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# Labour's vision is not one that thinks the solution to global poverty lies in more charity

World hunger and poverty can't be solved with the quick-fix 'trickle-down' approaches of the Tories, says KATE OSAMOR

MS

SOME 800 million people across the world are currently malnourished. That is the latest figure from the United Nations annual report on global hunger. And what's worse, this is the third consecutive year that global hunger has been on the rise.

At this rate the world is on track to epically fail to reach the global goal of ending hunger by 2030.

How can this be possible when the world produces more than enough food to feed the global population?

By the UN's own admission, the crises of persistent hunger is due to the interconnected problems of climate change, protracted conflicts and a broken economic system.

And while hunger increases, poverty remains at disgraceful levels and inequality grows at an unprecedented rate.

We are living in times of such extreme inequality that 42 people now own the same wealth as half of humanity combined.

Finding sustainable solutions to these major global challenges is at the core of our work in the Labour Department for International Development team.

This spring we launched our policy paper — A World for the Many, Not the Few — which lays out our vision for Britain's aid and development programme.

And during this year's party conference we will be introducing our ideas for a radically transformed approach to international development to our party members.

Our vision is not one that thinks the solution to global poverty lies in more charity. We are clear that we can never solve the problems facing the world today with handouts and quick fixes.

Poverty, hunger, inequality, climate change, mass displacement — these are all interconnected problems with deep-rooted structural causes. No amount of aid or charity, on its own, will bring about the fundamental change we need.

Nor can we solve the world's problems with the Tory approach of using aid to help British businesses expand their markets to countries across the global South.

This is what Theresa May was doing when she visited Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa last month. While on this trip to three major trading hubs in the African continent, the Prime Minister announced a series of new international development programmes that are further removed from poverty-reduction than ever before.

The government's stream of announcements that came out of this trip were all effectively about using British aid to help secure new trading relationships with countries across Africa.

May was eager to emphasis what a lucrative opportunity this would be for British business but showed little concern for how this investment would actually tackle global poverty.

The Tory approach is to simply hope foreign investment will somehow "trickle down" and benefit the poorest in society, but they do nothing to ensure that this actually happens.

Instead, this tactic entrenches poverty and inequality as any profit generated leaves those countries and therefore fails to benefit ordinary citizens.

Global tax avoidance alone means developing countries collectively miss out on $100 billion a year in lost tax revenue.

All this approach does is increase public scepticism over Britain's aid programme and makes it ever clearer that the Tories cannot be trusted with the aid budget.

Under Labour's watch, Britain's approach to aid and development would be based on an internationalism that is rooted in solidarity with people across the world who are on the front lines of fighting poverty and inequality.

Our approach is one that recognises the structural causes of poverty rather than fiddling with the symptoms.

That is why we would introduce a new dual-purpose for all aid spending to ensure it tackles both poverty and inequality.

We would put public services top of the agenda. Instead of helping corporations to extract more wealth from countries in the global South, we believe in working in partnership with governments across the world to build and strengthen public services, sharing the best of our expertise from the NHS.

This is because access to high-quality, free public services such as health and education is a core part of tackling both inequality and poverty.

At the same time, we believe that the deeply unfair global economy needs transforming. Aid alone will have limited impact if we leave a broken economic system intact. We need to make trade deals fairer, clamp down on tax avoidance and ease debt burdens that prevent governments from investing in their own citizens.

Rebalancing the global economy is the only way to ensure that wealth created in the global South benefits people in those countries.

Labour's vision for international development will also be a truly feminist one. With one in three women worldwide experiencing gender-based violence and women across the world earning on average 60 to 75 per cent of men's wages, we have to address the social power structures that perpetuate this gender inequality the world over.

This means going further than tinkering with the symptoms of gender inequality, such as child marriage or FGM.

We must work alongside grassroots women's groups, and empower them to tackle the root causes of power imbalances in society.

Adopting this radical vision to transforming the country's aid and development agenda is how we hope to achieve a fairer, more just world.

*Kate Osamor is shadow secretary of state for international development and MP for Edmonton. She is a supporter of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs.*

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