



EU aid failing to address poverty – new study

European Union aid programmes do not contribute adequately to international efforts on poverty reduction, a new report has found.

All eight of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) relate to health and education. They include achieving universal access to primary school for all the world's children, effective action against AIDS and ensuring sharp falls in infant mortality and the number of women who die during childbirth.

Yet Alliance 2015, a coalition of relief agencies, has found that the proportion of EU aid allocated to basic education fell from 4% in 2000 to 2.7% in 2005. It also found that out of 61 programmes devised by the EU for implementation in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) bloc, only two list health as a priority.

In addition, the report expressed alarm at new proposals by the European Commission to change what it considers as support to health and education. The Commission wants part of the aid it channels directly into the national budgets of recipient countries to be considered as support for health and education, even though it would have no control over how the money is used.

Launched in Brussels on Tuesday (26 June), the report alleges too that the EU is giving more weight to economic considerations than the needs of the poorest in drawing up its aid programmes. Under a new 'governance facility' recommended by the Commission, developing countries hoping for additional aid would be analysed according to a set of 23 criteria. While these relate to such issues as migration, trade liberalisation and the fight against terrorism, only one has a direct bearing on the MDGs.

Alliance 2015 comprises the Italian organisation CESVI, Concern from Ireland, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe from Germany, Ibis from Denmark, and People in Need from the Czech Republic.

Sources:

www.alliance2015.org

www.eepa.be

Development policy and the treaty agenda

Development issues are conspicuous by their absence from the draft mandate of the body that will prepare a new EU treaty, Eurostep has complained.

Last weekend, EU leaders agreed the broad outline of a treaty to replace the constitution rejected by French and Dutch voters in 2005.

The precise wording of a new treaty will, however, be finalised by an intergovernmental conference (IGC). Its deliberations are due to begin before the end of July and to conclude by the end of this year, so that the EU's 27 countries will have ample time to ratify the treaty before the 2009 European Parliament elections.

In the run up to the meeting of EU leaders Eurostep expressed concern about the draft mandate for the IGC. Although it listed various provisions from the constitution that should be reintroduced into a new treaty, clauses relating to development cooperation were not explicitly identified.

These clauses stated clearly that the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty should be the primary objective of EU development aid policy, that assistance to poor countries should be kept separate from assistance to richer countries and that the EU's activities in such areas as trade, agriculture and fisheries should not contradict its efforts to reduce poverty.

Eurostep has noted that these provisions would strengthen and clarify the role of EU development policy as they were agreed without opposition or controversy. It believes that they should be inserted into the new treaty. In response to questions from Eurostep about their apparent absence from the draft mandate official sources stated that it was clearly recognized that the Constitutional Treaty version of the articles should be included. This is covered, they said, by the wording of the mandate.

In response Eurostep says that it will follow the work of the IGC closely to ensure that this is borne out in reality.

Sources:

www.eurostep.org

www.ft.com

www.euobserver.com

EU trade tactics under attack from Brazil, India

Brazil and India accused the European Union of pursuing an agenda inimical to poor countries, as talks aimed at achieving a breakthrough in the Doha round of world trade talks collapsed last week (21 June).

Kamal Nath, India's trade minister, said that the EU and the US were insisting that his country and Brazil open their markets to industrial goods, in return for "minimal" cuts in farm subsidies paid by rich countries.

Speaking at a meeting of the G4 – the EU, US, India and Brazil – in Potsdam, Germany, Nath suggested that the spirit of the World Trade Organisation's Doha declaration was being broken. Approved at a 2001 conference in the Qatari capital, it made clear that trade should be used as an instrument for lifting people out of poverty.

"They were supposed to be the givers when the Doha round was launched in 2001 but over the last three days they behaved as though they are the takers from the developing countries, and this is unacceptable."

Peter Mandelson, the European commissioner for trade, claimed that the EU had made the most generous offers it could on agricultural subsidies. But he argued that India and Brazil were not proposing "*any substantive or commercially meaningful changes*" in their tariffs on industrial imports that could be considered "*a reasonable return on what we are paying into the round*".

Sources:

www.europa.eu
www.ipsnews.net

Energy plan for Africa to be unveiled

The European Commission will this week propose to increase its investment in Africa's energy sector as part of a new 'partnership' between that continent and Europe.

The Commission is scheduled to unveil plans on Thursday (28 June) for a relationship with Africa that will address such issues as energy, migration, climate change and strengthening democracy.

According to the newspaper European Voice, the plans have been drawn up in response to Western fears over China's increasingly dominant role in exploiting African energy resources.

It will, therefore, suggest that there should be more dialogue between the EU and African Union on gaining access to energy supplies.

A draft of the proposal suggests it is designed to usher in a "*relationship that will leave behind the donor-recipient relationship of the past and reflect a political partnership of equals*", European Voice has reported.

Sources:

www.europeanvoice.com
www.europa.eu

Paris holds pow-wow on Darfur

Javier Solana, the EU's high representative for foreign policy, was among the participants at an international conference on the Darfur crisis in Paris on Monday (June 24).

The conference is part of efforts by Bernard Kouchner, France's newly-appointed foreign minister, to respond effectively to violence in western Sudan, which has left 200,000 dead and 2 million displaced.

Officials at the French foreign ministry have said that they are not trying to create a "*parallel process*" to any efforts on Darfur being undertaken at UN level but are simply "*enlarging*" on those efforts, The Financial Times has reported.

The French government has involved representatives of China, which accounts for two-thirds of Sudan's oil exports, and has been reluctant to accept robust action against the Khartoum authorities, in the discussions.

But some analysts have indicated that the meeting may be responding primarily to concerns about Darfur within France. "*If you look at the French initiative, if you are cynical, you could argue that it was launched*

for the French agenda ahead of the parliamentary elections," said François Grignon, an Africa specialist with the International Crisis Group.

Sources:

www.ft.com

www.liberation.fr

www.crisisgroup.org

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