



Mitchell at a refugee camp near the Kenya-Somalia border: in the Horn of Africa, 750,000 people are at risk of starvation

spending in countries affected by conflict as agreed by the National Security Council – on which the Department for International Development plays a full part.

Taken together these changes represent a new approach. And they have allowed us to determine, for the first time ever, the results that British aid is intended to achieve for the next four years. During the course of this

Parliament British taxpayers will help vaccinate over 55 million children against preventable diseases; provide 50 million people with the means to help work their way out of poverty; secure schooling for 11 million children; save the lives of 50,000 women in pregnancy and childbirth and so much more.

And, of course, Britain's proud tradition of helping people facing humanitarian emergencies will continue. It is a sad fact that in the Horn of Africa up to 750,000 people are at risk of starvation. Britain is the second-largest donor to the crisis, saving lives and making a difference to the lives of millions of people affected. This complements the response of the British public to the Disasters Emergency Committee charity appeal, where once again British people have demonstrated their characteristic generosity in times of great need.

I believe everyone in Britain can be proud of our commitment to the world's poorest and what it says about our country – but above all that the coalition government is giving this the priority it deserves: creating a better life for millions of people and a safer, more prosperous world for us all. 🇬🇧

PUTTING DEVELOPMENT TO RIGHTS

It's true that international development has come a long way in recent years, says **David Mepham**, but it still has a long way to go, especially in respect of human rights



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In 2009, David Cameron pledged that the Conservatives in government would meet the international target of getting rich countries to devote 0.7 per cent of national income to combating poverty in the developing world. At the time, some commentators described this as clever political rebranding – making it harder for opponents to suggest that the Tories lacked compassion for the poor. Less cynically, others saw it as a reflection of Cameron's more liberal and internationalist values.

Whatever the motivation, the policy has been controversial for many Conservatives. Liam Fox has

been the most high-profile critic. But many MPs and party members resent the ring-fencing of overseas aid at a time of deep cuts to cherished defence and police budgets.

Cameron and the international development secretary, Andrew Mitchell, have responded in two main ways. First, they've asserted the patriotic case for aid – this is part of Britain's DNA, something the country can be proud of, where Britain is a global leader. Second, the government has conducted a major overhaul of UK aid spending (the bilateral and multilateral aid



reviews), aimed at using aid more effectively to deliver measurable results. In all DfID country programmes, five-year indicators have been set, with targets to boost school enrolment, increase access to healthcare, or create employment opportunities for women (objectives the ministers believe the public will understand and support).

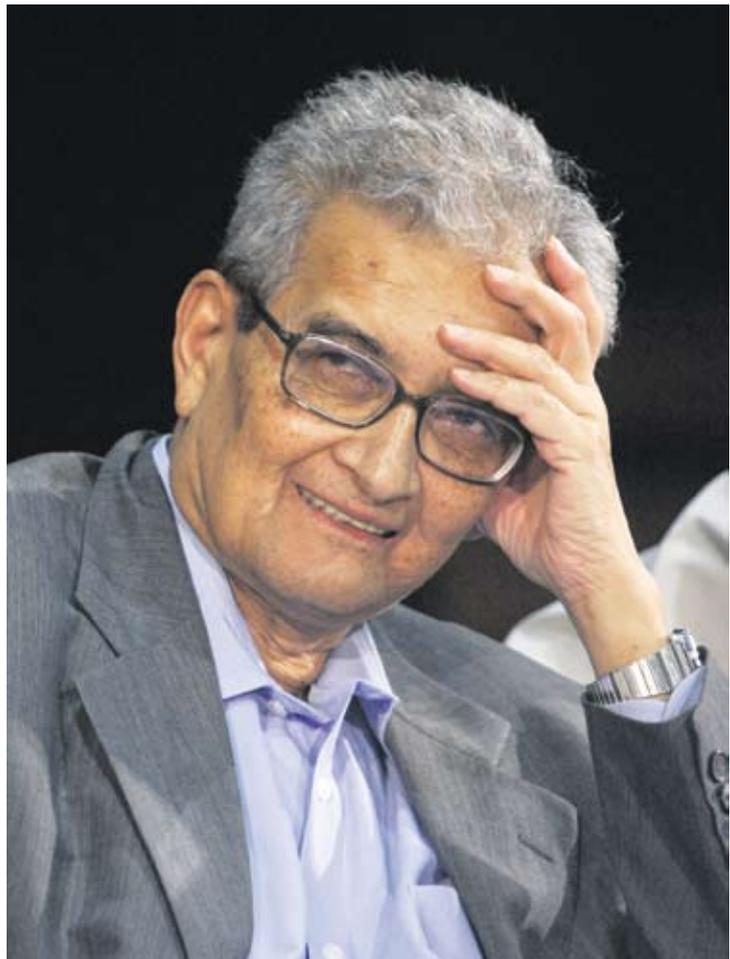
What should we make of this approach? Cameron and Mitchell should certainly be supported against those who advocate that Britain should do less to tackle global poverty. While Britain faces economic and social challenges, these do not remotely compare to the unconscionable levels of malnutrition, ill-health and thwarted educational opportunity faced by millions around the world. And Britain has moral and legal obligations, as well as reasons of self-interest, to do more to tackle it.

Although it is harder to argue against a results-based approach to development, it is here that the government's new approach is more vulnerable. Greater access to healthcare and education is obviously a good thing. But in attempting to sell development to its critics, the government risks oversimplifying how development actually happens. There are many reasons for poverty, but poor governance, corruption, conflict, the violation of human rights, the absence of the rule of law, and environmental pressures are major factors.

The key to progress is therefore for progressive elements within the country itself to press for far-reaching political and economic reform, so that governance improves, corruption is tackled, and human rights and the rule of law are respected. The most important job of outsiders is to support such forces, sometimes through aid, at times by applying pressure on the government in question, and sometimes by changing policies of developed countries that hinder development, like unfair international rules of trade or tax havens that deprive poor countries of revenue.

DfID's new approach gives too little attention to the political context for development, and its indicators create few incentives for tackling more systemic issues. For example, its country-level indicators rarely address political pluralism, media freedom or the rule of law – although these are fundamental to effective development.

DfID also has a particularly worrying blind spot when it comes to human rights. Some of its largest aid recipients in Africa are major rights violators. This includes Rwanda, where opposition parties are repressed,



journalists and civil society groups are intimidated, and no-one in the armed forces has been brought to account for war crimes committed within Rwanda and the DRC. A similar situation applies in Ethiopia, where the opposition is repressed, Ethiopian war crimes in the Ogaden and Somalia have gone unpunished and donor aid money has been misused by the ruling party.

These examples are not meant to undermine the wider case for development, but to suggest that DfID should be more assertive about human rights and governance issues with these countries. As Amartya Sen and others have argued for decades now, development is about creating conditions in which poor people can realise civil and political freedoms, as well as improve their economic and social conditions. DfID ministers should re-read Sen, and make rights and freedom a more central component of their new development approach. ■

Required reading: ministers should act on Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen's assertion that development is about fostering civil and political freedoms, not just improving economic and social conditions, says David Mepham