

## THE PUBLIC AND DEVELOPMENT: MOBILISING TO REDUCE GLOBAL POVERTY

Thank you for the warm welcome.

I would like to thank the University Of Bradford for inviting to me to give this lecture. I know that DFID has had connections with the University for many years and I am delighted to be here. And a little in awe to be presenting to such a fine collection of development thinkers.

Today, I want to share with you my thoughts about why reducing global poverty is one of the major challenges for all of us here in the UK and why we need to do more to make the public aware of this.

In the course of this lecture, I will argue:

1. that what happens in poor countries impacts on us here in the UK, affecting our quality of life, safety, health and security
2. that the UK Government is making unprecedented efforts to lift people out of poverty
3. that we need to wake the public up to this fact, build their support for our work, be more accountable to them and help people get personally involved.

My aim today is that by the end of my talk you will not only have a better understanding of what the Government is achieving on your behalf to reduce global poverty but that you will feel a sense of pride in the role your country is playing. In addition I hope you will feel passionate enough to take personal steps to both hold the government to account on its promises and to make a contribution to the global efforts yourself.

Since this government came to power in 1997 there has been a marked step change in the UK's commitment to International Development – DFID became a Department in its own right, with a single mission of alleviating world poverty. By 2010, this Labour government will have trebled the aid budget in real terms since 1997; the Tories halved it when they were in power. We are focussed on delivering the Millennium Development Goals agreed at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, which commit developed and developing countries alike to pursue the eradication of poverty and promotion of a greater equality of opportunity around the globe.<sup>1</sup>

So, let us start from the beginning. Why does the UK have an international development programme at all? Of course, we work to reduce poverty overseas because it is the right thing to do. But as an intellectual argument, is this enough?

The Government's international development efforts are motivated by our desire to see **social justice – on a global scale**. Social justice goes hand in hand with economic

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<sup>1</sup> The MDGs are (i) [Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger](#); (ii) [Achieve universal primary education](#); (iii) [Promote gender equality and empower women](#); (iv) [Reduce child mortality](#); (v) [Improve maternal health](#); (vi) [Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases](#); (vii) [Ensure environmental sustainability](#); (viii) [Develop a global partnership for development](#)

development as social justice and change can only come about if a country has the economic prosperity to foster it. It is our economic stability as the world's fourth largest economy that enables us to invest so heavily in international development. We have put huge efforts into achieving both greater economic prosperity and improved social justice here in the UK since 1997, and our international development work can be seen as an extension of those efforts – the UK taking its global citizenship responsibilities seriously as a key actor in today's global society.

Social justice is about how we use the resources we have to create fairer societies. The more economic growth and resources we generate, the greater the change we can bring about. But the change that we achieve reflects conscious decisions about priorities. It doesn't just happen. And this Government has chosen to prioritise the reduction of global poverty.

Almost a billion people worldwide – out of a population of over 6 billion - live in extreme poverty. During a recent visit to Ghana, which is arguably one of the more successful developing countries that DFID works in, I was shocked to discover just how many women still die during pregnancy and childbirth, and how many children don't live past their fifth birthday. Globally, one woman dies every minute in child birth – this stark statistic brings home the importance of our mission. Responding to help alleviate such human suffering and fight social injustice across the globe is something that we are wholly committed to.

We are lucky enough to have a Prime Minister who is passionately committed to international development too. That's why the government has committed to meeting the United Nation's target of spending 0.7% of the Gross National Income (GNI) on aid by 2013 (the UN "gold standard") - two years ahead of the agreed European target of 2015.

### **[SECTION 1: HOW POVERTY OVERSEAS IMPACTS ON PEOPLE IN THE UK]**

So, we reduce poverty because it is part of our work to create social justice. Reducing poverty also helps create an environment in which economic prosperity can grow. That, in turn, can advance social justice and this completes the morale case, putting it in simple terms.

But it is also crucial to show why reducing poverty in other countries matters to people in the UK; how is helping to create just, prosperous and secure societies in poor countries is of any relevance to the average British person? For most people in the UK, this will be the key factor in leading them to give their full consent to the UK government's international development.

So, again I ask why does what happens in poor countries matter to people here in the UK?

We all recognise that the world is becoming increasingly interdependent. For example, the effect of **green house gas** emissions knows no national boundaries. Even if tonight we ceased emitting CO<sub>2</sub> in the UK, within two years it would all be replaced by

industrial and economic development in China. This is an example of a global issue that we have to deal with at international level. And our efforts to help developing countries pursue low carbon economic growth will help offset the impacts of global warming worldwide, including here at home. This is becoming an increasingly important part of our work at DFID, as I will explain later.

**Illegal drugs** are having a devastating effect on the lives of many people in the UK across our communities, and, of course we must seek to stop those who trade in illegal substances and ruin lives in the course. But to get to the heart of the problem, to actually stop the production of these drugs in the first place, demands that we engage in the debate around international development. We need to help make it possible for the poor farmer who grows these drugs in a country like Afghanistan to earn a reasonable income from other crops. In countries like Afghanistan, it is therefore straight forward to see how poverty there impacts on the lives of UK citizens.

It is not just the source of drugs but the whole racket that needs to be cracked down on – the crime, violence and human cost of the drugs trade. That is why we are working across government with the FCO and Home Office to counter drug trafficking and people trafficking.

Our international development work also helps **make the world more stable**, a world that is safer for all citizens. War, conflict and terrorism are often deeply rooted in poverty and have ripples of effect that are felt right across the world in economic, political and human terms no matter where they take place. Ungoverned parts of the world where there is no rule of law can create havens for crime and insecurity – the effects of which can reach us here.

Similarly, **disease** knows no international borders. Avian influenza, or “bird ‘flu” is an example of a problem in largely developing or middle income countries that has potentially very significant implications for us here. Our efforts to help the affected countries counter and prepare for cases of bird ‘flu can be viewed as sensibly protecting our own communities as well as theirs.

## **[SECTION 2: UK EFFORTS TO LIFT PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY]**

I will return later to the issue of the interconnectedness between the UK and the rest of the world. But I want to take the opportunity here to talk a little more about the shape our international development efforts take. Given the urgency of the task and the importance of the cause, what are we doing about it?

DFID’s enduring mission is to reduce poverty, using the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. Some real progress has been made. For example, the proportion of the world’s population living on less than a dollar a day has fallen from a nearly a third to a fifth. That’s around a billion people lifted out of extreme poverty. But, as many of you are undoubtedly aware, the reality is that we are not moving fast enough to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

I have been struck by how complex and intertwined the issues are, and also by the extent to which the needs of individual countries differ. Deciding priorities has not been an easy task. The UK Government ensures that DFID has a growing budget, but it

can't do everything and the new Ministerial team has had to make some tough decisions on what would be the focus of efforts over the coming years.

In terms of building on the past ten years of activity, many areas of work remain as much a priority as ever. For example, DFID's clearly stated commitment to **good governance and to improving basic services** remains high on our agenda. Active citizen engagement, effective democratic processes, and the right to participate are essential in the fight against poverty. We will shortly be announcing the winners under a new Governance and Transparency Fund. This new fund will make £130m available to civil society groups in developing countries, helping them to hold their governments to account for improved services.

Another key priority remains the **elimination of child poverty** - something that is central to the achievement of the MDGs. With over 600 million children worldwide still living in absolute poverty on less than one dollar a day, an estimated 1 in 4, there's a long way to go. Our commitment to Education and Health remains steadfast: We will spend £8.5 billion on education to support children and young people's learning. In health, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health remain lynch-pins of our work.

One of the people I met recently in Ghana was Victoria Azumah, who has spent 31 years working as a midwife. During her career, she has delivered literally thousands of babies and has seen a lot of change. But the health district that she works in still has only four health clinics to serve 130,000 people and only around a third of women give birth with a professional health worker at their side.

**Gender equality** remains a key priority. The future of development depends on women because without women's economic and political contribution, we will not meet any of the MDGs – let alone MDG 3 on gender equality. We will not be able to face the challenges of the future without enabling women to be part of the solution to those challenges. We are working to develop better bilateral programmes in support for women; we have launched a gender action plan; we are promoting women's political participation and representation in parliamentary and local elections as well as working with the private sector, civil society and the media to raise women's voice in governance.

Last month in Ghana again, I saw for myself what an impact women's groups can have on political change. Domestic violence there is a significant problem and as many as 27% of women have been victims of sexual violence. Intensive lobbying by DFID supported women's groups led to a Domestic Violence Act being passed last year. I visited one of the domestic violence support centres in Accra and saw what a difference it has made to women's lives to know that they have rights.

My experience has taught me that there is a double challenge associated with gender equality: firstly getting women into politics; and secondly ensuring that women's issues are brought into the mainstream of politics. The first involves providing women with the education, skills and support to help them engage; and the second involves ensuring that accountability for addressing gender inequities cannot be demanded only from women representatives.

But whilst many of the Government's development priorities will be familiar to those of you who have attended previous lectures, there are new priorities too. Four priority policy areas have emerged as requiring particular attention over the next few years if our aid is to have maximum impact.

First, we need to question whether the **international institutions** – the World Bank, the United Nations and the IMF - created shortly after the Second World War, can deal with the world as it exists in the early part of the 21st century. We believe that reform is needed. We plan to spend more of our budget through multilateral organisations in the coming years. But we must not only maximise our contribution. We must also aim to maximise our influence to bring reform within these multilateral institutions.

Second, we know that **Growth and Trade** are necessary to reduce poverty – and to sustain hard won development gains, locking them in and making them sustainable. Developing countries have long argued the importance of growth and trade for lifting their people out of poverty. And recent indications on this front have been encouraging, showing trends of truly global growth. Indeed in Africa, fifteen countries, representing a third of the continent's population, are growing today at more than 4% a year.

No country has reduced poverty in the last 30 years without also increasing trade. That is why trade is so vital. My colleagues right across the UK government are working to align our aid, debt relief and trade policies to tackle poverty. With the UK's number one trade priority as delivering the promise of the Doha round. Notwithstanding all the difficulties we must continue to work to fulfil the promise of a truly development oriented round.

Third, **Climate change** is arguably the most serious concern facing the global community today and another critical area of DFID's work. The challenge facing the development community is two-fold. Firstly, we must ensure that steps are taken to mitigate against further climate change. The agreement reached at Bali on a roadmap for achieving a climate change deal by the end 2009 represented a landmark in this respect. Secondly, we must help countries to adapt to the effects climate change is already having. This is the thinking behind the UK's new £800 million Environment Transformation Fund - effectively to leverage additional international funding that will help developing countries to adopt low-carbon growth strategies.

Fourth, tackling the **causes and consequences of conflict** is another priority area for DFID. In Afghanistan, the Taliban pay young people a dollar a day to dig up landmines, which they then use to attack NATO forces. Children so poor that risking their lives for 50 pence seems like a good deal. We must make our response to conflict more effective and better coordinate our efforts nationally and internationally. DFID is working more closely with the Foreign Office under David Miliband and the Ministry of

Defence under Des Browne to better prevent and respond to conflict. And of course how we deal with the aftermath of those conflicts that take place.

The challenges I've just mentioned are immense. But, as I have said, the Government is prioritising the fight against global poverty. Following the recent Government Comprehensive Spending Review the Chancellor announced that DFID's resources would rise by an average of 11% per year over the next three years. You may not realise it, but the UK is now the second largest donor in the world behind the United States. This is something that I would hope people will take pride in.

I very much hope that pride in this work the Government is carrying out on the public's behalf can continue to emerge as a strong British value that unites diverse communities here in the UK. I would argue that a concern for the world's poor is a core British value, not uniquely ours of course, but nonetheless a defining characteristic that is given further expression in the size and scope of our international development programme.

But I am also very conscious of the heavy burden of responsibility our increasing budget places upon us. As our budget rises, there will be even greater expectations in terms of what DFID can achieve, and much scrutiny.

People have a right to demand of us that we are accountable for spending this money effectively. The need for us to be transparent with people about how their money is spent on aid and development is just as important as it is for us to account for how we spend their money here in the UK, and arguably more so, because the benefits are less easy to see at first glance.

We need to get much better at demonstrating to people that we are getting good value for money from our development expenditure. You need to know what we are doing with your money. We need to tell you that story. Transparency and accountability are core democratic values we are supporting overseas – which we need to promote back here in the UK.

**I am often asked three questions by my constituents:**

**1. Is our money getting where it's needed?**

**2. What difference is it making?**

**3. What does this mean for me?**

The answer to Question 1 is – yes, and DFID have robust policies on anti-corruption and strategies to maximise aid effectiveness. We know, through recent public surveys we've run, that people are still pretty sceptical about whether the money reaching those who it is intended for. The reasons quoted are inefficiency, high administrative costs and, of course, corruption.

Corruption exists, we all know that, but we can't wait for it to go away before working in poorer countries in need of assistance. And we take a zero tolerance approach to misuse.

Our strategy on tackling corruption involves firstly specific measure to protect the UK's development assistance, by assessing risks before allocating funds, through strong internal audit processes and working with governments in developing countries to strengthen their public financial management systems.

We also address the international causes of corruption, by, for example, establishing an International Corruption Group in the UK, and supporting new global initiatives which focus on asset recovery.

DFID is more focused than ever on explaining not only what is being spent on international development, but on what it achieves. And this necessarily means that we are focused on working with others we channel funds through to account for that expenditure, to eliminate risks of inefficiency or over-inflated administrative costs. It's as important to us as it is to you, the tax-payer.

The response to Question 2 - what difference does our aid make - can best be illustrated by listing some of our successes:

Every year our aid helps to lift around 3 million people permanently out of poverty and empowers poor countries to provide basic services such as health and education that we commonly take for granted.

Over the past ten years DFID has helped to:

- put more children into primary school – 17 million more in Bangladesh, six million in Ethiopia and over five million in Afghanistan;
- fund 700 more nurses in Malawi and 3,000 health workers in Uganda;
- bring clean water to over 2.5 million people in India, Pakistan and Iraq;
- save five million lives by immunising against common diseases through the International Finance Facility for Immunisation; and
- successfully support the first democratic elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

So, we are seeing good results, but we are not complacent. Far from it. The MDGs will not be met without urgent action from a wide range of partners as part of a global endeavour. We are redoubling our efforts. And we want people to join with us.

### **[SECTION 3 – WAKING UP THE PUBLIC & GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED]**

Before I move to the final part of what I want to say today, and in so doing respond to the third question – what does it mean for me? – I'd like to first highlight the great deal of support amongst some people in the UK.

The last eight years has seen a golden thread of British support for international development that has existed from Live Aid through Jubilee 2000 to Make Poverty History. The huge public responses to natural disasters – after the Tsunami, and the earthquake in Pakistan for example – only serve to underline that support, and the impact that ordinary people can have.

The campaigning achievements, however, also reflect a Government receptive to the demands of civil society. I have been an MP since 1997, and I can tell you that you'll be pleased, and maybe just a little bit surprised to hear that even before I started this job, letters from my constituents on international development represented the biggest single campaigning issue. These are the people who give generously to charities; who collect donations in the streets; who actively respond to disasters, or who join campaigns on issues they feel strongly about.

You will recall a tremendous swell in public support for development in 2005 around the G8 summit in Gleneagles - the white bands, the vast number of people who took to the streets in Edinburgh - and as a result UK took its role seriously in exerting influence to secure a comprehensive package for development at the summit. ... But we must continue to keep the pressure up, to capitalise on this public support and to communicate to a wider audience the case for development. Internationally DFID is seen as a role model, but in the UK people are unaware of what we do. I believe we've often been preaching to the converted.

There are still far too many people who have little understanding about the complexities of the issues, or know about what the Government is doing, and spending, on a daily basis to tackle poverty on their behalf, why it is important or how it impacts on them. Indeed there are lots of people who have never even heard of DFID.

If the average person was asked to explain, in 100 words or less, the ways in which their actions here in the UK can contribute to poverty reduction overseas, and how that, in turn affects people living in the UK, I suspect they'd struggle to answer. Let me tell you that I ask officials in my Department to tell me what we are about in three short sentences, and they struggle to answer. But it is intellectually difficult to express that chain reaction and it cannot be easily reduced to simple statements.

As we've seen, though, the world is connected in so many ways. The UK government is working to promote social fairness in ways we should be proud of. And our individual choices here can also make a small, but nevertheless real difference to the lives of others.

For example shopping habits, recycling, holidays, travel, choice of job – they all have relevance in some, albeit seemingly small, way to the lives of people on the other side of the world. But are individuals here sufficiently aware of that chain reaction? Do schools routinely teach about the important global issues which shape our lives? Does the media accurately reflect the challenging global issues the world faces to give people living in the UK a fair picture? I think not. And that is why DFID is paying growing attention to this issue. It is a real concern to both myself and Douglas Alexander, Secretary of State. We want people to know what we're doing in their name – don't want them to feel guilt or powerless but to feel part of the solution.

People in the UK feel far too removed from issues which don't at first glance appear to affect them personally. We all have a job to do here. We need to speak to people on their terms, in a language that means something to them. To help people feel a personal connection with development and understand how it is relevant to their lives. To build levels of understanding that we are all connected, wherever in the world we may live; and that our behaviour is highly consequential to people living on the other

side of the planet. To let people know what shape their personal contribution to the battle against global poverty can look like. And to help people understand the role their government is playing on their behalf and how they can hold us to account.

Let me share with you some of what we are doing as we renew our efforts to communicate better with the public and to engage people in development issues.

**Young people** are a priority audience for us. We are determined that every child should be educated about development issues, so that they can understand the key global considerations which will shape their lives and grow up to be responsible global citizens.

As part of a broader development awareness programme of activities, DFID currently spends about £8 million each year, directly on work in the formal education sector to embed global issues into the school curriculum.

DFID's work in schools continues to achieve change. And it is underpinned by close working relationships with education Ministries across the UK to explore how we can jointly strengthen these areas of work.

But this focus on the education system is a long term investment and, in my opinion, we haven't been doing enough to extend this reach to other audiences, particularly with young people who are not in education. We are increasing our efforts, not just to share information about our work, but to make a positive difference.

Young people should be able to embark on a development journey that begins with what they learn and experience in schools, and grows and develops with them, so that they become "active global citizens" for life. And so, DFID is expanding the range of opportunities that it provides for young people.

At the end of last month, our Secretary of State, Douglas Alexander, launched **DFID's global youth volunteering programme**. This is a £10 million programme managed jointly by Christian Aid, Islamic Relief and BUNAC that will give 2500 less advantaged young British people between the ages of 18 and 25 the opportunity to live and work in a developing country and to learn first hand about the issues of development. The young people will be required to commit to a programme to teach others about the world on their return home, and so build further understanding of and support for development.

As most people get information about the effectiveness of aid from watching the news on television or from newspapers. DFID is continuing to strengthen our work to get more development issues into the **broadcast and other popular media**. To name just a few areas of work: the DFID Broadcast Media scheme seed funds programme makers to build programme concepts and make pilots; we are funding a young journalists competition with the Guardian through Marie Stopes International and we are sponsoring the One World Media awards that reward efforts to accurately reflect global issues in broadcasting.

We know that young people can be a powerful influence on their parents and relations, and so communicating with them has an important knock-on effect to a wider group.

We are keen too to develop our relations with **black and minority ethnic groups** – these communities have a very valuable contribution to make to the international development agenda, we can learn from and support each other, and, of course, they have a very important role in promoting understanding of development issues and the contribution that the UK Government makes to poverty alleviation – both here and in their countries of origin.

**Faith groups** can also be important advocates for development and we are keen to engage with people from a broad spectrum of faiths to help build support for development and encourage people to play their part in helping to eradicate poverty.

Success in terms of our communication effort would mean that there would be sustained commitment and support for the eradication of global poverty amongst the UK public.

With this goal in mind, it is important to continue to measure the impact of our efforts and to track levels of understanding and support for development. We recognize that this is a difficult area and that public attitudes are likely to be influenced by immediate world events as well as DFID supported interventions. It is not easy to disaggregate this. Nevertheless, we will continue to monitor and measure the output of our individual activities and interventions; and continue with public opinion surveys that track changes in public attitudes against current benchmarks.

I hope that I have refreshed in you the compelling case for development based on the belief in social justice and human dignity which I know you share. And I also hope I have planted a seed of thought about what more needs to be done. We now need to spread the message so that people come to know the positive impact of the work we are doing and are motivated to play their part.

I will finish here but let me say one more thing. Keep your passion, keep your commitment, keep your knowledge, but don't keep it to yourselves.

Thank you.