

RECLAIMING

INTERNATIONALISM

10 progressive policy ideas for global equality

We must ensure that we look beyond Britain's borders to build a world which works for the many, not the few.

This requires a radical redistribution of power and a fundamental reshaping of the UK's relations with the global South. It means tackling the root causes of global poverty, inequality and injustice, not tinkering at the edges of the aid budget. It means being honest about the UK's role in poverty creation. And it means putting the redistribution of power to the poorest at the heart of international development policy.

These policy ideas are suggested as the start of a conversation between governments and civil society in the North and South.



About the Progressive Development Forum

The Progressive Development Forum was set up in 2013 to address the lack of political analysis in the UK development sector and the dominance of the 'aid' paradigm. It involves organisations and individuals from across the sector that want to see a different approach. We were founded on the shared belief that injustice, inequality and poverty are political conditions, and that solutions must be based upon a just and equitable redistribution of power. Join at www.progressivedevelopmentforum.wordpress.com or email progressivedevelopmentforum@outlook.com

RECLAIMING IN

We need a new vision for development with a focus on ending the root causes of global poverty and inequality.

Immediate priorities should include:

1. Re-imagining '0.7%'

The UK's funding to the global South needs to be re-imagined as just one form of global redistribution of wealth from the richest to the poorest, whether in the UK or beyond. As part of this, the 0.7% ring fenced funding for the global South should be renamed. Options include global redistribution, a solidarity fund, compensation or reparations to inform an open conversation about the UK's relationship with the rest of the world.

Why? Achieving radical change requires a drastic shift in current perceptions of global inequality and poverty. The notion of 'aid' falsely portrays the UK as a 'generous benefactor'. This has provided a smokescreen for our role in creating and sustaining poverty, enforced divisions between citizens of the global North and South, and fuelled public scepticism with aid. Reimagining 0.7% would demonstrate that the problems affecting people in the global South are often caused by the same processes that afflict people here in the UK: privatisation, globalisation, and unchecked corporate power, helping build solidarity and support for development spending with UK voters.

2. Redefining development

Improving wellbeing - not success measured by GDP - must be the ultimate aim of all international development policy. Indeed, many countries have improved quality of life without necessarily increasing GDP. This ultimate end must be the yardstick by which all UK development policy objectives are measured. We should amend the International Development Act to redefine the purpose of UK development as improving people's wellbeing and reducing inequality.

Why? The poverty indicators used are set at an incredibly low level, and the focus on GDP masks inequality within countries whilst telling us little about people's quality of life. Readjusting aid to focus on inequality and wellbeing would ensure that we get a more holistic perspective based on real outcomes.

3. Reforming 0.7 spending

Whatever 0.7 is called, and whilst recognising that it alone cannot solve poverty, it still requires radical reform. This means spending on the poorest, not on private contractors; helping countries collect tax; providing budget support and working with public-public partnerships to help countries build public services; supporting food sovereignty, and giving more voice and power to civil society and women's groups.

Why? Much of aid spent at the moment reinforces the power of corporations and the global North. Even when aid is spent well it lacks a focus on transformative change. We need radical reform of the 0.7 budget to ensure it helps people in the global South, not corporations based in the UK, and helps people transform their economies and societies for the long term.

4. Reshaping governance

DfID should create forums to engage civil society groups from the global South and the UK, including diaspora groups, in decision making at DfID. At the same time, the UK should introduce robust mechanisms for policy coherence between government departments, ensuring that policies of other government departments do not undermine the goals of reducing global poverty and inequality, and promoting well-being.

Why? Achieving global justice is the responsibility of more than just one department. Too often, development objectives are undermined by trade deals or business interests. Promoting policy coherence will help change this. At the same time, we need to ensure we are working 'for the many', by engaging grassroots and civil society groups around the world.

5. Enacting equitable trade and investment policies

We need to change the trade system to support sustainable development, rather than increase the power and wealth of the few. This means DfID taking a greater role in trade policy to ensure that trade and investment agreements facilitate technology transfer, allow countries to protect infant industries and export value-added goods, and make use of intellectual property flexibilities so that they can ensure access to medicines for their citizens. Investment agreements should promote investment and co-operation, without restricting the policy space of countries in the global South.

Why? Trade and investment, as it is currently practiced, facilitates wealth extraction from the global South, and undermines the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and climate imperatives. We need a trade system that supports sustainable development and the right of all people to a dignified life.

6. Ending the War on Drugs

Replace prohibition, militarisation, criminalisation and forced crop eradication with policies that prioritise sustainable development, promote peace and security and reduce harm. A priority should be funding research into alternatives, supporting countries to move towards harm reduction strategies, exploring regulated drug markets (particularly for cannabis) in the UK, and developing innovative alternative development projects, such as Bolivia's coca control programme.

Why? The War on Drugs is one of the most destructive, misguided – and yet unchallenged – policies the world has ever seen. It has fuelled poverty, poor health, corruption, environmental degradation, deforestation and violence throughout the world. Slowly, countries from Canada to Portugal are moving away from prohibition, with startling results. It is time the UK led the way, admitted that this is a policy failure and work with governments around the world to develop alternatives.

7. Tackling climate change

Deliver the Paris declaration goal of limiting temperature rises to well below 1.5c by pushing for mandatory targets for reducing emissions in line with equity and climate science and help countries develop renewable energy infrastructure. Aid funding should be used to support this, rather than promoting privatisation of existing energy systems. This can be supported by a progressive, activist trade policy that encourages action on climate change and refuses polluters the opportunity to sue governments that take action on climate change. At home, the UK must also take a lead on transitioning to a zero carbon, zero-cost, democratic energy system.

Why? Climate change amplifies existing global inequalities and threatens the lives and livelihoods of those least responsible for the climate crisis. The costs and impacts imposed by climate change fall disproportionately on the global South. This amounts to \$36 billion a year in Africa alone. This is 50% more than Africa receives in aid. Tackling climate change is fundamental to development and the right of all people to live dignified lives.

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8. Ending the UK's role in the debt crisis

The UK government should act to ensure all loans to governments given under UK law are transparent. When debts need to be restructured, the process needs to be made easier. The UK can help enable this by extending the 2010 Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Act which gave some protection from vulture funds, but only covers 40 countries and old debts. Ultimately, the UK government should support the creation of a fair, independent and transparent debt restructuring process within the UN to require lenders to cancel debts when needed. Such a process was supported by 136 countries at the UN in 2015, and opposed by just six: the US, UK, Germany, Japan, Canada and Israel.

Why? Debt problems are rising in many impoverished countries, with debt payments by governments increasing by 50% in the last two years. Many of the loans are given without the necessary transparency, and in some cases loans have been given secretly by London based banks and/or using UK law. Lenders, as well as borrowers, need to be held responsible when debt crises arise.

9. Ending tax avoidance

The UK should take a stand against tax avoidance to help countries build their independent tax base and develop public services. This means making tax transparent, following the **ABC** of tax transparency: **A**utomatic, multilateral exchange of tax information; **B**eneficial ownership registers for companies, trusts and foundations; and public **C**ountry-by-country reporting of corporate activities.

Why? Around \$500 billion in tax a year is stolen through profit shifting by multinational companies. A further £200 billion is lost to individuals through undeclared offshore assets. Tax revenue is a key source of finance for health and other public services, with this theft affecting people in the global North and South. The UK plays a key role in facilitating this theft with 10 tax havens under its jurisdiction.

10. Reforming multilateral institutions

Multilateral institutions should be reformed to give countries in the global South - and civil society from around the world - a more meaningful and powerful voice. This means making institutions more democratic, building on positive examples like international women's funds and the Global Partnership for Education, and the ways that the UN Committee on World Food Security has engaged civil society.

Why? For too long international institutions have reinforced the power of wealthy countries, and sidelined civil society. This sustains the problems that we are trying to solve, keeping power and wealth in the hands of the few.

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