

**John Lowrie**

**Evidence to International Development Committee of UK Parliament  
Racism in Foreign Aid**

I can be brief. You will be aware of and hear from many others about the “White Saviour” mentality that lives on. It is inevitable because of the way that decisions are made, by whom, and conveyed and implemented in developing countries, given that most decision-makers are white and from similar backgrounds. Even today most “aid-workers” tend to come from similar backgrounds, an observation I point out to the international development organisation [“DEVEX”](#) in its training arrangements and to UK universities offering the subject.

There needs to be an affirmative effort to diversify recruitment and promotion in to all Foreign Aid positions in all organisations concerned, not just donors but agencies, NGOs and charities.

Even more importantly the process by which Foreign Aid decisions are made must change, for intended “beneficiaries” to be involved from the outset of design of interventions right through the project-cycle to post-project impact evaluations. They really are able to conduct “problem, priority and solution” analyses without the need for so many expensive external advisers. Consultants and evaluators. There is [too much talk](#) about doing this but not enough real action.

I talk about this in my blogs, the first of which has been viewed over 50,000 times:

**[Smarter Aid, not More Aid](#)  
[Foreign Aid: Upside Down; Inside Out, & Roundabout!](#)**

Now there is a place for white people, especially young people, in Foreign Aid. Indeed their value can be immense especially in peer-to-peer sharing of skills and knowledge. Youngsters in developing countries do look to them with envy and surely Foreign Aid is about narrowing the gap between them.

The question is how best should this be facilitated?

Well one proven successful way, often the first and most appropriate step in to a career in Foreign Aid, is through organisations like Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO).

FCDO is already indicating correctly that it intends to appoint more in-house professional Foreign Aid staff, instead of relying on expensive consultants.

The Committee could do no better than to argue against the planned cut in support to VSO to ensure continuity of talent from that reliable source for the UK's Foreign Aid programme and our to other international partners.

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1987 – now  
St Helena, Malawi, Rwanda, Cambodia.