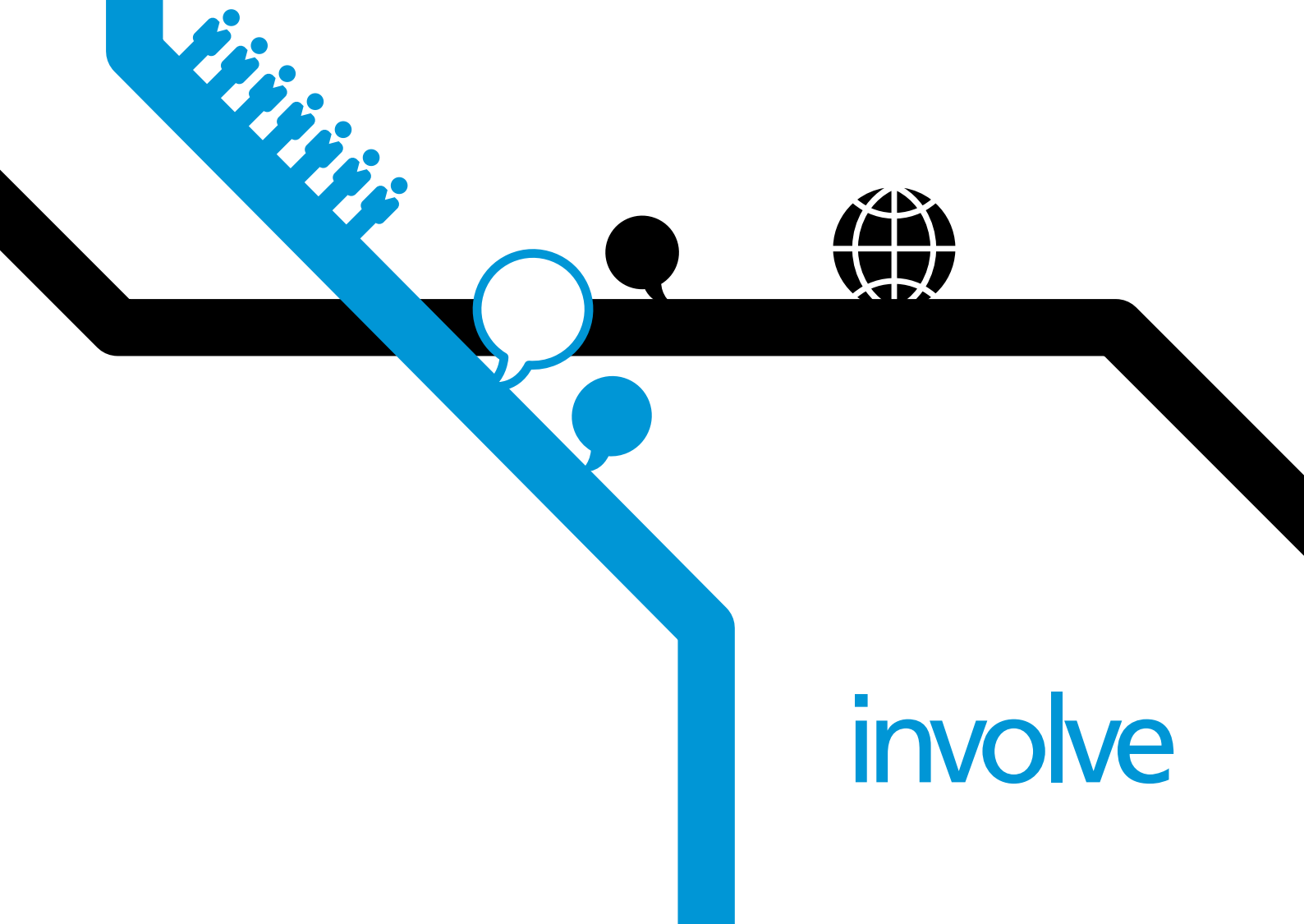
RESETTING THE AID RELATIONSHIP

By Lani Shamash, with Simon Burall and Brendan Whitty



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper argues that the Department for International Development (DFID) should follow the example of science and technology and use public engagement to inform its provision of aid. Like policy involving science and technology, international aid is deeply complex, value-laden and political. Even the least controversial interventions involve trade-offs, risks of failure and opportunity costs.

Moreover, the most immediate benefits accrue abroad, and are effectively invisible to the tax-paying public. We argue that despite costly accountability systems, DFID is not engaging the public directly in a meaningful discussion about international spending. We argue that this makes the aid commitment unstable and vulnerable to crises.

We advocate for more meaningful engagement of the public in the debate about international aid. This will:

- allow policy makers to better and more reliably reflect the values and principles of the British public, leading to more stable and more sustainable aid commitments that are less vulnerable to crises;
- support policy makers to develop more focussed and less costly accountability processes; and
- enhance democratic control and ensure decisions more meaningfully reflect the UK public's perspective on aid spending.

This is an important time to debate these issues. During 2013, David Cameron is chairing the G8 and a new United Nations (UN) committee on the successors to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This presents a crucial opportunity for the UK government to reframe the current debate on international aid and reassess current engagement strategies, or lack thereof.

But while DFID has dragged its feet in the realms of public engagement, the same cannot be said of all areas of government policy. Building on a long history of self-reflection in terms of how the public is engaged in the field, science and technology has made leaps and bounds in the public engagement journey. Spurred by a number of public controversies, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has institutionalised its public engagement strategy with its Science and Society programme. It has enabled Sciencewise to work alongside government departments and other public bodies to fund intensive, deliberative public dialogue projects. This enables policy makers to take into account public views and concerns when developing and implementing policy involving science and technology.

The international aid sector has taken a different tack. It has focussed on building accountability controls and transparency, rather than on developing an active dialogue with the public. These reforms do not change the way in which the UK public is engaged, but only the nature and framing of the content which is communicated to the public. Its emphasis is on positive stories and reporting outcomes, rather than acknowledging the challenges and trade-offs inevitable in the delivery of aid. We question the wisdom of a strategy which does not also include deeper public engagement, noting that recent reports show the public is calling for more discussion on values.

We argue that meaningful engagement is needed to help policy makers reliably navigate the complexities of development spending in cooperation with the UK public. Only then will aid policies and accountability systems be aligned and optimised to the needs of the UK public. This will, in turn, reduce costs, stabilise public support, make aid spending more stable, and ultimately strengthen democracy.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

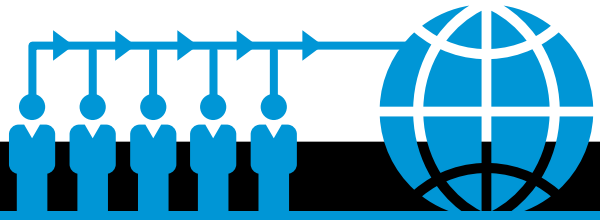
The debate surrounding the engagement of the UK public in international aid is by no means new. Indeed, the last few years have a witnessed a growing interest in this area by a number of key stakeholders and policy actors including DFID, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), the Oversees Development Institute (ODI), OXFAM, Brookes World Poverty Institute and ActionAid International (AAI) to name a few.

So what's all the fuss about? In short, critics argue that meaningful public engagement strategies in the international aid sector are either non-existent or superficial.[1] The 'results agenda', which was implemented in order to ensure British tax payers receive 'value for money' in international aid, involves no dialogue with the UK public on the complex, value-driven and inevitably risky processes of international aid interventions.[2] The focus on positive stories and on 'flat' outcomes obscures the ethical trade-offs and practical complexities involved in international aid provision.

Despite the long-standing and well-known tradition of support for aid among the British public, it can be characterised as 'broad but shallow.'[3] Recent reports show a real demand for a different form of engagement. More meaningful engagement with the UK tax-paying public should be a priority for the following reasons:

- Greater public engagement in international aid will allow policy makers to better reflect the values and principles of the British public, leading to more stable and sustainable aid commitments that are less vulnerable to crises;
- Improved public engagement in international aid will allow the policy makers to develop more focussed and less costly accountability processes; and
- Public engagement in international aid will enhance democratic control and ensure decisions more meaningfully reflect the public's perspective in the UK's aid spending.

This debate could not be more timely. During 2013 the UK's Prime Minister, David Cameron, is chairing the G8 conference and a new UN committee established to discuss



1 Recent examples include: ActionAid (2006) 'ActionAid Poll on Public Attitudes to Aid: Summary'. London: ActionAid, Darnton, A., with Kirk, M. (2011) 'Finding Frames: New Ways to Engage the UK Public in Global Poverty' http://www.findingframes.org/Finding%20Frames%20New%20ways%20to%20engage%20the%20UK%20public%20in%20global%20poverty%20Bond%202011.pdf and Glennie A., Straw W. with Wild L., Institute for Public Policy Research/Overseas Development Institute (2012) 'Understanding Public Attitudes to Aid' London: ODI

2 A package of management reforms from 2008-2011 which came to be known as the "results agenda", emphasising evidence-based results, robust accountability, evaluation and value-for-money. See also DFID (2012) 'DFID's Results Framework: Managing and Reporting DFID Results' London: DFID https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175715/DFID-external-results.pdf

3 I. Smillie, (1999) 'Public Support and the Politics of Aid'. Development 42(3): 71–6.

what should follow the MDGs. 2013 therefore presents a crucial opportunity for the UK government to reframe the current debate on international aid and reassess its current engagement strategies.

But what does better public engagement look like? The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) says simply,

> *'Well-designed public engagement helps design and deliver effective public policy and services while strengthening trust in government.'*[4]

Public engagement thus implies a degree of collaboration, debate and consensus building between government and its citizens, rather than simply the transmission of information or collection of feedback.[5] This kind of engagement can, in ideal-type, create a more accountable and transparent policy, and a stronger government mandate. In the field of science and technology it is exactly this kind of approach towards citizen engagement that has become a growing force in recent years. For this reason a comparison between the emerging engagement strategies within public policy involving science and technology and policy development in the international aid field may yield some important and practical insights.

Inevitably, there are differences between the two fields (see page 10). However, as two taxpayer funded sectors, with similar ethical and practical complexities, which enjoy both high levels of support as well as frequent crises of confidence, they share many fundamental characteristics. Most importantly, they share the same stakeholder: the British public.

Through a brief comparison of the two fields, this paper will identify the increasingly effective engagement strategies in public policy development involving science and technology which are lacking in the international aid field. This paper focuses on analysing UK government aid, and government-led engagement policies and practices, though insights are likely to be applicable to other actors in the field including other governments, inter-governmental institutions and development non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The paper begins by providing a brief history of public engagement in the two fields, focusing on the major public controversies of Genetic Modification (GM) and corruption, and the central role they have played in shaping the public engagement debate. Using these examples to explore public perception and governmental response, the third section analyses the policies developed in response to these controversies and developing debates; specifically the Sciencewise programme in public policy involving science and technology, and the 'results agenda' in international aid. The fourth section highlights the direct and indirect outcomes of the two policies, drawing out the implications of the engagement shortfall for the international aid sector and government more generally.

4 OECD (2013) 'Directorate for Public Governance and Territorial Development' http://www.oecd.org/gov/publicengagement.htm, [Accessed on the 22nd January 2013]

5 British Science Association (2010) 'The Public Engagement Triangle' http://www.britishscienceassociation.org/sites/default/files/root/SiS/PE%20conversational%20tool%20Final%20251010.pdf

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: THE STORY SO FAR

Public engagement is not a new concept in either science and technology, or international aid. In fact the sciences have long debated the issue of public understanding and involvement. Meanwhile, international aid has also focussed on enhancing public engagement, though the most vigorous debate has been from the perspective of the recipient of aid, rather than the taxpayers in donor countries.[6]

Indeed, theory and practice developed in the field of international development has informed and enhanced the practice of public engagement in the UK. A brief summary of the public engagement story shows that in contrast to the leaps and bounds made by science and technology, international aid has, despite the many innovations in engagement practice in developing countries, dragged its feet at home.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: FROM DEFICIT MODEL TO UPSTREAM ENGAGEMENT

In recent years, the government, academia and third sector working in science and technology have demonstrated a high level of self-reflection in terms of how the public is engaged. Indeed, as one commentator observes, public engagement has become somewhat of a norm in the sciences.[7] However, this was not always the case, but the product of a 'specific historic constellation.'[8]

The archetypal public lectures of the Victorian era show that public engagement in the sciences has a long history in the UK. It would be put more firmly on the political

BOX 1. CONTROVERSY AND CRISIS: GM

In the late 1990s, GM products were on sale in British supermarkets and were met with relative indifference. It was only in 1998 that GM would become a national controversy, when a televised documentary claimed that GM had potentially harmful effects on health, followed in 1999 by a staged protest event led by Greenpeace. The ensuing public outcry would ensure GM occupied the headlines for several months. By mid-1999, supermarkets withdrew all GM products from their shelves under heavy public pressure. By 2000, the British Prime Minister publicly conceded that there were legitimate grounds for concern.

But why did controversy become so widespread and entrenched? Polls undertaken and produced as part of the government's new Science in Society programme show that it was the public's perception of risk which was important in catalysing opposition towards the use of GM technology. This perception was associated with other important concerns about, for example, the monopoly power of large corporations. However, these were also rooted in much less tangible ideas such as the notion that it is 'wrong to tamper with nature'.

6 See the work of Chambers, R. (1997). Whose reality counts?: putting the first last. Intermediate Technology Publications Ltd (ITP); Scoones, I., & Thompson, J. (2009). Farmer first revisited. Rugby: Practical Action. It has come under criticism for being undermined by and actively obscuring underlying power relations: Cooke, B., & Kothari, U. (Eds.). (2001). Participation: The new tyranny? Zed Books.

7 Bell, A., 2010 '"Levels" of Public Engagement' http://doctoralicebell.blogspot.co.uk/2010/07/levels-of-engagement.html [Accessed on the 22nd January 2013]

8 Lengwiler, M. (2008) 'Participatory Approaches in Science and Technology: Historical Origins and Current Practices in Critical Perspective' *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 33(2)

agenda in the 1960s and 1970s when a number of social movements such as the feminist, anti-nuclear and ecological movements used technological and scientific arguments to critique British society. The first consensus conferences were then organised, initially involving experts and later members of the public too.[9] But it wasn't until the late 1970s and early 1980s that public engagement became a major focus for policy makers with the Public Understanding of Science (PUS) movement.

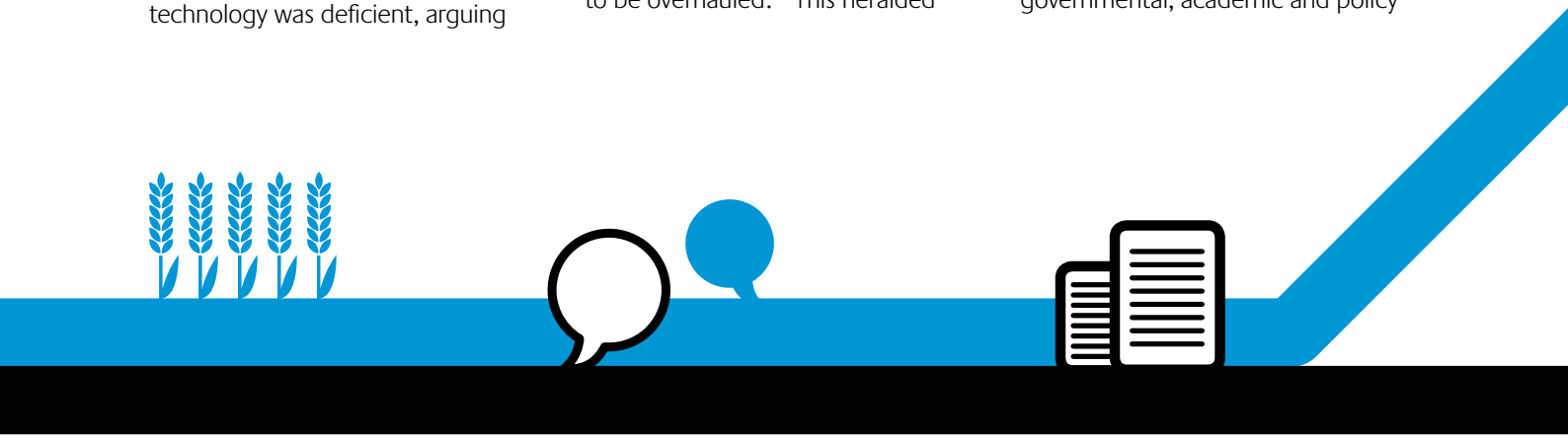
In 1985 the Royal Society published a now seminal report by Walter Bodmer which would come to shape the way the government and many policy and academic circles understood, and to some extent still understand, the relationship between science and society.[10] Now commonly referred to as the 'information deficit model,' Bodmer's report posited that the public's understanding of science and technology was deficient, arguing that as knowledgeable experts, scientists were obliged to 'fix' this knowledge deficit by educating the public.[11] PUS became the official policy of the government in 1993 when the report 'Realising Our Potential' was published.[12]

However, by the late 1990s the British government and scientific community were rocked by major public controversy around the bovine spongiform encephalitis (BSE) crisis and the development and use of genetically modified agricultural technology (see box 1).[13]

Amid growing furore, the House of Lords published its seminal 2000 report, tellingly titled 'Science and Society.' Within it, Lord Jenkin argued that the current policy of PUS had shown itself to be 'a rather backward looking vision,' highlighting the current climate of public unease at rapid developments in science and technology as evidence that public engagement strategies needed to be overhauled.[14] This heralded a new way of thinking about the sector's relationship with the public, commonly referred to as 'upstream engagement', public dialogue, or the Public Engagement with Science and Technology (PEST) approach. In section three, we explore what this kind of engagement looks like.

This change in thinking was reflected in *GM Nation?* a large scale public engagement exercise commissioned by the government which took place between 2002-2004. Through a series of different events, an estimated 20,000 people ultimately took part in the formal events.[15]

However, an important caveat must be made. The move from PUS to PEST has not been wholesale and as such cannot be characterised as one theory replacing another. Rather, what has happened is more the addition of an alternative, complementary approach. Despite these developments, the deficit-model is still commonplace in many governmental, academic and policy



9 *Ibid*

10 van Est, R. (2011) 'The Broad Challenge of Public Engagement in Science' *Science Engagement Ethics*, 17(4). See report: Bodmer, W., (1985) 'The Public Understanding of Science' London: The Royal Society

11 Brown, S (2009) 'A New Deficit Model.' *Nature Nanotechnology*. 4(10), pp.609-611

12 HMSO (1993), 'Realising Our Potential: A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology,' London: HMSO

13 Citations for box 1: By 2000 the current British Prime Minister publically conceded that there were legitimate grounds for concern during an international conference which debated the safety of GM food led by the OECD. Marris, C., Wynne, B., Simmons, P., with Weldon, S. (2001) 'Public Perceptions of Agricultural Biotechnologies in Europe' London: Commission of European Communities
Polling data taken from: OST, Wellcome Trust (2000) 'Science and the Public: A Review of Science Communication and Public Attitudes to Science in Britain' London: OST, p.19

14 Jenkin, R., (2000) 'Science and Technology Third Report' London: House of Lords

15 Sciencewise, (2011) 'Talking about GM: Approaches to Public Dialogue and Stakeholder Engagement', London, Sciencewise

communications[16] – and as we shall see with aid, information and transparency is necessary, but not sufficient.

The GM controversy demonstrated that, despite the public's connection to the sciences being strong due to its everyday life applicability, public sentiments were strongly affected by a sense of moral outrage. The same is true with international aid. Evidently, the scale and vehemence of the controversy demonstrated a deeper unease with not only governmental regulation, but also the way in which such regulation and policy were communicated to the British public. As a 2000 poll conducted by the Wellcome Trust and the Office of Science and Technology shows, the British public felt alienated from decision making, reflected in the low confidence respondents showed in governmental regulation of the industry more generally.[17]

The GM controversy acted as a catalyst for the government to change the way it tried to engage the public in the debate. However, while some inside government view *GM Nation?* as a failure[18] it is undoubtedly symptomatic of a sea-change in the way government viewed the relationship between the public and policy involving science and technology.

The developments in this public engagement journey demonstrate the importance of public controversies in catalysing new forms of public participation and informal methods of scientific and technological appraisal,[19] a point which will become especially relevant when looking at understandings of public engagement in the field of international aid.

INTERNATIONAL AID: FROM THE DEFICIT-MODEL TO … THE DEFICIT-MODEL

Like science and technology, policy making in international aid is complex both in terms of the environment in which it unfolds and the ethical and value questions it raises. However, in contrast to the leaps and bounds the field of science and technology has made, there have been few changes to the way that the British public is engaged with decisions about international aid.

Indeed, international aid has not developed in-depth engagement with the UK public; since the 1990s public engagement in international aid has been focussed on the recipients of aid rather than the UK population. This is a product, perhaps, of aid's unique composition as a chain which links the government to not one, but two publics – the taxpayers in the UK and the citizens in the countries in which development funds are spent.[20]

In the 1990s, new discourses of country ownership and 'beneficiary' participation became mainstream within the development sector, building on a growing movement since the 1970s. The new discourse linked aid actors to the priorities of those from developing countries, whether governments (in the case of ownership) or citizens benefiting from aid (in the case

BOX 2. CONTROVERSY AND CRISIS: CORRUPTION

Though not as intense and concerted as the GM controversy for policy makers and politicians, corruption in the international aid sector has long been controversial in the UK. Since 2000, coverage of international aid in the media has often raised the issue of 'corruption' in aid, referencing countless international and national reports on aid to make, and substantiate, claims of widespread wrong doing in the sector.

As the anti-corruption drive became a stronger force, reports began to emerge which connected aid to corruption as one of its major facilitators. This would be mirrored in public opinion towards the sector as various surveys conducted by DFID and IPPR revealed a common belief that corruption was a central cause of poverty in recipient countries. Indeed, for many observers, the sense of latent and endemic corruption has been a major contributor to what is now commonly referred to as 'aid scepticism.'

16 See Escobar, O. and Pieczka, M. (2012) 'Dialogue and Science: Innovation in Policy making and the Discourse of Public Engagement in the UK' *Science and Public Policy*, (39)6

17 OST, Wellcome Trust (2000) 'Science and the Public: A Review of Science Communication and Public Attitudes to Science in Britain', p.19

18 Sciencewise, (2011) 'Talking about GM: Approaches to Public Dialogue and Stakeholder Engagement', London, Sciencewise

19 Discussed in relation to the GM scandal in France, Bonneuil, C., Joly, PB. and Marris, C. (2008) 'Disentrenching experiment. The construction of GM-crop field trials as a social problem in France' *Science Technology and Human Values* 33(2) p.21

20 See Wallace, T. (2007) 'The Aid Chain: Coercion and Commitment in Development NGOs,' Rugby: Practical Action

of participation). In 2005, country ownership would be ratified as the cornerstone of the OECD organised Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, prescribing country leadership in development policies reinforced by mutual accountability between partner country and donor.[21] At the same time, participation was entrenched into professional standards, codes of conduct and indices in the development sector.[22] Importantly, among international and national institutions alike, the term public engagement was only ever understood in terms of the recipient.

What of UK domestic stakeholders? Concern about the attitudes of the taxpaying public would gradually move from the periphery to the centre stage with the increase of international aid budgets under Labour, and the increase of negative coverage of aid in the media. From the early 2000s onwards, UK coverage of international aid issues in the press rarely excluded a reference to recipient corruption[23] (see box 2).[24] Although these issues have in the past appeared on the DFID agenda, as demonstrated by the Building Support for Development (BSD) initiative,[25] the scheme's minimal budget and its brief existence reflected DFID's primary focus on international poverty reduction rather than the promotion of wider domestic understanding and public engagement.

The combination of tighter domestic budgets, growing aid budgets and the spectre of endemic inefficiency, wastage and corruption has shifted the policy focus away from beneficiary accountability towards taxpayer accountability. In consequence, a package of accountability and management reforms were enacted, chiefly from 2010. These have come to be known as the "results agenda". They emphasise "measure, management and reporting of ... results" as a key instrument to improving the transparency and value for money.[26] Measurement of results is intended to indicate "what works and what doesn't", and draws heavily on concepts of evidence-informed policy.[27] The results are constructed in tiers, with heavily aggregated numbers meeting the MDGs and DFID internal targets comprising the top two tiers. Moreover, DFID has created a new independent accountability oversight body with a function of auditing DFID's programmes' performance and impact,[28] and a range of transparency and reporting commitments and portals.

In essence, and unlike the equivalent debate about GM, public controversy about aid has produced a change in the content which is communicated by the government to the public, but not a change in the way the government views the public's role. Indeed, the 'results agenda' has arguably hardened the passive nature of the relationship between the UK public and international aid. Accountability for impacts and their communication is at the

21 OECD (2008) 'The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action,' http://www.oecd.org/development/aideffectiveness/34428351.pdf. Although questions were raised about the efficacy of mutual accountability: see Wood, B.; Betts, J., Etta, F., Gayfer,J., Kabell, D., Ngwira, N., Sagasti, F., and Samaranayake, M. (2011) 'The Evaluation of the Paris Declaration: Final Report', Copenhagen: OECD

22 See for example: Blagescu, M., de Las Casas, L., & Lloyd, R. (2005). Pathways to accountability. One World Trust, London, England, UK. Humanitarian Accountability Partnership. (2010) Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management, at http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/guide-to-the-2010-hap-standard-printer-friendly-version.pdf or the BOND Effectiveness Framework (now 'Voice and Inclusion' as concepts shift) http://www.bond.org.uk/pages/the-ngo-evidence-principles.html).

23 For example, shocking coverage of famine in Angola would conclude detailing the $5 billion of lost state funds, contextualised as 'five times what Angola asks in emergency aid from the international community each year.' Andersson, H. (2002) 'Hunger spectre over Angola' BBC World News: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/2504661.stm [Accessed on the 22nd January 2013]

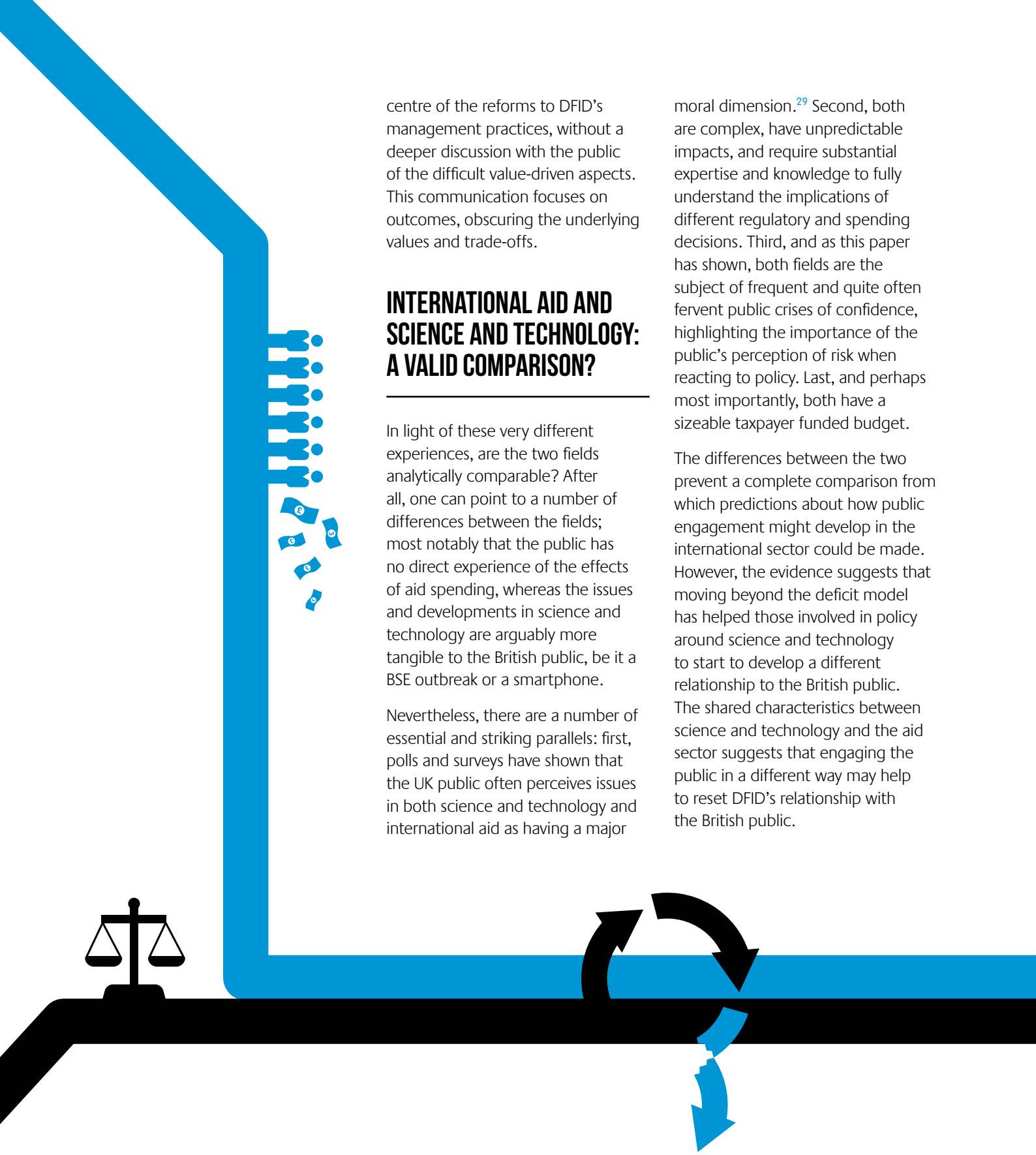
24 Citations for box 2: Kaspar W., (2006) 'Make Poverty History: Tackle Corruption' *The Centre for Independent Studies*, 67, New South Wales: CIS and Glennie A., Straw W. with Wild L., Institute for Public Policy Research/Overseas Development Institute (2012) 'Understanding Public Attitudes to Aid' p.6, p.12, and Henson S., Lindstrom J., Haddad L. and Mulmi R. (2010) 'Public Perceptions of International Development and Support for Aid in the UK: Results of a Qualitative Enquiry' Brighton: IDS, p.37 and ActionAid (2006) 'ActionAid Poll on Public Attitudes to Aid: Summary,' p.1

25 Building Support for Development was initiated in 1999 with the aim of educating the public on issues around poverty and development through civil society actors. Following a number of critical evaluations which argued that BSD, though well-intentioned, did not go far enough, the initiative vanished. See the 2011 evaluation: Thorton P. and Hext S. (2009) 'Review of DFID's Work to Build Support for Development through work with Businesses, Trades Unions, Faith Communities, Black and Minority Ethnic Communities, and Diaspora Groups: Final Report,' Verulam Associates and DFID: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/consultations/bsdreview/bsd-bus-tu-fth-bmec-dia-rpt-0709.pdf

26 DFID (2012) 'DFID's Results Framework: Managing and Reporting DFID Results' London: DFID, paragraph 5, p1. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-s-results-framework

27 Ibid paragraph 6. See for an overview of evidence-informed policy, Nutley, Sandar, Isabel Walter and Huw T. O. Davies (2008) *Using Evidence: How research can inform public services*. Bristol, The Policy Press, University of Bristol.

28 Independent Commission for Aid Impact, http://icai.independent.gov.uk/ [Accessed on the 22nd January 2013]



centre of the reforms to DFID's management practices, without a deeper discussion with the public of the difficult value-driven aspects. This communication focuses on outcomes, obscuring the underlying values and trade-offs.

INTERNATIONAL AID AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: A VALID COMPARISON?

In light of these very different experiences, are the two fields analytically comparable? After all, one can point to a number of differences between the fields; most notably that the public has no direct experience of the effects of aid spending, whereas the issues and developments in science and technology are arguably more tangible to the British public, be it a BSE outbreak or a smartphone.

Nevertheless, there are a number of essential and striking parallels: first, polls and surveys have shown that the UK public often perceives issues in both science and technology and international aid as having a major moral dimension.[29] Second, both are complex, have unpredictable impacts, and require substantial expertise and knowledge to fully understand the implications of different regulatory and spending decisions. Third, and as this paper has shown, both fields are the subject of frequent and quite often fervent public crises of confidence, highlighting the importance of the public's perception of risk when reacting to policy. Last, and perhaps most importantly, both have a sizeable taxpayer funded budget.

The differences between the two prevent a complete comparison from which predictions about how public engagement might develop in the international sector could be made. However, the evidence suggests that moving beyond the deficit model has helped those involved in policy around science and technology to start to develop a different relationship to the British public. The shared characteristics between science and technology and the aid sector suggests that engaging the public in a different way may help to reset DFID's relationship with the British public.

29 OST, Wellcome Trust (2000) 'Science and the Public: A Review of Science Communication and Public Attitudes to Science in Britain', p.18, Glennie A., Straw W. with Wild L., Institute for Public Policy Research/Overseas Development Institute (2012) 'Understanding Public Attitudes to Aid,' p.15

A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?

The current work of BIS's Sciencewise programme (see below) and the 'results agenda' in international aid can, in many ways, be seen as responses to the public controversies of GM and corruption. This section explores how these different reactions reflect the motivations of their respective government departments, and what kind of opportunities for engaging, if any, they present for the British public.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: EVOLVING PRACTICE AND POLICY

Following the public controversy around GM technology and the House of Lords 'Science and Society' report, a new policy of upstream engagement was pursued by the UK government. Funded by BIS, Sciencewise was set up in 2004 and evolved over three years to become Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre following a recommendation from the Council for Science and Technology.[30] Sciencewise aims to:

> *'Enable better policy making by fostering capacity within the policy making community to commission and use excellent public dialogue. This will ensure that all future policy involving science, technology and innovation is robustly developed, informed by public concerns and aspirations and based on all the available evidence.'*

In this way, Sciencewise's role in supporting the meaningful engagement of the public can be seen as a direct result of public controversy. In fact, a fairly straight line can be drawn from the public crises in the late 1990s and early 2000s, to a number of government-led and supported studies which argued for greater and more meaningful engagement with the public, right up to the development of the Sciencewise programme. Furthermore, this attitudinal shift is reflected in the self-descriptive government literature which sees public engagement in science as an essential and 'long-term challenge.'[31]

Sciencewise undertakes a number of activities, primarily providing funding and guidance for policy makers who wish to engage the public in policy involving science and technology. It focuses on funding public engagement through public dialogue projects, a particular form of public engagement. So what does a Sciencewise funded project actually involve? The 2007 project 'Dialogue on Hybrid and Chimera Embryos for Research' is a good example to use due to the subject matter's profound moral and ethical issues, and in this way can be seen not only as having parallels with the GM controversy, but also as a response to it (see Box 3).[32]

The deliberative dialogue was intended to 'explore and understand various public perceptions, motivations and attitudes to creating human-animal embryos for research.'[33] The success of the dialogue encouraged the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) to make greater use of public dialogue, base policies on better information of the public's perceptions, as well as helping policy makers to develop further their plans for improving their communication with the public in future. In addition, the process increasingly led participants to trust that the HFEA would take notice of public views and increased the willingness of participants to get involved in similar events in the future.

30 See Sciencewise-ERC: http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/background [Accessed on 22nd January 2013]

31 See BIS (2012), 'Engaging the Public in Science and Engineering': https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/engaging-the-public-in-science-and-engineering--3 [Accessed on the 22nd January 2013]

32 Citations for Box 3: Sciencewise-ERC (2012), 'What is public dialogue? And other frequently asked public dialogue questions,' http://sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/assets/Uploads/Publications/What-is-public-dialogue-FAQ-Report-V2.pdf, pp.4-5

33 Sciencewise-ERC (2007) 'Case Study: Dialogue on hybrid and chimera embryos for research' Harwell: Sciencewise-ERC

BOX 3. DIALOGUE ON HYBRID AND CHIMERA EMBRYOS

The use of hybrid and chimera embryos for research has the potential to lead to new treatments for diseases. The regulatory body responsible, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, was keen to explore how the public 'balanced the ethics, risks and benefits of mixing human and animal genetic material.' The overall consultation process included four ways of eliciting public views: an open public meeting, an opinion poll, a formal written consultation and a deliberative dialogue. The dialogue process consisted of small discussion groups involving participants recruited to represent a diverse public. Participants in these groups were introduced to the subject area and initial reactions were gathered. The second stage of the dialogue process involved a full-day workshop which brought public participants together again, this time with a diverse set of expert speakers who illustrated the different issues and arguments.

The HFEA decided, 'after careful consideration of the evidence gathered through the public dialogue [...] that cytoplasmic embryo research should be allowed to move forward, with caution and careful [regulatory] scrutiny.' Most notably, the authorisation of such experiments represented an explicit change in policy which can be traced directly back to the publics' response during the dialogue.

Sciencewise is not the only government public engagement strategy, but simply a good example of it. Indeed, since 2008 BIS have an entire policy directive and team dedicated to 'Science and Society.'[34] Such entrenchment is important as it creates the space for the standardisation and normalisation of procedure of public engagement in the long term.

INTERNATIONAL AID: CHANGING ACTIVITIES, BUT MORE OF THE SAME

In international aid, growing concerns of corruption and ineffectiveness within the sector have also provoked a policy change. However, these reforms focussed on improving the effectiveness of aid and generating evidence of that effectiveness, rather than specifically engaging the public. The 'results agenda' can therefore be understood as an attempt to make the development sector more demonstrably effective[35] and more accountable, limiting the potential for corruption and ineffectiveness to take place within the aid chain. The roll-out of this policy can be placed in parallel to a wider DFID-led initiative, the UK Aid Transparency Guarantee:

> *'Transparency is critical to improving the effectiveness and value for money of aid. Making information about aid spending easier to access, understand and use means that UK taxpayers and citizens in poor countries can more easily hold DFID and recipient governments to account for using aid money wisely.'*[36]

The results agenda mainstreams managerial and accountability processes which are aimed both at increasing the effectiveness of aid and accountability of aid spending by increasing the stringency and rigour of evaluations.[37] Like New Public Management before it, it is fundamentally concerned with subjecting the development sector to management control, focussed on targets and implemented through performance audit processes.[38]

The peculiarities of aid and the two publics identified above mean there is little room for feedback loops, a distinguishing feature from New Public Management which had citizen feedback and

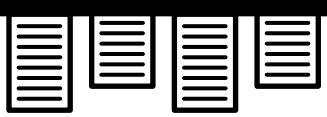
34 See BIS (2012), 'Engaging the Public in Science and Engineering': https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/engaging-the-public-in-science-and-engineering--3 [Accessed on the 22nd January 2013]

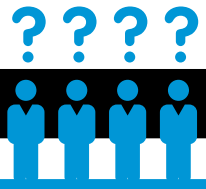
35 Hulme, D. (2007) ' The Making of the Millennium Development Goals: Human Development Meets Results-based Management In an Imperfect World' Manchester: University of Manchester

36 DFID (2012) 'What transparency means for DFID' https://www.gov.uk/government/news/transparency-100-aid-agencies-publish-spending-data [Accessed on the 22nd of January 2013]

37 *Ibid.*

38 See for the implications of an audit culture on a profession, Power, M. (1997). The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification. Oxford, Oxford University Press; Strathern, M., Ed. (2000). Audit cultures: anthropological studies in accountability, ethics and the academy. London and New York, Routledge; Bezes, P., et al. (2012). "New public management and professionals in the public sector. What new patterns beyond opposition?" Sociologie du travail 54: e1-e55.





public choice at its core. The 'results agenda' does not change the way in which the UK public is engaged with the international aid sector, but only the framing of the content which is communicated to the public. That is not to say that DFID does not communicate its taxpayer funded work to the public. In fact, an overview of DFID press releases demonstrates a conscious policy of positive communication which highlights progress and achievements of UK funded international development. But does it? A scan of DFID's press release archive demonstrates the 'results agenda' mode of communication in full swing. A good example is a statement on British aid to Uganda published in July 2012. The small statement includes a number of summary statistics on what UK aid to Uganda will achieve by 2014, including:

> *'Over 100,000 school drop-outs to return back to school, including 66,000 girls… [and] four million men and women to have safer, better and cheaper ways of saving and borrowing money.'*

The Annual Report and the Results Framework are full of similar figures. It is hard to interpret them, and what they mean about success. To take the first example in DFID's results framework: 11.9 million people achieved access to financial services due to DFID's work.[39] Does this number of people gain access represent good value for money, or should more have been expected? At another level, what does access to financial services mean?

We argue that, while the 'results agenda' enables DFID and its oversight agencies to exercise control over international aid spending, vis-à-vis the taxpayer, they are a continuation of the deficit-model approach to engagement. Darnton and Kirk argue in 'Finding Frames' that a monetised model focussed on communicating achievements alienates the British public from the people who UK aid helps. It encourages UK taxpayers to see their role as a purely transactional.[40] This lack of public engagement has led Martens to characterise the aid chain as a 'broken feedback loop', in which the UK taxpayer has no influence on policy despite being major economical contributors to it.[41] Polls suggest that UK taxpayers regularly overestimate the size of the aid budget, compounding the widespread view that wastage and corruption is all pervasive in the development industry.[42] Despite repeated surveys which show that UK public commitment to aid remains strong, the risk is that the 'broken feedback loop' will undermine long-term support for aid among the British public.

This problem is compounded by the British public's lack of awareness and understanding not only of positive stories from the world of development, but also of how positive change is achieved in international aid more generally. The resulting effect, as a poll conducted by the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) illustrates, is one:

> *'of considerable scepticism about the effectiveness of aid in practice. Such scepticism appears to relate to the inability to picture aid actually working, and the perception that little has improved in developing countries despite a long history of aid. The chief culprit in the perceived ineffectiveness of aid is weak (and even corrupt) governments in developing countries.'*[43]

Evidently, the British public are not only alienated from those they are helping, but also the means by which progress can be achieved. The disempowering nature of the public's isolation from decision making in international aid has been reflected in a number of polls and studies which show a strong disconnect between themselves as UK taxpayers,

39 Department for International Development, "Annual Report and Accounts, 2011 – 12" at p.11. http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/departmental-report/2012/Annual-report-accounts-2011-12.pdf

40 Darnton, A. (2009) 'The Public, DFID and Support for Development – A Rapid Review' and Darnton, A., with Kirk ,M. (2011) 'Finding Frames: New Ways to Engage the UK Public in Global Poverty' p.90

41 Martens, B. 2008. "Why do aid agencies exist?" in: *Reinventing Foreign Aid*. ed. Easterly W. Cambridge: MIT Press, p.286

42 ActionAid (2006) 'ActionAid Poll on Public Attitudes to Aid: Summary,' p.1

43 Henson S., Lindstrom J., Haddad L. and Mulmi R (2010) 'Public Perceptions of International Development and Support for Aid in the UK: Results of a Qualitative Enquiry,' p.33

and the developmental projects which such funds are spent on.[44]

Importantly, there is strong evidence showing that UK citizens are by no means comfortable with the lack of meaningful discussion and engagement; more than half of respondents to AAI's poll in 2007 agreeing that there 'was too little public discussion of aid,'[45] and a similar degree of hunger has been expressed for greater and more meaningful communication in IPPR and ODI's 2012 study into public attitudes.[46]

In the context of long-term fiscal austerity, the consequences of this lack of public engagement could be grave for the international aid sector. Currently there is no space for a frank debate with the public about the challenges and the complexities of aid and development. This makes the sector vulnerable to crises and risks leaving its financing unstable. We argue that DFID can go farther by engaging the British public to ensure that its policies better reflect their values and priorities, therefore reducing vulnerability to crises, and developing accountability processes which more closely meet their needs.

VALUING THE PUBLIC

These two contrasting approaches to public engagement reflect a very different attitude within government towards the role of the public. In theory at least, the focus on upstream engagement in science and technology represents a belief in the value of public opinion. It has resulted in a more open approach towards policy making. DFID's lack of focus on public attitudes and meaningful engagement not only ensures the continuation of deficit-model modes of communication, but more importantly, implies an undemocratic attitude towards public support.

By removing funding for already small public-facing schemes and drastically scaling back any communication strategies in place such as polling and newsletters, the UK government implicitly takes for granted UK taxpayers support for international aid. This is despite the fact that the sector is at risk for a number of reasons including corruption, for example. When looking at the long-term impact of such an approach, the real and potential cost will become clear as support for the aid budget falls.

AID AND SCIENCE: COMPARING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES

Drawing on the understanding of Involve and other public engagement specialists, what kind of public engagement do the policies of Sciencewise and the 'results agenda' facilitate, and how is this achieved?

The closure of avenues by which the government can transmit and receive information is indicative in itself. The termination of the BSD programme, and the ceasing of DFID sponsored polls and surveys now mean that the UK government only transmits information to the UK public, rather than making any attempts to receive information back, let alone engage with the public as part of a two-way communication and dialogue. DFID is to be commended for its concerted efforts to promote transparency in international aid, particularly through the great strides it has made as part of the International Aid Transparency Initiative.[47] However, transparency is not comparable to a programme of meaningful domestic engagement which can tease out the value-laden and complex political issues underpinning international aid. Though transparent in form, the broken feedback loop means the de-contextualised and broad statements of success characteristic of the 'results agenda' cannot really be intelligible, and thus transparent, for the UK public.

In contrast, the new forms of public dialogue about policy involving science and technology have enabled deeper public engagement. Returning to the dialogue on hybrid and chimera embryos, it is apparent that the dialogue project was designed to inform a policy decision as well as to empower public participants. Twinning the public with policy makers and practitioners promoted dialogue, providing: an opportunity for the public to influence policy; insights for the public about the technology; as well as insights for researchers and policy makers on key aspects of public values and attitudes to the use of hybrid and chimera embryos for research.

There is a considerable contrast between this type of engagement to influence policy and that of the approach taken by DFID.

44 *Ibid*., p.11

45 ActionAid (2006) 'ActionAid Poll on Public Attitudes to Aid: Summary,' p.2

46 Glennie A., Straw W. with Wild L., Institute for Public Policy Research/Overseas Development Institute (2012) 'Understanding Public Attitudes to Aid,' pp.19-22

47 See http://www.aidtransparency.net/

DIS/ENGAGEMENT: OUTCOMES

Continuing the analysis of the contrasting engagement strategies in the fields of international aid and science and technology, we now look at the outcomes of the different approaches of the two fields. We do so by structuring the analysis along the three statements set-out in the opening section of this paper:

- Greater public engagement in international aid will allow policy makers to better and more reliably reflect the values and principles of the British public, leading to more stable and more sustainable development commitments that are less vulnerable to crises;
- Improved public engagement in development processes will allow the policy makers to develop more focussed and less costly accountability processes; and
- Public engagement in international aid will enhance democratic control and ensure decisions more meaningfully reflect the public's perspective about the UK's aid spending.

Addressing each statement, the analysis will compare the public by the Science and Society Department of BIS to the strategies employed by DFID as part of the 'results agenda'. We draw the conclusion that DFID needs to engage the British public in a different way.

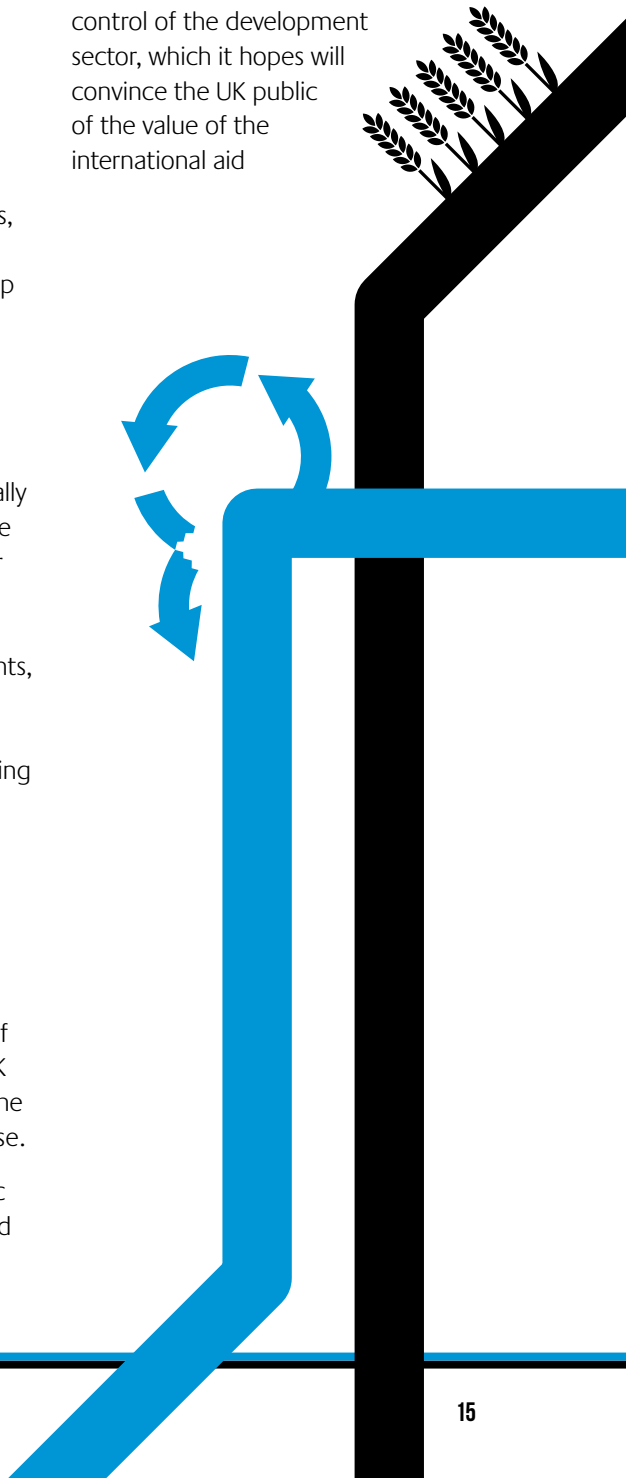
PUBLIC VALUES AND PRINCIPLES: CONSIDERED OR SIDE-LINED?

While engagement in science and technology has helped the government to better understand public concerns, values and visions and develop policies which better reflect them, the same cannot be said of international aid.

Rocked by the GM controversy which suggested that policy makers and the government were out of touch with public concerns and values, government was spurred into engaging the public in a very different way. Keen to prevent similar controversies in other fast-paced technological developments, the government initiated the Sciencewise programme to develop a new model of public dialogue that would ensure that policy was developed with the grain of public opinion. Providing funding and thought leadership, Sciencewise helps create the space for potentially controversial issues, such as the use of hybrid and chimera embryos for research, to be explored through public dialogue. Though limited in terms of the numbers of participants, these projects mean that policy makers can gauge some of the drivers of public attitudes concerning new technologies, and adapt policies accordingly.

Only time will tell whether earlier, deeper public engagement in potentially controversial areas of scientific innovation like hybrid cells has led to the development of policies which better reflect the UK public's values and priorities. But the hope is certainly that this is the case.

The explicit consideration of public values and principles in science and technology has not been mirrored in the international aid sector. The results agenda has focussed on demonstrable command and control of the development sector, which it hopes will convince the UK public of the value of the international aid



spending. However, polls indicate that the UK public want more. As both the Finding Frames and the joint ODI and IPPR studies highlight:

> *'While in general participants had a fairly basic understanding of issues, they repeatedly argued for a more complex understanding or to know more about how change was possible.'*[48]

The large, un-contextualised numbers characteristic of the 'results agenda' are not sufficient for a public which wants to understand practically how development can be achieved using taxpayer money. They do not allow for a nuanced discussion of the complex and ethically challenging trade-offs and decisions facing DFID and aid professionals in their day-to-day work. At worst, they risk dumbing down aid to simple, technical and risk-free interventions that are designed to meet a crude characterisation of what the public expects, rather than riskier, more transformational projects.[49]

That is not to say DFID has not made important progress: that the transparency and accountability processes it has set in place are important to support the effectiveness of international aid. However, we believe DFID should heed calls for a more nuanced discussion of the underlying values of the UK public acknowledging the political and value-laden aspects of international aid. We believe it is worth exploring in detail, and through on-going processes, the practical and ethical challenges of international aid, before adopting an explicitly and solely transactional perspective on aid.[50] Arguably, without public engagement processes similar to those adopted by the government in relation to science and technology, DFID will be unable to manage the expectations of the UK population when it comes to the inevitably ethically challenging trade-offs involved in international aid. This will leave the UK public's commitments to international aid vulnerable to crises in confidence.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY: REALITY OR SEMBLANCE?

In keeping with the current push for open government and policy making, all departments are subject to new transparency commitments, particularly with regards to the publishing of government tenders, contracts of high spend and opening up key data sets.[51] All accountability and transparency processes must be fit for purpose. For complex, value-laden policy areas of concern to the public, we argue that this requires more than simply the publishing of government information and data. A policy development culture which incorporates public consultation, accessible and comprehensible policy, and open monitoring and evaluation should also be a central component of an open government.[52] Following the controversies around science and technology, this kind of policy culture is beginning to develop in the sciences. This is reflected by a public which is increasingly pre-empting the government through calls for greater transparency and accountability, particularly with regards to regulation of the sector in the academic, public and private spheres.[53]

Through its UK Aid Transparency Guarantee as well as international commitments, DFID is in many ways ahead of other government departments in the race to be transparent. The 'results agenda' and its accompanying management criteria of value for money have been put forward as means to further entrench transparent and accountable processes, as DFID claims:

> *'Value for money' is a term generally used to describe an explicit commitment to ensuring the best results possible... In the UK Government, use of this term reflects a concern for more transparency and accountability in spending public funds, and for obtaining the maximum benefit from the resources available.'*

48 Glennie A., Straw W. with Wild L., Institute for Public Policy Research/Overseas Development Institute (2012) 'Understanding Public Attitudes to Aid' London: ODI, p21

49 Clarke, G., 'Agents of transformation? Donors, faith-based organisations and international development' in *Third World Quarterly* 28(1) p.90; Eyben, R. (2011) 'Contradictions and Gaps in the UK 'results agenda'' *Big Push Forward*: http://bigpushforward.net/archives/558 [Accessed on the 22nd of January 2013]

50 See Glennie A., Straw W. with Wild L., Institute for Public Policy Research/Overseas Development Institute (2012) 'Understanding Public Attitudes to Aid' and Darnton, A., with Kirk ,M. (2011) 'Finding Frames: New Ways to Engage the UK Public in Global Poverty' http://findingframes.org/Finding%20Frames%20New%20ways%20to%20engage%20the%20UK%20public%20in%20global%20poverty%20Bond%202011.pdf

51 DFID (2011), 'Procurement Transparency': http://www.dfid.gov.uk/work-with-us/procurement/procurement-transparency/ [Accessed on the 22nd of January 2013]

52 See the Open Government Partnership for an example of this kind of policy development culture: Open Government Partnership UK (2013) 'National Action Plan priority: Anti-corruption: http://www.opengovernment.org.uk/

53 Ipsos-Mori (2011) 'Public Attitudes to Science 2011' Ipsos-Mori/BIS, p.47

But the information provided to the public as part of this aid management system is arguably not transparent and accessible enough to allow British taxpayers to exercise accountability. We have seen already that they are calling for more. This means that the British public are unable to provide any feedback on the policy of international aid, thus undermining the link between the government and its domestic public. Such an exclusionary dynamic is emblematic of Marten's 'broken feedback loop.'[54]

Moreover, implementing these processes is resource-intensive. The accountability measures have generated additional processes and institutions and therefore costs on external oversight and evaluation.[55] They must themselves be fit for purpose and value for money. This is particularly the case since downwards pressure on administrative costs as part of DFID's efficiency drive has implications in terms of collecting data. Accountability systems must be focussed to be effective, and there is a tension between the accountability and learning functions of evaluation.[56] The need to report against their own results framework and the institutional pressures from the Public Accounts Committee[57] suggest the emphasis will be on 'measuring results' against specific targets.

We argue that DFID must push beyond the results agenda to engage the UK public in refining the information and accountability needs, in order to ensure that the accountability and transparency processes themselves are value for money, fit for purpose and allow the public to hold the government properly to account.

THE WIDER SECTOR AND ITS DEMOCRATIC MANDATE: STRENGTHENED OR UNDERMINED?

The last area to analyse is the current standing of the two areas of government themselves and whether or not the public's influence on decisions has been strengthened or undermined by current engagement strategies. Recent polls regarding public attitudes to science and

54 Martens, B. (2008) 'Why do aid agencies exist?' in: *Reinventing Foreign Aid*. ed. Easterly W. Cambridge: MIT Press

55 This explains in part the rise in reliance on independent consultants. Between 1993 and 2006, the funding on consultants is reported to have increased from £0.2 million to £256.2 million. Lapsley, Irvine (2009) New Public Management: the Cruellest Invention of the Human Spirit" ABACUS 45(1) 1, at p. 6. The Chairwoman of the Committee of Public Accounts, Margaret Hodge MP, recently questioned again the use of consultants: House of Commons, Committee of Public Accounts, "The Department for International Development: The multilateral aid review" Twenty-sixth Report of Session 2012–13, at Ev. 11 http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmpubacc/660/660.pdf. The funding of the Independent Commission was recently called into question for its value for money: http://www.simonmaxwell.eu/blog/reflections-on-icais-first-year.html [Accessed on the 22nd of January 2013]

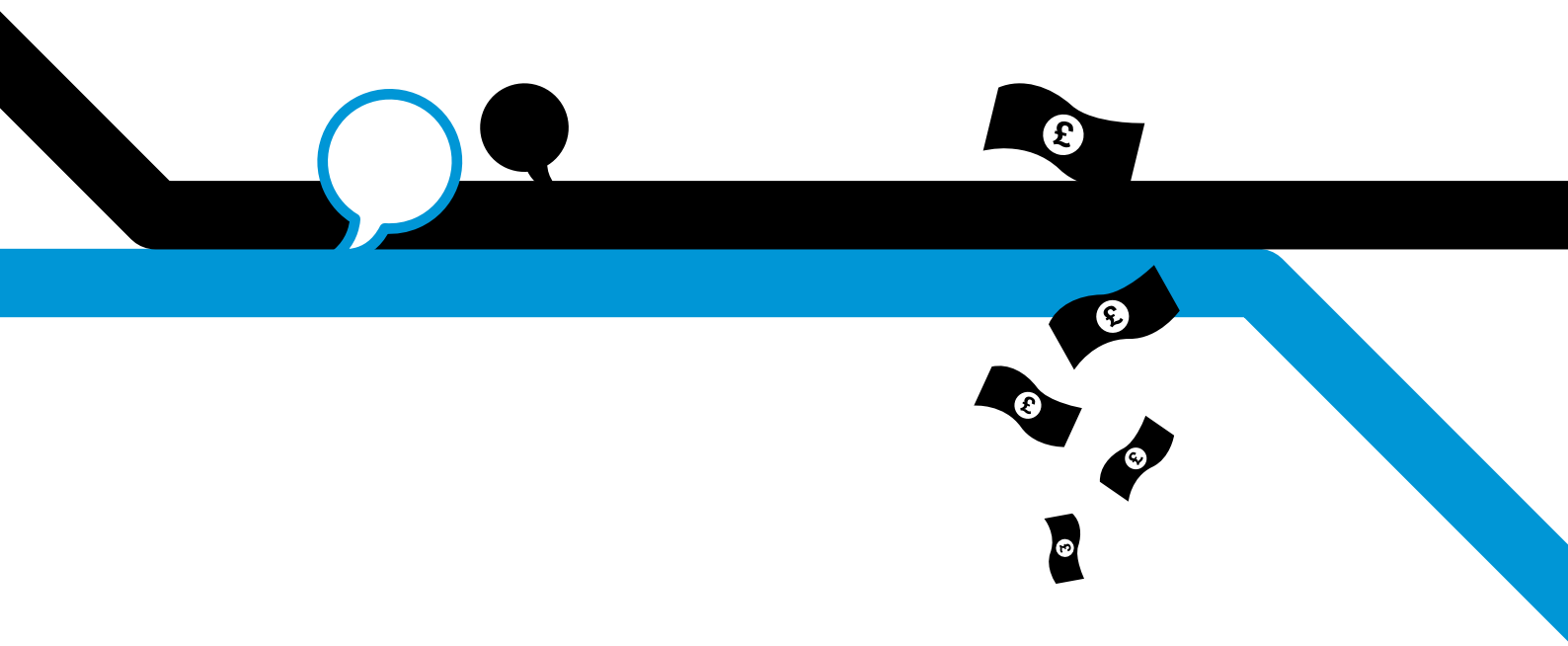
56 See e.g. for the importance of the *use* of the evaluation, Quinn Paton, Michael, *Utilization-Focussed Evaluation*, (2008, 4th Edn), Sage Publications; and Horton, Douglas, and Ronald Mackay. "Using evaluation to enhance institutional learning and change: recent experiences with agricultural research and development." Agricultural Systems 78.2 (2003): 127-142 at p. 129.

57 See House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts DFID Financial Management Fifty-second Report of Session 2010–12 *Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence* e.g. http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmpubacc/1398/1398.pdf

technology show that the vast majority of the public view the contributions their taxes make very positively, agreeing that the fields play a vital role in their society and economy and that "even if it brings no immediate benefits, research which advances knowledge should be funded by the Government."[58]

While, in contrast to the positive views of the contribution made by taxpayers enjoyed by the sciences, public views towards international aid are largely confused, misinformed and cynical. Studies by both Chatham House and AAI show the public drastically overestimates the amount that the British government spends on aid, with estimates averaging at about 19% of government spending, dwarfing the actual figure of 1.3% (2006).[59] Such misinformation inevitably gives rise to negative views towards international development, particularly at a time of fiscal austerity. Further, with little understanding of how positive change can be impacted and a steady stream of negative coverage in the press highlighting both high levels of corruption, wastage and degrading poverty, 'aid scepticism' is rife.[60] As the belief in aid drops, so too does the public's belief in the government's ability to deliver such aid responsibly and efficiently.

This democratic deficit and the consequent fall in public trust of the government creates a negative feedback loop. A debate is on-going within the international aid field as to whether such conditions are pushing the UK government to give forms of aid that focus on the easily measurable but are ultimately unsustainable, rather than supporting longer term and deeper-seated change.[61] Some aid experts and practitioners argue that the 'results agenda' not only undermines public engagement, but also excludes the most transformative types of international aid spending. This paints a grave picture for the field of international aid, not only for its donors, but also its recipients.



58 Ipsos-Mori (2011) 'Public Attitudes to Science 2011' Ipsos-Mori/BIS, p.6

59 Chatham House/YouGov (2011) 'British Attitudes towards the UK's International Priorities: The Chatham House/YouGov Survey,' p.33. See also ActionAid (2006) 'ActionAid Poll on Public Attitudes to Aid: Summary,' p.1

60 ActionAid (2006) 'ActionAid Poll on Public Attitudes to Aid: Summary,' see also Glennie A., Straw W. with Wild L., Institute for Public Policy Research/ Overseas Development Institute (2012) 'Understanding Public Attitudes to Aid,'

61 See for example the recent debate on Duncan Green's blog, summarised here http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=13590 [Accessed on the 22nd of January 2013] See also Eyben, R. "Hiding Relations: The Irony of 'Effective Aid'." *European Journal of Development Research* 22 (2010): 382-97. Eyben, R. "Donors' Learning Difficulties: Results, Relationshops and Responsibilities." *IDS Bulletin* 36, no. 3 (2005): 98-107.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have suggested that DFID should build engagement with the UK public into the way it makes decisions. The transparency and accountability systems that characterise the results agenda are either not sufficient or are in need of reform. We argue:

- The practical and ethical challenges within aid make it important that DFID align its policies to the values and priorities of the UK public. This will help them to meet the expectations of citizens and limit vulnerability to controversies and negative stories. Public engagement, as increasingly used in science and technology, offers one way to do this;
- Accountability systems are costly. It is important that they are fit for purpose. This requires the right mix of information for accountability and learning processes. We argue that public engagement will allow DFID to explore in greater detail the needs of citizens for accountability, and refine systems which at present seem of limited use to the public; and
- In an era of open policy making, it is incumbent on all policy areas to attempt to involve citizens more directly. This should not be disregarded no matter how distant from the public the policy is implemented. This is particularly true for a department which has a ring-fenced budget, while departments spending closer to home are making large financial cuts.

Controversy in the sciences has spurred the government into investing in public dialogue initiatives. However, similar controversies within international aid have not fundamentally changed the way in which the UK public has been engaged with the debates about aid delivery and development. It is only the framing and the content of the messages which are communicated which have changed. In fact the 'results agenda' may be more accurately portrayed as motivated by a need to communicate the achievements of taxpayer money abroad, without inviting public debate.

Sciencewise has enabled a more informed dialogue between the public and policy makers, leading to better policy design and implementation. In contrast DFID has closed off a number of avenues through which the government could engage with the British public. The genuine engagement instituted in the science and technology field has allowed for the beginnings of a change in relationships between the public and policy makers. International aid on the other hand, despite a high degree of controversy and critique, continues to rely on a deficit mode of communication and as a result undermines not only public support for the sector, but democratic values as a whole.

If DFID wants the trust of the British public, the department will need to demonstrate it has trust in the public too. It will need to listen to their concerns and aspirations for the future of international aid and development as it makes its plans for the future.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lani joined Involve as a research intern and supported the Involve team as Research Assistant. She holds a Masters degree with Distinction in International Politics gained at the School of Oriental and African Studies and a Bachelors degree in Contemporary History from the University of Sussex. She has volunteered regularly with Action Aid International in their Education Department and internal think-tank, the Knowledge Initiative. Lani has also taught English and Spanish, and worked in community development programmes in Guatemala, Nicaragua and Ecuador.

Simon is the Director of Involve. He has long and extensive experience the fields of democratic reform, governance, public participation, stakeholder engagement, and accountability and transparency. He has worked at the national level in Africa, Asia and Europe as well as on related issues of global governance and democracy.

In addition to his role with Involve, Simon is also the Chair of Democratic Audit, a Fellow of WWF UK and Head of Dialogue at the Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre.

Before moving to Involve Simon was a Research Fellow at ODI from 2006 – 2009. His interests included stakeholder engagement in the reform of the international aid delivery system and how to make development finance more effective. Prior to this he was the Executive Director of the One World Trust from 1999 – 2005 where he initiated and oversaw the development of the influential Global Accountability Index. Before joining the Trust, Simon re-established the UK volunteer network for AFS, an organisation based in Leeds co-ordinating intercultural exchange visits. Simon has taught both science and English in Namibia and Zimbabwe and was an election monitor in Bosnia Herzegovina in 1997.

Brendan has spent ten years working in the development sector, with a particular focus on Afghanistan and fragile states. More recently, he has been focusing on aid accountability and aid effectiveness, with the One World Trust and subsequently as an independent consultant. He has on going roles as a facilitator at the Big Push Forward and a Volunteer Associate for Aid and Public Engagement at Involve, and is a Postgraduate Research student at University of East Anglia, studying the implications of the 'results agenda' for aid and development work.

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ABOUT INVOLVE

Involve are experts in public participation. We believe passionately in a democracy where citizens are able to take and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Through both research and practice we seek to radically transform the relationship between citizens and their governments to better use the creativity, energy, knowledge, skills and resources of all.

We are currently facing complex challenges which require citizens and governments to work together to build a shared vision of a sustainable future.

Experience and research has shown that when done well, public participation can help to:

- Identify solutions to complex problems
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending and services
- Promote social cohesion and social justice, and overcome conflict
- Build the confidence and agency of individuals and communities
- Improve well-being and reduce social problems

Since Involve was founded in 2004 we have worked closely with public organisations at a local, national and international level to transform how they engage with citizens.

These include the Home Office, Ministry of Justice, the World Health Organisation, the European Commission, the OECD and numerous Local Authorities.

We have developed the case for public participation, produced practical guidance on how to engage effectively, explored innovative practices of engagement, and begun to understand how and why citizens engage. Our research covers both the practice and theory of engagement and is grounded in our work and experience.

In April 2012, we took over responsibility for running, with Ricardo-AEA and the British Science Association, the Sciencewise Programme. We draw extensively on this programme for this paper.

This paper was written by Lani Shamash during her research internship at Involve. She was supported by Simon Burall and Brendan Whitty.

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