

[An international development policy that works](#) [1]

Written by [Sam Bowman](#) [2] | Tuesday 20 April 2010



Today sees the publication of my briefing paper on the Conservative party's international development policy. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have signed up to a number of bad ideas. As well as several wasteful gimmicks – among them an X-Factor style approach to spending aid money and a 'poverty tourism' programme to send gap year students to Africa – the Conservatives have failed to break with the worst aspect of Western international development policy: development aid.

My briefing argues that the Conservatives' commitment to spending 0.7% of national GDP on international development aid is a mistake that will exacerbate poverty in the developing world. The biggest cause of Africa's failure to grow since the 1960s has been economic mismanagement by African governments. Aid money insulates these governments from the costs of their bad policies and prolongs the misery of their citizens. I recommend that the Conservatives wind down development aid if they form the next government.

The Conservative policy does have some strengths, however. Most notably, they have committed themselves to the unilateral reduction of agricultural subsidies and import tariffs on goods from the developing world. This is a brave and commendable stance that challenges special interests to the benefit of British consumers and foreign producers, although Britain's membership of the EU will presumably limit their freedom of action in this regard.

In the paper I go on to suggest that the promotion of freedom of movement be extended to people as well as goods, which would help Britain to attract the best minds from around the world. This would enrich the British economy and facilitate growth in immigrants' home countries in the form of remittances, which account for a huge transfer of wealth to the developing world's poorest people and bypass the problem of government mismanagement. International development has not been a major issue at this election, but will be important to the next government. My briefing paper offers a new approach to development that uses the free market to help the world's poorest to help themselves. You can read it [here](#) [3].

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[4] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript

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