

Institution: University College London
Unit of Assessment: 21 – Politics and International Studies
Title of case study: UK public attitudes towards international development aid
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Hudson and Hudson's research into public attitudes towards international development has (1) influenced the UK's Department for International Development's approach to surveying public support. DFID has changed the design of their long-standing survey as a result of the research and the OECD is incorporating it into the design of its proposed global solidarity poll. The research (2) was at the heart of a recent and influential report, <i>Finding Frames</i>, commissioned by Oxfam and DFID, that has reshaped the way in which the development sector approaches public engagement. (3) It formed the foundation of the 2013 #IF Campaign's public engagement strategy with the campaign's polling being explicitly based on the research findings.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research examined the underlying drivers of individual support for international development aid and the quality and design of the survey instruments used to gather this data. It was an original investigation into why people do or do not support international development assistance at the individual level. Existing polling work is limited, merely reporting aggregate levels of support and is based on weak survey questions. The research shows the limits of this approach.</p> <p>Two key findings emerge from the research:</p> <p><i>Individual drivers of support for development aid</i> (see [a] Section 3). Although the UK government has increasingly sought to justify development aid in terms of the national interest rather than framing it in more traditional moral terms, there is virtually no evidence on what drives attitudes at an individual level. Using national survey data from the Department for International Development, the research tested whether support for development is correlated with self-interested and/or moral reasons for giving aid. Using a binary logistic regression model we found differential effects for moral and self-interested attitudes on concern for poverty. Individuals who believe there are moral reasons for granting development aid are more likely to be concerned about poverty in developing countries. Self-interested attitudes are negatively related to concern. We further divided self-interested justifications into those that affected individuals personally and those that were in the national interest: 'personally affected' was positively related to concern but 'national interest' was negatively related. The findings have implications for the way in which aid is framed in public engagement strategies: justice and morality work better than self-interest in trying to engage the public.</p> <p><i>Survey design and validity</i> (see [b] in section 3). This paper provides a critical review of existing survey tools used in the UK, US and Europe to collect data on public attitudes to development. It demonstrates that existing measures suffer from poor measurement validity. This is because the questions used in the survey instruments are poorly designed and collect 'cost-free' expressed support but do not tap real political support where respondents have to make relative judgements about the importance of development aid. In addition the paper shows that the collected data has not been systematically analysed. In particular, reported findings fail to control for knowledge-levels or perceptions of aid effectiveness, both of which are widely thought to affect support. Finally, the paper argues that researchers and policymakers have failed to analyse the underlying drivers of support for development aid in the first place. All of these factors undermine the quality of the evidence base for policymakers and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The research was carried out between April 2008 and the present, by David Hudson (Lecturer 2005–2011, Senior Lecturer 2011–ongoing) and Jennifer van Heerde / Jennifer vanHeerde-Hudson (Lecturer 2003–2011, Senior Lecturer 2011–ongoing).</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[a] *Peer-reviewed journal article*: vanHeerde, J. and Hudson, D. (2010) "'The Righteous Considereth the Cause of the Poor?': Public Attitudes Towards Poverty in Developing Countries', *Political Studies*, 58 (3): 389–409. DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-9248.2009.00800.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2009.00800.x)

[b] *Peer-reviewed journal article*: Hudson, D. and vanHeerde-Hudson, J. (2012) "'Mile Wide and an Inch Deep': Surveys of Public Attitudes Towards Development Aid', *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 4 (1): 5–23. <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2015216>.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The development sector – including government, the third sector, and, since 1999, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) – has followed a strategy of building support for development, monitoring success through annual surveys of public opinion. With expenditure cuts and a ring-fenced aid budget, public attitudes to development have become salient in policy terms. The research addressed these issues and has had a demonstrable and material impact upon thinking, policy and practice through three channels:

1. It has reshaped DFID's approach to surveying public attitudes towards development as well as the OECD's proposed global poll;
2. It has reshaped the debate across the sector through the *Finding Frames* Report;
3. It has shaped the #IF Campaign's work on Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning.

1. DFID and OECD surveys on public support for development

In January 2009 the UK House of Commons International Development Committee (IDC), noting that public support is essential to an effective development policy, launched an inquiry into *Aid Under Pressure*, to which the UCL researchers submitted evidence. The evidence, based on the underlying research above, argued that DFID did not know as much as it could or should about the nature of public support for development in the UK [1]. The submitted evidence was later written up in [a] and [b]. That evidence suggested that the survey data was based on a question badly adapted to gauging levels of support. In particular it tapped concern in general rather than a more valid indicator such as support for government spending on development assistance in relation to other parts of the budget such as the NHS, police, jobseeker's allowance. DFID also failed to explore or control for relevant individual covariates of support – such as political attitudes, knowledge, or newspaper readership – which would allow for a more fine-grained approach to 'the public'. On the basis of the written evidence we were invited to give oral evidence to the IDC, which we did in March 2009 [2].

The evidence formed the backbone of Chapter 4 of the Committee's final report [3]. (See, in particular, notes 220, 221, 225 and 228 and pp. 62–3.) It challenged existing practice, with the Report noting that "The Secretary of State told us that the question of the methodology used in DFID's surveys was not one that the Department had considered." [3, pp. 44–45]. One of the Report's recommendations was:

"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. They focus on whether people are concerned about poverty, rather than whether they would support increased funding for development, nor do they attempt to assess the relative importance people place on development compared to domestic policy areas such as health and education. 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." [3, p. 45]

The recommendation was taken up by DFID and alterations were made to the national survey of public attitudes towards development from 2009 onwards. An explanation of the new measures of

Impact case study (REF3b)

support was provided near the beginning of the 2009 Survey Report, which directly cites the IDC recommendation that came from our research:

“The IDC Aid Under Pressure report in June 2009 suggested that the DFID attitudinal survey, as previously conducted, did not effectively establish people’s support for development aid. In particular, it questioned the usefulness of the measure of ‘concern’ towards poverty in developing countries and argued that it might be more helpful to ask what priority should be given to increased spending on development assistance compared to other policy areas, such as the NHS or law and order, so as to establish its relative importance. In response to this, the most recent wave included two new questions to establish these priorities. Respondents were asked to consider a number of global or international issues (16 in total) where taxpayers’ money is spent and to select their top five most important for the Government to spend money on. In addition, they were asked to prioritise support for poor countries relative to five domestic issues, ranking those issues in order of priority, a question previously asked in the segmentation study.” [4, p. 3]

More recently, the OECD – which is the main bilateral aid forum – has started work on a cross-national survey into public support for development. A ‘roadmap’ has been commissioned for this Global Solidarity Opinion Poll [5]. The report cites our research, noting that: “the most important issue to be settled for any public opinion poll: to ensure what it is that we want to measure and then to look at how to do that. The former starts with acknowledging that support, opinion, attitude, knowledge, awareness (which are often used interchangeably) are in reality different concepts.”

2. The *Finding Frames* Report and best practice in the UK development sector

The highly influential *Finding Frames* report was published in 2010 by Oxfam and the umbrella organisation for British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND) [6]. The report argues that the way in which ‘development’ is presented to the public matters and has definitively shifted the debate in the UK development sector – helping cement the idea that a deeper, more complex conversation is necessary [7]. The report draws on a rich psychological literature on values and behaviour to develop an argument for ‘reframing’ how development is presented to the public, for example to move away from notions of charity or aid towards justice and dialogue. The report notes the distinct lack of evidence about the values that drive public engagement with development, before identifying the underpinning research as the exception and going on to outline the arguments of van Heerde and Hudson 2010 [a] and Hudson and vanHeerde Hudson [b] [6].

The Report, influenced by the research, which is explicitly referenced at pp. 16, 20, 48–9, and 59, has shifted the debate in the sector as well as what is considered best practice.

- *Best practice:* The *Finding Frames* report has directly shaped the design of current large-scale campaigning initiatives. For example, in May 2011, Oxfam launched a new 4-year global campaign across all 17 of its country organisations called GROW [8]. The campaign was explicitly designed using the *Finding Frames* report [8]. Other key initiatives, such as the Global Poverty Project’s *1 Billion Reasons*, the Gates Foundation, and the 2013 #IF Campaign (see below), use the *Finding Frames* report to design their public engagement work.
- *Debate:* The most recent report on UK public attitudes, jointly published by Institute for Public Policy Research and the Overseas Development Institute [9], picks up on our arguments about moral vs. self-interested framing, citing both our published papers. They conclude that attempts by DFID “to reframe the case for development as being in Britain’s self-interest do not resonate as much as approaches that focus on what is ‘right’ or fair.” [9, p. 23]. The report has helped shift the public and media debate, with this specific finding being reported in *The Guardian* and the *New Statesman*.

3. The #IF Campaign

In anticipation of the June 2013 G8 meeting in the UK, over 100 organisations came together in a coalition to launch the #IF Campaign in January 2013. The campaign had four main demands: aid increases, stopping land grabs and tax dodging, and increased financial transparency. It aimed to

Impact case study (REF3b)

change the quality of public engagement with development to secure policy change.

The campaign has a number of key performance indicators, many of which pertained to public support; the monitoring and evaluation was done through a national poll in three waves with a sample size of 1,500 from January to June 2013. This was the largest such poll in the sector's history, and the survey design was explicitly based on Hudson and Hudson's research [10] – with their suggested measures of support, additional questions on knowledge, political attitudes all being used. In early January both researchers were invited to sit on the campaign's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Working Group to help with the design and analysis of further public engagement data collection and analysis. Thanks to the research, the campaign had 'a realistic understanding of public support for each stage' enabling it to refine its strategies for 'maximum advocacy impact with the government' [10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] van Heerde, J. and Hudson, D. (2009) Written evidence submitted to the International Development Committee (IDC) for the 'Aid Under Pressure: Support for Development Assistance in a Global Economic Downturn'.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmintdev/179/179we23.htm>

[2] Hudson, D. (2009) Oral evidence given to International Development Committee. 31 March 2009. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmintdev/uc179-iii/uc17902.htm>

[3] IDC (2009) Aid Under Pressure: Support for Development Assistance in a Global Economic Downturn. Final report of the IDC Inquiry. (See pages 43–44)

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmintdev/179/179i.pdf>

[4] TNS (2009) Public Attitudes Towards Development. New questions added to the DFID Annual Public Attitudes Survey as a result of IDC Inquiry and specifically our evidence (see p. 13, citing the IDC evidence in [3])

<http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100423085026/http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/Public%20Attitudes%20Towards%20Development%20Report%20November%202009.pdf>

[5] Pollet, I., Huyse, H. Schulpen, L. and Keulemans, S. (2011) Global Solidarity Opinion Poll: A Roadmap, Leuven-Nijmegen: HIVA-CIDIN. Available on request.

[6] Darnton, A. and Kirk, M. (2011) Finding Frames: New Ways of Engaging the Public on Poverty. Darnton and Kirk draw on our research in this influential report commissioned by Oxfam and DFID. (see e.g. pages 26, 20, 48-49)

<http://www.findingframes.org/Finding%20Frames%20New%20ways%20to%20engage%20the%20UK%20public%20in%20global%20poverty%20Bond%202011.pdf>

[7] Hogg, M. (2011) Do we need a deeper, more complex conversation with the public about global issues? A review of the literature, London: Think Global. Available on request.

[8] Green, D. (2011) 'Why is the new Oxfam campaign called 'GROW'? The importance of framing', <http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=5613>

[9] Glennie, A., Straw, W. and Wild, L. (2012) Understanding public attitudes to aid and development, London: Institute for Public Policy Research & Overseas Development Institute.

http://ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2012/06/public-attitudes-aid-development_June2012_9297.pdf.

[10] A statement corroborating the benefits of the research for the IF campaign was provided by the Research Lead, IF Campaign, and is available on request.