

# RESULTS

## WRITTEN EVIDENCE BY RESULTS UK TO THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE INQUIRY ON THE PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE OF AID

### About RESULTS UK

RESULTS UK seeks to work with others to create the public and political to end poverty by enabling people to exercise their own personal and political power for change. RESULTS UK is a movement of passionate, committed, everyday people. Together we use our voices to influence political decisions that will bring together an end to poverty. We undertake strategic policy, parliamentary and grassroots advocacy on three key determinants of poverty: economic opportunities, health and education, with a particular focus on child vaccinations, tuberculosis (TB), education and nutrition.

### Introduction

COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement both highlighted the discriminatory and oppressive structures in our world. For those who have long campaigned to change the way aid works this also further demonstrated power imbalances within the aid sector, and the impact this has had on the effectiveness of aid. In this submission, we propose questions for the IDC in its inquiry we believe will help to make the aid sector more democratic, accountable, and effective for the people it is meant to serve. Our submission will focus on the following key themes:

- Motivation for aid - what values should guide the aid sector?
- Localisation - how can recipient communities of aid have a greater say over its delivery?
- Racism and inclusion - to what extent do current practises and structures of aid reinforce racist stereotypes and perpetuate structural racism; and how can these be addressed?
- Aid architecture - how does the architecture of the aid sector concentrate power and resources in high income countries and how can this be addressed?

The questions we put forward in this submission are by no means exhaustive. We fully acknowledge that when considering the philosophy and culture of aid there are a myriad of avenues that could be explored.

Throughout this document we talk about the 'aid sector' rather than the FCDO or UK Aid because the challenges discussed are not unique to the FCDO, and ones the sector also need to address. In addition, many NGOs, private sector organisations and multilateral

organisations, while independent of government, receive large amounts of government funding or have government representatives on their boards, meaning that the government and partner NGOs can mutually encourage best practice of each other.

### **Motivation for aid:**

The purpose of this section is to understand the UK's motivations for giving aid and the effect that motivation has on the effectiveness of, and trust in, aid. Through these questions, we hope the Committee will gain a better understanding of the UK's motivations for giving aid and how decisions on aid allocation should change in the future. This is particularly significant in light of the recent merger of the Department for International Development with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which is intended to integrate development with diplomacy.

The following key questions could be asked:

1. What principles currently guide the way in which funding is allocated and the policy decisions that make up the UK's aid budget? What are the implications of this for aid delivery? Is there sufficient focus on poverty reduction?
2. What values should guide the UK's aid budget?
3. What is the effect of the FCDO merger and associating aid with advancing 'Global Britain' on the effectiveness of aid in achieving poverty reduction?
4. How should the UK navigate the tensions inherent in pushing for policy coherence in the aid, diplomatic, defence, and trade arenas given their often-divergent objectives? How can the UK ensure aid programming is not undermined by the process of pushing for policy coherence?
5. Should the allocation, amount and type of aid disbursed continue to be based on the economic stature (GNI) of a country rather than social, economic and health indicators?
6. How can we effectively communicate the philosophy, culture and impact of aid to taxpayers so that they understand the many reasons why the UK spends money on aid?

### **Localisation**

The purpose of this section is to explore how decisions around aid should be made so as to maximise aid effectiveness and to enhance local ownership of aid programming. Often decisions around aid spending are made in European or North American Headquarters that are detached from intended recipients geographically, politically, and culturally, which can lead to programmes being ineffective. It can also disenfranchise local communities and perpetuate problematic power dynamics. Some NGOs have taken steps to address this. For example, Oxfam moving its HQ to Nairobi has had a huge logistical and positive cultural impact on its operations; unfortunately, however, they remain an outlier in this regard.

In addition, the aid sector often sends staff from the UK, other parts of Europe and North America to head up country offices or to lead projects. The FCDO has made a recent decision that all its staff have to be British. Often these people are perceived as experts in a field but not in the application of their field to specific local contexts. For example, the factors

that constitute a successful education system in the DRC would not necessarily be suited to Pakistan. This often means that local knowledge is viewed as secondary, despite local actors often possessing more expertise, and relevant experience. This results in the knowledge and experiences of local actors being undervalued and underused.

A crucial and incredibly sensitive issue for the aid sector to navigate is how to work with countries and communities where cultural practices exist that are an attack on fundamental human rights, for example FGM, or the persecution of LGBTQ+ people.

The following key questions could be asked:

1. How can the aid sector involve and cede power to local people and aid-recipient governments when making decisions?
2. How can the aid sector root more of operational and decision-making functions in countries that receive aid in a way that is inclusive of local staff and is more sustainable in the long term?
3. What determines value for money for the British taxpayer, and should this be prioritised over local needs?
4. How can the FCDO use its governance position on multilateral organisations to improve consultation with the people and governments in the countries where those multilaterals operate?
5. How can global resource mobilisation moments, such as the replenishment conferences for multilaterals or global humanitarian appeals, be used to build global solidarity rather than reinforce power imbalances between donor and implementing countries?
6. How should the aid sector work to ensure cultural sensitivity is respected while protecting the rights of vulnerable, marginalised and persecuted peoples?

### **Racism and inclusion:**

Racism, saviourism, discrimination and neo-colonial approaches to aid continue to characterise and plague the international development sector. The IDC should use this inquiry to pose uncomfortable, self-reflective and challenging questions that help uncover and challenge these practices and propose an equitable way forward that is rooted in anti-oppression.

Answering them and drawing attention to the issues they highlight, is key to the future of development and humanitarian cooperation, and transforming aid as a concept, philosophy and practice. Shirking them will continue to undermine aid effectiveness and further denigrate trust and faith in aid as a whole in the eyes of the communities the sector professes to serve, and diaspora communities around the world. As stated at the beginning we are taking the 'aid sector' to include FCDO, NGOs, private sector organisations and multilateral organisations.

The following key questions could be asked:

1. How can aid actors be pushed to address racial inequalities and dismantle power imbalances among their staff, including discrepancies between the treatment of 'local' and 'expat' in-country staff and between people of colour and white staff?

2. The sector has been guilty of racist and discriminatory practices, whether it's the lack of ethnic minority staff in key decision-making roles or daily microaggressions. How do we make the sector more equitable and inclusive?
3. Why do the leaderships of many bilateral development agencies, multilateral funds and NGOs, not better reflect the communities they serve? How can we change this?
4. How can the aid sector actively dismantle saviour mindsets and practises, and end portrayals of the Global South that perpetuate negative stereotypes and harmful practices?
5. How can the sector avoid practices that use economic, political and cultural pressures to exert pressure to control or influence countries and people that receive aid?
6. How can an anti-racism and anti-oppression lens be mainstreamed across the aid sector?
7. How should the aid sector, including the FCDO, challenge local governments or laws that discriminate against ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ people, women, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups?
8. How can we challenge racist attitudes that often assume Southern NGOs will mismanage financial resources, and that overseas citizens are security threats, as evidenced by the UK's decision to make the FCDO a 'reserved department' barring the hiring of foreign nationals?
9. Are terms like 'aid', 'charity', 'donors', 'recipients' and 'beneficiaries', and models based on north-south flow of resources, outdated and problematic? If so, what models, terminology and philosophies should the sector adopt instead?

### **Aid Architecture**

The current aid architecture and governance has evolved over many decades and shapes how aid spending is planned, delivered and evaluated. As the Committee considers the philosophy and culture of aid, it is worth questioning whether this architecture is fit for purpose, what power structures it established and perpetuates, and how reforms might improve impact.

The following key questions could be asked:

1. The sector has been learning from its mistakes. How can those designing and delivering aid do better Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) to ensure that the sector does not go backwards again?
2. How can people reached by specific programmes play a more significant role in evaluating whether aid is effective?
3. How do we define aid effectiveness and do these criteria exclude any valuable interventions, particularly those that support outcomes that are difficult to measure quantitatively or qualitatively in MEAL frameworks?
4. Who is given the opportunity to make and influence decisions on where, how and why aid is spent? Whose interests do they reflect and what power dynamics are at play?
5. Is aid ever going to end poverty or just treat some of the symptoms? How can we make sure it works towards the former?

Please contact Lucy Drescher, [lucy.drescher@results.org.uk](mailto:lucy.drescher@results.org.uk) if you have any questions or need any further information.