

The Effectiveness of UK Aid

The definition and administration of UK aid - who should be responsible, and accountable, for targeting and spending aid? *The annual sum (0.7% of GNI) is funded by UK taxpayers & currently enshrined by law (International Development Act 2002) & should be managed as an integral element of UK Foreign Policy (part of the FCO) - the current parameters for the provision of UK aid are:*

- strengthening global peace, security and governance ... *of dubious merit. Any UK aid funds need to be focused on UK key foreign policy objectives, with a focus on The Commonwealth countries that have a strategic value, & on a mutual basis; such countries should show evidence & a clear interest in improving their own people's welfare. The world's "peace & stability" is neither peaceful nor stable & greater analysis into any aid provision requires better consideration.*
- strengthening resilience and response to crisis ... *humanitarian support in a timely & efficient manner, such as hurricane relief or medical disasters (i.e. Ebola outbreaks) may be deserving of UK support. Such aid should also be followed up by endeavouring to create resilience to that country/state; either a reluctance or indifference to do so may negate future assistance - especially in regions prone to repeat crises.*
- promoting global prosperity ... *where has such prosperity been evident after UK aid has been provided? What follow-up assessment has been undertaken to show how a state's improved prosperity has been evident, after UK aid has been provided? This 'provision' should be removed from the list of parameters.*
- tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable ... *laudable goals which should be focused on British Overseas Territories (BOT) & members of The Commonwealth; governments receiving UK aid should not squander their resources, failing to promote the aspirations set by parliament. The UK cannot be a provider of aid to all poverty within the world, more so when the British public are oft reminded of our own food banks & so-called child poverty. This 'provision' should be removed from the list of parameters.*
- delivering value for money ... *a moot point that appears to lack evidence to the taxpayer. Similar to the previous 'provision', it should be removed from the list of 'parameters'. Value for money is a vague term that has more resonance as a subjective & altruistic goal; where UK aid has been given to states, what evidence has there been to show a change of political behaviour & thus those benefiting states have turned over the proverbial new leaf?*

I hold the firm belief that the ID Act 02 should be revoked, having listened to the parliamentary debate of several years ago on the subject; I was singularly unimpressed by the rationale for the law to be retained. The significant number of charities seeking donations in the UK media has become an increasing industry &, any gifts should be a personal choice, rather than one that uses UK taxpayer funded aid.

How effective and transparent is the UK aid spent by the Department for International Development (DFID) compared to aid allocated to other Government departments and to the cross-Government funds? *There has been growing distrust within the British people of wasted funds & dubious causes. UK aid, funded from British taxes, should be limited & coordinated by a single government department - the FCO.*

How should the national interest be defined, and what weight should it be given, in relation to targeting UK aid? *The provision of aid should be focused on the BOT & The Commonwealth countries, where it is more likely to be in the national interest. It is clearly in the national interest to support the BOT when natural disasters befall them, with the understanding that resilience has to be built in to their administrative & management processes. The Commonwealth has a membership comprising some 25% of the world's states, some of whom are wealthy & have limited need of UK aid, though at times of extreme & out-of-the-blue emergencies aid would be proof of an enduring level of respect & mutual support.*

In cases of extreme need, the government has often turned to the Armed Forces (AF) to provide support to the civil authority or to international natural disasters; it is the AF who have the broad skills, capabilities & competences that cannot be replicated elsewhere. The AF have been hollowed-out for decades & still there is an expectation that a ship, aircraft or individuals can be sent at virtually no notice to respond to a call for help; the use of the AF & their expensive equipment/vessels/aircraft causes further wear & tear on them & distracts them from other commitments. UK aid (0.7% of GNI) should be used to fund the provision of suitable vessels (a hospital ship with associated personnel & equipment & logistic vessel(s)), aircraft (aero-medical aircraft/helicopters with crews), emergency equipment for support to hurricane relief/medical crises (tentage, chain saws, fresh water capacity, generators etc).

Overseas aid must be aligned to foreign policy; the Foreign Affairs (including UK aid), Defence & Security reviews are relevant to the future posture that the UK needs to refine, review & reform. The UK has to determine long-term (well beyond the parliamentary cycle) foreign policy goals to preserve critical/key national interests: the bullet-points in the first paragraph need to be refined & clearly stated. The UK should use the French aid 'focus points' as guidelines as to who & where future support should be allocated.

How is official development assistance defined, administered, and targeted elsewhere in the world? *Though there are differing national defined areas for overseas aid, the UK should select clearly stated areas of support. The UK is not the sole nation to provide help & there may be merit in pooling some capabilities with our most 'intimate' of nations - the Five Eyes may be a sound starting point. By focusing UK overseas aid within the FCO, there would be real value in having other relevant government departments embedding liaison teams within a re-formed UK Overseas Aid cell/department/group.*

French focus - education, health, sustainable development, agriculture and food security, economic growth.

US focus - disaster relief, poverty relief, technical cooperation on global issues, including the environment, U.S. bilateral interests, socioeconomic development.

German focus - applying minimum standards regarding the rule of law and the observance of human rights, sustaining the fight against hunger and structural deficiencies in the spirit of the UN Millennium Goals; strengthening good governance, self-determination, and self-help capabilities through strengthening civil society; harnessing business and industry to foster sustainable economic development.

Accountability of the 'Government systems and structures' recommended by the Integrated Review (including arrangements for parliamentary scrutiny). *Select Committees are a proven cross-party method of capturing ideas, undertaking analysis, making recommendations for improvements & scrutiny. There are a considerable number of Select Committees & government departments that appear to be working in separate groupings, rather than being co-joined or more effectively fused, each eager to prosecute a departmental agenda. This needs to be simplified to reduce, in some cases, competing structures & funding.*

The FCO should be the lead government department for international relations, trade, commerce & security aspects; DfID should be subsumed into the FCO. The annual UK aid budget, if not reformed by revoking the current ID Act 02, needs to be better used to enhance foreign policy (a Grand Strategic Concept - looking beyond the parliamentary cycle). This review may be a unique opportunity to enhance the only trained, organised & available government department (the MoD) with the necessary & available capabilities & capacity to respond to natural disasters, & in a timely manner.