

Act on Poverty - briefing for MPs

CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) is the official overseas development and humanitarian agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. We work alongside people regardless of race, religion, gender or nationality to tackle poverty and injustice in over 60 countries.

CAFOD is one of the five organisations who make up the British Overseas Aid Group (BOAG) alongside Oxfam, Save the Children, Christian Aid and Action Aid. We are a member of Caritas International, the second biggest global relief network, formed of Catholic organisations.

We have recently launched our Act On Poverty campaign, urging the government to:

- push for a fair climate change deal at the UN
- honour your commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of national income on aid by 2013
- ensure businesses are accountable to people in poor countries affected by their operations.

For more details visit cafod.org.uk/actonpoverty

This briefing highlights some of the main areas where we hope to see progress and the support you could provide.

Aid

CAFOD is committed both to improving the quality of aid planning and delivery, and ensuring that promises made on the amount of aid to be given are kept.

- We were delighted that all three major political parties made manifesto commitments to legally protect spending 0.7 per cent of gross national income on aid by 2013.
- In these difficult economic times the commitment to protect aid budgets by the coalition government is welcome and we hope that it will now be enshrined into law.
- 2010 is a critical year for aid, with important EU, G8 and G20 meetings taking place, and the crucial UN MDG Review Summit in September. Legislation to safeguard aid would send an important message to the international community on the need to protect the most vulnerable.
- We are working to be more accountable and transparent in all of our programmes.

What you can do

- We urge members to ensure that robust legislation on aid volumes is passed through parliament at the earliest opportunity.

Climate change

- CAFOD has been playing an active role in the international climate negotiations, working with our European network in the call for a fair, ambitious and binding deal. The Cancun meeting can deliver progress towards a global deal, especially on climate finance issues. In 2010, we must see clarity on two key issues: sources of long-term climate finance and delivery of short-term financial promises made in Copenhagen.
- Sources of long-term climate finance: It is crucial that finance is provided to help developing countries, who are being hit hardest, to tackle climate change. This finance should be additional to, not part of, the 0.7 per cent of GNI pledged in aid to help reduce

poverty. The Advisory Group on Climate Finance (of which Chris Huhne MP is a member) is discussing different sources for finance and it is crucial that its work delivers concrete recommendations to be agreed by the negotiators at the UNFCCC

- Delivery of short-term finance: The UK government has committed to £1.5 billion in fast-start finance, money to help poor countries to address the most urgent adaptation and mitigation needs. The EU committed to transparent reporting of these pledges, but so far the necessary detail has not been presented, which makes it difficult for developing countries to plan climate action. It is expected that the EU will present an updated report at the end of the year, and we must ensure that all the relevant information is there.

What you can do

- Hold the Government to account on its short-term financial pledges made in Copenhagen. EU Finance Ministers must commit to honest and open reporting of these financial promises.
- In advance of their meeting on 19 October, please ask parliamentary questions and write to George Osborne to ensure that he pushes for transparent reporting when meeting EU Finance Ministers. Transparency will enable poor countries to see:
 - Where will the money come from: does it come from existing commitments to spend 0.7 per cent of national income on aid?
 - What will the money be spent on: are the needs of the poorest addressed?
 - How will the money be given: will it be grants or loans that must be repaid?
 - Who will be responsible for spending the money: how will they be held to account?

The private sector in development

CAFOD believes the private sector plays a key role within development. Transparency on aid payments needs to be matched by appropriate reporting requirements for companies operating in the developing world. Corruption is a key example of what can happen when companies are not held to account and there is a lack of transparency in their operations.

- Around 25 per cent of African states' GDP is lost to corruption each year.
- CAFOD welcomes the new Bribery Act passed with cross-party support in the last parliament.
- CAFOD welcomes the appointment of Ken Clarke as a Ministerial Level Anti-Corruption Champion.
- A strong and coherent cross-Whitehall anti-corruption action plan is now essential if the UK is to play a leading role in global efforts to tackle corruption and ensure our international development objectives are met.

What you can do

- MPs can encourage the new government to set out clear measures to address international corruption, including private sector bribery, asset recovery and transparency of licit payments as well as country-by-country reporting.

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