The Public, DFID and Support for Development – A Rapid Review

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Background

In September 2009, DFID Communications Division commissioned AD Research & Analysis to undertake desk research to support the development of the ‘UKaid works’ strategy, using the recent reviews of the ‘Building Support for Development’ activity as a starting point. Two specific tasks were required: the first, a short output on prioritising within the audience of young people (‘Education Audiences Thinkpiece’, Andrew Darnton and Jonathan Smith, 2009), the second, this rapid review of the wider evidence on public support for development. Ultimately both pieces of research should contribute to the delivery of the overall objective for DFID of “instilling support for development into the national identity”.

Four specific objectives were set for this study, as follows:

- Synthesise recent evidence on the UK public’s perspective on global poverty issues (in terms of their understanding, involvement and support), drawing on research produced since late 2007.
- Assess the likely value for money of different communications and educational outreach interventions, in the short and longer term.
- Identify effective messages (and other drivers) for building support for development (in particular, what influences public support for government expenditure on overseas aid).
- Identify key channels and influencers for building support for development (including the media and less formal channels, and the role of key individuals and organisations).

This review was specifically conceived to update AD’s pair of previous reviews on public engagement in global poverty for DFID (October 2007; December 2007). Those two reviews similarly considered the drivers of engagement, and public perceptions. As well as updating the evidence, this rapid review focuses more sharply on the Building Support for Development strategy (launched in 1999), and specifically on generating support for government spending on development aid.

Methodology

The rapid review adopted AD’s standard approach to desk research, with an initial phase of datagathering, followed by the reading and noting of relevant content, then reporting. AD was supported by Jake Elster Jones in the initial gathering of sources, based on a call for information and list of key contacts agreed with DFID. DFID also helped in this phase by supplying their own recent research and that of some NGO partners to which they already had access. In total, 31 organisations were contacted, and 21 discussions completed within the timeframe. As a result of the datagathering, a total of 59 relevant sources were identified, from which 35 sources were selected as being top priority, and which could also be accommodated within the timeframe. These selected sources were carried forward for full review and reporting.

The review was conducted in a very tight timeframe: 2 days were allowed for the datagathering (across a period of 4 weeks), and 9 days for the reading, noting and reporting. The review ran from 14th September to 13th October.
This report opens with an Executive Summary, and then presents in brief the evidence gathered in the rapid review, under the following headings:

1. Public Perceptions
   1.1. Headline Perceptions across the UK Public
   1.2. Public Perceptions of Debt, Trade and Aid (and Corruption)
   1.3. Perceptions by DFID Segment

2. Drivers of Engagement
   2.1. Drivers of Support for Development Aid
   2.2. Drivers of Actions

3. Channels and Influencers

4. Effective Messages

5. Implications and Recommendations

A full list of references made in the text is given in the Appendix.
Executive Summary

- Global poverty continues to be subject to low levels of salience among the UK public: "poverty is not an issue for most people" (PPP 2007b). Global poverty is also subject to low levels of public engagement, as demonstrated by the proportion of the public who report being ‘very concerned’ about poverty in poor countries; this is taken as the headline measure of engagement in this review. In the latest wave of DFID tracking (September 2009) the proportion of ‘very concerned’ respondents stood at 21% - the lowest level in recent records (TNS 2009b). These figures have run at a low level since 1999; apart from a slight uplift in 2005 (‘the MPH effect’), levels of engagement have been static or falling. In terms of their engagement with global poverty, the public is on a downward trajectory.

- The low levels of public understanding of global poverty also remain unchanged over the last decade or longer. Most people believe that the causes of poverty are internal to poor countries (whether natural or man-made), with very few suspecting they may also relate to the conduct of developed nations. The perception of Africa as a site of endemic poverty and suffering may be traced back to Live Aid in 1985; the ‘Live Aid Legacy’, which casts the Western viewer in the role of ‘powerful giver’ and the African person as ‘grateful receiver’ still exerts a tight hold on the public mind in 2009.

- Accordingly, public understanding of the role of debt, trade and aid in influencing global poverty is widely overlooked. Aid is particularly subject to misconceptions; above all, most people only interpret ‘aid’ as “donations to charities in response to disasters” (Creative 2006, in Darnton 2007b). Only a very small minority are aware that the UK government gives long term development aid.

- This lack of awareness and understanding of development aid poses serious problems to the project of tracking public support for government spending on aid, through opinion surveys. The House of Commons International Development Committee reported doubts about which measures of support should be used, and whether the questions were sufficient to tap public support for aid spending (HoC IDC 2009). These shortcomings have been addressed in DFID’s response to the IDC report, and incorporated in the latest wave of DFID attitudinal tracking (DFID 2009b; TNS 2009b). However, concerns still remain about whether such questions represent meaningful measures while public awareness and understanding of development aid remains so low. For instance, it has been calculated that only 4% of the public are aware of DFID’s role in supporting development (Darnton 2007b); it follows that engagement with and understanding of development aid should be prioritised and increased, before measuring support for aid spending can be meaningfully undertaken.

- The majority of the public appear to be obsessed with corruption: it is the only topic related to global poverty which the mass public seem happy to talk about (albeit their understanding is limited, and that sometimes corruption can be seized upon as an excuse to justify people’s instinctive reluctance to engage with the issues). Most of the public think that most financial aid to poor countries is wasted. However, this perception does not undermine the determination of a significant minority of people to continue giving and supporting aid. Nonetheless, the perception of corruption appears to represent the biggest single barrier to increasing support for development aid.
It is notable that the size of the most engaged segment of the public (the ‘Active Enthusiasts’ in DFID’s model) has fallen between 2008 and 2009 (from 21% to 16%), while the number of less engaged ‘Distracted Individuals’ has increased (from 12% to 16% - TNS 2009b). The data underline the current ebbing away of public engagement. Targets to increase the proportion of the most engaged are to be welcomed, as they necessitate engaging individuals more holistically, and across a number of measures, rather than just seeking to drive up measures of support for spending on development aid.

Notwithstanding reservations over the validity of quantitative measures of support for development aid, the analysis undertaken to date suggests that levels of concern for global poverty are driven by a combination of morality and self-interest. A more detailed statistical exercise for AusAid in Australia found that support for development aid could be increased by raising the level of spending to 0.5% of GNI, and providing messages around the utility of aid spending to both donor and recipient. However, there are drawbacks to making a case predominantly on self-interest, as such messages can cause emotional disengagement, and at the same time reinforce old patterns and perceptions of aid dependency.

Actions which individuals can take to tackle global poverty can be effective in driving engagement: both by signalling individuals’ support, and by increasing their sense of agency that they can make a difference. Importantly, the evidence shows that different actions are driven by different factors: giving money tends to be triggered by emotional approaches; giving time by social ties and a thirst for new experiences; buying products by the standard ‘choice’ criteria of cost, quality and taste; while giving voice (ie. campaigning) is the area most strongly driven by engagement with global poverty issues.

Research on the role of the media has consistently shown the negative impact which the ‘doom and gloom’ portrayals of the developing world which permeate TV coverage have on levels of public engagement with global poverty. The latest research confirms that ‘serious’ developing world content (as in the news, documentaries, and charity appeals) is still reinforcing the ‘Live Aid Legacy’. Yet opportunities are also identified for ‘softer formats’ to deliver ‘gentler insights’, based around opening up the everyday lives of people in poor countries to viewers in the UK (especially in lighter formats, such as travel documentaries).

When it comes to driving deeper engagement or active support, the public needs a ‘compelling invitation’ to take part. Campaigns centred on big events can provide this, although there is the risk of the event itself becoming the message, and obscuring the campaign themes. Celebrities are also important in attracting attention to a story or campaign, but they also necessarily distract attention from the issues themselves. However, in order to build a sense of momentum, and hence achieve a shift in social norms, such high-profile techniques are likely to be required. Even then, they may not succeed in attracting some of the less engaged segments of the public.

What messages can be defined as effective ultimately depends on the objectives set for communications activity, yet consensus is emerging that the messages which best drive engagement with global poverty are those which focus on solutions, success stories, and the lives of real people, rather than problems, issues and amounts of aid. Solutions tend to relate to in-kind support not financial aid; however, emotional links also need to be built to sustain engagement, and revealing the inner life of poor people can establish a sense of shared and poignant humanity, which engages the viewer better than showing starving children.
• Looking across the evidence gathered in this review, the author concludes that the ongoing stagnation or actual decline in levels of public engagement with global poverty suggests it is time for a new approach to be adopted. Instead of pursuing the goal of building support for development, narrowly defined as support for spending on development aid, it is recommended that DFID should seek more broadly to drive levels of public engagement in global poverty, measured by a basket of indicators (and for instance by the distribution of the public across the DFID segments). This in turn would require a multi-stakeholder strategy that engages the whole of society and is set up for the long term. It is only by this route that DFID may achieve their expressed ambition of “instilling support for development into the national identity”. At the same time, such an approach should also bring about a rise in public support for spending on development aid.
1. Public Perceptions

1.1. Headline Perceptions across the UK Public

Among the general public, global poverty remains a low salience issue. The DFID-funded Public Perceptions of Poverty (PPP) research programme tracked levels of public engagement for three years around the Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign in 2005. Despite MPH, the final wave of qualitative research (conducted in May 2007) concluded that “poverty is not an issue for most people” (PPP 2007b). Since 2007 there has been little apparent change (perhaps unsurprisingly, given there has been no mass campaign to follow up on the impact made by MPH). Thus in 2008, qualitative research to develop DFID’s segmentation model concluded: “Rarely is concern about global poverty uppermost in people’s minds” (Creative 2008). The notion that people have limited cognitive capacity, and only a little of that is allocated to global poverty is developed in work by Mango for Save the Children: the researchers draw a brain, and show how the majority of “thinking space” is taken up with ‘My Life’ (managing home, work, income etc), then about a quarter is given to ‘Extended Life’ (family and friends). The last two small spaces are left for ‘National Media Concerns’, and smallest of all ‘International Media Concerns’ (Mango 2009).

In order validly to gauge levels of salience of a topic, qualitative research must be used, as it is only in conversation that researchers can allow people to reveal spontaneously the importance they give to a topic. The closest quantitative measure to salience is that of concern, or specifically ‘very concern’. The question ‘how concerned would you say you are about levels of poverty in poor countries’ was used throughout the PPP research as the headline indicator of levels of public engagement with poverty across the MPH campaign. Importantly, only ‘very concern’ was taken as a meaningful measure, as the largest number of respondents always tend to tick ‘fairly concerned’, and only a hardcore report low or no concern. The PPP ‘concern’ question was adapted from one asked in the DFID ‘Public Attitudes’ Tracker since 1999; the adapted version (asking about ‘poor’ not ‘developing’ countries) has in turn been adopted in the DFID tracker since 2007. In a recent ‘mini-dip’ wave (conducted in February 2009), the COI researchers describe the concern question as “an important measure for DFID to track how the UK public feel about global poverty” (COI 2009).

It is important to stress this point as the ‘concern’ question is often confused as being a measure of public support for development, and (worse still) development aid in particular. Thus in their recent enquiry, the House of Commons International Development Committee write: “UK public support for development has traditionally been regarded as being strong. 74% of respondents to DFID’s latest Attitudinal Tracking Study claimed to be ‘concerned about poverty in developing countries’” (HoC IDC 2009). The Enquiry report goes on to cite evidence from Dr David Hudson at UCL that ‘concern for global poverty’ is “not a good question to track true support”. In their recent response to the Committee’s comments, DFID have underlined that they do not take the ‘concern’ question to be a measure of support for development aid, but that it is “an important KPI in its own right” which measures “potential emotional commitment towards global poverty, an important precursor to belief in support for development aid” (DFID 2009b). To track public support for spending on development aid, rather than how the public ‘feels about global poverty’, different questions entirely should be used (David Hudson suggested some in his evidence to the IDC, and DFID’s response to the report highlights the measures in the 2009 tracker which they use as indicators of support for development aid – see ‘Aid’ in 1.2 below).

Over the last ten years, levels of ‘very concern’ among the public have fluctuated, but the longterm trend is around 25% (see eg. Darnton 2007b). However, as the PPP tracking showed,
public engagement as measured by ‘very concern’ can shift in response to communications activity and anti-poverty campaigns. Looking at the data since the beginning of PPP in later 2004, an ‘MPH effect’ is apparent, with levels of ‘very concern’ peaking at 32% of the public in the run-up to the G8 meeting at Gleneagles. After that point, campaign activity slowed, and levels of engagement dropped off. Following the line forward, there are fluctuations from survey to survey, but the decline seems to continue (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Levels of ‘very concern’ reported by the UK public, 2004-2009

Q: ‘How concerned would you say you are about levels of poverty in poor countries?’

Sources: PPP 2007a; MORI 2008Bb; COI 2009; TNS 2009a; TNS 2009b

Writing about the six waves of PPP ‘very concern’ data in 2007, Darnton concluded that “levels of public concern about global poverty appear to be static or actually falling” (Darnton 2007b). With two years more having elapsed, exactly the same point can now be made, and if anything, more emphatically. The figure of 21% ‘very concerned’ respondents recorded in the latest wave of DFID tracking (in September 2009 – TNS 2009b) is the lowest level recorded since 2004 (when the question was reworded to ask about ‘poor countries’).

Agency can also be regarded as a key dimension of public engagement, determining whether or not people will take action to tackle global poverty (see eg. the evaluation of Citizenship teaching in schools – Benton et al 2008 in Darnton & Smith 2009). In this context, agency can be defined a person’s belief that they are able to undertake an action to tackle poverty, and that the action will have the desired effect. The PPP research was thus very interested in tracking public levels of agency across the MPH campaign, and it did so using the statement ‘There is nothing I can personally do to tackle poverty in poor countries’. As with ‘very concern’, across the PPP surveys, levels of disagreement with this (negative) statement fell: while 40% of respondents agreed but 44% disagreed in Wave 1, by Wave 6 the proportions had reversed such that 45% agreed and only 40% disagreed (PPP 2007a). Since the end of PPP, the DFID trackers have shown that levels at first swung back, such that slightly more people disagreed than agreed with
Public knowledge of the developing world also appears to be static, based on an even longer term trend. As with salience, knowledge is best assessed through qualitative research – although tracker questions do ask people to self-report their knowledge of a number of aspects of development. Darnton’s previous review for DFID sets out the narrative of public understanding, going back to the ‘Viewing the World’ study for DFID in 1999 (the year the Building Support for Development strategy was launched). That study found that the general public understood the developing world (or ‘third world’ as they called it) to mean Africa (DFID 2000, in Darnton 2007b). The respondents then associated Africa with poverty, famine and drought; only ‘activist’ respondents who were members of NGOs put forward a different view (incorporating debt or trade). This perspective was reiterated in the influential 2001 study ‘The Live Aid Legacy’ (VSO 2002, in Darnton 2007b). In that study, respondents were asked to make spontaneous associations with the ‘developing world’ or ‘third world’; 80% of the answers related to war, famine, debt, starving people, natural disaster, poverty, and corruption. The researchers drew a causal link back to Band Aid and Live Aid in 1985, and the news footage of the Ethiopian famine which preceded those events.

The next chapter in the story was provided by qualitative research for DFID, undertaken to support the development of the ‘Trade Matters’ booklet (Creative 2006, in Darnton 2007b). The researchers found that nothing had changed in the public’s view:

“Like I said before, this Africa thing seems to be exactly the same now as it was when I was ten years old.”

The same researchers undertook further qualitative work in 2008, supporting the development of DFID’s segmentation model. The researchers revealed feelings of hopelessness among respondents when discussing global poverty. They reported “a universal feeling that efforts have long been made to combat poverty in places like Africa and yet little has changed” (Creative 2008). Finally, coming up to the time of writing this review, campaign development research for Save the Children in September 2009 found the same public reactions (Mango 2009). The study quotes a respondent who echoes the verbatim from the Creative study in 2006 – it could almost be the same respondent, the only difference being that three further years have elapsed:

“What’s happened since Live Aid? I was at school then. Now I’m 36 and nothing has really changed.”

The same stagnation is apparent in research evidence on levels of understanding of the causes of poverty. Live Aid is similarly influential here, and it can be seen that images of Africa and public understanding of the causes of poverty are strongly intertwined. Darnton’s 2007 review discusses evidence from The Live Aid Legacy research in 2001, which found that the public saw Africa as beset by natural problems such as famine, the climate or geographic issues (VSO 2002,
in Darnton 2007b). In work around the same time, Greg Philo of the Glasgow Media Group reported that the public saw African countries’ problems as “self-generated”, including war and poor governance (Philo 2002, in Darnton 2007b). These findings were echoed in the qualitative research on PPP, which concluded that the causes of poverty were seen either as “natural” or “man-made”, but that either way, they were deemed “internal” to poor countries (PPP 2005, in Darnton 2007b). In none of the above studies did the mass public indicate that the developed world might be responsible in some way for the poverty in developing countries. This finding is consistent with the ‘Live Aid Legacy’ study, the ‘Legacy’ being the dynamic which casts the UK public in the role of “powerful giver”, and the African public as “grateful receiver” (VSO 2002, in Darnton 2007b). This in turn is problematic, meaning that the only thing the UK public can do is give money, while all African people do is wait passively for it to arrive. This dynamic is still apparent in 2009: the latest research study in the ‘Reflecting the Real World’ series co-ordinated by IBT explicitly states that the Live Aid Legacy is still in effect. One respondent in that study described the developing world as “malnutrition and pot-bellied young children desperate for help with flies on their faces” (IBT 2009).

One of the objectives of the MPH campaign was to move public understanding on from the Live Aid Legacy to an appreciation of the influence of global factors on global poverty; as such it called for debt relief and fairer trade, as well as increased aid spending (see eg. Sireau 2007). However, the PPP research found that this message only got through to a small minority of those who were involved in the MPH campaign (who themselves were only 15% of the population – see eg. PPP 2007a). Across the research there were emerging signs that a few people were beginning to think that the causes of poverty might be political. This realisation was driven mostly by their awareness of the issue of international debt, and for some, by recognition of unfair trade arrangements (PPP 2007b). The other big shift achieved by MPH was that it increased awareness of the G8 among the mass public; before 2005, only a tiny minority had heard of the G8, but by the end of PPP surveying, only 25% of the public said they had never heard of it, while 65% claimed to know something about it (PPP 2007a). This raising of awareness was taken by the researchers as grounds for celebration, as knowing about the G8 meant that most people would now have some grounds for knowing that global poverty had global causes.

However, the hoped-for change in mass public understanding of the causes of poverty does not seem to have materialised. Research in 2009 by the Institute for Development Studies into public perceptions has delivered findings which almost entirely repeat those which came out of the PPP work in 2007. Thus the IDS researchers found that the main causes of poverty in poor countries are perceived to be bad government and natural disasters. “Some references” were made by respondents to causes such as the global economic system, but “most respondents’ explanations for poverty in developing countries lay within the countries themselves” (IDS 2009).

Looking back across the evidence reviewed here on headline perceptions, the public as a whole remains uninterested in and ill-informed about global poverty. The majority of people hold negative views of the developing world, and of their ability to change things. The research shows that little has happened in last ten years to change this situation, apart, perhaps, from Make Poverty History. Even here, momentary gains with those members of the public involved in the campaign have not been capitalised upon; there are even reports of increased disillusionment among the Involved in response to the apparent lack of change (see eg. PPP 2007b; Creative 2008). As emblematised by the data on levels of those who are ‘very concerned’ about poverty in poor countries, the public is on a downward trajectory.
1.2. Public Perceptions of Debt, Trade and Aid (and Corruption)

Debt

Public awareness of debt as a factor in global poverty goes back to the Jubilee 2000 campaign, when it was framed as an ethical issue (see eg. Yanacopoulos 2004 in Darnton 2007b). However, as the PPP research revealed, only a minority of the more engaged sections of the public spontaneously think of debt as a cause of global poverty (PPP 2007b). These more engaged respondents found debt easy to discuss at the top level, but then found it difficult to explain in terms of how it actually worked. Widespread uncertainty was also apparent whether the UK government had written off the debts of developing countries or not; this uncertainty persists in more recent research (eg. Creative 2008). When the issue of debt was opened up in the PPP research, respondents could often react cynically, questioning the government’s motives for cancelling debt, and alleging that it would only be in order to allow the recipients either to begin trading with them again, or to incur new debts. The Creative study shows how these reactions vary by level of engagement of respondent: the most engaged said that the debtor nations should be allowed to incur new debt, while the middling groups were resigned to the repayments not being met. The least engaged groups argued that existing debts should be repaid in full, as people in the UK could in turn benefit from that support, if the state passed it on.

Trade

Darnton’s 2007 review describes how trade is widely regarded as the most difficult of the trio of political influences on poverty which MPH tried to highlight (debt, trade and aid). It is described in the campaign’s review as “incredibly complex” (Firetail 2006 in Darnton 2007), and even one of the campaign organisers is quoted as finding it hard to describe (Sireau 2007):

“Aid, I think people can grasp probably quite easily. Debt, I think people can get that. Trade, the trade justice one, is a much more difficult message and it’s very difficult to get that in a succinct form that people can clearly understand what it is that you’re wanting to happen.”

Part of the difficulty of the ‘trade justice one’ stems from its loose definition: it is an umbrella term for “a tapestry of trade rules, barriers, tariffs and duties which govern international trade” (Darnton 2007b). Within this tapestry, each of the strands requires technical understanding, and an ability to handle complexity. These concerns however do not touch the public, nearly all of whom remain unaware that international trade is an issue in global poverty.

In 2004 Christian Aid undertook a research study in preparation for campaign on trade justice (TRBI 2004, in Darnton 2007b). The study found that the public knew almost nothing about systems of global trade; one typical respondent is quoted saying:

“I didn’t know international trade rules were a factor in poverty in the Third World.”

The researchers concluded that there were four missing facts which the majority of the public would need to understand if they were to be able to sustain a discussion around trade justice. The four ‘missing facts’ were:

- The ‘free’ market is only fair when participants are trading from the same starting point
- There are rules and regulations put in place by international organisations (dominated by rich countries) which currently prevent poorer countries from redressing the balance
- Trade rules protect and build our interests at the expense of poorer countries
Politicians have the power to regulate how companies trade but don’t use this power to help poorer countries.

These missing facts were carried forward into the PPP research, and in the final 2007 wave, it was found that, for the majority of the more engaged respondents who were interviewed, the four missing facts were “still missing” (PPP 2007b). The report concluded that among the general public “There is no greater understanding of trade than before”.

The same low levels of knowledge emerge in Creative Research’s study for DFID in 2008, suggesting that, as with headline perceptions of poverty, nothing has changed in terms of the public’s understanding of trade (Creative 2008). The study also found that when issues of trade were opened up, respondents adopted a wide variety of positions, most of them proving problematic to the agenda for fairer trade. Among the respondents’ concerns about the possible consequences of removing trade barriers were that this might damage our markets, flood the workforce with cheap labour, or just enrich bad governments in developing countries. Few respondents felt unequivocally positive about the notion of fairer trade.

Finally, one of the key difficulties in talking about trade is terminology: ‘fairer trade’ is a more approachable term than ‘trade justice’ but it can also be more confusing. The PPP research includes the example of a young activist respondent who keeps muddling up the terms ‘fairer’ and ‘free’, until he has to break off the point he is trying to make (see Darnton 2007b). The confusion with fair trade is particularly prevalent, given the very high levels of awareness of fairtrade among the public. In the last wave of PPP research, awareness of fair-trade was described as “near universal”, 93% of respondents having heard of it (PPP 2007a). However the confusion between fairtrade and fairer trade is also fundamental, as while fairer trade is little known and extremely hard to understand, fairtrade is part of most people’s everyday lives. The success of fairtrade is put down to its not being conceptual, but simply based on experience: familiarity is acquired through shopping. As such, fairtrade can be described as “a token gesture that anyone can do” (Creative 2008). This popular appeal goes hand in hand with the lack of cognitive demands fairtrade places on the individual-as-shopper. It is notable that in research, those who regularly buy fairtrade are shown only to have a very limited understanding of the issues behind the product label. Asked to explain her motives for buying fairtrade, one woman in a research study for the Fairtrade Foundation (Research Works 2005 in Darnton 2007b) commented:

“You’re doing something for somebody somewhere aren’t you?”

Aid

Public support for development aid has been memorably described by Ian Smillie as “a mile wide and an inch deep” (Smillie 1996 in eg. Darnton 2007b). Across different donor countries, and by a variety of different measures, support for aid is traditionally thought to be strong and stable, running at around 70% (see eg. Hudson & van Heerde 2009). However, the ‘inch deep’ side of public awareness is captured in qualitative research; it transpires the only form of aid that most of the public are aware of is humanitarian aid provided in response to disasters. In research for DFID on aid effectiveness, Creative Research found that the public’s default definition of aid was “donations to charities in response to disasters” (Creative 2006, in Darnton 2007b). This echoes work by Ida McDonnell at the OECD Development Awareness Centre in which she finds that, across donor nations, the prevailing understanding of aid is as “short term charity for humanitarian relief” (McDonnell et al 2003, in Darnton 2007b). So wedded are the public to the idea that all aid is provided by charities, that the only role they can imagine for the government in relation to
aid would be to encourage the public to give more money to those charities (Creative 2006, in Darnton 2007b). The PPP qualitative research found that there were only a few respondents who saw the situation any differently: a small minority of the engaged respondents who took part in that research felt sure that the government had “a pot of money”, although they were not sure how it was distributed, or to whom (PPP 2005, in Darnton 2007b).

Given that most of the public is unaware that the causes of poverty include the political, and unaware that the government even gives development aid, it is small wonder that few of the public know about DFID and what it does. The headline statistics in the 2009 tracking survey are that 45% of the public report having heard of DFID, including 22% who claim to know something about it (COI 2009). These levels have been static since 2007. However, the 2007 review framed the evidence on awareness and understanding of DFID rather differently. Based on data asked in a 2007 mini-wave of tracking for DFID by TNS, the review calculated that, as only 20% of the 21% of respondents who were aware of DFID also knew that they supported development projects overseas, it could be said that only approximately 4% of the public understands what DFID does. These data nicely chime with a straight question asked in the MORI survey undertaken during the segmentation development in 2008: when all respondents in the sample (aware and unaware) were asked how much they knew about DFID, 5% said ‘a lot’ or ‘a fair amount’ (MORI 2008b).

The fundamental problem in all this for researchers, and in turn policy makers, is that if development aid is “not salient or meaningful” (Hudson & van Heerde 2009), then how can support for aid be measured and quantified, and in turn, the factors driving that support be identified? Based largely on David Hudson’s evidence to their enquiry, the House of Commons International Development Committee concluded: “If DFID is to build public support for development effectively it needs first to establish what people’s attitudes are. This requires the collection of information that truly reflects public opinion. We do not believe that DFID’s surveys, as they are currently designed, achieve this. …We recommend that DFID examines how it assesses the level of public support for development and redesigns its surveys to address the weaknesses we have identified.” (HoC IDC 2009).

DFID has recently responded to the IDC’s report, and their response includes a clarification and refinement of the role of DFID’s annual survey in tracking levels of public support for development (DFID 2009b). First, the response reiterates that the ‘concern’ question is used as a “KPI in its own right” and not as a measure of support; the response also emphasises that it is the proportion of ‘very concerned’ respondents which is used as an indicator of engagement, not ‘net’ concern. Second, the response points to alternative questions which have been used to track support for development spending over recent years; and finally, the response highlights some new questions added to the most recent (September 2009) wave of tracking, in the light of the IDC report’s recommendations.

DFID’s response highlights the lack of understanding outside DFID over which measures should be used as indicators of support. The Select Committee objected to ‘concern’ being used as a measure of support for development aid; in his paper, David Hudson also objects to an OECD question which is widely used in this context (‘In your opinion, is it very important, fairly important, not very important or not at all important to help people in poor countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, etc. to develop?’ – in Hudson & van Heerde 2009). Neither of these questions explicitly relates to aid spending, let alone to amounts of spent on aid, and as such it is unsurprising that they represent unreliable measures of public support.

As David Hudson notes, questions that do explicitly ask about the amount spent on aid produce markedly lower levels of support. For example the DFID ‘Public Attitudes’ tracker in 2008
asked ‘In order to support the MDGs, the UK Government has committed to increase its spending on overseas aid to poor countries. How much do you agree or disagree with this?’ – and the question produced a level of net agreement of 46% (TNS 2008), notably lower than the traditional 70% level. The sorts of questions which David Hudson recommends as an alternative to the generic questions on ‘concern’ and ‘help for development’ include those featuring “relative not absolute measures of support”. Such a question was included in the survey undertaken by MORI for DFID in 2008 to provide the data for DFID’s Citizen Segmentation model, which in fact asked the question in two ways (MORI 2008b). The first asked about support for increased spending on different areas of policy: of the six areas asked about, development aid came out fifth, with 45% supporting increased spending (‘a lot’ or ‘a little’) – only ‘defence’ was lower (supported by 41%); NHS and schools are first and second respectively. The second question asked respondents to rank the six areas in order of priority for spending; this time development aid came out bottom: 19% of respondents ranked it in their top 3 priorities (while defence was ranked in the top 3 by 23%).

A similar question has been newly added to the DFID annual tracker of Public Attitudes in September 2009, and with similar results (TNS 2009b). Across six areas of domestic Government expenditure, ‘support to poor countries’ came out sixth, identified as one of their top three priority areas by 31% of respondents, and identified as their sixth and lowest priority by 42% of respondents (the next lowest priority area being ‘defence’, ranked sixth by 20%) (TNS 2009b).

These questions not only reveal lower levels of support for aid spending than is recorded in those used elsewhere in the OECD (and it is notable that MORI’s figure of 45% support for increased aid spending tallies with TNS’ 46% support for increased spending on aid) but also show that relative to other spending priorities, development aid is considered least important. As MORI’s report recognises, the questions do not capture the complexities of spending decisions, but they do provide a further set of measures of support for development aid.

David Hudson also argues that more meaningful measures of support for aid would include questions about “absolute amounts” of funding required (Hudson & van Heerde 2009). He gives the example of a question asked in a 2008 survey across a number of OECD countries about the additional cost per person required to meet MDG 1: this was calculated as £25 for the UK, $56 for the US, and so on. On average 77% of respondents were in favour of contributing towards meeting the goal, provided that everyone else contributed equally. This kind of ‘cost per head’ question is also not asked in the DFID tracker, or indeed, in other UK-only surveys included in this review. However, several surveys do ask about amounts of aid spent, and of levels of increase; these commonly ask about both the value expressed in money, and as a percentage of Gross National Income (GNI). One problem with such questions is, like the one on ‘cost per head’ above, they require the question to be framed by a chunk of information about spending levels which the respondents otherwise would not know. When questions do not do this, and simply ask how much respondents think is spent on development aid, or should be spent, the public notoriously overestimate the amount spent if asked in percentage terms (as 0.7% can sound “measly”) and underestimate it if in absolute terms (as £5bn can sound a lot) (see eg. ICM 2007 in Darnton 2007b).

It is interesting to look at an example of this more common type of question asking about actual amounts. A survey by YouGov for Oxfam in March 2009 included the following information: “In 1970, many countries including the UK pledged to spend 0.7% of the Gross National Income each year on aid to developing countries, this pledge was reinforced in 2002 and aid for Africa was brought back up the agenda in 2005. In 2008, the UK spent 0.36% of the Gross National Income on aid to developing countries”
Respondents were then asked whether the UK Government should honour its pledge to spend 0.7% of GNI on development aid (40% agreed – echoing the 45% figures above). Finally, the survey asked whether the Government should increase, decrease, or maintain its levels of spending on development aid. The biggest single group of respondents – 41% - chose decrease; 16% said it should increase spending, and 34% stay the same (thus half could be said to ‘support’ government spending on development aid).

These tighter quantitative measures appear to suggest that support for aid is not as strong or as stable as otherwise might be supposed. However, tightening up the questions used to measure public support for development aid does not address the fundamental problem that development aid is not something the vast majority of the public thinks about or understands. Once this point, evidenced through qualitative research, has been taken on board, even the tightest survey questions in this area can be seen as in danger of leading respondents to express opinions on matters where they did not knowingly have any, before they took part in the survey. The inherent limitations to using quantitative measures in assessing attitudes to development aid were discussed in the previous 2007 Review for DFID (Darnton 2007b), and the points made there still stand. The questions providing knowledge inputs in the form of chunks of information about development spending provide the clearest examples of how surveys necessarily must lead respondents in order to get them to provide an answer other than ‘don’t know’ to questions about aid spending.

There is one final problem with quantitative measures of support for development aid, which is also flagged up by David Hudson (Hudson & van Heerde 2009). The research data are regarded as important as they are supposed to provide a political mandate for maintaining or increasing spending on development aid. However, as Hudson emphasises, the relationship between public opinion and development aid spending is a mirage; it appears that spending levels do not rise and fall in line with public opinion, and that the quantitative evidence for this correlation is “shaky” (Riddell 2007). Furthermore, when correlations have been shown, they only apply to the relationship between opinion and humanitarian aid, not development aid (eg. McDonnell 2001 in Hudson & van Heerde 2009). While politicians across OECD donor nations cite public opinion as an important factor in determining levels of spending on overseas development aid, these data show that levels of spending are at least to some extent set independently of levels of public support as gauged in opinion polls (see eg. McDonnell et al 2003, in Darnton 2007b).

The overarching point from this section of the review is consistent with that expressed in DFID’s response to the IDC report, that “emotional commitment towards global poverty” (as tapped through ‘very concern’) is “an important precursor to belief in support for development aid” (DFID 2009b). Rather than solely measuring levels of support for development, narrowly defined as support for spending on development aid, this rapid review will recommend that a wider basket of measures is used. Taken together these measures provide an indication of levels of public engagement with global poverty (as the root cause), out of which support for development aid spending (as the symptom) will arise (see Section 5: Implications below). The evidence reviewed here shows that quantitative measures of support for development aid are open to fundamental doubt that they provide meaningful indicators. Equally problematically, the evidence also suggests that a communications strategy which pursues support for development spending over other, broader, public engagement goals is one which may have negative consequences for increasing levels of understanding of and engagement with global poverty as a whole (see eg. Collier 2008; Humble & Smith 2006 in Darnton 2007b). These points will be discussed below (for instance, in Section 2.1 on the Drivers of Support for Development Aid), but suffice to say here that foregrounding aid, and aid effectiveness issues (including corruption), above other approaches and solutions to tackling global poverty obviously risks reinforcing the negative and
incomplete perceptions the UK public has long held towards those who live in the developing world.

**Corruption**

It is not just levels of aid spending which are disconnected from levels of public support for development. A further quirky relationship is found between measures of perceived aid effectiveness and levels of public support for aid. Most of the public think that a large proportion of aid is wasted, yet support for development aid (at least if measured loosely, as is traditional) remains strong (see eg. McDonnell 2006, discussed in Darnton 2007b). Even among those members of the public who strongly support increased aid spending, concerns about aid ineffectiveness pertain. For Roger Riddell, this is not “an anomaly, a contradiction or a paradox”; instead it is an indication that there is subgroup of determined aid supporters in the population who will keep calling for more aid even if they believe much of it is misspent (Riddell 2007).

According to DFID tracking surveys, roughly half of the public believes that ‘most financial aid to poor countries is wasted’ (TNS 2009b). The level of agreement with this statement in September 2009 was 55%, up from 47% in August 2008 (although that in turn was down from 57% in 2007) (ibid; TNS 2008). Qualitative research consistently shows that the public think of wastage occurring all along the aid supply chain: thus ‘aid ineffectiveness’ refers to both charity misadministration, and corruption in the governments of developing countries (see eg. PPP 2007b; Creative 2008). Indeed, previous waves of DFID tracking have included a second statement: ‘Most financial aid is wasted as there is often corruption in poor country governments’ – adding the clause about ‘corruption’ increases levels of agreement with this statement to 73% (TNS 2008). A similar statement was included in the PPP tracking surveys (‘most aid to poor countries is wasted because their governments are corrupt’), and in the final wave, a very similar proportion – 77% - of respondents were in agreement (PPP 2007a). It is however interesting to note that ‘very concerned’ respondents were more not less likely than average to agree with this statement, suggesting that a focus on corruption is not simply a result of low levels of knowledge and engagement with global poverty issues.

In their survey for the DFID segmentation model in 2008, MORI introduced a new statement, ‘Corruption in poor country governments makes it pointless donating money to help reduce poverty’ (MORI 2008b). In the September 2009 wave of tracking, 53% of respondents agreed with this statement, which had notably risen since it was first asked in 2008, when 44% agreed (TNS 2009b; ibid.). While the pattern from PPP research does not recur, in that the most engaged segments least agree with the statement about it being pointless to donate, the findings still give cause for alarm. Arguably the perception of corruption, which has remained highly salient for the majority of the public over a number of years, represents more of a threat to support for spending on development aid than does the economic downturn (about which the Commons International Development Committee called its recent enquiry).

In qualitative research, corruption emerges as “the only issue which people will happily talk about in relation to global poverty” (PPP 2005, in Darnton 2007b). While this position was consistent across the three years of PPP research, it continues into subsequent studies; for instance 2008 work by Creative for DFID found that “Everyone perceives that money is siphoned off by corrupt leaderships / further down the line or diverted to buying arms” (Creative 2008). While the perception of widespread corruption is universally held, that study showed that reactions to corruption differ: less engaged respondents get angry with corrupt leaders, while more engaged respondents worry about the plight of the misgoverned people, and look for ways to get aid money through to them.
The qualitative evidence suggests that the public don’t need any encouragement to talk about corruption. For example, in the recent study for Save the Children on Child Survival, the first ‘barrier’ reported by respondents to donating to the campaign was ‘money not getting through to the end cause’ (Mango 2009). As in this example, it may be that the public partly use corruption as a post-hoc justification for their almost instinctive reluctance to get engaged in global poverty issues, and to justify their inherent reluctance to donate their money. Examples of these responses were found throughout the PPP qualitative research, from which it was concluded that “the public is looking for an excuse to disengage from stories about poverty” (PPP 2007c). Nonetheless concerns about corruption are expressed across all segments and subgroups of the public, and are stubbornly defended when challenged. Although ‘aid effectiveness’ has been on government and NGO radars for a decade or more, if anything, it appears the public’s obsession with corruption has only got stronger.

1.3. Perceptions by DFID Segment

So far this review has only discussed the research evidence at the level of the whole population, although variations in the attitudes of different subgroups will have been noted. The distinction between more and less engaged respondents which ran through the PPP research was formalised in 2008 in DFID’s Citizen Segmentation model (MORI 2008a; 2008b). It is not necessary to reproduce the detail on the six segments here (which may in any case be familiar to many readers) although simply recapping the segment names, sizes and topline characteristics may help in the subsequent discussion (the details are taken from MORI 2008a).

Segment 1: Active Enthusiasts (21%)
Most concerned; most likely to act and have acted, most likely to want the government to act, including increasing aid, and paying more tax

Segment 2: Interested Mainstream (23%)
2nd most concerned; 2nd most likely to act and have acted, want the government to act, half are for increasing aid, but not paying more tax; corruption an issue; doubt how much aid helps

Segment 3: Distracted Individuals (12%)
3rd most concerned; actions and willingness to act don’t match concern, would rather have the government act - who they notably trust; half are for increasing aid and half for paying more tax to do so; corruption is a big issue; doubt how much aid helps

Segment 4: Family First Sympathisers (16%)
4th most concerned; little personal willingness to help, especially by paying more tax; don’t trust the government; only a third are for increasing aid; doubt how much aid helps, and would rather have money spent in UK first

Segment 5: Insular Sceptics (19%)
5th most concerned, but little else backs up their concern, not their responsibility and nothing they can do; shouldn’t be giving more money and not in tax either; don’t change the amount of spending, most aid is wasted and corruption an issue; doubt the help that aid brings
Segment 6: Disapproving Rejecters (8%)

Not concerned, abdicate responsibility as nothing they can do; government shouldn’t be doing more either; indeed should reduce amount of spending, most aid is wasted and corruption an issue; doubt the help that aid brings; spend money in UK first (are concerned about UK poor)

The six segments described here were generated based on 29 items in the MORI survey, all of which tapped attitudes and beliefs relating to global poverty. Hence there should be little surprise that perceptions across the six segments show wide variation. Three headline measures are included here, based on the most recent tracking data (September 2009); these measures are indicative of the variation between segments (not always smoothly ‘down’ the segments), but also are specifically helpful in describing the segments:

Table 1: Variation in three headline measures across the DFID Citizen Segmentation Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>[total]</th>
<th>S1 (AE)</th>
<th>S2 (IM)</th>
<th>S3 (DI)</th>
<th>S4 (FFS)</th>
<th>S5 (IS)</th>
<th>S6 (DR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘How concerned would you say you are about levels of poverty in poor countries?’ [Very Concerned]</td>
<td>[21%]</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘There is nothing I can personally do to tackle poverty in poor countries’ [Disagree (net)]</td>
<td>[45%]</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It is in the UK’s interest to increase the amount the Government spends on overseas aid to poor countries’ [Agree (net)]</td>
<td>[43%]</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TNS 2009b

Looking at the table above, it is possible to conclude that the Citizen Segmentation model is a good gauge of levels of concern and support for aid (so far as questions on development aid are valid). Again, this is unsurprising, as all the three measures in the table are included among the 29 items on which the segments were clustered (MORI 2008b). The model is thus tapping support for development aid, but among numerous other measures of engagement; support for aid emerges as just one component in an overall model of levels of public engagement.

As with whole population measures of engagement, such as ‘very concern’, there is evidence that levels of public engagement with global poverty are falling. Subsequent waves of tracking since the original clustering in April 2008 have requantified the 6 segments (see eg. TNS 2009b). There may be a small amount of statistical error here as it appears only the 15 ‘golden questions’, not all 29 of the original cluster items, were used, but nonetheless the variations in segment size since April 2008 are marked:
A degree of variation is apparent in the sizes of some segments across the 18 months from April 2008 to September 2009 (TNS 2009b). The most engaged segment, the Active Enthusiasts, can be seen to have shrunk over the period; however, having reached its lowest percentage in April 2009 (when it became the smallest segment), it has since recovered to 16%. Meanwhile the less engaged, and less actively supportive, segment of Distracted Individuals, has grown by a third. Further analysis should be undertaken to establish which individual items in the survey most account for these changes: such analysis would help to frame DFID’s public engagement work. It is notable that DFID are already thinking along these lines: the draft strategy for the forthcoming ‘UKaid works’ communications activity includes the target of moving the number of Active Enthusiasts back to more than 20% of the population (ibid.). Such a target will require careful strategic planning and delivery; it will require working on engagement across a number of factors, and given the measures on which the segments are based, is likely also to require, and result in, higher levels of support for increasing development aid. Such a strategy would go some way towards achieving the departmental aspiration set out in the terms for this rapid review, of “instilling support for development into the national identity”, as it requires that multiple dimensions of individuals’ engagement are addressed, not just support for aid.
2. Drivers of Engagement

2.1. Drivers of Support for Development Aid

Notwithstanding their reservations about the commonly-used measures of support for development, Hudson and van Heerde have undertaken initial work to model the factors driving support (eg. van Heerde & Hudson 2009). As well as flaws in the ‘support’ questions, they note that there is inadequate data collected on the other variables that could account for that support. Nonetheless, their initial analysis finds that moral attitudes (seeing development support as a moral issue) are positively correlated with concern, as are perceptions of self-interest. While moral attitudes as a kind of altruism could be deemed at odds with self-interest, they note that both opinions can be held simultaneously by individuals: support can thus be driven through appeals to individuals’ morality and their self-interest. A further nuance is that if the self-interest measure is about development spending being in the country’s best interests, then this can in fact reduce support, whereas if it is perceived as in the individual’s self-interest, then this increases concern.

While this is a helpful contribution, Hudson and van Heerde call for a more solid modelling effort, including better data and multiple factors (Hudson & van Heerde 2009). Along the way they note indicative evidence from the USA that support for development aid has been shown to correlate with: seeing oneself as a member of the world community, being financially secure, having trust in institutions, being a woman, and being a regular worshipper. However, not all these attributes can be considered drivers, in the sense that they may not causally determine levels of support; some of them (like gender) are also not in the government’s power to affect.

A more thoroughgoing attempt at modelling the drivers of support for spending on development aid has been undertaken in Australia for the government aid agency AusAid (Instinct & Reason 2009c). As part of a wide-reaching programme of research including surveying and segmentation, the research agency Instinct & Reason undertook a choice modelling exercise for AusAid. Put simply, choice modelling is a practical technique for modelling the relative weights attached by the public to different options within a complex choice. The choice is put to the public as a whole package of elements, and they simply choose whether to support the package or not; the relative importance of the different elements is established afterwards, using statistics. The method was originated by a Nobel prize-winning economist, James McFadden, who also drew on psychological insights in developing his method.

In the AusAid example, the choice to support spending on development aid or not is broken down into 10 elements: How much is spent on overseas aid; How overseas aid is spent; Where it is spent; Why it is spent; and Messages about aid spending, in 6 separate categories (eg. education messages, infrastructure messages and so forth). Within each of the elements, 4 different options were tested; respondents received a series of cards with different permutations of the 4 options across the 10 elements, and on the balance of the elements they then had to answer the (binary) question: ‘If this was the way Australia helped other countries with overseas aid would you support it or not?’ (Yes or No).

The analysis starts from the baseline position, summarizing where Australian spending on development is right now (0.3% of GNI, or $3bn, per annum, mostly spent on neighbouring developing countries, on a mixture of projects – and notably no messages were included to promote the spending). This baseline combination achieved 76.2% support. Having run through all the permutations, the analysis found an ‘optimal solution’, which achieved 99.88% support. The solution is shown as follows:
**Figure 3: Optimal Solution for Support for Spending on Development Aid, AusAid**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Yes, I would support this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much is spent on overseas aid</td>
<td>$5 Billion 0.5% of Australian Governments Gross National Income (compare to 6% on defence and 33% on social security)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How overseas aid is spent</td>
<td>Spend on helping with a mix of basic needs, education, infrastructure for economic development, good governance and health initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where it is spent</td>
<td>75% with near neighbours and 25% in other parts of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why it is spent</td>
<td>No message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages – Basic needs</td>
<td>No message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages – Education</td>
<td>A girl with 7 yrs education in a developing country marries 4 years older and has 2.2 less children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages – Infrastructure</td>
<td>Image and caption of friendship bridge or Bali Road works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages – Good governance</td>
<td>Image and caption of landmine workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages – Better health</td>
<td>Immunisation campaigns have saved 3 million lives every year for the last 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages – various / mixed</td>
<td>A remote Papua New Guinea village donated money to the Victorian bushfire appeal almost a decade after Victorians came to their aid when a devastating tsunami killed thousands of locals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Instinct & Reason 2009c

The choice modelling exercise provides an impressive analysis and results in the identification of factors which are likely to increase support for development aid. It is notable that the uplift in recorded support is primarily due to increasing the level of aid spending from 0.3% GNI to 0.5% GNI and adding some ‘appropriate’ messaging. However, the method itself is unlikely to be foolproof, and it can be exposed to the same criticism of ‘manufactured opinion’ as applies to any quantitative questioning about a topic the public does not think about and knows little of.

Other elements of the research for AusAid show that the problem of low salience is applicable in the Australian context; for instance, one of the six segments in their segmentation model is called ‘Haven’t given it much thought’ (13% of the population) (Instinct & Reason 2009b). It is possible that the choice modelling analysis is a statistical concoction, which may be broadly correct in its findings, but is unlikely to be replicable in policy (for instance, by any measure, 99.88% support is unlikely).

Pursuing the strategy recommended by the model is also likely to have some unwanted side-effects. For instance, within each of the 6 ‘Message’ elements, different message options were found to affect support in different directions; eg. some of the ‘infrastructure’ messages could diminish support, other increase it. One message, that ‘There is no path out of poverty except through economic development’, was found to have a strong negative effect, relative to other messages (-9% -

Andrew Darnton
Research & Analysis

20
Instinct & Reason 2009c). This can be considered a perverse effect, as in general development aid is supposed to help poor countries develop, and in the choice modelling exercise in particular the emphasis elsewhere is on providing infrastructure, education, health and other ‘self-help’ solutions. Excluding messages such as these from an engagement strategy would in turn perpetuate the emphasis on aid, and aid dependency – aspects of the Live Aid Legacy.

Furthermore, the Optimal Solution as a whole emphasises the self-interest dimension of support – for instance, with 75% of aid to be spent on neighbours in the region, and education to be valued for reducing women’s propensity to breed. The aspect is prevalent elsewhere in the AusAid research; it is notable that the two segments who report the highest support for development aid do not show strong concern for global poverty, but instead support foreign aid on the premise that it will bring domestic benefits (Instinct & Reason 2009b). Turning back to theoretical arguments, van Heerde & Hudson note that the self-interested model of support for development aid is based on the economic idea of utility (van Heerde & Hudson 2009). While this rational basis is good for deciding momentary support (such as when answering a choice modelling survey), it is not so influential in determining ongoing engagement in everyday life. If rational appeals on grounds of self interest are used, emotionally people disengage (ibid.). This evidence again underlines that the pursuit of support for development aid as an end in itself can have the negative consequence of damaging engagement and understanding in the long term.

2.2. Drivers of Actions

Report 1 of the earlier desk research review for DFID (Darnton 2007a) made the distinction between ‘issue engagement’ (broadly, attitudinal stances, such as concern) and ‘active engagement’ (practical support, shown through behaviours). The benefit of this approach is to highlight that support is practical as well as attitudinal, and that there are things that people can do to tackle global poverty, the accomplishment of which in turn increases their levels of agency, and their overall levels of engagement.

At the time of the 2007 Review, there was no clear list of the actions people might take to show their support for development. Since then, DFID has produced a list of actions which people who support global development can take; the list is contained within a leaflet promoting the 2009 White Paper, and has also been used in other settings. As discussed in the ‘Education Audience Thinkpiece’ the list feels slightly provisional, and would warrant further work (Darnton & Smith 2009). In the absence of such a list, the 2007 Review identified a range of actions individuals could take, and set data on levels of uptake against each of them, based mainly on PPP data gathered around Make Poverty History, but also on DFID tracking data. The list is reproduced below:
Table 2: Summary of levels of public involvement in ‘active engagement’, by action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>% of the public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involved in Red Nose Day 2007 (any action)</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave money on Red Nose Day 2007</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored someone on Red Nose Day 2007</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever bought a fairtrade product</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated to a charity providing aid to people in poor countries (last 6 months)</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated to a charity helping victims of natural or man-made disasters (last 6 months)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in Make Poverty History (any action)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wore an MPH white band (approx.)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent a text message to MPH (approx.)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent an email to a politician for MPH (approx.)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined in the MPH rally in Edinburgh (approx.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources
1 – PPP 2007a; base n= 1,923 (GB only)
2 – TNS 2007a; base n= 1,947 (GB only)
3 – TNS 2007c; base n= 2,051 (all UK)
4 – PPP Wave 3 July 2005, cited in PPP 2007a; base n= 2,135 (GB only)

In order to draw together the available evidence on drivers, the review built upon a typology of actions identified by development academic Matt Baillie Smith. This typology consisted of three elements: “consumption, demonstration, and conversation about the issues” (Smith 2004, in Darnton 2007a). At the time, the review noted that ‘donation’ was missing from the list, which was intended to classify campaigning actions. In the current rapid review, a variant classification has been identified, which is in keeping with the Baillie Smith types, and builds in donations; it comes from Oxfam’s typology of potential supporters and actions, in which supporters can give ‘money, time, product, or voice’ (Oxfam 2008).

These four headings are used to arrange the evidence on drivers of actions people can take to tackle global poverty, and so signal and increase their levels of engagement. While most DFID research has focussed on building attitudinal support, most NGO work has been on active engagement, hence the evidence which has been accessed for this (and the 2007) review mainly comes from the charity sector.

Money

Research by Leapfrog for Comic Relief on ‘The Psychology of Giving’ found that giving money involves both the heart and the head, with the initial trigger usually an emotional appeal (Leapfrog 2004, in Darnton 2007a). Communications which reveal the shocking truth of suffering among poor people, and then cause us to consider the good fortune of our own position, should be effective in triggering giving. It is also noted that those who do give tend to do so with their heart, while those who do not give tend to defend that decision with rational arguments. Finally the report identifies three kinds of giver: automatic (completely habitual, committed supporter); semi-automatic (predisposed to give, swayed by peer pressure); manual (consciously decides to give in response to a specific appeal).

The power of emotional appeals is also attested by research for Save the Children on their ‘Just’ direct response (DRTV) advert (Mango 2008). The ad featured ‘traditional’ hard-hitting imagery of child suffering; the research found that the “powerful imagery” (of a boy dying, and a boy with his ribs showing) “worked well” – in that respondents who watched it were moved to give £3 in
response to the call to action at the end of the ad. The massive risk of such an approach is that it reinforces the Live Aid Legacy: it empowers the viewer to give by disempowering the child-as-recipient. The long-running tensions in NGO tactics between fundraisers on the one hand and campaigners on the other are unravelled in the 2007 review (Darnton 2007a). Yet in this particular case, the researchers found no signs that the viewers were “alienated” by the approach – at least in the short term. An alternative conclusion could be borrowed from the recent IBT research on developing world programming (Scott 2009), in which one respondent commented:

“Personally I try and avoid those sorts of programme.
They’re really irritating, it’s like ‘oh come on, more kids with flies.’”

Time

Few insights on how to drive people to give their time to support development have been identified in this review. The obvious point is apparent in the Oxfam segmentation study that volunteers require time in order to give it: time and money are often counterbalanced in supporter actions (Oxfam 2008). Furthermore, different groups can find different kinds of activity to give their time to, depending on their lifestyles and motivations; the Oxfam Mindset segmentation attempts to capture the interactions between these different impetuses. Thus older and more affluent types (‘Fortunate Givers’) may like to volunteer to work in an Oxfam shop, while younger bloods seeking richer sensations (‘Experience Seekers’) may want to work on grants projects overseas.

It is notable that much volunteering does not appear to be directly motivated by poverty concerns. A similar dynamic is apparent in research on fundraising (as opposed to donating money), such as that conducted for Comic Relief (see eg. 2cv 2003, in Darnton 2007a). This research, conducted with employees who raised money for Red Nose Day 2003 in their workplace, found that the two main motivations for organising such activity were to have fun at work (and during work time), and “a sense of personal martyrdom”. Clearly part of the huge success of Comic Relief as a fundraising organisation can be put down to their essentially providing a (veiled, yet meaningful) excuse for people to have a laugh.

Product

NGOs are likely to have a deep understanding of what drives people to support them through product purchase (see for instance Oxfam’s ‘Unwrapped’ retail offer). That type of evidence has not been accessed for this rapid review, but work commissioned by the Fairtrade Foundation on fairtrade purchasing has been covered in the 2007 reviews. As with the indications on volunteering above, the evidence on purchasing fairtrade products suggests that issue engagement is not important – and may even distract consumers in this context. Fairtrade Foundation research has consistently shown that the main drivers of fairtrade purchasing are the standard ‘choice’ criteria of cost, quality, and taste (Research Works 2005; Diagnostics 2005). Both quantitative and qualitative research have shown that the way to sell more fairtrade product (eg. during Fairtrade Fortnight) is to display the items somewhere prominent in the shop, and to offer price promotions (Research Works 2005; TNS 2007a). Thus the drivers of fairtrade purchasing are just like those of any other shopping choice, and this is possibly why fairtrade purchasing is so commonplace, to the point where researchers can call it “a token gesture that anyone can do and those who feel they have more disposable income are more likely to do” (Creative 2008).
Voice

Relative to the other types of action it is assumed that campaigning actions require more issue engagement from individuals. Looking at the list of actions set out in the 2007 Review (as reproduced above), it was noted that the most popular were the easy-to-undertake ‘MPH lite’ actions (wearing a white band being the epitome of these), while the more demanding actions (such as writing to an MP) were far less popular (Darnton 2007a). During the PPP research, the more intensive actions were found to be undertaken by the ‘very concerned’ respondents, as they required both issue engagement and a sense of agency. It was this sense of agency, or a “leap of faith” that led some of the MPH-involved to go ahead and send in an email to Tony Blair, while others didn’t do so – although in research, both respondents reported their severe doubts about whether or how the email would get through (PPP 2007b).

At the extreme end of the scale, marching was found to demand both issue engagement and time from supporters, who were invited by MPH to give up at least a weekend to go to Edinburgh and march in advance of the Gleneagles G8 Summit. Research conducted during the march found that those who attended were drawn from a wide range of overlapping NGOs and civil society groups: this both attested to the breadth of the MPH coalition, and to the importance of social ties in mobilising people to march (eg. Saunders and Rootes 2006 in Darnton 2007a). The research also noted that the marchers were not all “the usual suspects”; in particular a large number of people came along as part of faith groups, to the point that the researchers described the march as much as a “procession of witness” as a mass mobilisation against global poverty. Again, this underlines the importance of faith-based and other community-level groups in driving active engagement in support of development.

We can however conclude that ‘giving voice’ is traditionally for the more hardcore development NGO supporters. However, in recognition of the value of active engagement to those who undertake it, and to the development movement as a whole, NGOs are now taking pains to make campaigning more accessible, for instance through their online presence. Oxfam research shows how efforts are being taken to reduce the ‘transaction costs’ on the supporter, by making the experience of online campaigning less text-heavy, and more streamlined through the use of obvious buttons and click-throughs (Mesh 2009).
3. Channels and Influencers

TV

The picture television gives viewers of the developing world matters, as TV is consistently ranked as the top source of information about development issues by the public. In the most recent wave of DFID tracking to include the question, 80% of the public spontaneously identified TV, far ahead of newspapers in second place (mentioned by 41% of people – TNS 2008).

TV has traditionally been seen to have a negative impact on public understanding of the developing world. In the most critical of such analyses, Greg Philo of the Glasgow Media Group has charged television with delivering the “mass production of ignorance” (Philo 2002, in Darnton 2007a). Instead of increasing viewers’ levels of engagement, negative images of suffering unconnected from any narrative about possible causes or solutions leave people misinformed and disempowered. While this can seem paradoxical, this thesis is supported by van Heerde and Hudson’s initial work on the drivers of support for development (van Heerde & Hudson 2009). They found that high levels of awareness of poverty in the media correlated with lower levels of reported concern.

In his work in the Viewing the World study for DFID, Philo wrote about the ‘halfway through problem’, whereby viewers are not told about the background to developing world news stories, and nor are they then kept informed of the outcomes (DFID 2000 in Darnton 2007a). An exception to this tendency in the media is the Red Nose Day TV programme, which gives Comic Relief the opportunity to report back to the public on the positive impacts of their donations since the previous Red Nose Day (see eg. PPP 2005). However, most programming does not provide such continuity and nor does it include any sense of narrative, with causes and consequences. This strand of criticism has run through IBT’s ‘Reflecting the Real World’ studies, the latest of which (’The World in Focus’) re-emphasises that the Live Aid Legacy is alive and well, reinforced through imagery of the developing world seen as a series of disasters, both in news programming and in charity advertisements and appeals (’charity TV’ - Scott 2009).

In response to this kind of ‘doom and gloom’ programming viewers commonly disengage, to the point of taking evasive action. One lady in a PPP discussion group commented (PPP 2005 in Darnton 2007a):

“I don’t actually watch the news.
I know it sounds awful but there is so much I don’t want to see.”

The recent research for IBT found that, as a result of the news and charity programming, all content which had to do with the developing world was assumed to be “tough viewing” (TW Research 2009). This in turn means that even where programmers try to break out of the mould of traditional developing world programming, they struggle to reach potential viewers. The result is a double-bind for programme makers, as summed up by a comment from Onyekachi Wambu in the previous IBT study (’Reflecting the Real World 2’ – in Darnton 2007a):

“Every time we had a programme about Africa commissioned we didn’t get an audience.”

The conclusion reached in the current IBT research is that programme makers must strive to work developing world content into different formats, producing “softer” programming which is not issues-led, but delivers “gentler insights” (TW Research 2009). Such programming should
ostensibly be about other things (including programmes in entertainment and reality genres) but should feature links into developing world content. The research shows that such programming can find an audience and when it does, that these “gentler insights...build deeper cultural understanding and empathy” (ibid.).

Nonetheless, as re-emphasised by the TW Research study, the principal downside still applies that these programmes perform very well in research, but in real life, many people haven’t seen them. This was true of much of BBC’s ‘Africa Lives’ series in 2005 (reviewed in ‘Reflecting the Real World 2’ – and discussed in Darnton 2007a); it is also true of some of the programmes in the 2009 research, such as ‘Rageh Inside Iran’, which was well liked by respondents for showing everyday life in Iran: ‘It was nice to see how they actually go about their daily life, just the normality, the ladies with sunglasses, just really normal’ (Scott 2009). The research shows that this impression of normality represents a profound break from people’s preconditioned responses to the developing world. However, given that ‘Rageh Inside Iran’ was a documentary series, and was screened on BBC4, few respondents had chosen to view it in the course of their lives outside research.

Such examples of ‘softer’ developing world programming, which balance entertainment with learning opportunities, were also deemed hard to find by the researchers and project commissioners themselves. The majority of programming on Africa, as summed up by a respondent, is still “squalor or safari” (TW Research 2009). In between these two poles, there is little output, and real lives get overlooked. One exceptional genre is travel documentary and programmes like ‘Amazon with Bruce Parry’ were singled out for praise by respondents who really had watched them at home.

At the same time as the rise of these genres, and the proliferation of digital channels increasing the opportunities for ‘softer’ formats to be screened (if not viewed), the IBT research notes the decline of ritual of nightly news bulletin viewing (Scott 2009). Taking Greg Philo’s perspective, this could be a blessing and a curse.

**Film**

The IBT study notes that drama programmes can have a deep impact on people’s perceptions of the developing world (Scott 2009). However, this kind of content is regarded by the public as currently being better done in films than on TV (popular examples include ‘Blood Diamond’, ‘Slumdog Millionaire’, and ‘The Kite Runner’). One generic point in film’s favour is its longer formats, through which viewers get more immersed in stories which on TV they might simply channel-hop.

**Internet**

In the 2008 DFID tracker, the internet was spontaneously identified as a source of information about global poverty and the lives of people in poor countries by 15% of respondents, making it the third most popular channel, ahead of radio (TNS 2008). It is markedly more important to people in DFID Segments 1 and 2, although those in Segment 4 (Family First Sympathisers) were less likely to identify it as a source of developing world information for them.

The ‘Reflecting the Real World 2’ report focused considerable attention on the role of the internet (IBT 2007 – discussed in Darnton 2007a). On the one hand it was seen to hold considerable promise for development programming, in that it would reach young people more effectively, and through its emphasis on social media and user-generated-content, it would
support the opening up of two-way conversations with those interested in any aspect of global poverty. On the other hand the report noted that the kind of engagement that may occur with these issues online happens in essentially private spaces (such as via blogs or on social networking sites), between small numbers of interested parties. Such engagements are unlikely to have a catalysing effect on wider society, in the way that a TV programme broadcast on a terrestrial channel traditionally could do. In technological developments since that review, it may be noted that Twitter could be an exception to that rule – although content here is likely to be ‘softer’, or in the MPH campaign phrase, ‘content lite’.

**Newspapers**

Little new evidence has been added since the 2007 review, other than to note that the proportion of respondents to the DFID tracker who said they accessed information on global poverty via newspapers was 41%, exactly the same as in the 2007 survey (TNS 2008). The earlier review cited PPP research which noted that while older people were more likely to read broadsheets, some younger people read tabloids for entertainment, but then went online to broadsheets’ websites to access the stories on which they want in-depth content (PPP 2006 in Darnton 2007a). This in turn makes the whole question of newspaper purchase and readership a more unreliable indicator of the sorts of development information that people are exposed to.

**Campaigns and Events**

Campaigns and events function as a channel by which people engage with global poverty, although they are not included in surveys such as the DFID tracker. It has already been noted how people take part in Red Nose Day as a form of active engagement based on having a laugh, rather than engaging with the issues.

Events have particular importance in driving engagement with campaigns. They offer a shunt to get people started on the journey of engagement, when their initial temptation is to look for excuses not to engage (see eg. PPP 2007a). Recent research for Save the Children in preparation of their Child Survival campaign identified that people need “a compelling invitation to join the conversation”, and that an event can do this in two ways (Mango 2009). First, it can build momentum which sucks people in and builds shared norms, and second provides an occasion which functions as the focus of fundraising activity (Red Nose Day and Children in Need being the most obvious examples). As a slight rider, it should be noted that Mango research was conducted with ‘warm’ respondents (including a few Save the Children active supporters); it is likely that less warm segments and subgroups would resist such an invitation to get involved, however compelling or widely-adopted.

The analysis of Make Poverty History showed how an event – here Live8 - can increase the reach of a campaign. By making the campaign time-critical the event injected a sense of urgency and thus made the campaign ‘news’ (see eg. Sireau 2007). However the downsides of this approach for the wider campaign were many. First the issues on which the campaign were constructed were obscured: instead of the rallying call of ‘justice not charity’, Live8 reinvigorated the Live Aid Legacy. Many of the public assumed that the goal of the campaign must be to raise money, as Live Aid had done (see eg. PPP 2007b). By 2007 those research respondents who could recall the phrase ‘Make Poverty History’ assumed it was the strapline for Live8.
Celebrities

Like events, celebrities offer a ‘compelling invitation’ for the public to get involved in campaigning conversations. However, the role of celebrities in campaigns is complex; for this reason, it was made a focus of the final phase of PPP research, the story research project (PPP 2007c). The findings on celebrities are discussed in detail in the 2007 review (Darnton 2007a); suffice it to say here that the use of celebrities is a double-edged sword. They both attract attention to a campaign or story, and necessarily distract attention from it; the PPP research found that respondents come to a story through the celebrity, and judge the celebrity first, and the story second. The viewer’s primary criterion is genuineness: whether the celebrity is immersed in the situation s/he is exposed to, or whether they are wrapped up in their own concerns. ‘Big’ celebrities are thus to be preferred, as they attract the most attention from viewers, and they also are deemed to have the least to gain from the association with the development story. MPH recognised this truth, and used the biggest celebrities it could find, ideally all at once (most memorably in the ‘Click’ ad).

Personal Networks

Little research is included in this rapid review which specifically focuses on the role of personal networks and social groups in driving engagement. However, work in behaviourial theory emphasises that most change takes place at grassroots level, and through the medium of social groups (see eg. Darnton 2008). Points have already been covered in this review which attest to the power of particular social groups in driving engagement: the role of businesses as contexts for fundraising, and the importance of faith-based groups in mobilising members to march in support of MPH. Campaigns which gather momentum also unleash the power of social norms, as mentioned in the case of the research for Save the Children above, and as most strongly demonstrated in the MPH campaign. The most popular action, wearing a white band, was not undertaken as a result of issue engagement but by force of social norms: the bands became a fashion item among young people (PPP 2006 in Darnton 2007a):

“I only wore the band because I didn’t want to be the only one who didn’t.”

This emphasis on people not as individuals but in their social groups is consistent with a move away from driving support for development aid towards driving engagement with global poverty more widely. At the same time, it should be noted that the best place to engage people in campaigning conversations, and deliver active engagement, is on the ground. These brief findings underline the importance for DFID of working with local groups and membership organisations as partners for delivering strategy.
4. Effective Messages

Rather as discussed above in the context of drivers of support, it is very difficult to identify which messages are effective if it is not clear what outcomes the messages should be seeking to promote. As the Education Audiences Thinkpiece has argued, there is little point setting priorities for delivery until it is clear what kind ‘support’ is to built (Darnton & Smith 2009). In the context of messaging, whether one is driving support for development aid or seeking to build engagement with global poverty is a key distinction. For example, the analysis on the AusAid choice modelling exercise above has already noted that messages promoting self-interest as grounds for supporting development spending are inherently inclined to lead the hearer to disengage.

However, through recent work on effective messaging in the context of global development, some consensus is emerging that what makes a good message about global poverty may also be an effective message for building support for development aid. Such an approach would tend to focus on solutions, success stories, and the lives of real people, rather than problems, issues and amounts of aid. At the forefront of this work is a new framework for messaging developed by the Gates Foundation, in the context of their campaign on global health priorities, and the tackling of treatable diseases (Gates Foundation 2008). The framework does not recommend specific messages (they will depend on context – although a style guide for writers is also supplied). Instead the framework consists of five ‘building blocks’ of critical messaging, to be followed in sequence. The blocks, and the rationale for each one (derived from extensive research) can be summarised as follows:

1. Our global health investments are delivering real results
   a) tackles public perceptions of ineffectiveness; b) shows accountability is part of the method (note that effective campaigns tend to have accountability built in); c) sets a positive frame for the story

2. We’re empowering people to lead more productive lives
   a) tells life stories after the ‘hand up’ has been provided, allaying fears of short-termism; b) echoes the public’s idea of successful aid as that which boosts self-reliance, and creates sustainable communities

3. Our efforts are appreciated (those we help are grateful)
   a) if someone thanks us, our aid must have helped; b) subtly implies the aid is in our national interests (but without being overt PR)

4. We’re just getting started
   a) provides an otherwise absent sense of urgency, and potential of this moment of opportunity; b) avoids moral arguments: simply that action is right, and we are able to act; c) implies we may move on from big issues (like AIDS) to less prominent ones (like maternal health)

5. We can’t do this on our own, we need your help (which you can give by doing…)
   a) providing meaningful actions enriches people’s lives and makes global health visible and relevant in their communities b) academic research suggests that behaviour change can precede attitude change

Although the messaging framework is written in the context of global health, it resonates with the evidence on messaging around driving engagement in global poverty more widely – notably the detailed Story Research undertaken at the end of the PPP project (PPP 2007c). Much of that research was discussed in the 2007 Review (Darnton 2007b), but it is possible to bring out the key synergies here, arranged under two of the key principles that the Gates Foundation describe as informing their Framework:
“Don’t start with the problem: people know there’s a problem”

In response to ‘doom and gloom’ programming and messaging about global poverty, people adopt avoidance tactics (eg. Scott 2009). The recent child survival research for Save the Children referred to this as respondents “cocooning” themselves from negative images (Mango 2009). When confronted with harsh facts about infant mortality, their flat response was ‘so what?’ – the message itself was demotivating. The research argues that the campaign should aim for the opposite reaction: instead of “isn’t that terrible!”, “what can we do?”.

The ever-present issue of corruption provides a case in point. The House of Commons International Development Committee enquiry cites findings from the DFID tracker which notes the high levels of agreement with the ‘corruption’ statements, and concludes that “DFID needs to address this issue head on if it is to succeed in allaying taxpayers’ concerns” (especially targeting those groups who most report them (men and the over 65s) - COI 2009 in HoC IDC 2009). The PPP story research took exactly the opposite tack, on the grounds that no one needs encouragement to focus on corruption, which is inherently disempowering (PPP 2007a). Given the issue is so difficult to handle, the story research recommends that conversations are opened up with key audience groups, such that when the issue of corruption surfaces (as it will) the debate can be joined, and the complex arguments marshalled appropriately. In order to build engagement in this way, the 2007 Review concluded that “any conversation is a good conversation” (Darnton 2007a).

The above points for building engagement must however be tempered by the real need in many situations to provide some factual context. It has been discussed early in this review how the public make very little brain-space available for international news stories (eg. Mango 2009), and there will be times when the public needs ‘the facts’ to be set out before the more strategic, engaging elements are supplied. It must be stressed that global poverty communications need ultimately to overcome both the low knowledge and low salience of the issues with the public in order for a more evolved approach to tackling poverty to emerge across society as a whole.

“Start with successes…defined as empowering people to build productive self-sustaining lives”

The emphasis on solutions is apparent in the PPP story research, where the most popular stories included those about Wangari Maathai’s tree planting scheme (PPP 2007c). These stories challenge the power imbalance in the Live Aid Legacy giver/receiver dynamic. At the same time they put the emphasis on the in-kind support which the public find so much more attractive than financial aid (numerous references are made to the ‘give a man a fishing rod’ axiom – eg. PPP 2007c; Mesh 2009). Examples of popular forms of self-help support include wells (in the context of Comic Relief - PPP 2007c) and mechanical diggers (“It’s like the old Blue Peter appeals to buy ten diggers, rather than ‘raise 1/2m to send out to that country” – Mango 2009). As these examples suggest, such support can also be infrastructural (as discussed in the AusAid choice modelling – see Instinct & Reason 2009c). Either way, it must conform to the ‘a hand up, not a hand out’ model promoted by the Gates Foundation (and Bill Clinton before them).

As well as infrastructural solutions, mention should also be made of education, which appears among the effective drivers of support for aid in the AusAid work, and also provided the most popular message tested in the PPP story research. Education is popular
as it is the quintessence of a sustainable solution, enabling people to help themselves for
generations. It also involves children, which as the PPP research notes, always build public
engagement with a story (traditional fundraisers know this too – especially if the child is
covered in flies – Scott 2009, as discussed above).

The number one message in the PPP research was: ‘Currently 80 million children worldwide are too
poor to receive primary schooling. Sending all these children to school would cost the same as what people in
Europe spend on ice cream each year.’ The message’s initial impact was emotional: it was about
children, but it also made a connection (and a sharp contrast) between our lives and those of
people in poor countries. These sorts of connections – especially relatively soft and everyday
ones – are like those called for by IBT in programming about the developing world (Scott
2009). The PPP story research goes a stage further in identifying as particularly effective
those moments in a story when the surface of everyday lives is peeled back to reveal people’s
inner lives: on which level we are all the same, united in what the PPP research called
“poignant humanity” (PPP 2007c). Examples include children talking about their hopes and
dreams for later life, and the young girl living on a rubbish tip in Lima who said that she had
not eaten for a while but that it was fine as she did not like eating anyway.

In fact, it was the slight hardness of the ‘education and ice cream’ message that meant that it
did not play well with more engaged respondents, who could feel it was trying too hard to
tug at their heartstrings. Furthermore, across many respondents, once they started to
rationalise about the message its immediate appeal could break down. In particular the
statistics were distracting; the PPP story research found in a number of examples that
statistics often formed the weak point of messages, as they could be quibbled with, and if
found wanting, that would form sufficient excuse to disengage from the whole story. This
ultimately links back into the first principle in the Gates Foundation’s framework: statistics
tend to narrate problems, and to overlook everyday lives – when what people want to see is
real solutions.
5. Implications and Recommendations

The original objective set for DFID’s ‘Building Support for Development’ Strategy (1999) was “to promote public understanding of our interdependence, of the need for international development and of the progress that has been made and that is possible”. At the same time it was hoped that this objective “should help raise awareness and probably change behaviour and attitudes” (cited in Verulam 2009).

Ten years on, this rapid review finds that little of the objective has been achieved. Public understanding of global poverty and its causes is stuck where it was in 2000 (when the ‘Viewing the World’ study was undertaken for DFID), not to say in 1985, post Live Aid. Most of the public is not even aware of global poverty as an issue; that the government provides long-term development aid would be news to them. Potential solutions such as the MDGs, and actual progress in Africa achieved through development aid and tackling corruption, go virtually unheard of. Overall, there has been little attitude change – as reiterated here, public perceptions are “static or actually falling”. Furthermore, what behaviour change there has been across the ten year period has largely been driven by Jubilee 2000, Make Poverty History or the Fairtrade Foundation; connections between these movements and the ‘Building Support for Development’ Strategy are tenuous.

A parallel problem is the issue of measuring what positive outcomes the Strategy may have delivered. The Ten Year Review makes it clear that there have been some big wins, particularly in the context of the formal education system, but that in many areas, assessing the impact of BSD activity is “problematic”, as no systematic monitoring or evaluations have been carried out (ibid.). This situation is echoed in relation to the overall efficacy of the Strategy in building support for development across the public. As the IDC Enquiry exemplified, there has been a lack of clarity over which are the key indicators of support for development (eg. the use of the ‘concern’ question), as well as reservations over whether the ‘support’ questions are adequate. These shortcomings have been addressed in DFID’s response to the IDC report (DFID 2009b), and the improvements have been incorporated in the September 2009 DFID tracking survey (TNS 2009b).

However, this rapid review suggests that there is an opportunity to go further. The evidence on public perceptions of global poverty over the last five or ten years suggests that the approach that has been adopted may ultimately be insufficient to increase levels of public engagement. Hence, by any indicator, public support for tackling poverty – broadly defined – has fallen back since 1999. Setting new objectives which explicitly aim to build this broader engagement may prove more tractable, and increase the effectiveness of the Department in building public support. At the same time, levels of public support for development aid - narrowly defined - should also increase. While such a shift in focus has advantages, it also counteracts the potential negative consequences of continuing to prioritise support for development aid over other broader goals: reinforcing negative stereotypes of the developing world among the mass public.

On the back of the evidence reviewed here, it is recommended that DFID broaden their public engagement strategy to aim for a “deep-cut values shift” in society (Rosenblatt 2005 in Darnton 2007b). This in turn will mean evaluating success in engagement across a variety of measures, as reflected in the distribution of segments in the DFID Citizen Segmentation model, among other indicators.

This approach builds upon the recommendations of the International Development Committee (HoC IDC 2009), but goes beyond them to draw on a wider body of evidence on what works in driving public engagement in global poverty which has been accumulated here, and in the 2007
Review (Darnton 2007a; 2007b). The appropriateness of a new, broader approach is also signalled by the adoption of DFID’s overarching ambition of “instilling support for development into the national identity”. The new focus on identity has two principal implications: at the individual level, it means getting to grips with people’s lifestyles, and embedding global dimensions in their everyday lives (this is very similar to the current educational agendas for global learning and active citizenship – see Darnton and Smith 2009). At the national level, this means shaping societal values and cultural norms, which in turn necessitates co-ordinated working with partner organisations across civil society, and in particular working with the media, and once again education, to shift culture itself, and create ‘normal’ perceptions of poor people in poor countries, who are like us, but poor. It is culture change on this scale that the Secretary of State pointed towards when he spoke to the International Development Committee (HoC IDC 2009):

“My real objective would be to get to a place where [aid] expenditure […] is deemed to be as central to Britain’s sense of identity as the kind of money that we spend on the BBC or the National Health Service at the moment. …I hope that in the years to come we can build a consensus that Britain meeting its international obligations is part of who we want to be as a people in the 21st century.”

Material recommendations flowing from this broader approach would include:

- Designing strategies to drive engagement with global poverty (the root cause of support for development aid) rather than solely to build support for development aid (the symptom). In turn this requires a multi-stakeholder strategy that engages the whole of society and is set up for the long term (several decades).
- The strategy should be designed through stakeholder engagement from the outset, recognising that driving engagement with global poverty is a goal shared by the whole development sector, whereas building support for (government) spending on development aid is not.
- Success measures should be debated, and set out, for the engagement strategy; all partners should be charged with contributing to these goals. Measures could relate to: sizes of the segments in the DFID model (eg. more Active Enthusiasts and fewer Distracted Individuals); levels of agency across the public; positive (‘normal’) perceptions of Africa; uptake of agreed actions for specific audience groups.
- ‘Softer’ development programming being provided by the media, and at every opportunity possible. Opportunities to reach wider audiences with ‘gentle insights’ should be pursued, as should opportunities for opening up conversations online.
- Opportunities for active engagement, and for change more widely, should be provided at the grassroots level, predominantly by DFID’s civil society and community-level delivery partners.
- Educational activity should shift further towards encouraging the values and skills needed to become a responsible citizen, and away from disseminating knowledge of development issues; more activity in Further and Higher Education, and in youth work outside formal education, should be supported.
- Messaging from DFID and all partners should follow a ‘solutions first’ model (on the basis that everyone knows there are problems, and that problems promote disengagement). As a guiding principle, communications should value conversations over information. While many of these conversations with the public are best held by delivery partners, DFID are well placed to open up spaces for debate and provide an ‘invitation to engage’, for instance by organising high-profile national events on which local partners can capitalise.
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