

# Christian Aid's proposals for the UK general election 2017



**Christian Aid has been working to help the world's most vulnerable people and to tackle the root causes of poverty for over 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 and, more often than not, as a consequence of political decisions.**

As our Chairman, Dr Rowan Williams, says, 'As we enter the election period and debate the terms of Brexit, Britain's political and social landscape is in flux. We face great choices about the soul and future of our nation... all of us as individuals can play a vital role in shaping the nation we want to be.'

Led by the prime minister, the entire UK Government must put Britain at heart of global efforts to address the root causes of poverty. Based on our understanding of poverty, discussions with our partner organisations, and the backing of thousands of supporters for our campaigns, we call on all parties to consider these recommendations in their manifestos.

## **Building on the UK's leadership on climate change**

The risks of climate change are the biggest factor affecting global efforts to end poverty. The historic UN Paris Climate Agreement is only as good as the actions that follow,

and while other nations are seizing the opportunities for a low carbon economy, the UK risks falling behind. Promoting international cooperation and leading by example are vital for our standing in the world as well as for the world's poorest people. The next UK Government should:

- place climate change at the heart of our global presence by ensuring our future relationship with Europe includes cooperation on climate change and energy markets
- make climate change a central pillar of the UK's Commonwealth presidency – one of the first opportunities to explicitly showcase the UK's approach to global climate leadership
- support our international allies to adapt to climate change and transition to low carbon economies by 2020, to implement the Paris Climate Agreement that the UK helped to forge



We believe in life before death



- produce a low-carbon industrial strategy and an ambitious emission reduction plan that will get the UK back on track and transform the economy in line with the Climate Change Act
- require the UK's financial services and banks to phase out investment in fossil fuels and increase its focus on renewable energy.

## The UK can play a leadership role on aid and sustainable development

Extreme poverty has halved in the last 40 years, and child mortality has halved since 1990, but many have been left behind, so we must redouble our efforts and address the root causes. World leaders have a plan to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 – the Sustainable Development Goals – but without the determined efforts of all governments, businesses and civil society, these goals will not be achieved. The next UK Government should:

- recommit to continuing to spend 0.7% of national income on international development aid – mainly spent through an independent department, and focused on eradicating poverty among the world's poorest people
- ensure that other departments are only permitted to spend aid money when it is focused on eradicating poverty, and able to prove its effectiveness and meet the highest transparency standards
- integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into all departments, publish a plan to present to the UN in 2018, and provide annual updates on progress

- boost its leadership on empowering women and girls – resisting making cuts on funding for organisations which champion women's rights, and ensuring all government policies are specifically addressing gender discrimination overseas
- go beyond aid spending to make sure all government policies work to tackle both the symptoms and root causes of poverty – whether it be adapting to climate change or reforming tax rules to make a fair playing field for all countries.

## The UK must lead the world in a more transparent tax system

Developing countries lose around \$200bn every year due to multinational tax avoidance, often facilitated by offshore centres under the patronage of wealthy countries. The UK has set the agenda on transparency and reform of tax rules, but it has not gone far enough – and its own role has been in the spotlight following the Panama Papers leaks. The next UK Government should:

- require all UK companies to publish their key economic indicators such as taxes paid on a country-by-country basis, and persuade other countries to do the same in fora such as the G7, G20 and Commonwealth
- build on its pioneering public register of the real owners of companies, by fully verifying the data, persuading the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to adopt public registers by 2020, and urging more countries to follow suit
- review all new and existing tax policies to ensure that they do not harm developing countries.



## Reform the way the UK responds to humanitarian relief

The world is facing the largest humanitarian crisis since 1945 – but the international response is struggling to cope with the scale and new challenges. The UK public are among the most generous responders to emergency appeals, but to save lives we must act not only in response to disasters, but also to prevent them. The next UK Government should:

- increase investment in disaster risk reduction and resilience-building measures so that communities are better able to cope with potential crises. Every £1 spent on disaster-risk reduction saves £7 in recovery. The proportion of UK aid devoted to this should rise from 0.4% currently to 5%
- put local communities at the heart of decision-making about how aid is spent, directing at least 25% of humanitarian funding to local groups by 2020 and urging the UN to do the same – in line with commitments made last year at the World Humanitarian Summit
- be a champion for international and human rights law, and end impunity for violations wherever they take place.

## Upholding and improving the rights of all those on the move

Worldwide over 65 million people are displaced by war or disaster, yet many countries are cracking down on the rights of refugees. At least 40 million are displaced within their own countries where they receive little help or protection despite being in greatest need. In September 2018, the UN is calling a summit to ensure the international system protects the rights and dignity of all people on the move. The next UK Government should support calls to:

- uphold international refugee law and resist any attempts at backsliding
- increase support and recognition for internally displaced people and host communities, who are often left behind
- provide much greater financing for short- and long-term support to refugees and other displaced people, especially as the USA cuts its funding to refugee agencies
- include the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in national law and policy
- lead by example, by expanding resettlement schemes so long-term displaced people can find a safe place to call home in the UK, and champion safe and legal routes for desperate people to find sanctuary.



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