Make Poverty History
End of Year Notes

From the ‘Public Perceptions of Poverty’ Research Programme

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Introduction

Background

- This End of Year Review summarises findings from research into Make Poverty History (MPH) conducted across 2005. The research was undertaken through the Public Perceptions of Poverty (PPP) programme, which in turn is part of a wider Comic Relief project on media engagement, funded by the Department for International Development (DfID) through the Development Awareness Fund (DAF).

- PPP is a multi-method programme of research, comprising desk research, quantitative research (by tns), and qualitative research (by synovate). PPP is co-ordinated by Andrew Darnton, an independent researcher and consultant to Comic Relief.

- PPP research began in December 2004; five waves of quantitative surveying, and three waves of qualitative discussion groups have been undertaken to date. The most recent waves were conducted in January and February 2006.

- These Notes are designed to provide a short and accessible account of what was achieved in 2005 in terms of public perceptions of poverty. All the research findings are in the public domain; numerous reports are available, including full details on the methodologies employed. For further details email ad@andrewdarnton.co.uk .

Methodology

- ‘Public Perceptions of Poverty’ (PPP) is a three-year programme of research (from 2005 to 2007). The findings on which these Notes are based are taken from all the PPP research activity to date: namely an initial desk research study, five waves of quantitative tracking, and three waves of discussion groups. The waves of both elements were carefully scheduled to tie in with key events in 2005: the MPH campaign, Red Nose Day, and the G8 Summit in Gleneagles.

- The quantitative (tracking) survey was conducted by tns using their Omnimas omnibus; the research activity was co-ordinated by Nathalie Plumet at tns (contact: Nathalie.Plumet@tns-global.com ). Approximately 2,000 adults across Great Britain have been interviewed face to face in each wave of tracking. Details of the five waves are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>wave</th>
<th>[fieldwork dates]</th>
<th>[no. adults]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wave 1</td>
<td>10th - 21st December 2004</td>
<td>2,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 2</td>
<td>25th March - 5th April 2005</td>
<td>2,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 3</td>
<td>15th - 19th July 2005</td>
<td>2,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 4</td>
<td>2nd - 6th December 2005</td>
<td>1,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 5</td>
<td>13th - 17th January 2006</td>
<td>2,104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The qualitative study was undertaken by Alice Fenyoe at synovate (contact: Alice.Fenyoe@synovate.com ). The methodology involved discussion groups conducted across Great Britain with adults aged 16 to 75. In focussing on the general public, activists were excluded from the sample. Each wave comprised six groups (with eight individuals in
each); Wave 2 was the exception, comprising eight groups. Details of the three waves are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[wave]</th>
<th>[fieldwork dates]</th>
<th>[respondents]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wave 1</td>
<td>February 2005</td>
<td>Tabloid readers; Broadsheet readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 2</td>
<td>October 2005</td>
<td>The ‘Very Concerned’; BMEs; 60+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 3</td>
<td>February 2006</td>
<td>The MPH involved; The RND involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The PPP research activity is scheduled to continue until April 2007, when one further wave each of quantitative tracking, and of qualitative groups, will be conducted post-Red Nose Day 2007.
Key Findings

The findings from the PPP research are summarised here under three headings (involvement; awareness; attitudes and understanding), then supplemented with a final set of conclusions.

i) Involvement

• 15% of the public took part in Make Poverty History.
  Public involvement in MPH peaked at 15% in July 2005. This is defined as 15% of respondents saying they had undertaken at least one of nine MPH actions.

• Wearing a white band was by far the most popular form of involvement in MPH.
  Of the 15% of the public who were involved, the majority (c.60%) undertook the less profound actions. For instance, in July 2005, 50% of the MPH Involved respondents reported wearing a white band, 25% registered on the MPH website, and 19% sent a text message to MPH. Other actions were less widely undertaken, for instance, 14% of the MPH Involved sent an email to a politician, 2% took part in the Edinburgh march (on 2\textsuperscript{nd} July) and 10% took part in another MPH event.

• The average person involved in MPH was educated, upmarket, and under 45 years old.
  The research suggests MPH reached a new audience in terms of driving action to tackle poverty. In July 2005, the MPH Involved were found to be more likely than average to hold degrees (29% of those with degrees were involved), to be from higher socio-economic grades (24% of AB SEGs were involved) and be young (21% of 18-30s took part, with the rates even higher among under 18s). Additionally, only 18% of the MPH Involved reported ever having joined a march or public demo in the past. It is also notable that individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BMEs) were less likely than average to be involved in MPH: in July 2005 (Wave 3), 7% reported involvement. However, similarly low levels of representation can be found in many mainstream development NGOs’ campaigns and memberships.

• Many of the MPH Involved were first-time campaigners.
  The qualitative research found that the MPH Involved were not the ‘usual suspects’ in terms of anti-poverty supporters. For many of the MPH Involved under research, MPH had provided them with their first experience of campaigning. A by-product of this inexperience of campaigning was that many of those taking MPH actions did not understand how those actions would have an effect.

• By 2006, some people had forgotten that they had been involved in MPH.
  By January 2006 (Wave 5), only 12% of the public reported having been involved in MPH (the gap between the Wave 3 and Wave 5 levels may be accounted for through failing recall, as those who were less profoundly involved began to forget they had been involved at all).
ii) Awareness

- Nearly 90% of the public were aware of MPH in July 2005.
  In July 2005, 87% of the public said they were aware of MPH (76% reported knowing at least a little about MPH, while 11% had only heard the name). This is impressive growth in public awareness across a seven month period. However, since July 2005 levels of awareness have been in decline: in January 2006 (Wave 5) 81% of the public was aware of MPH.

- Only fair trade achieved equally high levels of public awareness in 2005.
  The PPP surveys also assessed levels of public awareness and knowledge of four other campaign themes: Fair Trade; Trade Justice; Drop the Debt; More and Better Aid. As with awareness of MPH, awareness of these four campaign themes peaked in Wave 3 (post-G8, in July 2005), and has fallen back since then [see Figure 1 below]. For instance, 57% of the public was aware of Trade Justice in July 2005 (falling back to 53% in January 2006). Fair Trade is the only campaign to achieve similar levels of awareness to MPH, although these high levels remained static across the year. In July 2005 86% of the public was aware of Fair Trade (similarly, 87% were aware in February 2006). Considering qualitative evidence, fair trade was found to be the only ‘way in’ to discussions on trade which included all types of members of the public.

![Figure 1: Levels of Understanding and Awareness of MPH and related campaign themes, December 2004 to January 2005](image-url)
iii) Attitudes and Understanding

- **Public understanding of global poverty increased in 2005, but starting from a very low level.**
  Advances in understanding of global poverty across 2005 were achieved among the broad mass of the public, but at very low levels of knowledge. The key example of such learning is that, in the Wave 1 discussion groups (February 2005) no respondent mentioned the G8 and very few could even give an answer when asked what it was. By October 2005 (Wave 2) all respondents in the discussion groups were aware of the G8.

- **As well as becoming aware of the G8 in 2005, some people began to associate debt and trade issues with global poverty.**
  A similar example of learning is apparent regarding perceptions of the causes of poverty. At the start of 2005 respondents reported the traditional blend of man-made and natural causes of poverty in poor countries (war, over-population, corruption, famine, drought). By October 2005, two other causes were being cited by some respondents: debt and trade. This evidence suggests a growing knowledge among the general public that there is an international political dimension to poverty in developing countries, where previously there was no such knowledge. However, this knowledge may not have been fully assimilated by many of the public: when asked in February 2006 about the causes of poverty, debt was again mentioned by some respondents, but trade by no one.

- **Public understanding of debt, trade and aid issues remained extremely poor throughout 2005.**
  Considering the three core campaigning areas of debt, trade and aid, the qualitative research suggests that the public’s understanding of these issues has not advanced during 2005. This appears to be the case across different subgroups of the public, including the MPH Involved, as well as those who did not take part. For instance, few respondents in the discussion groups had anything to say on the subject of trade rules; the only topic in this area on which whole groups could keep up a conversation was fair trade. Trade justice was not a term recognised by any member of the public in the discussion groups. The quantitative data support the view that perceptions of debt trade and aid were unaffected by MPH and related activity in 2005. Across a range of attitude statements asked consistently in the five waves of tracking, little significant variation was apparent; what peaks there were tended to occur in July 2005 (Wave 3). For instance, the most agreed-with statement was ‘in order to tackle world poverty, we need fairer trade not free trade’. In Wave One (December 2004) 71% of respondents agreed with this statement; the level peaked in Wave 3 (at 77%) before falling back to 74% in Wave 5 (January 2006).

- **Very few people can discuss debt, trade and aid issues in detail.**
  Within the broad themes of debt, trade and aid, it was apparent from the discussion groups that few of the public could talk about the issues at any level of detail. Thus none of those interviewed was aware that conditionalities applied to debt relief or aid, and only a few people were aware that the UK government provided aid to developing countries on a regular basis (i.e. not in response to crises and appeals). These low levels of knowledge did not appear to have risen by February 2006.

- **However, everybody can talk about ‘corruption’**.
  In contrast to the issues of debt trade and aid, all those interviewed in discussion groups were keen to talk about corruption. From the general public’s perspective corruption is what stops
the money they give reaching the poor people who need it. Thus corruption has two aspects: charity wastage through bad administration and high overheads, and deliberate theft by governments of developing countries; the public are much more able to discuss the former (and with some enthusiasm) than the latter (eg. the only leader in Africa they commonly mention is Mugabe). Quantitative data support the finding that the public views charities’ inefficiencies as seriously as they do rotten governance. In response to a pair of attitude statements asked in January 2006, 75% of respondents agreed that ‘Most financial aid to poor countries is wasted because their governments are corrupt’, while 76% agreed that ‘Most financial aid to poor countries is wasted because it is inefficiently administered’. It is important to note that the ‘Very Concerned’ about poverty were more likely than average to agree with these two statements (while the MPH Involved were less likely to do so).

• Roughly a quarter of the public are ‘very concerned’ about global poverty – but at times in 2005 nearly two thirds were ‘very concerned’.
Across 2005, headline levels of ‘concern about poverty in poor countries’ varied from wave to wave. In general the proportion of the public saying they were ‘very concerned’ about poverty in poor countries rose steadily up to July 2005, and then declined in the second half of the year, returning to pre-2005 levels (26% said they were ‘very concerned’ in February 2006). However, this smooth pattern was interrupted by the London bombings of 7th July. The Wave 3 fieldwork, conducted the following week, showed an unexpected dip in the proportion of the public being ‘very concerned’ (26%). Thus the peak level was recorded in April 2005 (Wave 2), when 32% of the public reported being ‘very concerned’ about poverty in poor countries.

• Most people think there is little they can do to tackle global poverty (apart from giving money); this did not change across 2005.
The quantitative survey asked two questions exploring the public’s sense of agency (ie. that they could personally take action on poverty which would make a real difference). Responses to these two statements hardly varied across the five waves of surveying, although it is notable that some of the lowest levels of agency were reported in January 2006 (Wave 5). Thus, in Wave 1 (December 2004), 40% of the general public agreed ‘there is nothing I can do to tackle poverty in poor countries’; in January 2006, 44% agreed with this. A comparable statement achieved even less variation across the year: in Wave 1, 59% of the public agreed ‘The only thing I can do to tackle poverty in poor countries is to give money to charities and appeals’, while 57% agreed in Wave 5.

• The 15% of people who were involved in MPH were more likely to think they could do something to tackle global poverty.
One of the distinctive differences among the MPH Involved is their higher levels of reported agency. Thus in July 2005 (Wave 3), only 25% of the MPH Involved agreed with the statement ‘there is nothing I can do to tackle poverty in poor countries’ (against 42% of all respondents). In the same Wave, 41% of the MPH Involved agreed with the statement ‘The only thing I can do to tackle poverty in poor countries is to give money to charities and appeals (against 53% of all respondents). While these findings show that the MPH Involved report higher levels of agency, it cannot be proven that those higher levels resulted from their involvement in the campaign (their involvement could be a result of their higher sense of agency, not vice versa). However, MPH did provide the public with means of tackling poverty other than giving money, and this logically should have shown those involved that such options were open to them. As a piece of indicative evidence that MPH taught people about alternatives to giving money, it is notable that the higher levels of agency shown by the MPH Involved in response to those two attitude statements had begun to subside a little by January
2006 (Wave 5) – to 26% and 47% agreeing respectively. It could be suggested that as the public’s awareness and recall of MPH declines, so does their awareness of any means of tackling poverty other than giving money.

- ‘Campaigning’ is not something the public talk about – and even those involved in MPH don’t understand how it works.
The topic of campaigning (as opposed to giving money) was a consistent area of research in the discussion groups. Across 2005, the public’s understanding of campaigning remained very patchy; no respondent ever used the word ‘campaigning’. However, by February 2006, MPH Involved respondents were commonly asking questions about how the MPH actions they had undertaken might help to tackle poverty in poor countries (finding out what happened to emails sent to Tony Blair was the most common example). As with giving money, the public suggested that they were uncertain of how effective their actions were, and those who took the actions tended to do so as an act of faith. Nonetheless, some of the MPH Involved put forward the view that donating money had not ended poverty, so it was time to try alternative methods.

- Few people understand what MPH was, what it was about, or who was behind it.
Considering the Make Poverty History campaign itself, the research shows that the public had a very limited understanding of what the campaign was aiming to achieve, what actions it required, and which organisations were behind it. When asked in the discussion groups in October 2005 to make some ‘top of mind’ associations with the campaign, the most common response was to link MPH with Live8 (and Bob Geldof), while slightly fewer people suggested it was a campaign driven by the Government (and Gordon Brown). Very few people associated MPH with other charities (or a coalition). In terms of aims, a few respondents in October 2005 linked MPH with dropping the debt, and with issues around trade. However, this nebulous understanding of MPH was found to have faded by February 2006: in that Wave of groups, far fewer associations were made with MPH, including the vanishing of a link to Government, and no mention of aims relating to trade. This trend was consistent with a growth in the numbers of respondents who couldn’t remember, or weren’t sure, what MPH was (these findings are in line with the quantitative data on awareness highlighted above). When asked in February 2006 what Make Poverty History is, the most likely answer to be given by a member of the public was that MPH was the “slogan” used by Live8. In order to explore levels of public understanding of who was behind MPH, a question was added in Wave 5 of the tracking survey (February 2006), asking respondents who were aware of MPH to name any organisation which was involved. Asked without prompting, 19% of the MPH-aware said Oxfam, and 16% Live8. When prompted with a number of options, 64% said Live8, 56% Oxfam, 40% Comic Relief, and 37% Christian Aid.
Conclusions

• MPH worked as a catalyst for raising public awareness in 2005 – but the impacts of 2005 are not down to MPH alone.
In identifying the impacts of Make Poverty History, a distinction should be drawn between direct and indirect effects. Making a direct causal link between MPH and public perceptions of poverty is especially difficult given the amount of related activity and media ‘noise’ around the G8 Summit in 2005. However, while isolating effects is very difficult, it may be less important in this context, as MPH deliberately sought to build popular momentum, and spread its messages across many channels. For instance, while it would be misleading to claim MPH alone had raised levels of concern about poverty in poor countries, it is likely that this effect would not have been so marked without the leading contribution of MPH.

• 15% of the public were involved in MPH, and many of these people were first-time campaigners.
The research evidence shows Make Poverty History to have been effective in engaging a mass audience in actions to tackle poverty. At its height, 15% of the public reported being involved in MPH.

• MPH delivered mass education, albeit starting from very low levels: after 2005, everyone is aware of the G8.
After July 2005, the whole public had become aware of the G8, where before 2005, only a small minority recognised the term. This finding shows the vital role of MPH in reaching the general public: without awareness that there is such a thing as the G8, it would be hard to pursue any dialogue about the international political causes of poverty, let alone explore issues around trade debt and aid. In critiquing MPH, it should be remembered that the majority of the public is approaching both global poverty and the act of campaigning from very low levels of knowledge.

• MPH achieved near-total public awareness, although few people understood what it was or knew anything about the issues it was campaigning on.
Across the first six months of 2005: surveyed after the G8 Summit in July, 87% of the public was aware of MPH. However, the research findings show great uncertainty among the public as to which organisations were behind MPH. There is also evidence to suggest that the ‘justice not charity’ message was not clearly understood by the mass audience, many of whom persisted in believing that MPH was aiming to raise funds for Africa. After July, Live8 was assumed to be synonymous with MPH, and that event added to the public’s sense that MPH must be about money raising (just like LiveAid was). It is notable that, in 2006, the public tends to look back on MPH as something that happened in July 2005, with Make Poverty History being remembered as the “slogan” for Live8.

• MPH and related activity in 2005 had minimal impact on public perceptions of global poverty, and by 2006 the small positive changes were beginning to slip back again.
Looking back at MPH from the year end, it is clear that where MPH contributed to small positive changes in public attitudes to global poverty in the first half of 2005, these effects had begun to wear off by the beginning of 2006. The headline measure of proportions of the public who are ‘very concerned’ about poverty is a good example of this pattern: in January 2006 this stood at 26%, the lowest level recorded since PPP surveying began. That the proportion of ‘very concerned’ people can be raised is a key finding in itself (there is a ‘sector’ view that it has been and always will be around a quarter), but the overall conclusion is that a vast amount
of effort was required to deliver relatively small shifts in public perceptions. Moreover, if that engagement is not sustained, it appears that the positive impacts very soon disappear.

- MPH has helped to establish a new audience for anti-poverty campaigning, but they need to be kept engaged if they are to continue to take action.
  By asking individuals to take simple (and non-fundraising) actions, MPH gave a new generation of citizens the chance to become campaigners. Despite their not understanding fully how their actions might help (eg. in sending an email to a politician), substantial numbers of young people were prepared to answer MPH’s call. Through that process of taking action, MPH also began to sow the seeds of campaigning: showing that everyone has a voice, and that the causes of poverty might include the political. In this way, MPH’s mass action objectives served as educational (experiential learning) activities for those previously unaware of these issues. This conclusion offers a model for other issue-based mass engagement campaigns.

- MPH itself provided an opportunity for in-sector learning, to which the PPP research has contributed; for instance, see our segmented model of the general public [overleaf].
  MPH itself offered those in the sector the chance to pursue their goals together, and to see how much of a difference their collaborative push (and the resulting popular movement) could make to political processes. A huge amount of learning will have resulted from MPH, and it is hoped that the PPP research evidence has contributed to that learning process. The research has generated many detailed findings not covered here; one of its most useful outputs is a segmentation of the public based on their levels of engagement with global poverty, and the extent to which they will act on those attitudes [see Figure 2 below]. In tracking the impacts of MPH, the qualitative research in 2005 showed movement of people between segments towards greater engagement with and action on tackling poverty. However, the research in February 2006 showed many of these people moving back in the other direction, and reverting to type. It is vital that engagement with these new audiences is maintained if they are to become regular anti-poverty campaigners.
## PPP: Segmenting the Public

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Engaged</th>
<th>Passive Engaged</th>
<th>Active Disengaged</th>
<th>Passive Disengaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes towards poverty</strong></td>
<td><strong>Attitudes towards poverty</strong></td>
<td><strong>Attitudes towards poverty</strong></td>
<td><strong>Attitudes towards poverty</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Global poverty features highly on their political radar</td>
<td>- Tend to have ‘room’ for one or two issues that they are really interested in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Another part of the ‘political animal’ self identity</td>
<td>- Have read about, and are aware of poverty in the third world – some more interested than others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- High knowledge of intricacies of trade, debt, and aid</td>
<td>- Know that they have knowledge gaps, and always mean to find out more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Knowledge and the passion with which it is expressed can be a status symbol</td>
<td>- Often don’t realise how interested and aware they are until they start talking about it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Can patronise or denigrate people who are not as interested, not as knowledgeable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Behaviour**

- Talk with passion – lots of gesticulating
- Express their feelings physically via campaigning – marching, rallying, emailing, letters,
- Aware of most campaigning tactics and how they work
- Unlikely to be a make or break issue in terms of voting – these are probably not floating voters, but committed to either a particular party, or spoiling the ballot paper
- These tend to be existing activists

- Likely to be supporting an international charity
- By now, may have done MPH campaigning (and likely to be proud of it)
- For many this will be the first campaigning they have done (beyond ‘easy’ actions like Fair Trade, organic)
- May have considered this issue when deciding who to vote for – likely to be floating voters
- These tend to be younger, professional

**Behaviour**

- Some will be supporting international charities as part of collection of regular support – and effort will end there
- Others won’t support beyond RND
- Issue of poverty less likely to be a driver to real support – than just having a portfolio that covers key issues (i.e. third world tick, cancer tick etc)
- Will not have been a consideration when deciding how to vote
- These tend to be family dads

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**Behaviour**

- Unlikely to be supporting international charities beyond RND
- Will not have been a consideration when deciding how/whether to vote
- These tend to be family mums

- Aware that there is lots of poverty in Africa – but knowledge stops here
- No interest in talking about it, interest tends to stop at local issues, or issues with personal relevance to them
- Believe that this is an issue ‘that other people are worrying about’ – no need for them to get involved

**Behaviour**

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- Will not have been a consideration when deciding how/whether to vote
- These tend to be family mums