“Full transparency and new independent watchdog will give UK taxpayers value for money in aid”

Description

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Copied from the DFID website, 3rd June 2010:

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“British taxpayers will see exactly how and where overseas aid money is being spent and a new independent watchdog will help ensure this aid is good value for money, International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell has announced.

In his first major speech as Development Secretary, Mr Mitchell said he had taken the key steps towards creating an independent aid watchdog to ensure value for money. He also announced a new UKaid Transparency Guarantee to ensure that full information on all DFIDâ€™s spending is published on the departmental website.

The information will also be made available to the people who benefit from aid funding: communities and families living in the worldâ€™s poorest countries.

These moves come as part of a wider drive to refocus DFIDâ€™s work so British taxpayersâ€™ money is spent transparently and on key priority issues such as maternal mortality and disease prevention.”

In Mr Mitchellâ€™s speech, delivered at the Royal Society with Oxfam and Policy Exchange, he argued that overseas aid is both morally right and in Britainâ€™s national interest but that taxpayers need to see more evidence their money is being spent well.

Andrew Mitchell said:

> â€œWe need a fundamental change of direction â€“ we need to focus on results and outcomes, not just inputs.Â Aid spending decisions should be made on the basis of evidence, not guesswork. That is why we have taken the first steps towards creating a new independent aid watchdog.
>
> â€œThe UK Aid Transparency Guarantee will also help to create a million independent aid watchdogs â€“ people around the world who can see where aid money is supposed to be going â€“ and shout if it doesnâ€™t get there.â€•

Andrew Mitchell highlighted the results of well-spent aid, saying:

> â€œDevelopment is good for our economy, our safety, our health, our future. It is, quite

simply, tremendous value for money: the best return on investment that youâ€™ll find anywhere in government.

â€œBritish aid pays for five million children in developing countries to go to primary school every day. Thatâ€™s roughly the same number as go to primary school in Britain yet it costs only 2.5 per cent of what we spend here. Thatâ€™s real value for money.â€•

And he gave this pledge to UK taxpayers:

â€œTo the British taxpayer I say this: our aim is to spend every penny of every pound of your money wisely and well. We want to squeeze every last ounce of value from it. We owe you that.

â€œAnd I promise you as well that in future, when it comes to international development, we will want to see hard evidence of the impact your money makes. Not just dense and impenetrable budget lines but clear evidence of real effect.â€•

Barbara Stocking, Oxfam Chief Executive, said:

â€œAndrew Mitchellâ€™s announcement of a watchdog to improve the quality of British aid is welcome and something Oxfam has requested for years.

â€œThe new watchdog must be truly independent of government if it is to achieve the best results for the British taxpayer and poor people alike.

â€œAs our report launched today argues, strengthening transparency and accountability will be important in further improving the quality of British aid but they should be pieces in a larger jigsaw. Ensuring aid is poverty focused not politically driven and strengthens the public services poor people rely on are all vital to ensuring that it makes the biggest possible difference to the lives of the worldâ€™s poorest. We look forward to working with the new government on these issues.â€•

Richard Miller, ActionAid UK Director, welcomed todayâ€™s announcement on an Aid Transparency guarantee.

â€œActionAid has long campaigned for citizens in poor countries to have information about aid provided in their name. We are therefore delighted with the Secretary of Stateâ€™s announcement of increased transparency in aid spending. It will hopefully establish a new standard of openness and encourage scrutiny by citizens in countries receiving UKaid, as well as assuring UK taxpayers that aid is reaching the poorest.â€•

Dr Amy Pollard, CAFOD’s aid effectiveness policy analyst said:

“CAFOD are delighted that the Secretary of State today announced that Britain’s aid is to

become more transparent.

“Whilst it is not a silver bullet, transparency is a vital condition for improving aid.Â Proper information on aid funds is critical in the fight against corruption and essential for promoting accountability in development work.

“Transparency underpins the effort to make aid better – it is impossible to co-ordinate aid, assess results or build real partnerships between donors and developing countries without it.”

Hear the full speach

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