

# INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Our policy platform sets the agenda for our party and its representatives, and puts forward our to-do list for Parliament. In the tradition of co-operation, our policy process is member-led and this is your opportunity to shape the ideas we'll take to all levels of Government.**

This year, the policy consultation will focus on two areas – health and international development. Members are invited to share their views and ideas through our consultation, running until 19th June 2022.

There are a number of ways to get involved – you could attend your local party meeting to discuss the topics and share your collective views, or send your individual answers to us. Resources and support are available to help you convene your meetings online, and you can also learn more at one of our regional conferences happening through the year – where expert speakers will debate these issues with our members.

Your contributions will be collected and considered by the NEC's policy sub-committee, who use your ideas and feedback to shape policy proposals. These will be brought to the Co-operative Party annual conference in the Autumn for delegates to debate and vote on.

As a Party and a movement, co-operativism is proudly internationalist. We know that our values and principles don't stop at our borders. This consultation asks some big questions about the UK's role in the world, our approach to aid and the role of co-operatives in international development – we want the consultation to cover the full gambit of policy in this important area. We hope the consultation doesn't seem to daunting in its length and breadth. Please remember that these questions are intended as a guide – members should share anything they feel is relevant to the debate and should not feel obliged to answer every single question either.

# International development as a political priority

The past year has seen the UK take huge steps backwards from the global stage in terms of its contribution to aid efforts. The Department for International Development (DFID) has been merged with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office – which in reality appears to amount to its abolition. The Co-operative Party and its representatives have campaigned hard to save DFID in recognition of the value that we as a Party and movement put on international development.

Our aid budget has been cut, with the Government renegeing on manifesto commitments to retaining our 0.7% GDP spend, cut to just 0.5%. This has seen significant cuts to aid allocation to many of the highest priority countries.

## Questions

- Do you support adopting the campaign re-establish DFID as formal Party policy?
- How can the next Labour & Co-operative Government not just reinstate DFID, but bring back something better and more impactful?

# Tackling global poverty

Our existing policy reads:

*“The Co-operative Party is committed to supporting a development agenda that seeks to eradicate global poverty once and for all. This can only be achieved through a rights-based agenda that ensures decent jobs and social protection; access to universal health and social care; universal access to basic utilities; quality primary and secondary education; protection of ecosystems and biodiversity; basic food security and eradication of hunger; and women’s empowerment and gender equality.”*

## Questions

- Do you still agree with this statement? Is there anything you think needs to be added or changed?
- How can we ensure equalities is at the heart of our approach to tackling global poverty?

# International aid

The Co-operative Party’s policy platform at the General Election 2017 highlighted concerns about the current trend towards linking the Department for International Development spend on foreign aid to issues of defence and private business development.

The CDC, the private sector arm of the UK's aid programme, has a record of channelling investment through tax havens and into private sector projects. The 2017 Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) Act, which saw the cap on funds spent through the CDC significantly increased, only served to make this problem worse.

With the abolition of the Department for International Development (DFID), this conflation of aid and private business development overseas continues, with the CDC accused of wastefulness and secrecy as well as continuing to use tax havens and investing in coal, petroleum pipelines and oil-burning power plants contrary to Britain's commitments to tackling climate change.

## Questions

- How can we ensure greater transparency of how British aid is spent?

## Global co-operative development

The co-operative movement is one of the largest organised segments of civil society with over one billion members, and plays a crucial role across a wide spectrum of human aspiration and need.

## Questions

- Are there good examples of co-operative approaches to tackling global poverty you have come across that you would like to highlight? Why do they work?
- How can we support further co-operative growth and build international co-operative capacity?

## Climate justice

Climate justice is a core plank of the Co-operative Party's climate policy - it means not just tackling climate change but doing so in a way which is equal and equitable.

Climate change and development are closely intertwined. Poor people in the Global South will feel the impacts first and worst (and already are) because of vulnerable geography and lesser ability to cope with damage from severe weather and rising sea levels. In short, climate change will be awful for everyone but catastrophic for the Global South.

Many researchers also point to climate change, damage to biodiversity and ecological breakdown as a factor which creates conditions for new viruses and diseases, such as Ebola or Covid-19, to emerge or existing diseases like Malaria to spread further than they have previously.

## Questions

- How can we ensure that climate justice is at the heart of our approach to international development?
- What role can we play in preventing further ecological breakdown to protect health and livelihoods in the Global South?

## Fair trade

The UK is about to renegotiate trade arrangements with a large number of countries around the world. This could have serious consequences for millions of jobs and livelihoods in very poor countries.

Covid-19 has also had a serious impact on producers' workplaces – many have been unable to make a living, or are forced to work in unsafe conditions through the pandemic because of a lack of access to PPE.

## Questions

- How can future trade agreements ensure that changes in trade arrangements lead to fairer trading relationships that help end poverty?
- Many workers in the Global South do not earn a wage they can live on. How can we promote a living wage through our international development policy?

## Response to Covid-19 and global health equity

The pandemic has been devastating the world over – but in the Global South especially so where pre-crisis conditions were already weak. Frail health systems, lower living standards and a lack of services have struggled to respond. Pre-existing endemic health inequalities from malaria to hunger to HIV left populations more vulnerable. Lockdowns, treatment, support and vaccine administration is made harder where populations in cities are overcrowded and in rural regions are widely dispersed and poorly connected.

Education was put on pause – in many instances, even when a school had managed to put its lessons online and a parent had a smartphone, the parent might not have a sufficiently generous data plan to make use of them. Lockdowns in the West caused plummeting demands for the export products that sustain local economies, and many workers are in insecure, poorly paid jobs without access to adequate PPE.

Now that countries are racing to vaccinate and protect their populations, the Global South is again being left behind. Wealthy countries are stockpiling vaccines while poor countries are

struggling to afford enough doses to protect their population. High-income nations, home to a sixth of the world's population, have received nearly half of doses made by the four major Western vaccine makers - while low-income countries which account for around one-tenth of the global population, have received less than 2% of all doses.

The Covid-19 jab is one of the “most expensive vaccines in history” for poorer countries. South Africa had been forced to buy doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine at a price 2.5 times higher than that paid by most European countries. Bangladesh and Uganda have also paid more than the EU for the vaccine. Many countries are only able to access vaccines nearing their expiry date which they are unable to rollout in time.

At the same time, higher-income countries have paid below the norm for their Covid-19 vaccine supplies – and have stockpiled so many that millions of jabs expire before even being used and are discarded. In 2021, 60m vaccines that could have been sent from the Global North to the Global South, passed their ‘use-by’ date and had to be destroyed.

It is reported that the global coronavirus death toll could double due to a surplus of vaccines in the richest countries and a shortage in the poorest – both because of the unnecessary deaths of unvaccinated populations in those countries and because unequal vaccination globally enables new variants to more quickly develop and spread.

## Questions

- Should ensuring fairer access to vaccines be a policy priority? How can the UK play a leadership role on the international stage to promote vaccine equity?
- What role should pharmaceutical companies, many of whom have made significant profits through this crisis, play in ensuring the Global South has equal access to vaccines?
- The need to rapidly invest in tackling Covid-19 has stripped resources from other health services and in many parts of the world has damaged the rest of the healthcare system. How can building capacity and resilience in healthcare, including helping the Global South to future proof their systems ahead of potential future crises, play a greater role in our international development efforts?

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