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gives us the view from the aid recipient and Lady Fiona Hodgson discusses her work with women in developing countries. Sabrina Mahtani, an NGO advocacy worker in Sierra Leone, explains the importance of working to restore justice and human rights in post-conflict countries. Having co-founded a development charity to build stronger legal systems in Africa myself, I believe that the rule of law is as important to development as clean water and anti-malarial vaccines. Finally, if you want to actually do something about it, then Stephen Crabb MP tells you how. Project Umubano, now in its fourth year, enables Conservative party members to visit and volunteer in Rwanda and Sierra Leone on social action projects. Having participated in Umubano for 3 years in Rwanda and Sierra Leone, I unreservedly encourage you to get involved.

Our Association has been going through change this summer too. We welcome Clare Hambro as new Chairman and David Loader as our new Agent. We are privileged to have two such experienced, dedicated, positive and talented people at the heart of the leadership and I am sure that this marks the beginning of new and exciting times ahead.

There are lots of challenges ahead - at home and away. Only by working together as a united team, appreciating everyone's efforts and staying positive, will we get the results we wish for.

Enjoy reading and see you soon.

Best wishes
Suella Fernandes

Blueprint Editor

HEALING THE WOUNDS

A NOTE FROM OUR EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Welcome to this edition of Blueprint. This summer has seen crisis at home and abroad: looting rioters in our own city forcing us to face up to harsh truths about some of our young people and how the authorities deal with them; media scandal calling into question freedom of speech; revolution in Libya and Syria; famine in Somalia; bitter divisions at the heart of the US Congress culminating in an unprecedented credit downgrade. Tough times for all.

Against such a backdrop, it becomes difficult to justify spending taxpayers' money on overseas aid. After all, what's in it for us? Mark Field MP addresses this very question and reminds us of Britain's tradition of compassion, the importance of not losing sight of the bigger picture, and how "soft power" increases in value as our "hard power" slowly declines. Dr Syed Kamall MEP



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SAMI ESTATES

MAKING THE CASE FOR OVERSEAS AID

by Mark Field MP

> Few Tory MPs attending constituency events these days avoid being buttonholed and harangued about the government's stance on overseas aid. Not so long ago we were typically being swamped by campaign emails imploring the government to commit 0.7% of GDP to overseas aid. There are pure, altruistic, as well as slightly more cynical PR reasons why our Party committed itself to fulfilling the 0.7% pledge. Modern Conservatives would match economic diligence with a social conscience.

Fast forward to mid-2011, however, and our aid promise is under intense scrutiny. For sure, to neglect it would have left the new government vulnerable to accusations of heartlessness. However, rather than being proud of the government's stance, a number of my constituents regard it as symptomatic of an administration out of step with the needs of ordinary people which misuses taxpayers' money to parade its compassion on the global stage.

Assuming that our policy on aid is not ripe for a u-turn, we shall have to do a far better job of selling it to an increasingly cynical public. During an era when UK defence expenditure, and with it our projection of 'hard power', has been in inexorable decline, we should recognise that our taking a lead in provision of overseas aid will bring the nation real 'soft power' benefits. We stand to increase our clout in the developing world and make real diplomatic and economic advances.

However, I appreciate that aid scepticism

is not just borne of our current financial predicament. For decades now, through their taxes and charitable giving, Britons have paid vast sums to help developing countries. Many have even spent time in those countries working on aid projects. Yet all too often progress has appeared negligible. While the Far East and South Asia power to economic dominance, sub-Saharan Africa has stalled despite the billions of international aid injected there. For aid to succeed requires stable political and economic institutions in recipient countries. It is clear that in much of Africa over the past forty years or more this prerequisite has been absent. By contrast there has been a Faustian bargain promising stability rather than critical economic reform between donors (NGOs, charities and Western governments alike) and heads of African States who have become increasingly corrupted by the vast sums of aid at stake.

People understandably now ask – is aid working, does it deliver value for money and do we donate more to salve our consciences than to deliver real change on the ground? Worse still, might aid actually be hampering the progress of developing countries?

The Department for International Development (DFID) needs to show that taxpayers' money is being channelled to effective projects and that our people overseas work vigorously to reduce the flaws in existing programmes. Second, it would be helpful if we were to communicate a broader range of benefits



that come from our work abroad. In a globalised world, governments recognise that not all policy solutions can be found at home. To prevent crime, to curb new waves of immigration, to stop the spread of disease, our efforts can be made more effective by concentrating on the source of an issue. Hunger relief and health programmes may be laudable in their own right, but British people want to understand how DFID money benefits them personally. We might also communicate how strengthening our ties with developing countries can be of huge benefit in terms of our trade, energy and security interests. Third, we should make clear that our eventual goal is to see aid stopped altogether. Taxpayers would be right to consider the ultimate mark of a successful development policy as being the elimination of aid. Yet I am not sure I have ever heard such an aim uttered – indeed I fear the number of people now working in the aid business is so huge that we have inadvertently created a vested interest in sustaining the flow.

In microfinance (the provision of financial services such as small loans or savings accounts to low income clients), DFID has a form of aid that has more chance than most of becoming self-sustaining and long lasting, echoing the themes of responsibility and independence that will become ever more important as our own nation negotiates the tough economic years ahead.

At a more elevated level, I believe we should encourage recipient governments to seek alternative sources of financing to reduce aid dependence. Top of the list should be Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). There are currently too many hurdles in place that would otherwise make sub-Saharan Africa an attractive place for private investment. Regulatory and legal systems need to be made more reliable, property rights honoured, infrastructure improved, tax systems streamlined. The UK has the expertise to help with those reforms.

Finally, closer to home sceptical taxpayers need to be aware of the fast changing reality in Africa as a result of China's increasing influence. The Chinese are investing huge sums on that continent. Their might is spreading accordingly and this may make old strategies of engaging with developing nations moribund. I am not suggesting a battle for influence on the African continent akin to that which occurred two centuries ago or during the Cold War. In truth today it would be a battle in which we could not compete! But our development budget can be used as a tool to project our values. For example, if the Foreign Office budget struggles to sustain an influential BBC World Service, hitherto one of the UK's most high quality international assets providing us with invaluable soft power, we might consider whether it could be brought under DFID's umbrella.

DFID is already doing many of the things I have suggested. But I fear the government is losing the marketing battle. The British public finds it condescending to be lectured about the moral imperative of giving aid by an intellectual elite. People are not hardhearted but they rightly demand that taxpayers' money is used wisely and delivers direct value to Britain as well, particularly in lean times. The case can be made but it requires the government to confront scepticism with evidence, not sanctimonious preaching.

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ISSUES FACING WOMEN ACROSS THE WORLD

by Lady Fiona Hodgson

> Still today in the 21st Century there is not one country in the world where women have the same socio-economic and political opportunities as men.

Women make up 70% of the 1.2 billion people across the world who live in poverty and in many countries women are the poorest of the poor. They perform 66% of the world's work, produce 50% of the food but only earn 10% of the income and own around 1% of the property.

Women suffer from a disproportionate lack of access to education and healthcare. There are still countries where women are denied the right to vote and stand for election and in most countries there are few women in senior political and decision making positions.

For women in many parts of the world violence and discrimination are an everyday reality, with many women living a life of fear. Still in some parts of the world, girls may be traded as chattels and sold off, or forced to be married at a very young age to a man they have never met.

In many societies rape victims are considered to an affront to a family's honour – and a girl just being seen talking to a boy outside the family may be considered to have brought disgrace – all of which results in an estimated 5,000 "honour killings" per year, if not more.

130 million girls and women alive today have undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a devastating human rights abuse. This is a widespread practice in many countries, even in countries such as Egypt; it is estimated that over 90% of women there have undergone FGM.

Afghanistan is one of the harshest countries in the world to be a woman. It has not always been this way but in many countries where there is conflict, rights for women go backwards and domestic violence escalates exponentially. It is hard to get accurate statistics, but it is generally acknowledged that gender based violence in Afghanistan is the most pervasive and institutionalised in the world with over 87% of women being affected by domestic violence. For most of them, as for women in many other countries, access to justice is almost impossible to achieve.

One in every eight Afghan women dies in childbirth. That is one woman every 30 minutes. Heartbreakingly, almost a quarter of Afghan children die before they reach the age of five.

Afghanistan is not the only country with such a high maternal mortality rate. Last summer I went on Project Umubano to Sierra Leone to look at the situation for women there. Sierra Leone is the most dangerous place in the world to have a baby.



DFID have started a new programme which helps support free healthcare for pregnant and lactating women and for children up to the age of 5. Early indications of the number of women accessing this basic healthcare – many of them for the first time in their lives – are hugely encouraging. However, it will take time to build capacity and many women live in villages too remote to get help to when things go wrong.

Maternal mortality is an enormous global problem – and the Millennium goal on maternal health is the one where least impact has been made. The figures are terrible: every day across the world nearly 1,000 women die needlessly during pregnancy or childbirth for want of basic medical care. 90% of maternal deaths are preventable, but in so many countries healthcare is not free and women have no money.

Women also have less access education and training. Girls still account for 54% of the out of school population and of 163 million youth in the world, 63% are female. Girls in rural areas and from the poorest households are the least likely to enrol and stay in school.

Sometimes the barriers to girls' education are very basic. For example, an adolescent girl does not want to share the same lavatories as boys, while in some countries parents stop their girls going to secondary school because they

are worried that they will be attacked on the way, or that they will be inadequately supervised and thus be raped and become pregnant. This will mean that they are unmarriageable and remain a burden as another mouth to feed for the family.

Addressing these issues needs universal political will, financial resources and action. This is a particularly special year for women globally as in February I was lucky to be at the launch of the new UN agency, UN Women, under the leadership of Michelle Bachelet. We are fortunate that in the UK, too, Andrew Mitchell and his team – Stephen O'Brien and Alan Duncan – have also recognised that women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty and are committed to putting women and girls at the heart of UK's development assistance.

Because helping women is about helping the whole of society. When you invest in women, they invest that money into their families and you are investing in future generations. Women do not wish to be seen as victims, but if we can help support women in developing countries, they have the ability to transform their societies and can be the most powerful agents for change.



HOW TO SPEND OUR GROWING OVERSEAS AID BUDGET

By Dr Syed Kamall MEP

> “I don’t believe it would be right to ignore the difference we can make, turn inwards solely to our own problems and effectively balance our books while breaking our promises to the world’s poorest. Instead, we should step up, deliver on our promises to the world’s poorest and help save millions of lives.”

There are equally strong moral arguments against the Government spending money that we have to borrow, but the words quoted above are those of our Prime Minister David Cameron, and he has made it clear that the one policy this Government will not be rethinking is its commitment to increase the overall level of overseas aid. So how should we be spending all this money? Mr Cameron laudably has committed funding to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisations. This will allow wider distribution of two vaccines to tackle the two biggest killers of children in the developing world: pneumonia and diarrhoea. I am sure Bill Gates is right that the healthier children become, the less parents feel the need to produce huge families because of their fears so many of their children will die young.

The growth in population levels across Africa, Asia and Latin America in the twentieth century has been staggering. If good healthcare and education can help keep population levels more stable, then the increasing strains on the earth’s resources to feed, clothe, house and transport people will be eased.

As every parent knows, population growth generally results from free choices made by

consenting adults. But in many parts of the developing world, free choice in other areas of life is severely restricted. Two years ago, I visited Cote d’Ivoire where I co-chaired a winter school on the Principles of a Free Society for young centre-right politicians from Cote D’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Tanzania and Uganda. During our discussions, I heard harrowing details of beatings, rape and other physical violence that opposition politicians have had to endure from left-wing governments across the continent. Here were some incredibly bright and brave individuals who wanted to reverse the damage caused by dictators who post-independence had adopted Marxist policies as a backlash against colonisation.

I asked the participants for their views on how we should spend our aid budget. To my surprise, few wanted our money, on account of the fact that so much of it has gone to waste over the decades. There was a strong consensus for Britain and the West to deregulate our markets so they could export their produce and products to the EU at a fair price. They would like to see the British government doing more to challenge other governments in the EU on their support of corrupt regimes. And while aid is welcome for short-term disaster relief and to help the most vulnerable, they were suspicious of long term development aid. Some were even against foreign aid altogether - especially direct budgetary support - since they felt it helped to keep corrupt governments in power.

If direct aid is to be given, they wanted it focused on the following areas:



1. Helping farmers to meet EU sanitary and phytosanitary standards, not in the form of government to government aid, which might eventually trickle down into building local laboratories after the government had taken its cut, but simply to send experts over to advise on how to meet these standards and to ensure compliance.
2. Building infrastructure where the private sector will not provide the finance for roads and railways to facilitate the movement of people and goods.
3. Developing robust legal systems, e.g. legal advice, training for lawyers and judges, legal staff, court recorders, documentation etc.
4. Drawing up land & property registers which would allow citizens to register their properties and raise capital.

5. Creating a system of mortgage finance to create property-owning democracies.
6. Lending capital to entrepreneurs who are unable to access larger banks.
7. Improving tax collection and government revenue systems in order to reduce reliance on import tariffs which often mean local citizens pay more for imported food and medicines.

8. Training local politicians and civil servants for trade negotiations. They were critical of what they called “large Northern [hemisphere] NGOs” who often write the position papers of less developed countries and advocate protectionist policies, often against the interests of local entrepreneurs.

I could not promise that the Conservative Party would take on board all their advice, but I did come away more optimistic that there is a generation of young politicians across Africa who realise that the key to development is in their hands and who look to us not for hand-outs but for help in abandoning decades of aid dependency and the failed policies of previous political leaders.

Dr Syed Kamall is the Conservative MEP for London.



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> Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, UK Prime Minister David Cameron, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, Bill Gates and the UK's Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell at the vaccines summit.
Picture: Mark Makela



From the top, anti-clockwise,

- > The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Transport and guest speaker at the CLWCA annual Two Cities Luncheon, with Patrick Evershed (Association President)
- > Cllr Jonathan Glanz with Terrence Tehranian (Hon Treasurer) and Ruth Fielding (Vice Chairman) at Donald Stewart's Farewell Reception in May
- > Blueprint editor Suella Fernandes, the Association's former Agent Donald Stewart and councillor Cameron Thomson at the Agent's Farewell Reception in May
- > The Chinese Conservative Group table at the CLWCA annual Two Cities Luncheon





This page from the top, anti-clockwise,

> The Hon Clare Hambro (Association Chairman) at a recent CPF Event with Suella Fernandes, Tony Devenish, Jonathan Lord MP and Harriett Baldwin MP.

> The Bryanston and Dorset Square Summer Party: Suella Fernandes (Ward Chairman) with Syed Kamall MEP and ward councillors Audrey Lewis, Richard Beddoe and Sheila D'Souza.



YOUR NEW AGENT.....



by David Loader

> I am pleased to have this opportunity to introduce myself in this edition of Blueprint. Becoming Agent at Cities of London & Westminster is a role that I aspired to when I first started training as an Agent over 17 years ago! It is of course an honour to be following in the footsteps of Donald Stewart and I am well aware that they are big shoes to fill. Being an Agent in a constituency for over 30 years elevates you to almost legendary status – especially in an Association which has been at the top of the league for so long. I hope that I will be able to build on Donald's many successes and wish him a very happy retirement.

With my feet now firmly under the desk at Ebury Street, I am looking forward to working with the officers, members, branches, councillors and our Member of Parliament

Mark Field. One of my top priorities to start with will be working on next year's Mayoral elections to ensure that we deliver victory with Boris. I have no doubt that it will be an exciting and fascinating campaign as well as a very hard fought one. To win we need to include as many people as possible to work on all the various levels that are required for a successful election. I hope that it will be a campaign that will generate interest to new people for the Party and enable us to involve people who haven't been before.

My career in the Party has taken me across the country and enabled me to meet and work with many great people that I have been privileged to learn from. I am excited about this next chapter and look forward to the many challenges and fun times ahead! <

CV – David Loader

Age: 36 **Hometown:** Havant, Hampshire

Education: Chichester High School, West Sussex

Employment History:

1994-96	Trained and qualified as a Party Agent
1996-99	Appointed agent to Esher & Walton Conservatives
1999 – 2001	Head of Conservative Future (Party's Youth Organisation)
2001	Conference Executive for CIPD
2002-2004	Research & Development Manager for Westminster
	Explained producing Parliamentary Training Seminars
2004-2006	Appointed Agent to Harrow West Conservatives
2006-2011	Appointed Agent to Esher & Walton Conservatives (again!)

Interests: Enjoying the company of family and friends, winning elections, things that make me laugh and happy memories!

PROJECT UMUBANO

by Stephen Crabb MP

> 2011 is the fifth year of Project Umubano, the Conservative Party's social action project in Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

Set up in 2007 by the Prime Minister David Cameron and the Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP, Secretary of State for International Development, Project Umubano was the first time a British political party had engaged in a social action project in the developing world. Over the last four years, the Project has certainly had a profound impact on our party, with the number of Conservative volunteers increasing annually. This year over 100 Conservatives will join us, and the effort and enthusiasm of our participants always overwhelms me.

Every year that Project Umubano continues serves as a powerful demonstration of the Party's commitment to social action and international development. We focus on teaching skills to provide long term sustainability and a lasting legacy for the partners that we work with on the ground.

Led by our own MPs, the project reaches into a diverse range of areas. This summer Fiona Bruce MP and Jeremy Lefroy MP will be returning to lead an expanded Business project with the Private Sector Federation of Rwanda and the Capital Markets Advisory Council. They have put together a superb programme which builds on

the success of their entrepreneurship workshops last year.

We're also building on our project links in Sierra Leone, led by David Mundell MP. Our team there will continue work on groundbreaking legal and medical projects, and for the first time this year Umubano will also work alongside UK charity Street Child of Sierra Leone on educational and entrepreneurship initiatives.

In Rwanda we're continuing our English language classes for school teachers making the adjustment from a French-based education system to one where English is the principal language. Some of our volunteers will also deliver English language workshops for a group of young survivors of the 1994 genocide. We will also have a team working on a Community Project alongside SURF, the main survivors' charity in the country.

This year Project Umubano has also been invited by the President of the Senate to bring a small team to work alongside their parliamentary assistants to develop their research and report writing skills. We are also continuing our work with the Rwandan FA to coach football for boys and girls, and hope to expand this to cricket coaching this year.

When the Project was set up, the Conservatives' vision was to bring together a team from across the party to raise awareness of global poverty and



play a small part in tackling it on the front line. Although we are realistic about what we can achieve in a relatively short period, through the project our teams of volunteers have been able to make a modest but lasting difference.

We are always interested to hear from party activists and supporters who want to share in a remarkable experience in Rwanda and Sierra Leone in the coming years. It's something that brings together all parts of the party, working alongside ministers, MPs and people from all over the country.

Please do get in touch with Abigail Green at abi.projectumubano@live.co.uk if you would like any further information.



SIERRA LEONE

50 YEARS FORWARD?

by Sabrina Mahtani

>
**Child Soldiers.
Diamonds.
Charles Taylor.**

These are the prominent images the international media portray of Sierra Leone, a small country on the coast of West Africa, which this year celebrated 50 years of independence. Nine years since the end of a brutal civil war, images and memories of the war are hard to forget. Sierra Leone however is trying to portray different images. Breathtaking, palm fringed white sandy beaches. New infrastructure. A country rebuilding and ripe for investment.

The images of Sierra Leone which I encounter every day are rarely covered by the international media. For over six years I have worked with girls and women who come into conflict with the law, most often women detained in prisons with their young children. The majority of these women are illiterate, poor, have a background of physical or emotional abuse or mental health problems. They have little understanding of the justice system they are facing and without access to legal advice and assistance can be detained for months to years in prisons which still struggle to meet basic international standards and have insufficient resources to meet the specific needs of women and their children in detention.

I met Sia in prison last year. She is the mother of 4 children and was 4 months pregnant. She is a market trader and used to sell “junks” (second hand clothing) for

a lady. She owed this lady around \$850 but was unable to pay her all the money as business had been slow that month and several of her customers paid on credit as they could not always afford to pay the entire price. The lady complained to the police and she was arrested. She was eventually released on police bail and tried desperately to pay back the money. Over the next few months she managed to pay back most of the money with only around \$130 remaining. However, the lady became impatient and Sia was arrested again and detained for a week in the police station. She was charged with “fraudulent conversion”, an archaic law contained in the Larceny Act 1916 still in force, and held in Pademba Road Prison.

AdvocAid's Legal Officer, Simitie Laval, took up Sia's case and tried to secure bail for her. Finally a suitable surety was found and Sia was granted bail after spending four months in prison. It was just in time as a few weeks later she gave birth to a healthy baby boy at Aberdeen Women's Centre, a centre offering free health care to women, which AdvocAid was able to arrange. AdvocAid run the only formal after care programme in Sierra Leone, assisting ex prisoners with immediate support and longer term support (such as small business grants or skills training) to assist them to reintegrate back into society and reduce recidivism.

Sierra Leone and its international donors are not in an enviable position. With so many needs to address, how does one choose? The justice and penal system



are often low on the list of priorities with security and infrastructure seen as more pressing. There is often desire to help “victims” rather than “perpetrators”, a black and white distinction which cannot be so strictly applied in such a complicated context.

A country cannot move forward without suitably addressing fundamental justice and human rights concerns. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established to foster lasting and durable peace in Sierra Leone, noted that the collective inaction of judges and lawyers significantly contributed to the human rights violations which occurred before, during and after the war. A 2007 United Nations report cited the ongoing abuse within Sierra Leone's prisons and the failure to protect the rights of inmates as a serious threat to peace in the country.

The vast majority of Sierra Leone's prisoners are pre-trial detainees, still awaiting their case to be concluded

through the courts. This creates greater costs for the State and also deprives families of vital income earners. In Sia's case, her business was destroyed during her imprisonment and her children were not able to go to school as she was unable to pay their school fees.

There are images of hope. A DFID funded justice sector development programme, in conjunction with the Government, initiated a pilot legal aid scheme in Freetown, built new courts and funded various capacity building programmes. The desire for change is evident. However, the small progress made is in danger of being lost without continued support for justice sector reform and continued funding for civil society organisations that often fill the gap where governments are unable. As of July 2011, Sia's case is still ongoing. Without AdvocAid's intervention, Sia would still be in prison and her child growing up behind prison walls.

Sabrina Mahtani is a British-Zambian lawyer. She previously worked at the former Legal Aid practice, Fisher Meredith, specialising in police and prison law. She has worked in human rights projects in Sierra Leone since 2005 and is the co-founder and Executive Director of AdvocAid. This article is written in a personal capacity.

For more information about the work of AdvocAid, please see: www.advocaidsl.com



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