

# Campaign update: Government aid review

## Thought overseas aid was safe?

Think again! At a time of domestic budget cuts, the continued commitment to increasing overseas aid to 0.7 per cent by 2013 has been seen as a minor miracle by those of us fighting to keep international development issues on the agenda. However, somewhat under the radar, the government has been undertaking an extensive and concerning review of its aid spending. This review was triggered by wider government objectives around ensuring policy coherence, results-based outcomes and value for money across Whitehall.

Whilst the rhetoric doesn't sound unreasonable, there are serious concerns about what this could mean in practice. 'Value for money' has been widely interpreted as the government wanting aid to deliver returns to the British economy. Similarly, 'results-based outcomes' could translate as a narrow focus on measurable short term outputs, rather than investing in transformative long term impacts. Perhaps most worryingly, 'policy coherence' has implied a redirection of aid from the poorest parts of the world to those that more closely fit the UK's broader foreign policy and defence agenda, under the direction of the new National Security Council.

WDM is now seriously concerned that UK aid spent could move towards a focus on seeding British business opportunities or funding counter-terrorism operations rather than fighting poverty and injustice.

The way in which DfID has been conducting this process has been far from ideal. Whilst DfID has historically actively sought the views civil society on potential policy changes, this time no formal consultation process was launched. However, several domestic organisations and international institutions, such as the World Bank, were hand picked to provide their views.

WDM was not invited to input its views, but we submitted them nonetheless. We reaffirmed that DfID should adhere to its core mission to alleviate

poverty through an approach driven by the welfare needs of the world's poorest people, not UK economic or security interests.

## Take action!

These reviews are due to be concluded by the end of February. We want to make it clear to DfID that the public wants to ensure that DfID's overall remit should remain focused on ending poverty, rather than furthering British domestic interests.

Please write to Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell about the aid reviews. You can either email [MARcomments@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:MARcomments@dfid.gov.uk) or send a letter to Secretary of State for International Development Andrew Mitchell, 1 Palace Street, London SW1E 5HE. You could also write this as a joint letter from your group.

Key points to make are:

- DfID should adhere to its core mission to alleviate poverty through an approach driven by the welfare needs of the world's poorest people, not UK economic or security interests
- UK aid should not be spent on seeding British business opportunities or funding counter-terrorism operations, but should focus on overcoming poverty.

**If you would like a copy of WDM's response to the review, please email Sarah on [sarah.reader@wdm.org.uk](mailto:sarah.reader@wdm.org.uk)**