

**Development News – 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2017.**

**David Cameron – Former UK PM**

There's a big argument taking place over whether in these straitened times we should be continuing to fund foreign aid programmes. It's quite right that we have this debate – taxpayers' money should be spent only if this is achieving good results. My view is clear: aid works.

Take one statistic. Between 2011 and 2015, [Britain helped vaccinate 67 million children](#), saving at least 1.2 million lives from diseases such as pneumonia and diarrhoea. Such financial help doesn't benefit just the countries that receive that aid: money spent on international development is an investment in our own security. Because if we don't tackle poverty abroad, the results are visited upon us at home. Mass migration, epidemics such as Ebola, climate change and pollution: none of these things respect national borders.

Here's another statistic. In 1950 the population of the Middle East and [Africa](#) was equivalent to half of the population of Europe. By the end of this century, it will be eight times the size of Europe's. If we don't play our part in ensuring that everyone has an education and hope of a decent life, then the waves of migration we have seen in recent years will be nothing, compared with in decades to come.

My view is that the debate shouldn't be whether we spend money on aid: it should be how we spend that money. The answer is to shift our focus to address the failure of states to govern effectively, which is increasingly responsible for the suffering we see around the world.

It used to be said that geography is destiny. It's not. More than climate, culture or history, it is the strength of a country's political systems that determines whether its people live in poverty. As it has been put before, bad governance is the main reason poor countries are poor. Governance is destiny.

There are so many countries where the governments lack legitimacy or authority, and where corruption, conflict and violence are rife. These governments are frequently unable to provide the most basic services, such as healthcare, education, security or infrastructure. The building blocks of democracy, such as a fair judiciary and the rule of law, are often completely absent. Crucially, there is no prospect of the creation of an effective private sector – and, with it, jobs. These are, in the development lingo, "[fragile states](#)".

I've [seen the effects at first hand, from Sudan](#) to Afghanistan: gilded presidential palaces next to slums; people seeking justice from extremist organisations because there is no rule of law.

As prime minister, I made sure that half Britain's aid spending went to the most fragile states. With our presidency of the G8, we put tackling corruption at the top of the international agenda, as well as three of its cures: more transparency, fairer taxes and better trade. Today, state failure is increasing – and nearly half the world's poor people will soon live in fragile states and regions.

At the same time, there are huge gaps in our understanding of what makes states fragile, and keeps them that way. And much of the work that has been done has yet to be translated into workable policies.

That is why I am chairing the new Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development, with Oxford University's Blavatnik School of Government and the London School of Economics.

My co-chairs will be Donald Kaberuka, the special envoy of the African Union Peace Fund and the former president of the African Development Bank, and Adnan Khan, research and policy director of the International Growth Centre. Sir Paul Collier and Tim Besley, two of the world's finest minds on development and economics, will serve as academic directors.

We will be joined by eight other commissioners from around the world to take evidence from everyone from military commanders in Afghanistan to aid workers in Syria. We want to generate the most cutting-edge recommendations that governments, donors and NGOs can put into practice. This may destroy some long-held shibboleths. It may show that, when it comes to aid, there should be more investment in security. It may show that the building blocks of democracy – critically, the rule of law – are more important than the act of simply holding elections.

One crucial question we hope to answer is how to enable the private sector to play its role. Because it is not just big companies but small and medium enterprises that are the bedrock of successful economies and vibrant societies.

Another is how to help governments create a tax base so they can pay for their own development. With some fragile states raising only 12% of their GDP from tax revenue, there is much to do.

From defeating fascism and communism to spending 0.7% of our national income on aid – the only major economy to do so – Britain has always led the way when it comes to making this a safer, fairer, more prosperous world. Maximising every aspect of our soft power is even more essential in a post-Brexit world. And keeping our promises on aid makes us uniquely well placed to argue for a new approach.

This new commission is determined to play its part.

## **Gender Equality**

In rural farming initiatives in Kenya, in boardrooms in Geneva, in high-level policy discussions in Washington, D.C. — the words “gender parity” are being uttered aloud, written on signs, inked on budget lines and presented as the necessary new normal at a rapidly increasing rate around the world.

Civil society and U.N. member states are observing the new U.N. secretary-general to see if he fulfills his promise of having equal numbers of men and women for senior positions.

In global development, the two words took central stage throughout the past year's race for U.N. secretary-general, when many hoped the organization would set an example by electing a woman as its leader for the first time. The hope fell flat — but the new SG, António Guterres, has promised an intensified focus on women leadership at the U.N.

The call for gender parity from field office to corner office, meanwhile, grows louder.

Right now, the three World Health Organization frontrunners are being asked tough questions about addressing the gender and geographic disparities at the WHO. The race's frontrunner, [Tedros Ghebreyesus of Ethiopia](#), said he would “intensify” the full implementation of the WHO's commitments

to gender parity, including achieving a 1.5 percent annual increase in women occupying professional and higher-level categories at the aid agency in the next five years.

And gender parity was integral in [Devex's recent interview with newly appointed president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development Gilbert Fossoun Hounou](#), who commented that “while IFAD is doing well regarding gender parity in staffing — I believe 59 percent of staff are women — when you disaggregate the data from the middle management to higher management, the number of women is in deficit.”

Even in the face of recent setbacks, such as U.S. President Donald Trump's swift reenactment of the “global gag rule,” those in the global development community united to protect gains made in women's health. Last week's ["She Decides" conference](#) drew 400 delegates, including 20 ministerial delegations, to Brussels to discuss the impact of the reinstated rule and to raise funds to help tackle the shortfall in family planning aid that has been created.

Elsewhere, aid workers are speaking up about rape and sexual violence, pointing to a [legal system that fails to protect women](#) and girls in both developing and developed nations. Aid agencies and international nongovernmental organizations are slowly beginning to recognize that sexual harassment, discrimination and assault against female aid workers is a serious problem within the industry — and that perpetrators are often men holding senior positions; several women shared their own stories with Devex in February.

It might be common knowledge that women are an important focus of aid and development programs, but [gender experts](#) were for years relegated to the fringes. In recent years, these professionals have become sought after to better target programs and distribute aid most effectively. And [gender data](#), having drawn the attention and funding from the world's largest foundation and countless INGOs, is finally in high demand.

This past year, and even the past few months, have seen both gains and setbacks for gender parity. To recognize those on the frontlines of positive change, Devex this month is honoring five of the most influential women in our industry with [Power with Purpose](#).

And today, on International Women's Day, Devex is highlighting content that speaks to the state of women in development, challenging men and women to help forge a better working world by being more gender inclusive and taking actions big and small to drive change for women.