



# Christian Aid's 2015 general election manifesto policy recommendations



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**Christian Aid has been working to help the world's most vulnerable people and to tackle the root causes of poverty for almost 70 years. We are not party political, but we know that poverty does not happen by accident. Wherever it exists, poverty is the result of unequal access to power and resources, more often than not as a consequence of political decisions.**

**Based on our analysis of poverty, and the backing of thousands of supporters for our campaigns, we put forward the following manifesto recommendations. We urge parties to adopt these proposals as part of their contract with the world's poor.**

## **Global leadership and government-wide commitment**

Early in the life of the next government, countries will commit to new global agreements for eradicating poverty, tackling climate change and strengthening the global humanitarian system. Led by the Prime Minister, the entire government must seize this opportunity to tackle the root causes of poverty.

This means that the priorities of the UK government should be:

- to secure ambitious agreements on development and climate at the United Nations (UN), guided by equity and sustainability
- to commit to accountable implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the global climate change agreement reached in Paris in 2015
- to publish a Sustainable Development Plan, setting out the cross-Whitehall activities to deliver and finance an integrated post-2015 agenda.

## **Climate and sustainability**

Climate change is already costing lives and destroying the livelihoods of those who did least to cause it. And now its impacts are

also being felt here in Britain. But the risks associated with climate change can be averted, and moving to renewable, clean energy can boost sustainable growth in the UK and in developing countries.

The government should:

- fully implement the Climate Change Act, in line with the Independent Committee on Climate Change
- work within the EU to increase ambition on carbon emission reduction targets and to provide greater incentives to encourage renewable energy and energy efficiency
- increase support to developing countries to adapt to climate change and access clean energy
- ensure that action on climate change is central to the UN's post-2015 development goals, promoting resilient and low-carbon development
- make ambitious plans to achieve a fair global deal to keep climate warming below two degrees. This will require backing for an ambitious EU climate and energy package, and a strong EU position in UN climate negotiations – including a phase out of dirty energy and phasing in a 100% clean energy future by 2050.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Christian Aid is a member of The Climate Coalition and endorses its campaign objectives.



## Fair tax systems

Tax avoidance and evasion rob countries of vital revenues with which to provide public services and create an environment that is good for enterprise – and so a way out of dependency on aid. They cost countries more than they receive in aid, draining funds from essential services such as health and education.

Tax avoidance increases inequality both globally and nationally. The UK is a major financial centre and in control of many tax havens. The next UK government should champion reform of the global tax system and, crucially, ensure that developing countries benefit.

### The government should:

- require all UK firms to report their tax payments publicly, on a country-by-country basis, so that developing countries have access to the information and can ensure the right amount of tax is paid. The UK must share tax information automatically with developing countries, and support this as a new global norm
- ensure that UK tax policy does not adversely affect poor countries, for example by carrying out 'spill-over analysis' of the likely impacts of new tax policy on poor countries; tightening up existing accounting rules, which currently encourage UK companies to avoid tax in developing countries; obliging UK companies to report their use of tax avoidance schemes in developing countries; and reviewing existing tax treaties with developing countries to ensure a fair distribution of tax between countries
- ensure that the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies can no longer

operate as tax havens, by improving financial transparency and the sharing of tax information in line with UK standards (including new legislation before this parliament on the publication of company ownership information)

- work with the EU and G20 to end the abuse of 'shell companies', used to launder illicit finds, by making information about company ownership publicly available
- ensure that taxation is included within the post-2015 agenda and is at the heart of discussions around new global financing for development plans.<sup>2</sup>

## Gender equality

The Department for International Development (DFID) should continue to focus on gender equality. It is essential for sustainable poverty reduction and to ensure the human rights of women. In the context of next year's UN Women's global campaign, marking the 20th anniversary of the World Conference on Women held in Beijing, the UK government should play a strong leadership role and embed gender equality and women's rights throughout its work.

To do this the next UK government should:

- create transformational targets and a stand-alone goal on gender within the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals agenda. This should drive action to eradicate gender-based violence, promote the participation and leadership of women in all aspects of decision-making, and promote economic justice for women.
- invest in long-term social and cultural change, including through the engagement of faith leaders and faith-based organisations, and ensure that funding

<sup>2</sup> Christian Aid, in partnership with other UK groups, will also be bringing forward more detailed proposals for a number of these measures in a Tax Dodging Bill in the next Parliament.



is available to those working to tackle discriminatory social norms.

- ensure that strategies for economic development are in place to finance gender equality (including sufficient spending on essential services and social protection, to remove the structural barriers that prevent women from fair and equal participation in economic life).

## Reform of the humanitarian system

In the past 20 years, disasters from natural hazards have affected 4.4 billion people, claimed 1.3 million lives and caused \$2 trillion in economic losses.

The UK public continues to be among the most generous in responding to emergency appeals, such as the typhoon Haiyan emergency response in the Philippines. They also see the increasing need for governments not just to respond to disasters but, where possible, to prevent them.

## The next UK government should:

- support renewed determination and action to end impunity for gross violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. This includes greater efforts to ensure life-saving aid for isolated communities experiencing violence
- give more support for local and national capacity to prevent and respond to disasters. This implies a need for DFID to re-examine its risk-averse control requirements, which hinder efforts to strengthen local humanitarian capacity
- deliver strong commitments, in key global agreements in 2015, on disaster prevention and on accountability to disaster-affected populations
- give strong financial support for the Start Fund – a leading-edge, flexible funding mechanism that enables NGOs (who are responsible for 70% of global humanitarian assistance at point of delivery) to provide rapid support to under-funded crises.

