

13 March 2019

Dear CARE supporters,

I would like to thank you for the tremendous support you give to CARE, to end the injustice which causes extreme global poverty – which means that 1 in 7 people live on less than £1 a day, that 16 million people in Yemen are starving, and that women in many countries have no legal protection from sexual harassment at work.

I hope your support for justice means we can also count on you to stand up for aid. **Because it is under threat.**

British people can be proud of the fact that we are one of the most generous countries in the world when it comes to helping people in poorer countries. And so we should be. The UK is the 5th largest economy in the world. If we can't afford it, who can?

We should also remember that the UK itself, within living memory, has been the recipient of aid. At the end of the Second World War, the UK received millions of CARE Packages from the general public in the USA, to help **British people suffering from food shortages** long after the fighting had stopped. When the British people needed help, we were lucky that others were prepared to give it. Now it is our turn to pay that generosity forward, to the people who need it most today, wherever they are.



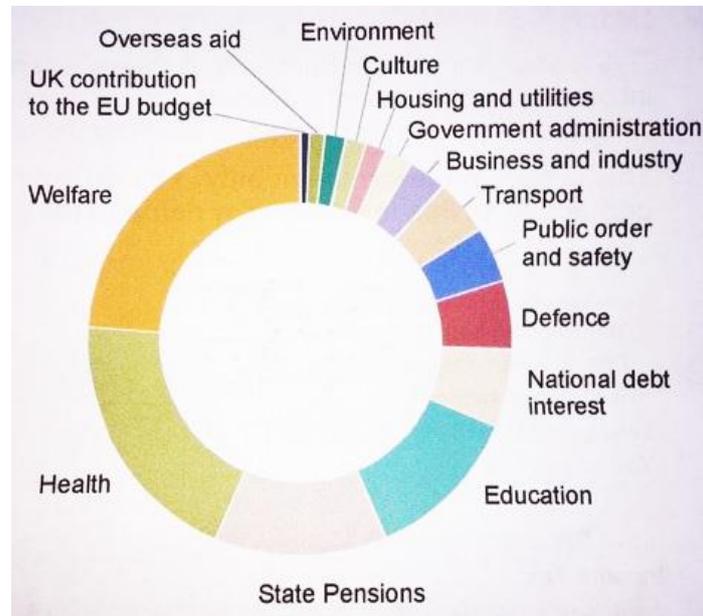
And let's not forget that, like you, millions of British people are **proud of aid** – not least, **because it works.**

In 2005, 9 million people in Britain – maybe including you – supported **Make Poverty History**. One outcome was that governments, at the 2005 Gleneagles Summit, agreed to ensure that everyone who needed treatment for HIV and AIDS would get it. In 2005, less than 100,000 people in Africa who needed HIV and AIDS treatment received it. Now over 6 million people in Africa

receive treatment. As a result, the number of AIDS deaths – which peaked at 2 million in 2005 – began to fall for the first time. It has now halved. **Aid achieved this.**

The groundswell of public opinion also meant that all political parties in the United Kingdom agreed to increase UK aid to the UN target of 0.7% of national income. **In 2013, this was finally achieved.** In 2015, this was protected in law by Parliament.

Even so, overseas assistance remains a small proportion of overall government spending in 2019, as this pie chart from HMRC shows:



But that commitment is now under attack. In the coming weeks, Boris Johnson and Priti Patel will put their names to reports by the so-called TaxPayers' Alliance, and they will claim that aid doesn't work, or is wasted, or should be used for the interests of British companies rather than the poorest people in the world.

They won't say they want to stop all aid. That would be stupid – like saying you should close every school in the country because one failed its Ofsted. **But they do want to reduce aid a lot. So they will argue that they want aid to work better.** They will carefully select a few real examples of aid that has not worked very well. And they will twist other good projects to sound silly. And then they will propose what better aid would look like.

They will say it should be more about British economic interests and future trade deals. **But that isn't better aid. It isn't aid at all. And it has been tried – and failed – before.**

In 1994, the High Court found that the government had **illegally** used British aid to further British economic interests. It paid a British company £238m to build the Pergau Dam in Malaysia, in return for Malaysia buying five times that amount in arms from Britain. A double win for the British economy you might say. But a double lose for poor people in Malaysia, who got unnecessarily expensive electricity and more than paid for it themselves.

They will say that aid should be more about stopping immigration. More about preventing terrorism. But neither of these has anything to do with aid. **It's not true that immigration (which is a good thing by the way) or terrorism are prevented by helping poor people.** So they should not be linked. The point of aid is to help poor people, for no other reason than that they are human beings in need. It's supposed to help them. And the only way it needs to help us, is by making the world a little bit more like the way we want it to be – a fairer and better place, for everyone.

CARE fully agrees that we should make sure that aid is always improving. Making the world better isn't easy. Of course it doesn't always work. We're trying to create new jobs for people in war zones, help people to rebuild lives after natural disasters, get girls in poor communities into school, fight for women's rights globally, and much more. It's difficult. So we are always trying to learn and do better, so we can help more people, and more effectively. We want aid to **really** get better. And that means getting it focused back again on helping the world's poorest people.

From 2012-2016, **British aid dropped from 3rd place to 15th** in a ranking (by the Center for Global Development) of aid effectiveness among the 27 biggest aid funders. This fall happened while Boris Johnson and Priti Patel were in the FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and DFID (Department for International Development), precisely because they had already begun doing the kinds of things that they are going to call for more of – spending aid on the wrong things.

In 2011, Parliament set up the **Independent Commission for Aid Impact**. It tries to make aid better by looking at real evidence of what works, and making recommendations to government. So it knows **what works better, and what doesn't**. And generally, the kind of things which Boris Johnson and Priti Patel did when they were in government – and the kind of things they say they want to do more of – reduced the impact of aid:

- The majority of ICAI reviews of FCO-led programmes have been amber/red, and the only review of an MOD project was amber/red (in contrast, ICAI reviews of DFID have awarded the vast majority of its programmes either green or amber/green).
- On poverty focus, DFID spends 53% of its aid in Least Developed Countries and fragile and conflict-affected states. The FCO spends only 16% of its aid in those countries. The Business Department spends only 5% of its aid in these countries. There is clear evidence that DFID and its largest programmes prioritise poverty reduction, but this is not evident for the FCO or other departments.
- On transparency, DFID ranked 3rd out of 45 in the 2018 International Aid Transparency Index. The FCO came 40th.

I'd like to say one final word about **transparency**. One of the things that Boris John, Priti Patel and others will say, is that British charities only support a bigger aid budget because we directly benefit from it.

It is true that CARE and most British international charities receive grants from the government to support our projects all over the world. We are totally transparent about that in our annual reports, as we are about the salaries we pay, the frauds we have suffered, and the results we achieve. We don't hide this. But we believe in UK aid not because some of it funds our work, but because we believe Britain has made a promise to help people in the world less fortunate than ourselves, in the same way we were once helped after WW2.

However, **the organisations which are attacking aid are not so transparent**. In February, Bob Seeley MP put his name to a report by the Henry Jackson Society, calling for reduced aid and for more of it to be spent by the Foreign Office and the Army, not to help the poorest people but to support trade and defence. The Henry Jackson Society refuses to reveal where any of its funding comes from. You might wonder why?

Similarly, the so-called TaxPayers' Alliance, which will be issuing at least two reports in the coming weeks, with Boris Johnson MP and Priti Patel MP, is far from transparent about its funding. The most recent Annual Report on its website is for 2016, and includes no financial statements. Its 2017 annual accounts at Companies House also include no information about its sources of income. What are they hiding?

So when you hear aid being attacked in the news in the coming weeks, **I hope you will tell the people you know the truth.** That aid works best when it helps the poorest people. And aid that helps the poorest people, often works. And when it doesn't, we learn from it so we can make it even better.

I also hope you will **write to your MP** and tell them why you want all political parties to stick to our 2005 promise to the world's poorest people.

Aid works – but there is still more work to do.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurie Lee".

Laurie Lee
Chief Executive, CARE International UK

P.S. I'd be very interested to **hear your feedback.** Please email me at ceoffice@careinternational.org