

global Eye

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Support for the 'new' South Africa

During President Nelson Mandela's visit to London in July, Prime Minister John Major promised South Africa a new aid package worth £60 million. The money is an indication of the British Government's support for the important economic and political changes taking place in South Africa. Much of the new aid money will be spent on education, in which President Mandela has a particular interest.

The other main things which British aid to South Africa is being spent on are: health care, rural development, small enterprise development and good governance.

Aid for Cambodia

Britain has promised £4 million in aid to Cambodia. This is in addition to £26 million which has been committed to specific projects since 1992. Some of the money will continue to be used to clear landmines. It is also planned to improve health care and education, and to allocate some funds to tackling urban poverty.

Fasting to help development

Over 250,000 young people in school groups, church groups and youth clubs took part in the 1996 24-hour famine, organised by the Christian organisation, World Vision. Lots of celebrities, like Michelle Gayle and the cast of Byker Grove lent their support. In total, the famine raised over £1.7 million for overseas projects. If you want to find out more about taking part in next year's event, which is being held on February 28 1997, you can contact: 24 Hour Famine Coordinator, World Vision, 599 Avebury Boulevard, Milton Keynes MK9 3PG.

HIV affecting development

Baroness Chalker the Minister for Overseas Development has said that a near doubling in rates of HIV infection is seriously affecting international development. In some countries in East, Central and Southern Africa more than half of hospital beds are occupied by people living with HIV or AIDS. However; the pandemic has shifted from Africa to Asia, with India now showing the highest rates of infection.

Gap between rich and poor is widening

The global gap between rich and poor is widening every day, according to the 1996 Human Development Report recently published by the United Nations. The report concludes that economic gains have benefited only a few countries – often at the expense of others. Some 1.6 billion people in the world are worse off than they were 15 years ago.

The report ranks countries in terms of human development. Its top five countries are Canada, USA, Japan, Netherlands and Norway. The United Kingdom is in 16th place out of 174 countries.

Fighting poverty: the challenges ahead

The World Bank has recently announced that it will need to increase its efforts if it is to achieve its main aim of helping developing countries to reduce poverty. Although the proportion of poor people in the world has declined, rapid population growth has meant that the number of people living on less than one US\$ a day has increased from 1.23 billion in 1987 to 1.31 billion in 1993. This is more than one-fifth of the world's population.

Population living below US \$1 a day in the developing world (1993)

| | million people |
|--|----------------|
| East Asia and Pacific | 445.8 |
| Eastern Europe and Central Asia | 14.5 |
| Latin America and Caribbean | 109.6 |
| Middle East and North Africa | 10.7 |
| South Asia | 514.7 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 218.6 |

Bangladesh means 'the land of the Bengali'. It includes the largest river delta in the world, where the waters of the River Ganges and the River Brahmaputra flow into the Bay of Bengal.

More than half of Bangladesh's total land area is under cultivation: most of this is planted with rice. Pulses, wheat, jute, oil, seeds, sugar, tea, spices, vegetables and fruit are also grown.

Across the floodplains, **rice fields stretch as far as the eye can see**, a patchwork of paddies, punctuated by villages on tree-covered mounds raised to escape flood waters. **In the hills the ground is carpeted with tea bushes** planted under the cover of widely placed shade trees.

All over Bangladesh, the roads are **crowded with bicycles, rickshaws and people**, many of whom carry heavy loads.

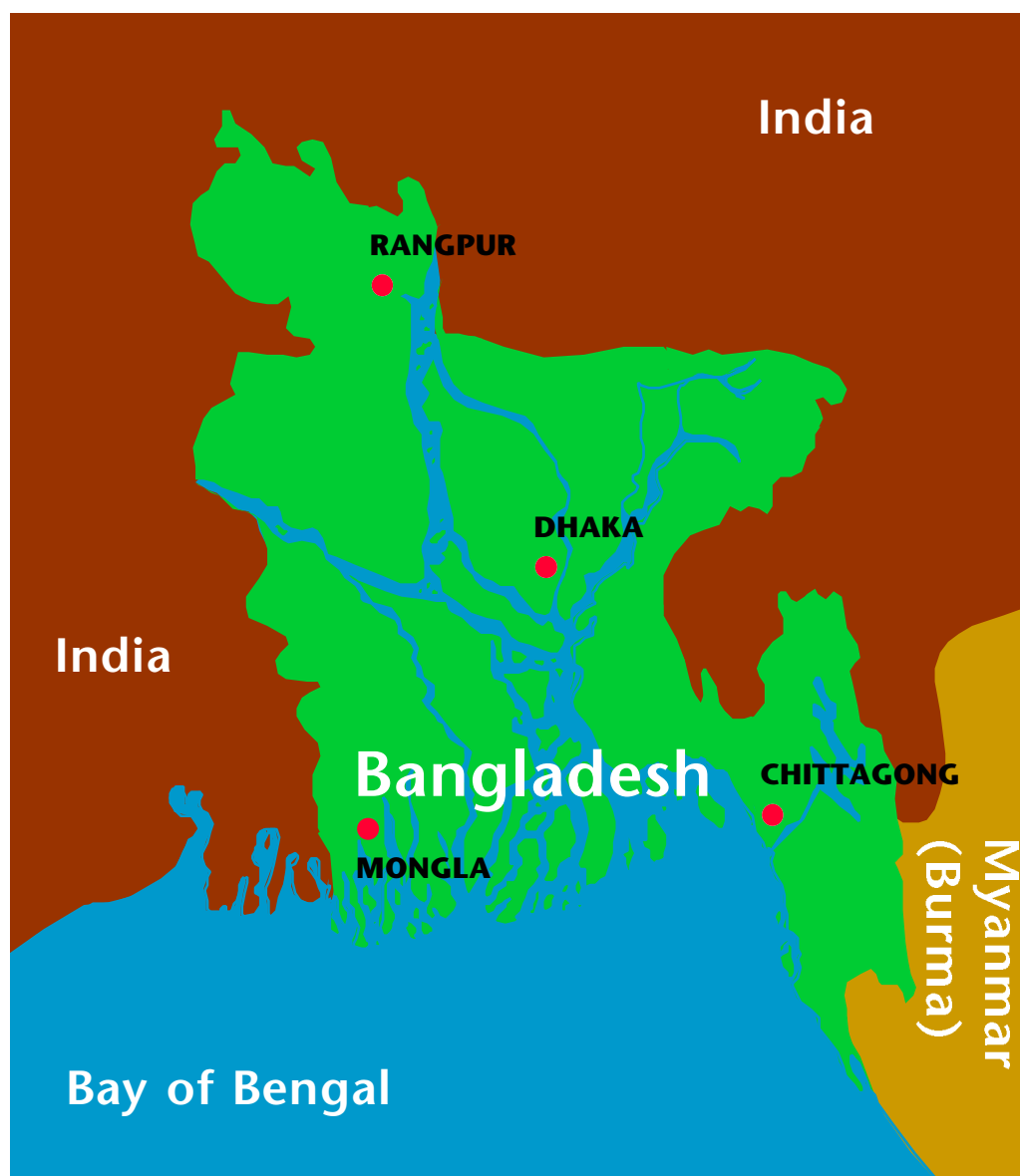
65% of Bangladesh can be accessed by inland waterways, making boats an important means of transport for both people and cargo.

| People | Bangladesh | UK |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Population (million) | 118.2 | 58.1 |
| Life Expectancy (years) | 56.9 | 76.8 |
| Infant Mortality (per 1,000 births) | 83 | 6 |
| Literacy (%) | 38 | 99 |
| Communications | | |
| TVs (per 1000 people) | 7 | 612 |
| Radios (per 1000 people) | 47 | 1,433 |
| Economy | | |
| GNP (US \$ per capita) | 240 | 18,700 |
| Employment (%) | | |
| Agriculture | 65 | 2 |
| Industry | 16 | 29 |
| Services | 18 | 69 |

Source: UN Human Development Report, 1998.

Bangladesh is:

- the world's largest exporter of jute
- the largest supplier of shirts and T-shirts to Europe
- rich in natural gas



Flood Action Plan

There is considerable annual variation in rainfall and the extent to which rivers in Bangladesh flood. On occasions, as much as 45% of the national land area may be under water. Such an extreme was experienced during the floods in 1987 and 1988.

After this, the Government of Bangladesh and the international aid community devised a Flood Action Plan (FAP). The extent to which Bangladesh's rivers and floods should be or can be controlled is controversial. Some experts say that permanent embankments should be built to contain the rivers; others opt for allowing the rivers to overflow their banks, but developing better early warning systems and building flood refuges in areas most at risk. The agricultural and environmental arguments for the latter option are powerful.

Current work on flood mitigation looks at ways of managing the water, which balance the need for protecting populations with the need to allow annual flooding.

The Grameen Bank

Poor people, who are often forced to borrow at high rates of interest from money lenders, can become trapped in debt.

In 1976, a Bangladeshi economist set up the Grameen Bank or 'village bank'. It has done what no bank before has ever dared to do – it only lends money to people in extreme poverty. Most of these people have no guaranteed income, no education and no land. Borrowers are organised into groups of five – if one member of the group fails to repay a loan, then no-one in the group is allowed to borrow again. Borrowers must agree to the bank's rules and are encouraged to abide by the 'sixteen decisions' that it lays down. These include educating their children and keeping their families small.

Today, the Grameen Bank is one of the largest banks in Bangladesh. It lends around £20 million every month, to more than 2 million borrowers, mostly women. Average loans are just £50, but 98% of these loans are repaid.

The Garment Industry

Bangladesh has more than 1,500 garment factories employing over 1.2 million people, mostly women.

The garment industry relies on imported raw materials including machinery, cotton and ready-made textiles. Only 5% of the 2 billion metres of fabric used each year is produced inside Bangladesh. In order for the garment industry to remain Bangladesh's biggest foreign exchange earner, the amount of fabric produced domestically, needs to increase.

The garment industry has given women from poorer families, a secure income and status never seen before. It has been said that the growth of the Bangladesh garment industry has done more to change the situation of women in Bangladesh, in a few years, than NGOs have managed in the last two decades.

Recent publicity has criticized the employment of children in the factories, and international pressure has led to a reduction in that number. Some children have joined basic education programmes but others have gone on to work elsewhere, needing to help support their families. The problems of the urban poor are drawing increasing attention from NGOs and the Government.

The Sundarbans

The Sundarbans, in south-west Bangladesh, is the single largest mangrove forest in the world, covering some 6,000 square kilometres. The forest is criss-crossed by a network of rivers, creeks and canals, which flood twice daily. The Sundarbans provide a rich habitat for many species of fish, mammals, reptiles and birds. It is the largest remaining habitat of the Bengal tiger, which is becoming rarer as pressures on the forest increase.

The Sundarbans make up 45% of the country's natural forest and are the single largest source of wood and other forest products: over 100,000 tonnes of fuelwood and 68,000 cubic metres of timber are harvested every year. There is a huge fish catch, and honey and beeswax are also collected.

What is Aid?

'Aid' is a term used to describe any type of assistance given to a country ranging from technical equipment and money to skilled workers and emergency supplies.

There are many ways of giving aid:

| Type of Aid | |
|--|--|
| Government to Government Aid | Bilateral Aid |
| Government contributions to international organisations like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) | Multilateral Aid |
| Aid from charities, churches and other civil groups | Non Governmental Organisation Aid |
| Government Aid (of all types) | Official Development Assistance |

Who gives Aid?

Typically aid is given by rich countries to poorer ones in Africa, Asia and Latin America. However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, some aid is now given to countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Most aid is given by governments, either directly or through international organisations, but Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) play an important role too.

Why give Aid?

Aid is given for a number of reasons. The main purpose is to reduce poverty and suffering and to help people in poorer countries to improve their lives.

By making poorer countries stronger, aid can also make the world a more stable place with fewer wars and less discontent. It can also help preserve the environment. For instance, the poorer people are, the more likely they are to cut down trees for their own use or to sell. As developing countries grow richer, they provide a boost to the world economy so all countries can benefit through increased trade.

Aid can also open up markets for British companies, particularly through the Aid and Trade Provision (ATP) which provides financial help to companies to enable them to compete for contracts in the developing world.

Aid from the UK

The United Kingdom ranks amongst the top aid donors. In 1993 the British government's Overseas Development Administration gave £1,948 million in Official Development Assistance, whilst British NGOs gave £302 million, £32 million of which came in grants from the government's Joint Funding Scheme (JFS). Nearly half of government aid went to Sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest region in the world, (see map above) and nearly a third went on large scale energy and infrastructural projects. While most people consider that providing aid for countries less well-off than ourselves is a worthwhile thing, others criticise the idea (see table below).

| Advantages of Government aid | Criticisms of Government aid |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Its large size means that it can bring benefits to hundreds of thousands of people. ■ Developing a poor country's industry and infrastructure can help to boost economic growth. ■ Aid can help to create a more prosperous and less dangerous world. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quantity is not everything – not enough aid is targeted on the poorest sections of the population. ■ Wealth rarely 'trickles down' to the rural poor, so those who benefit are mainly urban dwellers, particularly those who are already well off. ■ Some people argue that charity begins at home and that we should sort out our own problems before spending money on helping others. |

How can aid be spent?

Aid is spent on a variety of projects from building bridges and dams to providing short-term emergency food supplies and shelter after a natural disaster. Deciding how to spend money allocated as aid involves making difficult choices.

Here are some of the ways that £200 million could be spent:

- immunise 20 million children against the six main preventable diseases
- provide basic village-level water supplies to ten million people
- fund slum-improvement projects for over one million families
- build between 3,500 and 35,000 km of rural access roads

Aid to India

As the largest Commonwealth country with a population of 900 million, India receives more British aid than any other country. It goes to improving the services on which the poorest people depend – health, primary education and water supply – and making power supplies more reliable and efficient so that industry and agriculture can grow. One project being supported is the reform of the Orissa State Electricity Board, which supplies power to users in Orissa, in Eastern India. The board is being split into a number of commercial companies free of the old government rules and regulations. Once the new system is up and running it is expected to turn the state government's present annual loss of £40 million into an income of £25 million, which can be used to improve other government services – and the people of the state will get better electricity supplies too.

Aid projects

Both of the case-studies featured here are funded by ActionAid.

Long-term aid:

The REFLECT Programme

Improving basic education is an important development goal, and has always been an important aim of ActionAid. In 1995 a radical new literacy programme, called REFLECT, was piloted.

REFLECT is very different from the traditional approach to literacy which uses textbooks. Instead it relies on resources made by the participants themselves. One of the first communities to try this was a group on Bhola Island in Bangladesh who asked ActionAid to help them with numeracy and literacy skills. They used their own records about loans and repayments to help improve numeracy. Group discussions about health, trade and families led to the production of diagrams, maps, tables etc. These materials were then used to help with reading and writing activities.

The project has proved to be very successful. It depends on the interest of the learners in looking at their own problems, a great stimulus since they can use their new skills to try to solve those problems. They also build up a range of useful information about their community.

In a project funded by the ODA, extended trials in Uganda, El Salvador and Bangladesh suggested that the REFLECT method is two to three times more successful than traditional methods of literacy training. Baroness Chalker (Minister for Overseas Development) said:

"I have no doubt that this is only the start of what promises to be a new era in the teaching of literacy. I am delighted that a British charity (ActionAid) has taken the initiative in this area."

REFLECT is now being used in 20 countries. The World Bank has agreed to fund the programme in seven countries in which ActionAid works.

Other examples of ActionAid's education projects include:

Peru: 3000 people have benefited from a rural literacy programme.

The Gambia: ActionAid built and ran 512 primary schools throughout the 1980s, all of which are now recognised Ministry of Education schools.

Uganda: ActionAid is working with the teacher training college in Mubende on a correspondence course which upgrades teachers' skills in basic subjects.

Emergency Aid

Quick response and immediate relief to emergencies is a vital part of aid work. ActionAid has an Emergency Unit ready to respond to natural or man-made disasters – earthquakes, drought, flooding and war. Although its purpose is to react quickly to emergencies, it has to plan for such responses. The charity has set-up many crisis ‘early-warning’ centres in local communities which are thought to be at risk.

In 1995 it spent £4.2 million (13% of its income) on emergency aid. Much of this was long-term planning to enable ActionAid to be as well-prepared as possible to deal with emergencies. An Emergency Response Information Centre was established in Kenya. This helped to monitor problems in nearby Burundi and Rwanda and also Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan. Political upheaval and civil wars are frequent problems, so monitoring current situations is vital. If this new centre succeeds ActionAid will set up similar centres in other parts of Africa.

During 1995 aid was given to Burundi and Northern Ghana as areas were over-run by people fleeing from fighting, putting enormous pressure on already limited resources.

In Malawi, maize and sorghum seed was distributed to nearly 3/4 million people affected by drought. £3.3 million was spent during this relief aid operation, thanks to funding from the ODA.

ActionAid exists to help overcome poverty and improve the quality of life of people in the developing world. The organisation works directly with three million of the poorest children, families and communities in 20 countries throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America.

ActionAid is one of the UK's largest development charities.

It employs 3,000 staff, mainly nationals in their own countries who know the needs of their local communities.

In 1995 ActionAid raised over £37 million. Over half of its income comes from a sponsorship programme which has more than 100,000 regular givers. Other funds come from companies, donations, appeals and the British Government.

What does ActionAid do?

ActionAid helps poor communities in many ways:

Planned development projects:

Major projects include the provision of clean and safe water supplies as well as education, especially adult literacy and primary schooling.

Emergency Aid:

ActionAid frequently responds immediately to major crises e.g. earthquakes, flooding or drought. In 1995 it helped supply seeds to Malawi to help prevent a food shortage. It also helped to deal with refugees displaced by fighting in Burundi, Ghana and Rwanda.

Campaigning:

ActionAid tries through its campaigning to bring about changes in the policies and practices of major decision makers to tackle the root causes and worst effects of poverty. In 1995 it agreed on seven focus areas for this work:

education; HIV/Aids; natural resources; financing the poor; conflict; urban development; development co-operation.

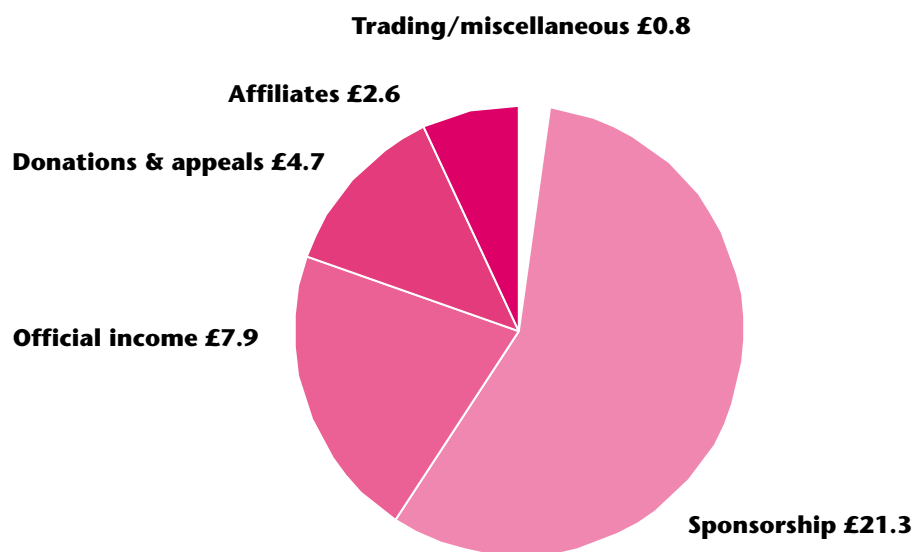
ActionAid

| Latin America | Country | ACTIONAID contribution 1995 (£,000) | Population targeted |
|---------------|-------------|---|------------------------|
| | Bolivia | 146 | 18,000 |
| | Ecuador | 188 | 84,000 |
| | El Salvador | 179 | 27,000 |
| | Nicaragua | 130 | 28,000 |
| | Peru | 269 | 126,000 |

| Asia | Country | ACTIONAID contribution 1995 (£,000) | Population targeted |
|------|------------|---|------------------------|
| | Bangladesh | 668 | 210,000 |
| | India | 4,169 | 1,242,000 |
| | Nepal | 755 | 167,000 |
| | Pakistan | 483 | 42,000 |
| | Vietnam | 399 | 51,000 |

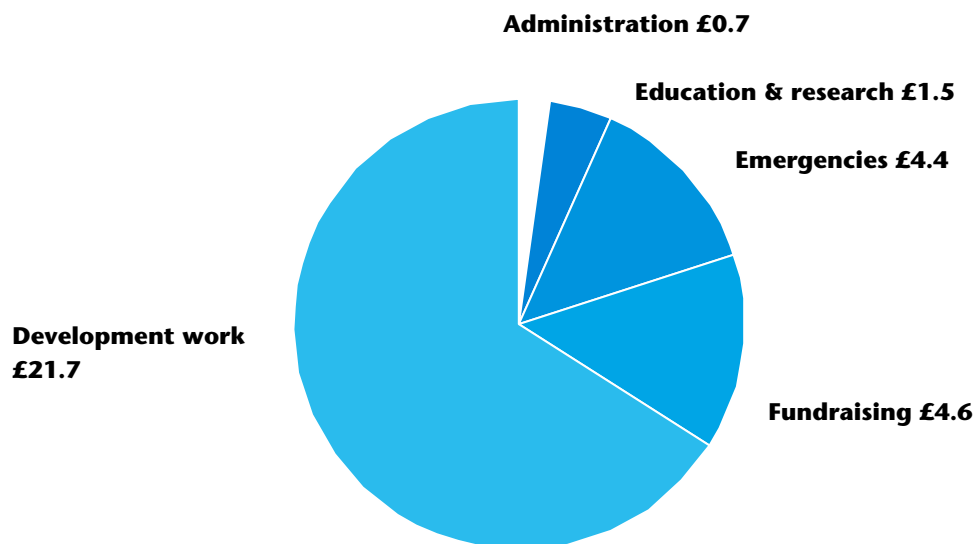
| Africa | Country | ACTIONAID contribution 1995 (£,000) | Population targeted |
|--------|--------------|---|------------------------|
| | Burundi | 509 | 120,000 |
| | Ethiopia | 1,635 | 150,000 |
| | The Gambia | 1,642 | 181,000 |
| | Ghana | 902 | 45,000 |
| | Kenya | 3,539 | 335,000 |
| | Malawi | 3,513 | 82,000 |
| | Mozambique | 850 | 100,000 |
| | Sierra Leone | 931 | 84,000 |
| | Somaliland | 346 | 80,000 |
| | Uganda | 2,463 | 186,000 |

Where the money came from (£ million)



1995 Total: £37.3m

How the money was spent (£ million)



1995 Total: £32.9m

This page is for you. Please write and let us know what you think about the magazine – good or bad! We also want to know what your school is doing to help charity, or if there is an interesting link between your school or community and the developing world.

School exchanges

Have you been on a school exchange? Many schools in the UK are twinned with schools in Europe. Students at De Aston Comprehensive in Market Rasen have just returned from The Gambia in Africa as this letter reveals...

September 1996

Dear Global Eye

In April of this year, a group of fourteen sixth-form students from De Aston Comprehensive School in Lincolnshire returned from a three week cultural exchange with students from Gambia High School in West Africa. This experience has been one of the most brilliant times of my life. I am sending you a few quotes to give you some idea of what we all gained from the experience.

The exchange has touched our lives in so many different ways, too numerous to mention, but so very important that I would encourage anyone, if the opportunity arises, to take part in an exchange. Despite the hard work that it has involved, the benefits that you gain, such as new friends and special memories, will definitely prove to be worthwhile.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Blanshard

"I feel very glad that we were treated like visitors who went with a purpose and not tourists who go for the sun and the sand." Tom Stopp

"The exchange has had an enormous impact on me. Before I came on this exchange, I felt quite well-travelled, but this was nothing to what I have seen and learned in The Gambia." Joe Rosser

"I don't think I will think of Third World countries in the same way now." Helen Clark

"I've made new friends, which in my eyes is the biggest benefit the exchange could have given." Matt Cooper

"The exchange has helped me to look at people for who they are." Matt Rivers