited Margaret Beckett’s trip to a land-mine wrecked country, although struggled to identify exactly where she had travelled<sup>14</sup>. The government’s donations to the Tsunami relief were also recalled, as was the response to the Pakistan earthquake. One or two others cited the

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<sup>14</sup> Margaret Beckett was Foreign Secretary in the last year of Tony Blair’s administration.



government's broader support of charity via gift aid as having a role in promoting giving.

### **G8: Government overshadowed by other players**

Starting with the G8, the main recognised government activity, it was notable that even here, politicians got little credit. The government's action seemed to have been overshadowed in people's minds by a combination of other people and actions:

- Bob Geldof's personal role;
- the Live 8 concerts;
- and popular demonstrations in Edinburgh and London

Also notable was people's sense that the *motivation* and the *energy* around the G8 was generated by Geldof, by campaigning groups and popular opinion, rather than by any politician. Typically, Blair and Brown were cast as responding to these other influences, even "Jumping on the bandwagon", rather than leading the events. The G8 summit was seen as steered by Geldof much more than by Tony Blair, Gordon Brown or any other politician.

In the next section, we will explore in a bit more depth what lies behind this current scepticism about government action and ask why there seemed so much unwillingness to give credit to government or to government initiatives.

## **10. Understanding Scepticism Around the Government's Role**

### **Perceived lack of genuine commitment**

A lack of trust about politicians, and in particular the Blair government, ran through the five groups with UK-born respondents. Once again we should bear in mind here the negative perceptions of the current administration and the lack of trust in the Prime Minister referenced in the introduction. Scepticism about ODA policy seemed often to reflect a wider and deeper suspicion about the government as a whole.

It often seemed that attitudes towards the *politicians* overshadowed attitudes towards the *policies*. Pronouncements by Blair about Africa were overwhelmed by cynicism about Blair himself. When he supports a cause, the cause seemed to suffer in many people's minds from the association. As one person described it cynically and succinctly:

*"Tony Blair is asking us to put money into a bucket; but a bucket marked Tony Blair – I'd like to see what ended up in that".*

Most people felt that any announcement on development was likely to be a motivated by politicians' desire to promote themselves. Furthermore, many felt that development policies were typically performed under duress, from 'genuine' campaigners like Geldof and or from public pressure:

*“At G8 it was Blair trying to put himself up on the world stage, to get his name known around the world. And that’s the big problem that ultimately they’re out for themselves. They’re trying to make a name for themselves using our money”*

*“It’s almost like Bob Geldof walks out of Number 10 and Tony Blair shuts the door and says ‘It’s OK! He’s gone now!’”*

*“Tony Blair was just jumping on the bandwagon with the G8 summit”*

People also recalled here the response to the Tsunami, where government giving was raised in reaction to the generosity of individual gifts:

*“What got me about the Tsunami was that the government gave maybe 8 million pounds. And then suddenly the British public have given a whole lot more. And so, all of a sudden to get on side with the public he’s thinking ‘I’d better give more’”*

*“Yeah – that was Gordon Brown wasn’t it”.*

### **Politicisation of aid**

Because it was seen as part of the broader foreign-policy field, development policy could at times get clouded by doubts about Britain’s recent foreign conduct. This was one clear way in which political involvement in development assistance ran the risk of undermining people’s faith in it, since it suggested that donations might be politically motivated or tied to conditions.

*“It’s all connected. Pakistan for instance, I’m sure will be getting more aid than other countries, now that they’re on the Taliban’s case.*

*“That’s true. It’s all politics”*

### **Lack of trust in government claims**

There was often cynicism about the actual claims that the government make, particularly the figures in play. This is by no means an original finding, but it was a constant one: on development as with many issues, people believed that government would be manipulating and massaging the figures:

*“They’ll promise so many billion. Then you found out they already promised that a year ago and are telling you again”*

*“There’s always small print that’s in there, it’s like say America give 10 billion to global warming, it won’t actually be instant; it’s over ten years”.*

Again we are reminded of the gap between the government language (of finance and statistics) and the attraction that people had towards more ‘practical’, ‘concrete’ interventions. Part of the issue here seems to be that the figures discussed can feel very remote and abstract. With the sums in play, running into millions and even billions of dollars, people can find it hard to put a context around them. Are they

generous or not? What can they be expected to achieve in real world of poverty problems?

*“It will talk about 25 billion or whatever but that’s impossible to get your head around. How many years is that for, how many countries are giving it, what will actually happen.”*

*“Above a certain figure it’s hard to know what it really means”*

### **Few recognised signs of achievement**

It was notable that most respondents found it hard to cite any evidence of what government policy had to achieve. For instance, only a few of the most aware donors were able to point to clear signs of progress from G8:

*“They have cancelled a lot of countries’ debt. Not as much as they said they would, but that should make some kind of difference”.*

Amongst others, particularly non-donors, people felt that there had been little they could cite as progress – the doubling of aid, the writing off of debt and the promises on HIV treatment all announced at Gleneagles seemed to have faded into the background.

*“He got on the bandwagon and it was ‘we’re going to this, that and the other’. And then it went into the background. He did nothing”*

*“This is the government all over. It’s empty promises. We don’t – it’s over a year since the G8 and what has been done about it? We don’t know”*

This again seems to relate back to some familiar themes. Firstly, the lack of trust people placed in the government means their default position is to assume that policies lacked substance. Secondly the language in which the progress is expressed, with its focus on figures, does not seem to help it stick in people’s minds. Thirdly, the spectre of corruption and mismanagement is so widespread that people did not see promises of money as guaranteeing progress. The ‘results’ that were talked about at Gleneagles may have been celebrated by politicians, but for most of the people we spoke to they were more of a ‘first step’. The real results were what happened with the money, on the ground.

*“The thing is that we don’t know what happens. They need to come back and say what has actually happened with the extra money that is given. Until we know that that money has gone directly to those charities and made an actual effect in these countries then frankly it’s meaningless.”*

### **Politics is only one handshake away from corruption**

Because the help that the UK government gives is seen to go through the ‘corrupt’ national governments of developing countries it can be assumed to be less effective than methods that are seen as more direct – such as fair trade or donations of physical goods.

*“With the Tsunami, not enough of the money actually helped people. You’ve got people like the prime minister of Thailand who they eventually got rid of.”*

*“You can take away the countries’ debts, but they’re likely to get back into it sooner or later. Until you get rid of these governments – people like Mugabe...”*

### **Government seen to lack a clear plan, framework or ideology for development**

A further problem was the perceived lack of a coherent intellectual framework for solving developing countries’ problems. UK government initiatives were seen almost entirely in terms of donating (large and abstract) sums of money to stem current problems. There is little sense that the government has a *model* or *plan* that will take developing countries out of poverty. How do you move a country from debt to long-term solvency? How do you create a national infrastructure of education, travel and telecoms? How do you protect markets initially to boost internal development whilst opening them up so that they can benefit from global trade? Understandably these are not questions that most people felt they could answer. More worryingly, they don’t seem to believe that the government knows how to answer them either.

*“I get the feeling sometimes, they’re just throwing good money after bad”*

*“The problem has been with us for such a long time and I really don’t know if or how we are going to solve it. I’m not sure the government know any better”*

There seemed a concern that the UK government is out of its depth in trying to deal with development. This is not just on a practical level – lacking the political influence or skills to put a plan into practice – but also on an intellectual level as well, since people struggle to point to a roadmap for development. No one that we spoke to suggested that the government had a clear plan – but was simply being thwarted by corruption and lack of resources. They weren’t able to reference an effective plan at all.

### **What does the government add?**

The cynicism around politicians’ involvement in development assistance stemmed partly from people’s sense of them as ‘a group apart’. British contributions to overseas aid weren’t seen to be something politicians could take credit for since the money was ultimately funded by the people - *“they are sending tax payers money”*. Government messages might have greater credibility if people could see politicians themselves making sacrifices that contributed to overseas aid – whether significant personal donations across the cabinet, or holiday time spent doing physical work on projects in Africa. People also saw, to use a favourite government expression, a lack of ‘added value’ from politicians themselves. With the money being spent on ODA coming from tax payers, the government seemed to be cast as a (largely inefficient and shady) bank, rather than an important contributor. This takes us back again to the lack of a recognised intellectual framework for dealing with overseas poverty. Whilst people see government action simply as ‘handing over money’, the respect that government has for doing so is likely to remain limited.

### **Beyond the power of national government**

Lastly, people found it hard to point to a prominent and credible international organisation that might be able to bridge the gap between the UK government and developing countries. Organisations like the IMF and World Bank were rarely cited. The UN was not much more prominent in people's conversations. Doubt about the honesty and competence of the UK government and cynicism about African national governments does not seem to have been replaced/offset by increased faith in cross-national organisations.

## **11. In Summary: What Does this Mean for Government Influence?**

On the original question of whether government policies and messages are likely to 'crowd in' or 'crowd out', there were signs of evidence in both directions.

Very occasionally, we did hear some donors citing government action as a positive influence on their own inclination to give.

*“When they have these G8 summits all the governments get together and say ‘we’ll put x amount to global warming, x amount to Africa’. I think if you’re watching you can think ‘they’re doing something; maybe I should do something’. It’s in a way tugging at your heart strings for you to do more” .*

Meanwhile some of those who were sceptical about giving to overseas aid did talk about taxation and government development-spending as 'doing their bit' for them. By paying their taxes to a government who make donations abroad, they feel they had covered off any need to give personally.

*“Through our taxes we are donating money to try to help these people. The government are donating a certain amount of money and we are paying off some of their debts”.*

Thirdly, there were a few extreme occasions where people's negative views of Blair and Brown meant that they could be turned off development if these politicians spoke out on the issue.

*“When you’ve got Blair’s photograph here in front of it, it just puts you off. I don’t want to give money; he’s just doing it for publicity”.*

More often, though, respondents' attitudes to the current government meant they were likely either to screen out the messages or dismiss them.

- People felt that Blair or Brown's messages were largely insincere and unlikely to be substantiated; and therefore added little to the overall debate.
- In addition, politicians dealt in figures that were felt to be easily manipulated and were hard to put into context.
- They were also seen to go through the established network of government to government donations, running into the problems of corruption.

- Meanwhile, their interventions were seen more as ‘handing over money’ than part of a clearly understood and thought-out plan for development.

In a context of political cynicism it would seem that we need to think of government policy and messages as a less forceful and less direct influence on decisions such as charity giving.

As such, government intervention appeared to have a lower effect on people’s perceptions of development assistance than some of the other influences that we explored earlier – in particular travel, celebrity involvement and new more concrete ways of giving. This would suggest two interesting areas for future research. Firstly, to understand what role non-governmental figures and organisations can play in encouraging overseas aid in an environment where government influence seems limited. Secondly, it would be very helpful to start to build a model of how the different influences overlap with and interact with one another – how do government policy, NGO campaigning, messages from iconic figures, discussion with peers and media reporting work as a *network* of influences?

## **12. Future Steps: How Can Government Help Promote Overseas Giving More Effectively?**

This frankly is not an easy question to answer. The roots of people’s cynicism seem to go deep and wide. There are though a number of directions that might be worth exploring to identifying how the UK government could play a more positive role in encouraging giving to development. These are drawn from this reasonably small scale and qualitative piece of research and hence are set out here as initial areas for consideration.

### **Beyond ‘Africa’: Separating out the different stories of development**

If the government is to convince more people that the battle against poverty abroad is worth fighting, it may be useful to highlight a) the differences between different countries in Africa and b) examples of African countries that have made real progress, especially where western aid and support has been influential. The example of India and China may also be worth bringing into the message – ‘if 200 million people can be taken out of poverty in less than 20 years in China, then progress is possible.’

### **We have a plan: Democratising best current thinking on development**

One of the problems underpinning people’s views seems to be the lack of a sense of a framework that might ever work to solve poverty. We noted earlier that respondents didn’t seem to believe that the UK government has a clear framework for helping a poor country out of poverty. On the other hand, where people did see aid as part of a clear practical strategy for change, they seemed more likely to give. For instance,

*“I gave some money to this charity that John Humphrys is involved in. They focus on educating people; because that’s the starting point for everything”*  
*“You hope that if it goes into educating people it will have a knock on effect – on their knowledge of how to use their resources, on their politics in due course”*

It may therefore be worth looking at ways that thinking on development can be made accessible to the general public in countries like the UK. Many of the steps that allow development to take place seem reasonably well agreed across economists and governments<sup>15</sup> and yet were hardly ever referenced by people in the sample. Publicising and ‘branding’ these steps (we’re reminded, perhaps troublingly, of Tony Blair’s pledge cards back in New Labour’s earlier days) could give more people a sense of the possible building blocks towards progress and play some role in reducing the sense of fatalism.

### **Surprising news – challenging a culture of received ideas**

It was striking how confident people’s views could be within this research – and how engrained certain assumptions about development were. Another strand to consider might be a public campaign designed to overturn 4 or 5 ‘universally acknowledged truths’ about Africa and overseas development. For example:

- How the UK is moving quickly up the league table of donors to ODA;
- How developing countries have been as a whole made significant progress over the last 4 decades;
- A comparison of actual versus perceived corruption (e.g. compare the UN/World Bank evidence on corrupt countries with the UK population’s beliefs about these countries).

### **Depoliticising the government’s role**

We saw continual assumptions in this small sample that government statements and policies are designed to make political and personal gains. It might therefore be helpful to look at ways of depoliticising the government’s role in giving to development. Some of the most negative reactions arose when people saw Blair or Brown as trying to take personal credit for action on development.

*“It comes across as I’m Tony Blair and I have done this. But he is using the money we have paid as taxes and giving it to other countries. I don’t know why he is so proud”*

Might antipathy be reduced if politicians took a deliberately humbler line? Could the aid that governments sanctioned be recognised more as contributions by the people of the country, rather than its leaders?

Meanwhile, it seemed that people could be very slightly less cynical if they envisaged an all-party commitment to development. Given the cynicism around the current government, this is an area that is worth monitoring in the future as the Blair government is replaced by a new administration.

### **New and more practical action**

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<sup>15</sup> For example: respecting past practices and traditional knowledge; removing corruption and excessive regulation; creating an infrastructure that enterprise can use via education, communication networks and roads; ensuring all members of the population have the opportunity to start and share in enterprise via education, reducing prejudice and involving excluded groups; intervening when vulnerable but potentially important initiatives get into trouble; and using redistributive taxation to avoid gross inequalities and to finance continual improvement to infrastructure.

There was a regular desire to hear more about *solutions* versus *sums of money* donated:

*“They talk about how many millions or billions, but you don’t know what the actual plans are for how the problems are going to be solved”.*

This research suggests that more focus could be placed on talking about specific concrete programmes and achievements versus on the sums of money that the government makes available.

Respondents also discussed how the government could encourage and incentivise individuals with specific skills to donate these to developing countries. More overt government support for VSO style programmes felt more tangible and hence more credible than the abstracted and hazy sums involved in financial aid. There was enthusiasm for public messages of endorsement for volunteer programmes and for policies that made it easier for people to donate their time and expertise:

*“People with skills – the trades, or medics, we should be using our expertise more” .*

People were similarly looking for the government to find ways of contributing in a more direct and concrete fashion.

*“It’s not just about money. Take the armed forces for instance. They’ve got a lot of expertise that could be used. Part of their work could be in poorer countries – except that they’re all in Iraq and Afghanistan”.*

There were also some novel suggestions about how to square the circle of problems at home versus problems abroad. For instance, could part of the penal system for young offenders involve helping the poorest countries abroad?

*“Go and see how hard other people’s lives are....See the number of people who don’t have what you take for granted”*

Whilst it is all too easy to imagine the kinds of negative media coverage that this might attract – ‘Hoodie Hoodlums Holiday’ etc. – it is worth considering how this area might be approached. For example, young people who spend time working on government approved projects abroad could be rewarded with credits against tuition fees or entrepreneurial projects. A fund might be made available for youth from socially excluded areas to carry out development work abroad. (A parallel example here is the experiment of sending young Muslims from deprived areas of Birmingham to Mecca captured last year in a BBC documentary<sup>16</sup>.)

### **Enforcing versus giving**

The most valuable role that some people could see the UK government playing was in using political influence to ensure that aid reached *people* and not just *politicians*. They were talking here about setting stricter *conditions*, putting more effort into *tracking* aid and helping charity groups to *operate* freely in developing countries:

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/factual/pip/3sd68/>



*“I’d be much happier if they said ‘we’ve collected all this money and we’re not going to give it to you unless you will let us to inspect it and make sure it goes to the people who need it. And if you won’t let us in to see then you won’t have the money’”.*

*“The government should be putting effort into making sure the charities can get their aid in and to the source” .*

People seemed more willing to accept the government’s role here as a broker and enforcer of aid. It would be useful in future research to look at how people respond to government messages on fighting corruption and whether these in fact provide a more credible motivation to give than messages around aid donations and debt relief.

### **More direct aid: individual to individual**

Given the often negative views of both the UK and developing countries’ governments, it may be worth exploring how to create development that bypasses both –a more direct relationships between individuals in the UK and individuals in developing countries. With the extraordinary advances in technology, it is likely to be increasingly possible to connect individuals more directly in this way. The explosion of mobile phone ownership<sup>17</sup> coupled with the rise in ‘social networking’ websites for example suggests interesting possibilities for sharing trade and aid more directly between individuals and informal groups in the west and developing countries. Would it be possible for instance to build an online social network that allowed people in the west to donate money, expertise and time and in return buy direct, fairly traded goods? An early initiative along these lines can be seen at [www.kiva.org](http://www.kiva.org) (which we have seen has had very positive responses in other research we have conducted) or at <http://www.c4-world.com/>.

### **New ways of reporting on progress**

There was a lot of talk around the impossibility of measuring progress and the need to tackle a sense that nothing is changing. The idea of a regular, accessible, concrete update on progress was often talked about a necessary.

*“Every six months the government should actually publish something to say this is what we’ve done and this is what we’re going to do”.*

Of course, some information of this kind is available – the Department for International Development’s website for instance has a page which offers some of the tangible signs of progress that people talked about<sup>18</sup>.

In a world of league tables, waiting list figures and other accountability bulletins it is, though, difficult for such information to ‘cut through’ to public attention. Our sense is that a lot of thought would need to be given to how the information is presented. Respondents talked about punchy video footage that mixed simple facts and human stories more than written reports

*“They should do a 6 monthly mini documentary”*

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. Paul Mason’s Newsnight report at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/6241603.stm>

<sup>18</sup> Cf. <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/dfidsuccesses.asp>

*“It says here there’s a 400 page report coming out. With the best will in the world almost no one out of the UK population is going to read that, but they might watch a little documentary”.*

Working with film-makers and other kinds of artists to look at how to transmit this information might be a useful direction to consider.

### **Allowing people to discover for themselves**

The way that people encountered information on overseas aid, particularly information linked with politicians was talked about in noticeably negative language. There was a sense that information was either cast down to them by remote authority figures, or used deviously by an untrustworthy government. The language we heard was of figures being ‘thrown at them’ or of facts being ‘presented’ or ‘managed’ in a sly and probably duplicitous fashion. One way of bringing people into the issue might therefore be to try to change the way that information is spread around. Is it possible to create ways that people can interact with and discover information for themselves? If the government currently produces statements and reports, is there scope in the future for information to be presented also as questions, invitations, hooks that encourage people to work out the answers for themselves. This might involve more interactive technology<sup>19</sup> and looking at how to allow information to be ‘pulled’ as well as pushed.

### **More open debate**

Lastly, it is worth noting that there is a difficult double-bind facing the government if their commitment to continue raising the percentage of GDP spent on ODA is sincere. Many of the people we spoke to were simultaneously critical of the government for not ‘keeping their promises’ to developing countries and yet wary of seeing British money spent abroad. Respondents could at times want both their cake and to eat it – dismissing the government for *not caring* as much as individuals like Bob Geldof; but then expressing concern about tax-payers’ money going abroad, rather than tackling problems closer to home. There may be a case for encouraging people to face up to these contradictions in their views by creating a more public debate on the question of how much the UK should be devoting to development assistance.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. the number of charity organisations using features such as Google maps to personalise an issue to individuals.

# **Appendix 1:**

## **Findings from the African Born Group Discussion**

This appendix describes the findings from a sixth focus group, conducted with respondents born in Africa. It is divided into five short sections:

- Rationale for this part of the study;
- Background context: attitudes to social issues;
- Perceptions of the UK government's role in development;
- Respondents' hopes for the future;
- Concluding thoughts.

### **Rationale for the African-born group**

The UK population includes significant numbers of people who have families living in Africa. The project team were interested in understanding how views and behaviour might be different amongst people who had been born in Africa and who still had ties to African countries. How, for instance, would their greater knowledge of and connections with Africa affect how they saw the UK government's messages and action? Would the UK government's involvement increase their likelihood to give to development charities, or to send aid directly to friends and family? Or were other sources of information much more important?

To explore these questions we held an additional focus group with 8 respondents who were born in Africa (Ghana and Nigeria were two countries represented) and who were now living permanently in the UK. In line with the main sample, the group included a mix of people who were giving regularly to development charities (e.g. World Vision, Red Cross) and those who made only one-off donations or no donations.

This was clearly a very small sample, even for a qualitative project. Therefore more work would be needed before reaching any definitive conclusions about the influence of the UK government on African-born citizens. However, from the discussion that took place there were a number of themes which are worth noting and which could be explored further in more detailed future studies.

### **Background Context**

#### **Sources of Information on social issues**

When talking about sources of information on social issues, respondents' reference points were similar to those of the UK-born respondents. British newspapers such as *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* and *Metro* were the most common sources mentioned. The BBC was often cited as a particularly well-trusted source for information on world news as well as UK stories. There were fewer references to African-based news sources, such as Nigerian or Ghanaian newspapers online.

However, there were some sources that were more prominent than in the UK-born groups. Firstly many of the respondents were regular church goers and a number cited their church as a source of information on charity issues<sup>20</sup>

*“There are often leaflets... Or it will be talked about when you talk to people after a service.”*

*“The church I go to is always involved in a campaign.”*

Secondly, and unsurprisingly, there appeared more evidence of work of mouth information on the politics and problems of Africa. Respondents were a little quicker to talk about particular examples of countries, issues and politicians and it appeared a more natural topic of conversation.

Thirdly, a number of people noted the positive role played by well known Africans in publicising and addressing social problems. As in the UK-born sessions, respondents mentioned famous European or American figures who were tackling social problems, including Geldof and Bill Gates.

*“Bill Gates has been a big champion all over the world. He has said ‘I have enough money’ and is giving money to fighting disease.”*

But people also referenced famous Africans, such as footballers Kanu and George Weah, who were playing a role in tackling poverty and social problems – something that was much less common in the UK-born groups.

*“A good example is someone like the footballer Kanu... He has helped a lot of children with heart problems.”*

*“A few footballers have dedicated time to charity... There’s an Ivorean player who does a lot.”*

## **Perceptions of the UK Government’s Role in Development**

### **Difference 1. More Faith in the UK Government**

The African-born respondents were notably less critical of the British government’s overall performance and character than any of the UK-born groups. There was less talk of disillusionment or mistrust and fewer accusations of government ‘spin’.<sup>21</sup>

Hence when it came to overseas aid, the UK government’s motivations were seen as rather more genuine, less driven by self-interest or tainted by a questionable foreign policy. As one respondent described it,

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<sup>20</sup> In other studies conducted by 2cv for development charities we have seen how religious faith can play a powerful role in supporting people’s belief in giving to development.

<sup>21</sup> Whilst this was not explored in huge detail, the more positive views seemed to reflect a more positive outlook on ‘the state of Britain today’. Where many of the UK-born respondents talked the language of decline, the African-born respondents tended to have a more optimistic sense of life in Britain, citing examples of where quality of life in Britain was superior to the countries of their birth.

*“Their intentions are genuine, even if they may not achieve what they want to.”*

### **Difference 2. More Recognition of the Role Played by Government in Encouraging Giving**

The African-born groups were also quicker to cite and to praise measures taken by the UK government to encourage giving (both to Africa and more generally).

For instance, respondents talked about having seen changes by the UK government to increase the amount of money people could send to their relatives abroad, citing this as an example of sensible, pragmatic policies that the UK government had taken to help spread wealth to Africa<sup>22</sup>

*“If you have family in Africa and want to send money home, four or five years before if you wanted to send money you could only send I think a maximum of five hundred. And the UK government realised that if you allow more to be sent then you allow these people to support their neighbourhoods. So the limit was lifted to I think two thousand pounds. ”*

Gift Aid was also talked about more positively than in the UK-born groups, as a progressive and practical government policy that can encourage giving – either to Africa or to other causes

*“That is something the UK government has done. It makes a difference; knowing that if I give a pound to this charity there is extra money that they will give to it as well.”*

### **Difference 3. Faith in UK government turns to scepticism about ability to act in Africa**

However, whilst the government was credited for encouraging donations via Gift Aid and allowances for remittances, people were more sceptical about more direct and high profile initiatives to tackle African development.

It was generally felt that activity like the G8 Gleneagles Summit would make little difference in encouraging donations. The UK government could make a difference through the domestic policies cited, but its interventions in Africa were viewed more sceptically.

For those not giving regularly, the UK government involvement was seen as well-intentioned but probably ineffectual:

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<sup>22</sup> Since there are no formal controls on capital mobility, we suspect this participant may be referring to regulations relating to large amounts that are designed primarily to prevent money laundering. It is also worth noting that respondents at times included remittances as part of the broad overall project of redistributing wealth to poorer countries, however we did not have time within the session to explore how they saw this as different to other kinds of contributions to development. This may be an area for future exploration.

*“I think that it [the G8 Summit] is propaganda because the money doesn’t actually get down to the grassroots.”*

Likewise, those who *were* giving to overseas development did not feel that the UK government’s involvement would have a great effect on their donations. Their faith was placed much more in the charities they gave to, who they saw as having a direct presence on the ground and who provided them with feedback on what aid achieves

*“Something like the G8 wouldn’t affect me. Because I always give to the Red Cross and I can see how the money is spent. They report back to me. I see that they are out there. I can see what is being done.”*

This reflects the fact that though these respondents were more generous about the UK government’s motivations, they too expressed doubts about the *effectiveness* of the government’s activity. And as we will explore now, the problems with effectiveness were similar to those highlighted by the UK-born respondents.

### **Criticism of African Corruption**

The majority were very critical of the Nigerian and Ghanaian governments and political systems. Here their views were quite close to the UK-born respondents. They cited stories of corrupt governance and corrupt business practice and saw corruption as a serious barrier to solving poverty in African countries

*“The problem with international aid in my country is that you’re only helping those people in power. Because most of the money is going to bounce back immediately to them.”*

*“Some of the things we see about Nigeria are so unreal. Because Nigeria is actually a rich country...But we have some parts that are so poor; and the reason for that is the social structure.”*

*“There was a guy recently who died with 4 billion dollars in his bank account. Now somewhere like Zaire is one of the poorest countries in the world. But it will have things like huge buildings, cathedrals for the people at the top.”*

### **UK government seen as remote from the problem**

There was a sense that the UK government lacks the direct involvement on the ground that the most credible charities bring and that the UK government (and other western partners) would be naïve about the complexities of the situation in the countries they were trying to help

*“Something like the G8, they are not aware of the situation. They’re not aware of what is going on on the ground.”*

*“They are in Downing Street. They don’t know what is going on over there on the ground.”*

There were also comments (that echoed those of the UK-born respondents) that British and other western governments tended to stop thinking about Africa ‘once they’ve signed the cheques’. In other words, UK politicians are concerned with

providing an aid budget, but not with ensuring that the money is used effectively on the ground.

*“They get it to the point where it is OK on paper. And they are happy with that. How they implement it in Africa they don’t think about.”*

An interesting comparison here was made with the approach taken by the Virgin company, which has launched an airline in Nigeria. Virgin was felt to have taken a lot of time to understand and test out the specific local character of the Nigerian market and through careful preparation and interaction ‘on the ground’ had succeeded in managing its investment in Nigeria wisely.

*“A test case is Richard Branson in Nigeria, Virgin. At every point they assessed it – where is the money going. And that is why he was successful.”*

*“When he launched the Virgin brand in Nigeria he went slowly from place to place. When the first place was successfully completed, he’d move on the next place....Check everything was OK and move on slowly. But the G8 won’t do that.”*

Respondents felt that western governments might profit from studying the example of Virgin. As one respondent commented later in the discussions

*“The system in Africa is completely different. Try to understand the system a little bit before you try to find a solution.”*

## **Hopes for the future**

### **Looking for governments to provide policing role**

As with the UK-born groups, the African-born respondents felt that more needed to be done to prevent money being siphoned by corrupt officials, particularly in African governments.

*“If you are an aid organisation you have to go through the government of that country. Because if the government say to you ‘get out’, you’re going to have to get out.”*

*“They’ll say either you bring the money in through me, or you don’t bring it in at all.”*

Again, they saw scope for the UK government to play a more visible role in policing the diffusion of aid and thereby helping and empowering the citizens of African countries, not their politicians.

*“People want to give but they don’t know that the money will get through.”*

*“They [the African commission] say they are listening to Africa, but which Africans are they listening to – is it the citizens or the government.”*

### **Looking for practical and long-term aid**

As in the UK-born groups, respondents sometimes distinguished between crisis aid and longer-term development strategies and again saw the latter as more valuable and worthy of support.

*“There are many charities in East Africa that are giving them seeds to plant and irrigation for them. These are things that are prevention more than cure. There’s no amount of rice you can give them that won’t finish one day. The crops can last for much, much longer.”*

*“Like in East Africa with the river blindness, they’re digging wells, trying to make sure that you can get proper fresh water. That’s longer-term.”*

*“If you say you are sending 3 million to Nigeria then it is worthless. If you send people to teach skills that is the best idea to me.”*

Likewise, as with the UK-born groups, people felt more comfortable with aid if it was sent as more concrete material goods

*“If they send medical supplies rather than cash it’s less likely they will go missing.”*

Similarly, the idea of western countries sending people with skills to help directly ‘in the field’ was seen as a form of aid that was more likely to succeed

*“People who are medical people – not necessarily doctors, could be say nurses – could go over there and teach people about how to save lives. There are some basic things that could make a huge difference.”*

## **Concluding thoughts**

Attitudes to the British government and its overseas development policies were more positive in the group conducted with African-born respondents than in the 5 UK-born groups.

- There was much less cynicism about the government overall.
- There was more belief that the UK government’s *intentions* towards development were genuine, even if their *ability* to make development work was doubted.
- There was more recognition of, and respect for, some of the roles that the UK government has played in encouraging giving generally, such as establishing gift aid
- It was felt that these policies could have a background effect on encouraging giving. Government intervention was deemed credible and positive here, because it took place within the UK.

In contrast, direct government involvement in Africa was seen as more likely to fail. This reflected concerns about the effectiveness of development, which were quite similar to those expressed in the UK-born groups.



- There was a belief that aid granted by the UK government was likely to be siphoned by corrupt African officials.
- The UK government was seen as far removed from the reality of life in Africa and liable to be naïve in its dealings with African countries.
- The UK government was felt to end its responsibility with the signing of cheques – to be concerned with allocating money, not overseeing how it was spent.

In terms of increasing belief in development, there were similar themes to the findings in the main panel.

- There was greater faith in aid that goes outside of political channels – e.g. the hospitals established by footballer Nwankwo Kanu were seen as more effective than money that flowed through political channels.
- There was likewise greater belief in small-scale, tangible, on-the-ground solutions, rather than grand political schemes and cash injections.
- There was a desire for the UK government to put pressure on African governments to use aid money and other foreign investment legally and efficiently.

## Appendix 2: Discussion Guides

Included are two guides: one for groups with donors, one for groups with non donors.

### Topic Guide – Donors

#### Warm up and introductions

##### Introductions

- Recap on the project: emphasise that this is an independent research project, for Southampton University, who are not affiliated to any particular charity, although they are interested in one particular area, which we'll come to later.
- Introductions from respondents – work life, family life, interests...
- ...if they were given money to make a documentary about anything they liked, what would they make it about....

##### Hopes around the future

- What would they like to be doing in 5 years time?
- How would they like their own life to change?
- How would they *like* the broader world to have changed by this time?
- And how do they *expect* the world to be in 5 years time?

#### Exploring media & real life influences on their perceptions

##### Media Influences – spontaneous thoughts

- Where do they get most of their current affairs information? What types and 'brands' of media?
- How do they feel this has changed if at all in recent years?
- Which sources of media do they trust most?
  - What is it about these particular types of media, or media brands?

##### Word of mouth – spontaneous thoughts

- Do they talk about current affairs much in everyday life?
  - *When* does it most often come up – what times, social situations?
  - What *kinds* of issues do (and NB don't) get talked about?
- Can they tell us about a *personal example* of a conversation that has changed or particularly influenced their views ....or is this kind of thing hard to recall?
- Do they have people in their social circle who typically tell them about current affairs?
  - What are these people like – e.g. qualities, role in life...?
  - What kinds of areas do they talk about?

##### Influences on charity specifically

- What about charity specifically – versus the broader world of 'current affairs'....

- Are there certain *media* that they would say influence their perceptions of charities?
  - What have they seen / learned from these media?
  - Can they give any concrete examples of this happening?
  - What is it that makes these sources *trusted*?
- Are there certain *people* who have influenced their perceptions of charity issues
  - Again, can they give us a concrete example?
  - What are these people like? Probe particularly around the types of experience and expertise these figures have
    - E.g. professional expertise / student activists / religious affiliation / expertise through travelling / contact with people from other countries....

### **Examining real life influences in more detail – tracing the diary**

- Think back over their diary – was there anything that surprised or struck them through doing it?
- Did they notice their entries changing as time went on?
- How would they sum up what they noticed / learned about themselves through doing it – was there much to fill in, or not?
- Ask them to look back over the diary for 2 minutes on their own and pull out the points where their views of charities / charity issues were influenced most clearly
- Go round the room and share at least one example each
  - What did they see and where....
  - Why did this stand out?
  - What did it make them think / feel?
  - Did it change / develop / or confirm their previous views?
- Write up on paper together to be able to compare notes later
  
- Once everyone has given at least one example, go back over and explore for common themes / differences across the group
  - *types* of issue talked about
  - *angle* on the issue....are there certain angles that make an issue feel more relevant, interesting?
  - *way* that issues were talked about....
  - media sources they noticed...are some sources more influential than others (e.g. are they talking mainly about TV, or online, or word of mouth...why is this)
- Explore how far these influences *changed* their attitudes to charity-giving versus *confirmed* their current attitudes
  - Was it more one or the other?

## **Examining different charity areas – development assistance versus other sectors**

### **The language of charity giving**

- Stop and recap on...how would they describe this whole area of giving money to causes?
- Go round generating/checking words that everyone would associate with it... Try to sum up what is the best way of talking about this area – “donations”, “good causes”, “charity”, something else... Why does that word/those words feel right for talking about it?

### **Charity giving current behaviour**

- As a group generate a list of possible areas that you might give money to
- Go round the room going through the different categories
- E.g.
  - Children’s charities*
  - Animal charities*
  - Cancer related charities*
  - AIDS related charities*
  - Other illness related charities*
  - International Development / Overseas Aid*
  - Religious charities*
  - Environmental charities*
  - Etc.
- (NB Use specific charities to help develop the list, but keep the focus on the overall area)
- Ask respondents to ‘map’ the different categories as a group – e.g. “we’d like you to arrange these into a pattern; they can be ordered any way that you like, but think about the similarities and differences between them, the gaps and the connections...”
- Ask them to explain how they have grouped them / differentiate them
  - How would they describe the key differences
- Which of these charities are they are most / least likely to give to?
  - Explore initial explanations behind this: why do they tend to go for certain sectors over others...in particular *overseas development*

### **Examining donating behaviour – spontaneous versus planned**

- (This may be hard to pull out in detail, but...) Explore whether people have a finite amount they give (e.g. each year), or whether they tend to respond to the causes that they encounter...
  - how planned versus spontaneous does their giving tend to be?
- Where it is *spontaneous* what are the kinds of things that have prompted them to make a unplanned donations?
  - Can they give us a concrete example of an occasion where this happened – did they see or hear something specific that triggered them to make the donation
  - Obviously, look out for and probe any mentions of media/peer advice...and any links back to *government/political* comment or action here

### **Differences between development assistance and other types of charity**

- Focus in on development assistance versus the charity sector/s that they give most to
- What are the strengths / weaknesses of each of these areas? Write up to return to later.
- May also be useful here to use a more projective exercise like a Gestalt room exercise to probe behind people's attitudes
  - E.g. *"I'd like you to close your eyes and imagine that you are walking down a corridor, as you go, you pass door after door, after a while you come to a door which is marked with [the most salient charity area] I want you to imagine you go into the room and think through without talking what is in there. What do you see, hear, feel, sense, smell, taste and experience in that room" ...Repeat with the Overseas Aid room....Ask the respondents to feed back – what did they find/feel like in each of these rooms...Probe around the different senses – what sounds, images, sensations, smell/tastes, ideas do they associate with each*
  
- What are their main reasons for giving to development?
  - *Write them out* to return to later
  
- Talk us through how they first got into giving to development
  - *When* did they start donating?
  - Can they talk through the process – how it went from an idea to actually signing up
  - Was there something in particular that stimulated them to start giving
  - Had they seen or heard anything in particular – from friends, in media...
  
- Tell us about how they chose the particular overseas development charity that they give to
  - How far do they feel allegiance to that charity – are they more an overseas development supporter or a Christian Aid/Oxfam... supporter?
  - Do they see significant differences between the different development charities?
  - How would they describe these differences?
  
- Do they imagine that they'll carry on giving to development into the future
- What kinds of things would make them more or less likely to continue?
- Has their allegiance/certainty changed at all over time
  - If so, why?
  - How do they feel the issue has been changing in recent years?
  - Can they cite anything in particular that has changed their perspectives?
  - NB look out for specific media/peer group comments...any mentions of government action or messages

## **Tracing where their perceptions of development assistance come from**

### **Spontaneous thoughts on where views come from**

- Go through each of the associations they have made with development assistance
  - Where do they feel each of these associations has come from?
- Encourage people to try to go back to how each of these impressions has been built? – e.g. ‘Have you seen anything specific that made you think about these charities in that way?’
  - NB look out for and question people when there are signs they are speculating / guessing versus where they have actual specific memories
- Look out NB in each case at how *government action* or inaction comes into these associations – e.g. is there a sense of the government and charities working in combination to change trade agreements?

### **Using the diary to unpick how their views have been influenced**

- Ask them to think back over *the diary* to see if they can see anything there that contributed to their perceptions of the importance (or otherwise) of giving to development
- Ask people to read back over and then show and talk through any personal examples
- Did they see anything around overseas aid specifically?
  - If they *didn't* see anything, why do they feel this was....
    - Is it that there is little material around
    - Or is it more that they aren't noticing it?
  - What kind of material have they seen at other times?
  - If they *did* note material in the diary, what kind of material did they see?
    - What did it make them think / feel?
    - Probe around how it confirmed versus changed their opinion
- Summarise by drawing up a list of all the things that they see as influencing their views of development assistance
  - How would they trace the relationship between these different influences...e.g. how does what media say affect government, and vice versa
  - May be useful to ask respondents to sketch a doodled map of how these areas connect up
- Overall, how would they characterise what they tend to see in the media about overseas aid
- Overall, how would they characterise the way that their friends/family/colleagues/peer group talk about overseas aid

## **Focusing explicitly on government action**

### **Focus in on political statements**

- Explore why political statements or action *have / haven't been mentioned already* – e.g. “It’s interesting you haven’t mentioned anything to do with politics....”
- If not mentioned – why do they feel this was?
  - Do they feel that they notice what the government says or does around this kind of issue?
  - (What about politicians more generally – NB is there a difference between government and broader politicians/opposition?)
- What is their general impression of what the government is:
  - *Saying* about overseas aid
  - *Doing* about overseas
  - (NB do the two things go together? Or do they see a disconnect between words and action)
- Where does this impression come from?
  - Can they cite any examples of where they’ve seen/learned about it?
- Examine this impression of what the government is saying and doing...What does it suggest to them about what *they themselves should do*?
  - Does the government position make you feel more or less likely to give money yourself?
  - Why / why not?
- Are there particular kinds of comment or action that:
  - Influenced them to start donating?
  - Make them feel like they should continue to donate?
  - Or in fact make them feel less likely to carry on donating?
  - Do they have a sense that they and the government are ‘aligned’: what they’re trying to do, and the reason I’m involved are very similar?

### **Introduce a number of examples of government comment / action**

#### *Suggested stimulus material*

- Make Poverty History – newspaper clippings and material from websites
- Africa Commission – newspaper clippings and material from websites
- Gordon Brown visit to Africa – newspaper clippings
- With each of the examples
  - Do they remember seeing anything around this in the past?
  - How does it make them feel about the issue?
  - Does it, or did it, change/develop their views of development assistance
    - Or confirm what they already thought?

- Would it (or did it) make them any more likely or less likely to give to development?
  - Probe why this is
- Recap, once they have seen all the different examples
  - Do these examples confirm or clash with their previous perceptions of what the government is doing?
  - How do they feel now they have seen this material?
  - Have they seen anything that either changes their attitude to development assistance in any way...or confirms their current attitude?

## Topic Guide – Non Donors

### Warm up and introductions

#### Introductions

- Recap on the project: emphasise that this is an independent research project, for Southampton University, who are not affiliated to any particular charity, although they are interested in one particular area, which we'll come to later.
- Introductions from respondents – work life, family life, interests...
- ...if they were given money to make a documentary about anything they liked, what would they make it about....

#### Hopes around the future

- What would they like to be doing in 5 years time?
- How would they like their own life to change?
- How would they *like* the broader world to have changed by this time?
- And how do they *expect* the world to be in 5 years time?

### Exploring media & real life influences on their perceptions

#### Media influences – spontaneous thoughts

- Where do they get most of their current affairs information? What types and 'brands' of media?
- How do they feel this has changed if at all in recent years?
- Which sources of media do they trust most?
  - What is it about these particular types of media, or media brands?

#### Word of mouth – spontaneous thoughts

- Do they talk about current affairs much in everyday life?
  - *When* does it most often come up – what times, social situations?
  - What *kinds* of issues do (and NB don't) get talked about?
- Can they tell us about a *personal example* of a conversation that has changed or particularly influenced their views ....or is this kind of thing hard to recall?
- Do they have people in their social circle who typically tell them about current affairs?
  - What are these people like – e.g. qualities, role in life...?



- What kinds of areas do they talk about?

### **Influences on charity specifically**

- What about charity specifically – versus the broader world of ‘current affairs’....
- Are there certain *media* that they would say influence their perceptions of charities?
  - What have they seen / learned from these media?
  - Can they give any concrete examples of this happening?
  - What is it that makes these sources *trusted*?
- Are there certain *people* who have influenced their perceptions of charity issues
  - Again, can they give us a concrete example?
  - What are these people like? Probe particularly around the types of experience and expertise these figures have
    - E.g. professional expertise / student activists / religious affiliation / expertise through travelling / contact with people from other countries....

### **Examining real life influences in more detail – tracing the diary**

- Think back over their diary – was there anything that surprised or struck them through doing it?
- Did they notice their entries changing as time went on?
- How would they sum up what they noticed / learned about themselves through doing it – was there much to fill in, or not?
- Ask them to look back over the diary for 2 minutes on their own and pull out the points where their views of charities / charity issues were influenced most clearly
- Go round the room and share at least one example each
  - What did they see and where....
  - Why did this stand out?
  - What did it make them think / feel?
  - Did it change / develop / or confirm their previous views?
- Write up on paper together to be able to compare notes later
- Once everyone has given at least one example, go back over and explore for common themes / differences across the group
  - *types* of issue talked about
  - *angle* on the issue....are there certain angles that make an issue feel more relevant, interesting?
  - *way* that issues were talked about....
  - media sources they noticed...are some sources more influential than others (e.g. are they talking mainly about TV, or online, or word of mouth... why is this)
- Explore how far these influences *changed* their attitudes to charity-giving versus *confirmed* their current attitudes
  - Was it more one or the other?

## **Examining different charity areas – development assistance versus other sectors**

### **The language of charity giving**

- Stop and recap on...how would they describe this whole area of giving money to causes?
- Go round generating/checking words that everyone would associate with it... Try to sum up what is the best way of talking about this area – “donations”, “good causes”, “charity”, something else... Why does that word/those words feel right for talking about it?

### **Charity giving current behaviour**

- As a group generate a list of possible areas that you might give money to
- Go round the room going through the different categories
- E.g.
  - Children’s charities*
  - Animal charities*
  - Cancer related charities*
  - AIDS related charities*
  - Other illness related charities*
  - International Development / Overseas Aid*
  - Religious charities*
  - Environmental charities*
  - Etc.
- (NB Use specific charities to help develop the list, but keep the focus on the overall area)
- Ask respondents to ‘map’ the different categories as a group – e.g. “we’d like you to arrange these into a pattern; they can be ordered any way that you like, but think about the similarities and differences between them, the gaps and the connections...”
- Ask them to explain how they have grouped them / differentiate them
  - How would they describe the key differences
- Which of these charities are they are most / least likely to give to?
  - Explore initial explanations behind this: why do they tend to go for certain sectors over others...

### **Examining Donating behaviour – spontaneous versus planned**

- (This may be hard to pull out in detail, but...) Explore whether people have a finite amount they give (e.g. each year), or whether they tend to respond to the causes that they encounter...
  - how planned versus spontaneous does their giving tend to be?
- Where it is *spontaneous* what are the kinds of things that have prompted them to make a unplanned donations?
  - Can they give us a concrete example of an occasion where this happened – did they see or hear something specific that triggered them to make the donation
  - Obviously, look out for and probe any mentions of media/peer advice...and any links back to *government/political* comment or action here

### **Differences between development assistance and other types of charity**

- Focus in on development versus the charity sector/s that they give most to
- What are the strengths / weaknesses of each of these areas – write up to return to later
- What were the main reasons for giving to their current forms of charity – tell us about what persuaded them to sign up/give regularly
  
- What are the main barriers to giving to development?
  - *Write them out* to return to later
- May be useful to look at the question the other way around: what would make them more likely to give?
  - Imagine say it is 2007 and you are donating regularly to overseas aid – what has had to change to create this different situations
  
- May also be useful here to use a more projective exercise like a Gestalt room exercise to probe behind people's attitudes
  - E.g. *"I'd like you to close your eyes and imagine that you are walking down a corridor, as you go, you pass door after door, after a while you come to a door which is marked with [the most salient charity area] I want you to imagine you go into the room and think through without talking what is in there. What do you see, hear, feel, sense, smell, taste and experience in that room" ...Repeat with the Overseas Aid room....Ask the respondents to feed back – what did they find/feel like in each of these rooms...Probe around the different senses – what sounds, images, sensations, smell/tastes, ideas do they associate with each*

### **Tracing where perceptions come from**

#### **Spontaneous thoughts on where views come from**

- Go through each of the associations they have made with development assistance.
- Where do they feel each has come from?
- Encourage people to try to go back to how each of these impressions has been built? – e.g. 'Have you seen anything specific that made you think about these charities in that way?'
  - NB look out for and question people when there are signs they are speculating / guessing versus where they have actual specific memories
- Look out NB in each case at how *government action* or inaction comes into the barriers that people are talking about – e.g. is there a sense that government in the UK is adding to perceived corruption?

#### **Using the diary to unpick how their views have been influenced**

- Ask them to think back over *the diary* to see if they can see anything there that contributed to their perceptions of the importance (or otherwise) of giving to development.
- Ask people to read back over and then show and talk through any personal examples

- Did they see anything around overseas aid specifically?
  - If not, why do they feel this was....
    - Is it that there is little material around
    - Or is it more that they aren't noticing it?
  - What kind of material have they seen at other times?
    - How would they characterise what they tend to see?
  - If yes, what kind of material did they see?
    - What did it make them think / feel?
    - Probe around how it confirmed versus changed their opinion
- Summarise by drawing up a list of all the things that they see as influencing their views of ODA
  - How would they trace the relationship between these different influences...e.g. how does what media say affect government, and vice versa
  - May be useful to ask respondents to sketch a doodled map of how these areas connect up

## **Focusing explicitly on government action**

### **Focus in on political statements**

- Explore why political statements or action *have / haven't been mentioned already* – e.g. “It’s interesting you haven’t mentioned anything to do with politics....”
- If not mentioned – why do they feel this was?
  - Do they feel that they notice what the government says or does around this kind of issue?
  - (Or politicians more generally – NB is there a difference between government and politicians/opposition?)
- What is their general impression of what the government is:
  - *Saying* about overseas aid
  - *Doing* about overseas
  - (NB do the two things go together? Or do they see a disconnect between words and action)
- Where does this impression come from?
  - Can they cite any examples?
- Examine this impression of what the government is saying and doing...What does it suggest to them about what they themselves should do?
  - Does the government position make you feel more or less likely to give money yourself?
  - Why / why not?
- Are there particular kinds of comment or action that make you:

- Feel more likely to give?
- Feel less likely to give?
- Why is this in each case?
- Keep probing NB for any *concrete* examples of noticing something the government has said or done?

### **Introduce a number of examples of government comment / action**

#### *Suggested stimulus material*

- Make Poverty History – newspaper clippings and material from websites
- Africa Commission – newspaper clippings and material from websites
- Gordon Brown visit to Africa – newspaper clippings
- With each of the examples
  - Do they remember seeing anything around this in the past?
  - How does it make them feel about the issue in question?
  - Does it change/develop their views of development assistance?
    - or confirm what they already thought?
  - Would it make them any more likely or less likely to give to development?
    - Probe why this is
- Review once they have seen all the different examples
  - Do they confirm or clash with their previous perceptions of what the government is doing?
  - How do they feel now they have seen this material?
  - Have they seen anything that would change their attitude to development assistance in any way?

### **Examining the detailed areas around development assistance**

#### **Areas to probe: Who is responsible for tackling overseas development?**

- Who do they feel takes most action around overseas development
  - Probe around government / charities / informal groups / business.....
  - Explore around who they think *should be* responsible versus who *is* most responsible?
- Where do their impressions of who is responsible at the moment come from?
  - Can they give us a *concrete example* of something that made them think say that government or business was / wasn't doing enough in this area?
  - Was there anything from the *diary* for instance?
- What is the perceived relationship between development charities and the government?
- And the *ideal* relationship
  - What should each be doing / how should they combine?
- Look explicitly at our key issue

- Are they more likely to give money to charities if they are seen to be putting into action a message that chimes with national government policy?
- *Or* are they more likely to give if they see a charity as the waspish outsider, who harries the government into taking action?

#### **Areas to probe – Trade versus Aid**

- Explore role of trade versus aid
- Which do they feel is more influential and important?
- Point out and explore why one has been talked about more than the other – e.g. “You haven’t really talked about fair trade, is that because it’s not as important”
- Do they buy fair trade?
  - Is their behaviour changing around fair trade?
- What do they feel the government is more involved in right now?
- Where *should* it be more involved?
- What role do they see the UK and western governments playing in promoting / or hindering / fair trade?
  - E.g. which do you feel Tony Blair/Gordon Brown believes in more?
- Would people be more willing to give to development if they saw it as more trade focused than aid focused
  - E.g. levelling the playing field around trade system versus providing financial support?

#### **Areas to probe – corruption**

- Where does this image of corruption come from?
  - Can they trace it back to particular stories, images, media....
- What role does government play here?
  - Have they seen the government saying or doing anything that might reduce corruption?
  - Or do they see government policy as having no effect...or even being complicit in corruption?
- Is there any particular example – or type of – government or media activity that makes them think that corruption is a problem?
- And conversely, are there other kinds of government activity or media reporting that has made them think that corruption may be being cleaned up / is less of an issue?

#### **Areas to look out for and probe – global warming**

- NB has this been talked about spontaneously
- Are people’s views here strongly felt / do they seem to be in flux?
- How if at all does it affect how they see problems in Africa / developing countries generally?
- Do they see a relationship between the two problems – versus one over-riding the other?
- Is there any evidence that development assistance is being reframed by global warming concerns – e.g. questioning fair-trade as the issue of ‘food miles’ continues to grow

- How would they compare government messages around global warming versus overseas aid
  - Where does their priority seem to be?
  - Do they have a different approach to the two issues?

### **Last thoughts**

- How would they sum up the government's message around overseas development
- What could the government do or say that would make them (even relatively) more likely to give to a development charity?
- Thanks and close

## **Appendix 3: Stimulus Material**

### **List of Stimuli Used**

1. Official Material from Africa Commission
2. Press Coverage from Africa Commission: The Guardian, The Sun
3. Press Coverage from G8 Gleneagles Summit:
4. Press Coverage from Gordon Brown visit to Africa April 2006:



# AFRICA COMMISSION – OFFICIAL MATERIAL

## The Commission for Africa



In early 2004, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, established the Commission for Africa. The 17 members of the Commission, 9 from Africa and all working in their individual and personal capacities, published their report "Our Common Interest" on 11 March 2005.

The Commission's report is addressed to the leaders of the G8 and to the wider international community. It is also addressed to the people of Africa and the world as a whole. The measures proposed by the Commission constitute a coherent package to achieve the Commission's goal of a strong and prosperous Africa.

The Commission for Africa was launched by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair in February 2004. The aim of the Commission was to take a fresh look at Africa's past and present and the international community's role in its development path. The work set out to be comprehensive and challenging, addressing difficult questions where necessary. Five formal objectives were established to guide the Commission's work. It was tasked with finalising its report by early 2005 and producing clear recommendations for the G8, EU and other wealthy countries as well as African countries.

### Objectives of the Commission

The following five formal objectives for the Commission were agreed at the first meeting in May 2004.

1. To generate new ideas and action for a strong and prosperous Africa, using the 2005 British presidencies of the G8 and the European Union as a platform;
2. To support the best of existing work on Africa, in particular the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union, and help ensure this work achieves its goals;

3. To help deliver implementation of existing international commitments towards Africa;
4. To offer a fresh and positive perspective for Africa and its diverse culture in the 21st century, which challenges unfair perceptions and helps deliver changes; and
5. To understand and help fulfil African aspirations for the future by listening to Africans

# PRESS COVERAGE – AFRICA COMMISSION

## Blair challenges world to end 'obscenity' of African poverty

Sarah Left  
Friday March 11, 2005  
[Guardian Unlimited](#)



Gordon Brown, Tony Blair, and Bob Geldof at the launch of the Commission for Africa report. Photograph: Stephen Hird/Reuters

The prime minister, Tony Blair, today challenged the world to help to end the poverty, conflict and disease plaguing Africa. He called for huge increases in aid, debt relief and anti-corruption measures but admitted he still had to convince wealthy nations to pay their share.

"There can be no excuse, no defence, no justification for the plight of millions of our fellow beings in Africa today. There should be nothing that stands in our way of changing it. That is the simple message from the report published today," said Mr Blair, unveiling the findings of his Africa Commission at the British Museum in central London.

The 400-page report, *Our Common Interest*, calls on the international community to immediately double foreign aid to Africa, to \$50bn (£26bn), and make fighting Aids a priority. It sets 100% debt cancellation as a goal and urges rich nations to drop trade barriers that hurt poor countries. The report calls for a partnership with African leaders, who it says must move faster toward democracy, tackle corruption and end the conflicts that block aid from producing results.

Mr Blair said he hoped the report would be accepted worldwide as a blueprint for an African renaissance. He has made helping Africa a priority for Britain's presidencies this year of both the EU and the G8 group of wealthiest nations.

However, Mr Blair does not yet have a commitment from developed nations, in particular the G8, to fund the \$25bn annual increase in aid the report calls

for by 2010. When asked whether other G8 nations had bought into the report's action plan, Mr Blair admitted: "What I'm sure of is I'll do my level best to deliver it. I can't promise more than that."

"In a world where prosperity is increasing and more people are sharing each year in this growing wealth, it is an obscenity that should haunt our daily thoughts that 4 million children in Africa will die this year before their fifth birthday," Mr Blair said, calling for a new partnership between the developed world and Africa "that goes beyond the old donor and recipient relationship".

"If we fail to act we will betray the future not only of hundreds, millions of children in Africa but of our own children, too. It is unthinkable that we should do so," he said.

Africans and others working to solve the continent's problems said the challenge was to implement the report's recommendations.

"Unless we deliver, it'll just be another report," said Myles Wickstead, the director of the Commission for Africa.

The 17 members of the commission, chaired by Mr Blair and including Bob Geldof, the Live Aid activist and musician, and the Ethiopian prime minister, Meles Zenawi, have acknowledged that other high profile efforts to rescue Africa have foundered.

The chancellor, Gordon Brown, spelled out the results of previous failed initiatives. The promise of the millennium development goals to halve poverty in Africa by 2015, he said, would not be met on current trends until 2150, and the promise to halve maternal and infant mortality by 2015 would not be met until 2165.

"Africans have long known the virtues of patience, but the world should know that 150 years is too long to wait for justice," he said.

Mr Geldof praised the report and the personal commitment to African development shown by Mr Blair and Mr Brown. In a speech peppered with expletives, he urged the British government to convince the leaders of developed nations, particularly the US president, George Bush, and the French president, Jacques Chirac, to commit money to the project.

"Tony and Gordon have to ring up George and say: 'Do this. It's going to cost you fuck-all. Do it for me,'" Mr Geldof said, causing the prime minister to flinch.

Mr Blair has said he hopes the report will energise a crucial round of trade talks when the World Trade Organisation meets in Hong Kong in December. The report urged wealthy nations to drop "politically antiquated, economically illiterate, environmentally destructive and ethically indefensible" trade barriers that hurt poor countries.

But it also said African countries needed to drop barriers that blocked trade within the continent. It said billions of dollars siphoned off by corrupt African officials and now held in western banks should be returned, estimating that the stolen assets amount to more than half the continent's total national debt.

"This report can be a rallying call for a generation that will no longer tolerate the obscenity of extreme poverty in Africa - or it could end up gathering dust," said Adrian Lovett of the anti-poverty group Oxfam. "It's now up to world leaders to rise to the challenge, to take long-overdue action and make this a breakthrough year for Africa."

Tom Cargill, Africa programme coordinator at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, said Mr Blair had failed to engage other G8 nations in realising his African goals. The failure to have Germany represented on the commission - given that country's upcoming presidency of the G8 in 2007 - showed a lack of continuity and long-term thinking, he said.

He also wanted to see more radical changes. "If they were going to do something bold, they should call for an end to all agricultural subsidies in North America and Europe and produce a roadmap of how to do it," he said.

Commissioner Anna Tibaijuka, of Tanzania, gave a sobering account of failed international promises. She described growing up and seeing the promise of independence squandered and successive UN promises to commit to Africa founder. She said that, in 1980, the UN called upon the developed world to commit 0.7% of annual income to aid for Africa, the same call being made in Mr Blair's report. It never happened.

That spectre of failed promises obviously haunted Mr Blair, who said he feared the judgment of future generations, who would ask: "How could wealthy people so aware of such suffering just turn away and busy themselves with other things?"

## U2 star Bono backs Blair



Bono ... is focussed on helping the poor in Africa

### By SUN ONLINE REPORTER

U2 superstar Bono has backed Tony Blair's attempts to try and help eradicate poverty in Africa.

And the singer said that his role was to persuade politicians to take the difficult decisions necessary to achieve that.

Bono told a press conference: "I suppose my job as a rock star and activist is to bring applause when people get it right and make their lives a misery when they don't.

"I think I have some use here to try to encourage people to take some unpopular decisions at home and do the right thing on the global stage.

"These are expensive choices people have to make if they want to do the right thing for Africa."

Bono added that Britain's presidency of the G8 group of leading economic nations offered an "historic opportunity" to help improve the lives of others.

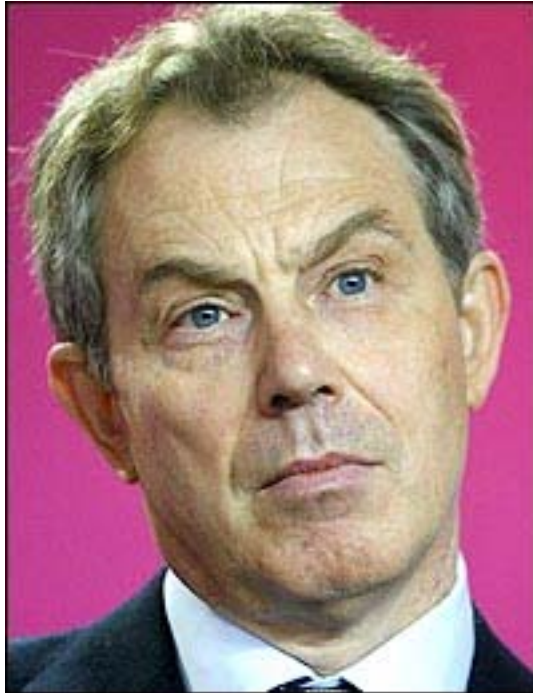
Blair has established an African Commission with African leaders to stamp out poverty.

Bono said: "I truly believe that the Africa Commission has the chance to change more lives."

- [Corny Alicia goes bowling](#)
- [Ozzy to headline festival](#)
- [Will & Jada's music bond](#)
- [Walford return for Babs](#)
- [Emma: I use Mel's sex toy](#)
- [Chris in a Coldsweat](#)
- [Lee's not Blue for gig](#)
- [Delta's fickle finger](#)
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[FULL BIZARRE INDEX >>](#)

# Blair plan to save Africa



Blueprint ... Tony Blair

**By NIC CECIL**  
**Political Correspondent**

[FULL NEWS INDEX >>](#)

TONY Blair today unveils a 10-year masterplan to save Africa from the horror of Aids, famine and war.

His global blueprint is the most comprehensive for at least a generation.

But the PM faces a battle to persuade wealthy nations such as America and Japan to back an extra £26billion a year in aid by 2015.

Some cash could come from a new air ticket tax on millions of tourists.

The Commission for Africa Report brands the gap between the world's rich and poor as the "greatest scandal of our age".



Desperate ... starving child in Sudan

It highlights the plight of a Kenyan woman set to die from Aids within five years because she had to sell unprotected sex to buy food to save her starving baby.

Mr Blair said: "This report brings us face to face with one of the biggest challenges of our generation.

"It shows what we need to do to kick-start Africa."

Wealthy nations are urged to boost aid by £13billion by 2010 and by a further £13billion by 2015, if progress is being made.

This works out at just 5p a day for every man, woman and child in Africa.

The PM will stress cash is needed now to meet UN goals to fight extreme poverty, Aids and child deaths and to ensure all kids get primary education.

But the Commission warns that African leaders must tackle corruption, which is rife in their countries — or the extra cash would be wasted.

The 461-page report is being launched in London, New York and the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

Live Aid organiser Bob Geldof sat on the Commission.

He said: "The poor of Africa are allowed no voice and have no means to change things. But we do."



# PRESS COVERAGE – BROWN VISIT TO AFRICA

If Mozambique's children could vote, it would be President Brown

**By Neil Tweedie in Maputo**

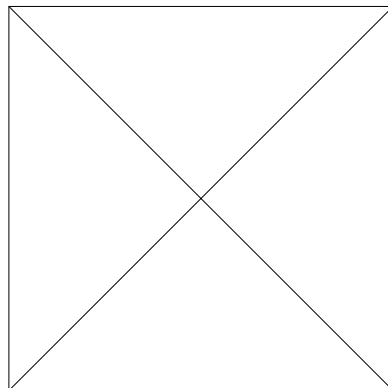
(Filed: 11/04/2006)

In truth, Armando did not know who Gordon Brown was. There was a long, smiling pause before the young student ventured an answer.

"He's the president?"

Of?

advertisement



"England?"

Mr Brown - who would happily settle for prime minister - was a few feet away, sweating steadily and smiling broadly as the pupils of the Mozambique People's Liberation Forces Primary School greeted him with a barrage of drumming.

"Viva!" they shouted, with clenched-fist salutes.

All a bit Old Labour, or rather Old Frelimo, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer didn't mind. He was in his element, doing at last what he would have been doing for years had he not been suckered into making that rash agreement with Tony Blair in Granita.

He seemed genuinely happy to be immersed in a sea of expectant, quizzical faces, publicising his [campaign to ensure that every child in the world has a primary school place](#) by 2015.

The Chancellor, who travelled to Maputo and back to London in 36 hours, packed

a visit to the school, a teacher training college and an agricultural research centre - and a meeting with Nelson Mandela - into his seven hours in the Mozambican capital.

It didn't really matter whether the goal of universal primary education was attainable or not.

If a week is a long time in politics, a decade is eternity. Mr Brown is 55 and will be two or three years from whatever new retirement age he chooses for the nation when 2015 swings by. No one is going to remember whether he succeeded or not.

What mattered yesterday as he toured the dilapidated, empty sheds that passed for classrooms was not some far-off goal, but that Mr Brown should be seen as a human being and prime minister in waiting.

The Labour leadership was never mentioned on the visit, but it hung in the humid sub-tropical air. President Mandela helped the Chancellor's prospects, talking of "my friend Gordon Brown" and that "fine minister" as he took time off from retirement in his 88th year to support the campaign for universal education.

Mr Brown responded by praising his "inspirational presence" before the two men strolled out into the manicured gardens of the presidential palace.

There was an air of optimism as Mr Brown's party flew out from London, in contrast to the wearied atmosphere of Tony Blair's grander tour of Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia just over a week previously.

Mr Brown was awash with ideas on his new pet topic, from a multi-national education service "sans frontiers" that might be deployed to failed states, to exchange programmes allowing British and African teachers and pupils to experience each other's worlds.

Mr Brown announced yesterday that £8.5 billion of aid would flow from Britain to Third World schools over the next 10 years, with other rich nations having to contribute six times that amount if the 2015 target was to be reached.

In return, countries receiving aid for teacher training and school building must produce viable 10-year plans to improve their education systems. "In the 19th century the issue was what we could do to Africa; in the 20th what we could do for Africa; and now in this century the issue is what Africa, empowered, can do for herself," he said.

Hilary Benn, the International Development Secretary and arguably the more relevant minister on such a trip, was relegated to a supporting role as Mr Brown bestrode the international stage.

Fairly or unfairly, Mr Blair will probably be remembered for bombing or invading obscure parts of the world. Mr Brown intends to be remembered for educating them.

# Brown vows £8.5bn in crusade to educate world's poor

**By Neil Tweedie**

(Filed: 10/04/2006)

[Your view: World poverty or the NHS?](#)

Gordon Brown will commit Britain to spending £8.5 billion over 10 years as part of a plan to provide every child in the world with a primary school place by 2015.



Nelson Mandela is meeting Gordon Brown in Mozambique to launch the project

The Chancellor is using a visit to the impoverished African state of Mozambique to call on other developed countries to spend \$100 billion (£57 billion) during the next decade to create 200 million primary school places in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The £8.5 billion donation follows a promise by Mr Brown at the G8 summit in Gleneagles last year to raise British spending on foreign aid to 0.7 per cent of GDP.

Currently, 100 million children go without any formal education, a number that will double if no action is taken, as the world population grows.

Mr Brown, who will be accompanied by Hilary Benn, the International Development Secretary, will tell his audience in Mozambique: "It is one of the world's greatest scandals that, even today, 100 million children do not go to school - denied one of the most basic rights of all: the right to education.

It is no longer acceptable to a civilised world that less than two thirds of Africa's children complete a primary education."

The whistle-stop visit, during which Mr Brown will meet Nelson Mandela and the president of Mozambique, is another step in his evolution from Chancellor to prime minister-in-waiting.

His adoption of universal access to basic education as a personal political goal is part of a steady process aimed at widening his popular appeal and countering Tony Blair's dominance in the international arena.

Emphasising the need to deliver on promises to end Third World poverty made at Gleneagles, he will say: "Our demand is that promises must be kept, school by school, class by class and child by child.

"To enable the poorest countries to put in place the plans to provide free education to every child, and not just for one year but for every year, the richest countries must keep the 2005 promises on aid and provide long-term funding necessary to finance them."

However, it remains to be seen whether Mr Brown can persuade other rich nations, particularly the United States, to sign up to the project. While substantial, the British contribution is only 15 per cent of the amount required to eradicate educational deprivation in the Third World.

The Chancellor said he would be using a round of meetings with fellow finance ministers, including a European summit in Vienna this weekend, to push his case.

Mozambique illustrates the magnitude of the task - one million children in the country do not receive a primary school education.

Despite some improvements, the pupil-teacher ratio in the country is 74 to one.

HIV is one of the most serious factors affecting education in Africa. Last year, one million pupils in the continent lost their teachers as a result of the virus.

# PRESS COVERAGE – G8

## G8 leaders agree \$50bn aid boost

The G8 summit has ended with an agreement to boost aid for developing countries by \$50bn (£28.8bn).

The debt of the 18 poorest nations in Africa is also being cancelled. On trade, there was a commitment to work towards cutting subsidies and tariffs.

On climate change, Prime Minister Tony Blair said an agreement had always been unlikely, but that the US now accepted global warming was an issue.

But reaction was mixed, with some calling it "vastly disappointing".

"The people have roared but the G8 has whispered," said Kumi Naidoo, chair of the Global Call to Action against Poverty.

### 'Progress'

But Live 8 organiser Bob Geldof spoke of a "great day".

"Never before have so many people forced a change of policy onto a global agenda. If anyone had said eight weeks ago will we get a doubling of aid, will we get a deal on debt, people would have said 'no'," Mr Geldof said.

 OPEN



World leaders gather as the G8 summit in Gleneagles ends

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He added that he gave the G8 summit "10 out of 10 on aid, eight out of 10 on debt".

Irish rock star and fellow anti-poverty campaigner Bono, praised the agreement to give universal access to Aids drugs.

"600,000 Africans, mostly children, will remember this G8 summit at Gleneagles because they will be around to remember this summit, and they wouldn't have otherwise," said Bono.



**“ I believed that the G8 leaders would make momentous steps to address this injustice but they only made small steps ”**

[View from Oxfam worker](#)

Key points:

- Mr Blair said trade discussions in Hong Kong later this year should yield an end date to agricultural subsidies.
- Britain is to host a 1 November meeting on climate change, to assess progress.
- Mr Blair said "only people who can change Africa ultimately are the Africans".
- \$3bn agreed for Palestinian Authority for investment in infrastructure.
- Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo described the deal as a "success".
- G8 commits to training 20,000 peacekeepers for Africa.
- African leaders to commit to democracy and good governance as part of the deal.
- Debts of the 18 poorest countries to be forgiven.
- Universal access to anti-HIV drugs in Africa by 2010.

Summing up the G8 meeting, Mr Blair acknowledged: "It isn't all everyone wanted, but it is progress."

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said the G8 deal represented a "good day", but that it was only "a beginning".

"The fight to end poverty is just starting," said Mr Annan.

On climate change, Mr Blair said: "If it is impossible to bring America into the consensus on tackling the issue... we will never ensure the huge emerging economies, who are going to consume more energy than any other part of the world... are part of the dialogue."

He said however that agreement had been reached that climate change was a problem, human activity contributed to it and it had to be tackled with urgency.

### 'Face of death'

Earlier the prime minister had said that in the wake of Thursday's attacks, the communique was the "definitive expression of our collective will to act in the face of death".

"It has a pride and a hope and a humanity that can lift the shadow of terrorism," he added.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) remained critical of the G8 deal.

Some described the talks on climate change as a "significant lost opportunity".

G8 leaders have indicated the statement represents progress but Stephen Tindale, a spokesperson for Greenpeace, said: "The G8 has committed to nothing new but at least we haven't moved backwards on the environment."

The Sustainable Energy and Economy Network, a worldwide coalition of environmental and development campaigners, said: "Urgent action is now required to substantially reduce emissions, reduce fossil fuel dependence and to protect people around the world, especially the vulnerable, the poor and disappearing nations."

#### G8 SUMMIT RESULTS

Stalemate on climate change as US position barely budges  
G8 nations agree to full debt cancellation for 18 countries, while African countries call for debt relief for all Africa  
EU members pledge to reach a collective aid target of 0.56% of GDP by 2010, and 0.7% by 2015  
The G8 agrees a \$50bn (£28.8bn) boost to aid  
A 'signal' for a new deal on trade  
Universal access to anti-HIV drugs in Africa by 2010

[G8: The view from Africa](#)  
[Analysis: A successful G8?](#)

[The G8 Gleneagles](#)  
[Communique \(330K\)](#)  
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#### WHAT IS THE G8?

##### Name

Group of eight major industrialised states, inc Russia

##### Members

Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK, US

## More to do to aid Africa

(Filed: 09/07/2005)

The conclusion of the G8 summit in Gleneagles yesterday marked an African apotheosis for Tony Blair. For a consummate political operator, the Prime Minister has taken a surprising interest in a continent which was always unlikely to have much impact on the British electorate.

This interest was evident soon after he came to power in 1997 through his support for the deposed, democratically elected president of Sierra Leone, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. In 2000, British troops intervened in this small West African country, rescued a failing United Nations mission and captured the rebel leader Foday Sankoh. In so doing, they brought to an end a notoriously barbaric civil war that had cost some 200,000 lives.

Labour's commitment to Africa was further demonstrated with its backing for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad), launched by the Organisation of African Unity in 2001, and through a diplomatic initiative, with France, to bring peace to the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the meantime, the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, has led a campaign for debt relief for the poorest countries, most of which are African.

Mr Blair's most ambitious project, however, has been to commission a report on lifting Africa out of poverty. Published in March, *Our Common Interest* suggests nearly doubling aid to Africa to around \$50 billion by 2010. It is that which formed the centrepiece of the Gleneagles communiqué yesterday. The Prime Minister, with sterling support from Bob Geldof and his fellow musicians, is to be congratulated on drawing world attention to a neglected continent and securing fresh commitments to it from the G8.

Yet there is a danger that increased aid and debt relief will appear patronising, a latter-day version of the white man's burden, without corresponding reforms in the developed world. Here, Mr Blair was on shakier ground. Having failed to commit his G8 colleagues to a fixed date for doing away with farm subsidies, he expressed the hope that the Doha Round of trade negotiations would agree to their elimination by 2010, at a meeting in Hong Kong this December.

Given the difficulties already experienced by the round, that seems wishful thinking. Yet the removal of subsidies by the European Union and the United States would have a much more beneficial impact on African economies than increased aid.

**Mr Blair's persistent championing of Africa has, with the Live8 concerts and the Gleneagles summit, paid off politically. His success is deserved. But it still has to be translated into effective aid programmes and furthered by abolition of an iniquitous system of agricultural subsidies.**