

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL (UK)

the coalition against corruption



4 September 2008

The Editor
The Guardian
London

Dear Sir,

You report (International development: Britain unveils plan to stop misuse of aid to poor countries, 4 September) that the UK, with support from other donors, is proposing an initiative to increase transparency in aid flows and budgets which will make it easier for people in poor countries to track how aid budgets are being spent.

We welcome this initiative and look forward to seeing the full detail. Aid would be more effective if donor and recipient governments adopted an approach based on mutual accountability. Both should agree on specific reform measures to increase transparency, which can be monitored, especially by civil society and the media. The UK Secretary of State for International Development has quite rightly stressed that donors must agree common standards for transparency and predictability in the aid they provide. At the same time measures to ensure aid is properly spent should be strengthened. Action in three areas would make a huge difference: (1) the establishment, with the involvement of competent civil society organisations, of effective systems for monitoring and tracking public expenditure, especially at the local/community levels; (2) the recording of all aid funds in recipient governments' budgets with effective legislative and other oversight mechanisms; and (3) the strengthening of the oversight capacity of legislatures and supreme audit institutions to monitor budget allocations, actual expenditure and service delivery. It is ironical that whilst calling for more democratic accountability in recipient countries, very few donors encourage scrutiny by those countries' parliaments.

Yours sincerely,

Laurence Cockcroft
Chairman

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