

Knowing the audience

**Survey Findings on International Development Sector
Attitudes to Development Education and Research on Public
Attitudes**

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January 2011**

**THE
GLOBAL
POVERTY
PROJECT**

**Think
Global** 
The Development Education Association

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About the Organisations



The **Global Poverty Project** is a development education and campaigning organisation that exists to increase the number and effectiveness of people taking action on extreme poverty. Since launching in the UK in Feb 2010, more than 25,000 people have seen the *1.4 Billion Reasons* live presentation, and globally more than 50,000 have seen it.



Think Global (formerly the Development Education Association) is a membership based charity that works to educate and engage the UK public on global issues. We aim to help people in the UK learn about global issues such as poverty and climate change and find out how they can play a part in creating a more just and sustainable world.

Background

Over the past ten years, funding into the international development sector through both Government and charitable giving has dramatically increased, and major campaigns like Make Poverty History and the Jubilee Debt Campaign have stirred public and media interest. Alongside this has emerged a robust set of data about public attitudes towards development, which in turn has encouraged debate about what drives of these attitudes.

What is less well understood, and what this brief report seeks to explore, is the way in which the international development sector itself views and understands public attitudes towards development, and in particular, how this understanding interacts with development education activities and perceptions.

This research was born out of discussions between staff at the Global Poverty Project and Think Global (formerly the Development Education Association). Both organisations regularly attend meetings discussing both public attitudes and development education, and both are familiar with the anecdotally expressed views of the participants, and their own views.

These discussions highlight a danger that development education is being left behind in the rush for bigger budgets and more supporters, and that this is undermining efforts to build more values-based and long-term commitment from the public.

The survey that was developed for this report seeks to bring a greater clarity to these discussions and views, and is designed to inform a more evidence based debate about how the sector can and should progress to build public support for development.

In particular, we hope that this report will stimulate debate within the sector and DFID on who and how public attitudes research and development education should be resourced and supported.

Simon Moss (Global Poverty Project) & Max Hogg (Think Global), January 2011.

Methodology & Demographics

This report is based on the results of an anonymous online survey of organisations working in international development conducted online between November 17 and December 17 2010, which received 53 responses.

Survey questions were developed jointly by the Global Poverty Project and Think Global, with a view to gauging the attitudes of people working in the international development and development education sectors in the UK. A link to the survey was sent via BOND's Campaigning list, as well as via Think Global's Global Learning Charter and membership lists. Additionally, personal emails inviting participation were sent to around 20 Global Poverty Project partners and supporters.

Table 1, right, outlines the activity areas of responding organisations and individuals, demonstrating the reach of the survey. It should be noted the survey did not focus on fundraising professionals.

Activity Area	Organisation	Responding Individuals
Policy	66%	26%
Overseas Programs	53%	15%
Advocacy & Campaigns	66%	55%
Development Education	87%	87%
Fundraising	53%	30%

Key Findings

The survey on was completed by 53 international development professionals and development educators, with the following key findings:

- Research on public attitudes is important and useful, but is used in only a limited way.
 - 81% report that attitudes research informed their organisation's work.
 - Whilst DFID's research is known by more than 70% of respondents, it could be used more effectively, with only 15% using it a lot.
- The sector feels that more positive public attitudes are constrained by public perceptions of corruption, aid effectiveness and media portrayal of development issues.
 - 62% feel perceptions of corruption are very important.
 - 54% feel perceptions of aid effectiveness are very important.
 - 60% feel that media portrayal of development issues are very important.
- The sector perceives that public support for development is decreasing after several years of steady support ... and sees development education as key to reversing this trend.
 - Over the past three years changes in public support for development were felt to have been positive or neutral by 58% of respondents.
 - 72% expect negative or strongly negative changes in public support for development in the next year.
- The sector sees development education as fundamental to building support for the government's vision of a 'big society.'
 - 68% of respondents feel that the best statement to describe development education is "a long-term investment in building citizens committed to action on poverty."
 - 95% agree or strongly agree with the statement that "There needs to be a stronger focus on development education to foster responsible global citizens for the future."
- The sector views DFID's continued role in funding and support development education work as vital, not just in schools but across the whole population.
 - 63% of respondents feel that public attitudes research should be jointly funded between DFID and the sector.
 - 93% want DFID should open its development education funding to focus on the whole population, not just schools.
 - 68% think DFID should either continue or expand the size and range of funded development education projects.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this survey and an analysis of the existing literature on public attitudes and development education, we recommend that:

1. BOND should collate, publicly share and promote the full range of public attitudes data. Currently there is no central repository of public attitudes data. BOND, as the sector's representative body, should collate this data, provide guidance notes and support materials, and promote it to the international development community. This data should not be restricted to the BOND membership given the many educators, community groups and others who are not members but who find this information useful.

2. DFID should continue to fund twice-yearly attitudes research. Over the past decade DFID's support for this at least annual research has developed a strong evidence and high quality base with a consistent methodology, enabling the tracking of public views over time. DFID alone has the resources to fund this particular type of research, and the maintenance of this will enable other sector actors to pursue other, more in-depth, research. Alongside this, DFID should do more to disseminate research findings, via BOND as per recommendation 1.

3. Think Global and the Global Poverty Project should build a clearer case for the importance of development education to the sector and the country. Development education has encountered a problem of the commons, where costs are incurred by individual agencies, but the benefits accrue to the sector and the public at large. Global Poverty Project, alongside Think Global as the lead membership body for development educators, should build, publish and promote a clearer and more evidence based case for development education to garner additional priority, focus and resourcing.

4. Development education should be at the centre of any NGO or DFID plans to build greater public support for development, rather than plans based solely on communications and marketing approaches. Long-term support for development is best built through development education, and therefore program and campaigns plans to build public support must focus much more on development education. Short-term communications and advertising approaches currently predominate in this area, yet the evidence suggests that they lead only to short-term rises in support.

5. The NGO sector, trusts and foundations and DFID should come together to agree collectively how to support development education in the future. Each of these actors has an interest in ensuring we continue to educate the public about global poverty and global issues, but no single actor is willing or able to fund this work alone. A collective settlement on funding would allow a long-term focus on the most effective development education programmes. Funding could be explicitly linked to improvements in education and public attitudes outcomes, with a basket of indicators agreed collectively..

Survey Results

Research on public attitudes is important and useful, but is being used in only a limited way.

A range of organisations have conducted thorough and robust research on public attitudes to development in the past decade. This research has provided the sector with unprecedented amounts of both quantitative and qualitative data, and we sought to understand how this research is informing both the thinking and practice of the sector who are seeking to influence public attitudes and actions.

81% of respondents report that public attitudes research informed their organisation’s work in at least one area, as shown in Figure 1. This research was most likely to be used in development education (66%), policy (41.5%) or advocacy and campaigns work (41.5%). Surprisingly, public attitudes data had only a limited role in fundraising work (26.4%), driven perhaps by the more integrated values and behaviour data that is available to fundraising and marketing teams in determining target audiences and yield. Finally, public attitudes research plays a very limited role in overseas programs, reflecting the commitment of the sector to basing programs on needs in-country, rather than donor preferences or concerns.

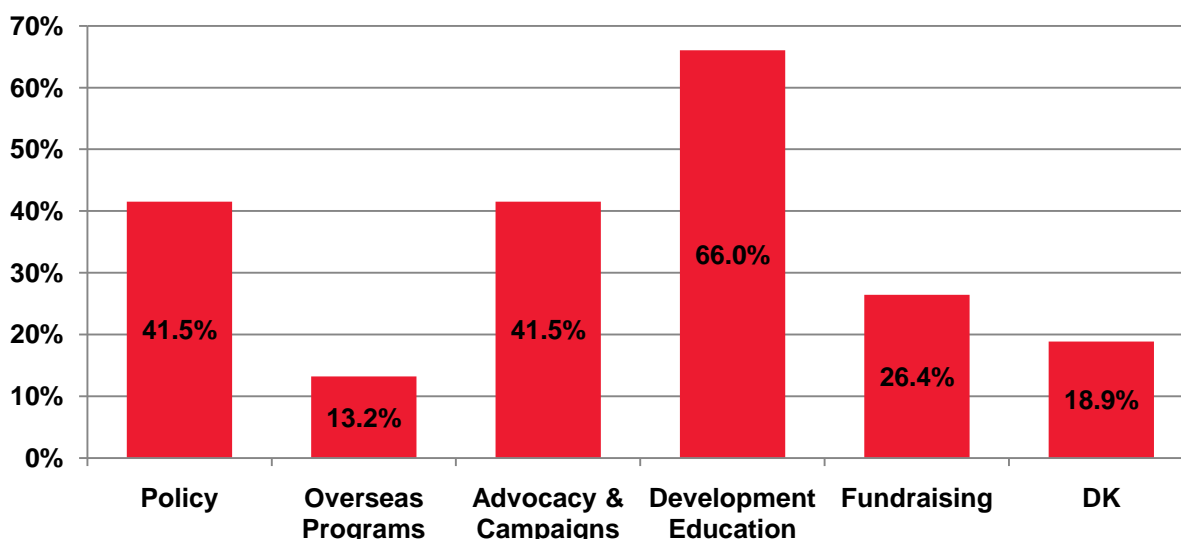


Figure 1. To the best of your knowledge, does your organisation use public attitude research to inform any of the following? (N=53)

As a follow up question, we asked respondents to report their personal and their senior management’s view of public attitudes research against a series of statements, as shown in Figure 2. Both groups (senior managers 37.3%, personal views 39.6%) were most likely to see this research as a long-term investment in building citizens committed to action on poverty, reflecting the sector’s sense that this data is helpful in tracking long-term and social trends. Respondents were also likely to see this research as useful for advocacy and campaigning (20.8%), and to a lesser extent, valuable in its own right (11.3%) or an optional extra (9.4%). In contrast, respondents felt that their senior management were more likely to see it as an optional extra (19.6%), and to a lesser extent useful for advocacy and campaigning (15.7%). A small number in both groups felt that it was useful for fundraising (7.5% of respondents, 9.8% of senior managers).

Several respondents provided their own 'other' views, the most instructive of which were comments by three respondents on their own personal views:

“Research that measures genuine links between knowledge, attitude and behaviour are welcome. Reports that simply measure levels of 'concern' are not.”

“Valuable intelligence, useful for helping us better understand how to engage and communicate with the public”

“I'm sure it would be useful if we had the staff capacity to be able to process such information and it was provided to us in a dedicated form that matched our organisation's priorities”

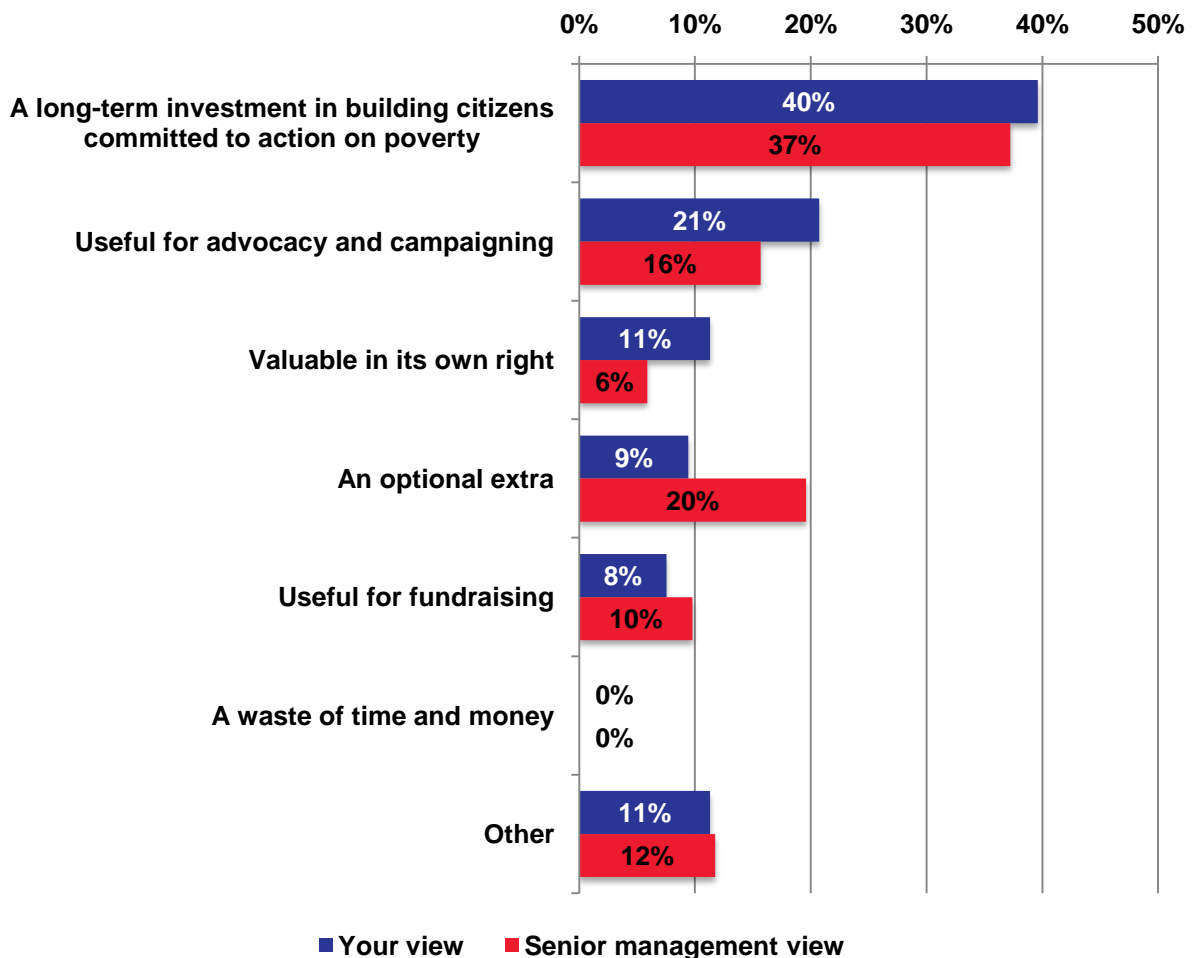


Figure 2. Which of the following statements best matches *your personal* and *your organisation's senior management's* view of public attitude research conducted by DFID or another external organisation? (N=53)

Finally, we wanted to understand more about what research the sector was familiar with, and how it was used by their organisations. We suggested the five largest and best-known pieces of research:

- DFID’s bi-annual Public attitudes polling, conducted in recent years by TNS, the most recent results for which are available [here](#).
- DFID’s larger audience segmentation that defines the six demographic groups (active enthusiasts, interested mainstream, distracted individuals, family first sympathizers, insular skeptics, disapproving rejectors) used in the public attitudes polling.

- Eurobarometer’s semi-regular survey of the views of the public in EU member states about development aid, the most recent version of which from October 2009 is accessible [here](#).
- IDS’s current research project on [Public Opinion on Development](#), which is publishing regular results from a panel of respondents.
- DEA’s regular polling on student and teacher attitudes to development education and global learning, conducted by Ipsos Mori, the archive for which can be found [here](#).

	Know & use a LOT	Know & use a LITTLE	Know & DON'T USE	Don't know of	No response
DFID public attitudes polling	15.1%	43.4%	13.2%	26.4%	1.9%
DFID segmentation work	5.7%	30.2%	11.3%	45.3%	7.5%
Eurobarometer	0.0%	9.4%	18.9%	64.2%	7.5%
Institute of Development Studies	3.8%	37.7%	30.2%	26.4%	1.9%
DEA/Ipsos MORI research	32.1%	41.5%	13.2%	13.2%	0.0%

Table 2. Which of the following sources of public attitude data do you know and use? (N=53)

As Table 2 shows, where research is known, it is generally used to some extent, with the exception of IDS’s research, which is both narrower and more recent than the other research. Across all but the DEA research, at least a quarter of respondents weren’t familiar with the other available sources, suggesting that more needs to be done to make the sector aware of research that is being done.

Furthermore, once the sector is more aware of current research, more needs to be done to equip development professionals to translate this into practical and tangible insights that can be applied to their work.

In an optional question, respondents were asked who should pay for broad-based public attitude research. As shown in Figure 3, 63% said it should be jointly funded between DFID and the sector, with the remaining 37% wanting it to be paid for just by DFID.

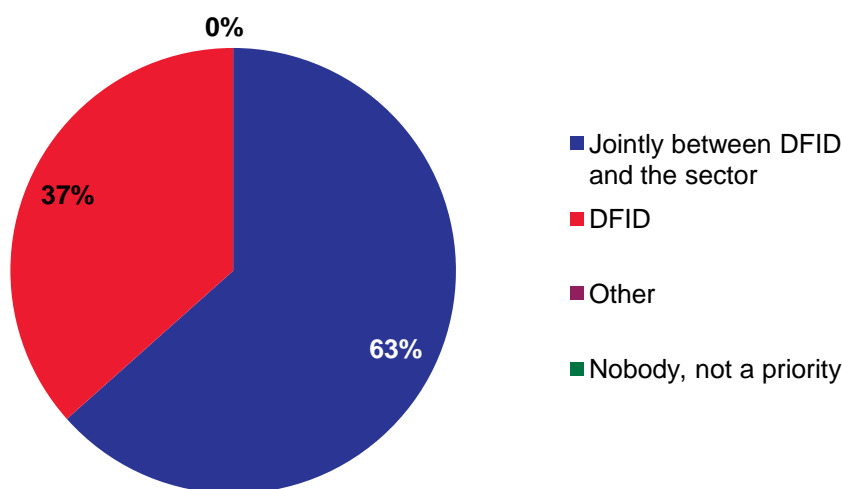


Figure 3. In your mind, who should pay for broad-based public attitude research? (N=41)

The sector feels that support for development is constrained by public perceptions of corruption, aid ineffectiveness and media portrayal of development issues.

A range of public attitudes research has been conducted to assess the barriers to greater levels of support. In the most recent and comprehensive of these studies for DfID in February 2010, TNS asked for a spontaneous response as to what they thought were the main causes of poverty in poor countries, the results of which are shown in Figure 4.

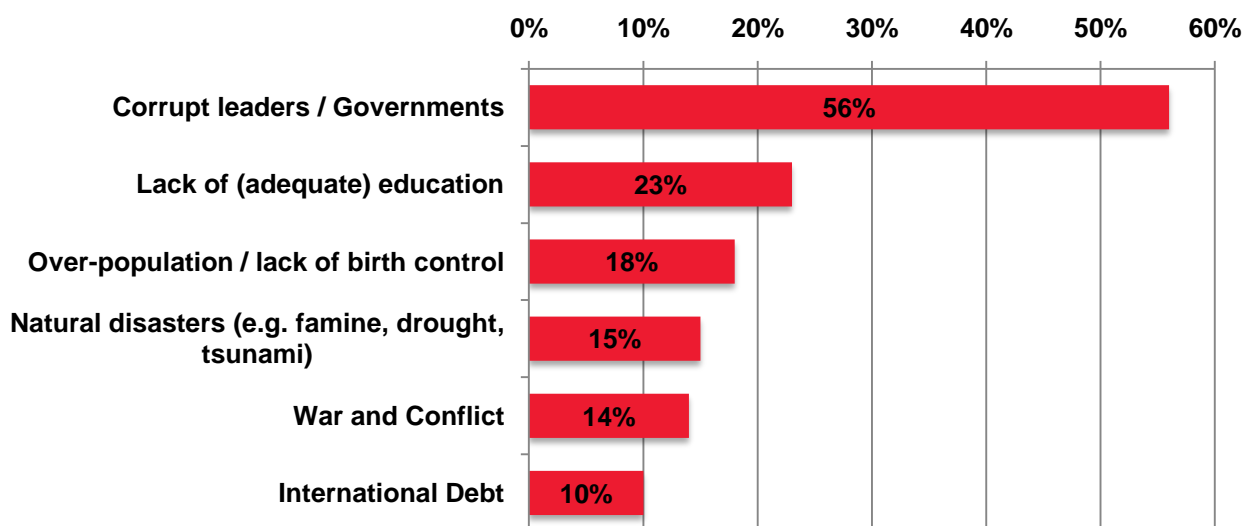


Figure 4. What do you think are the main causes of poverty in poor countries? (Source: TNS)

Additionally, TNS asked respondents about their views about aid effectiveness and corruption. The results are shown in Figure 5, the striking results of which are that 52% of respondents felt that “most financial aid to poor countries is wasted,” and 57% believed that “corruption in poor country governments makes it pointless donating money to reduce poverty.”

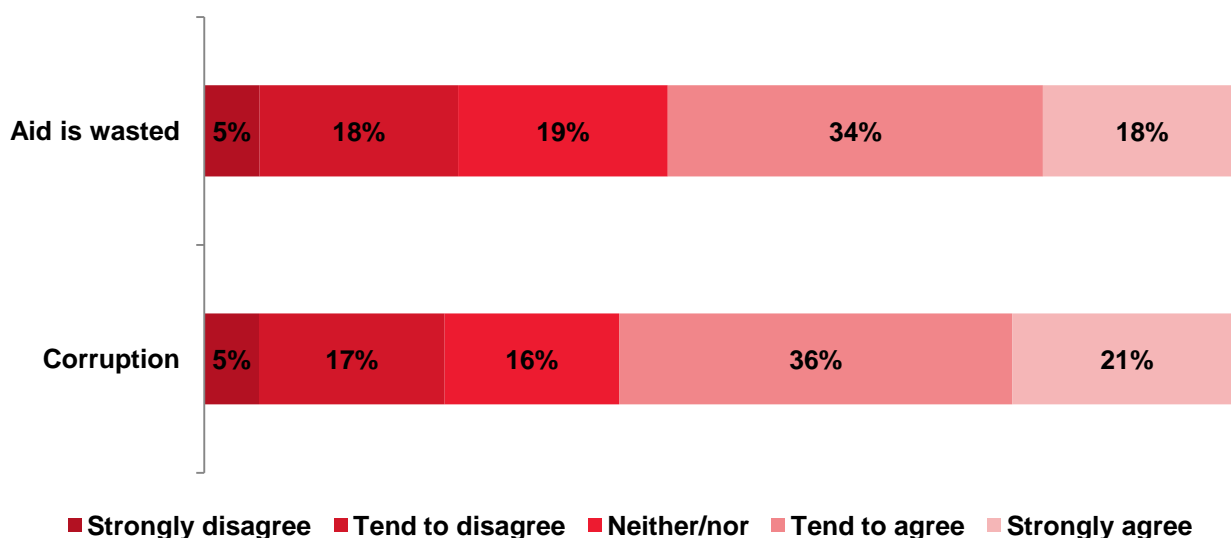


Figure 5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements, “Most financial aid to poor countries is wasted” and “The corruption in poor country Governments makes it pointless donating money to help reduce poverty” (Source: TNS)

We wanted to cross-reference these responses from the public with views within the sector, and so asked our respondents how important they thought a series of issues were as barriers to more positive public attitudes to development, as shown in Figure 6.

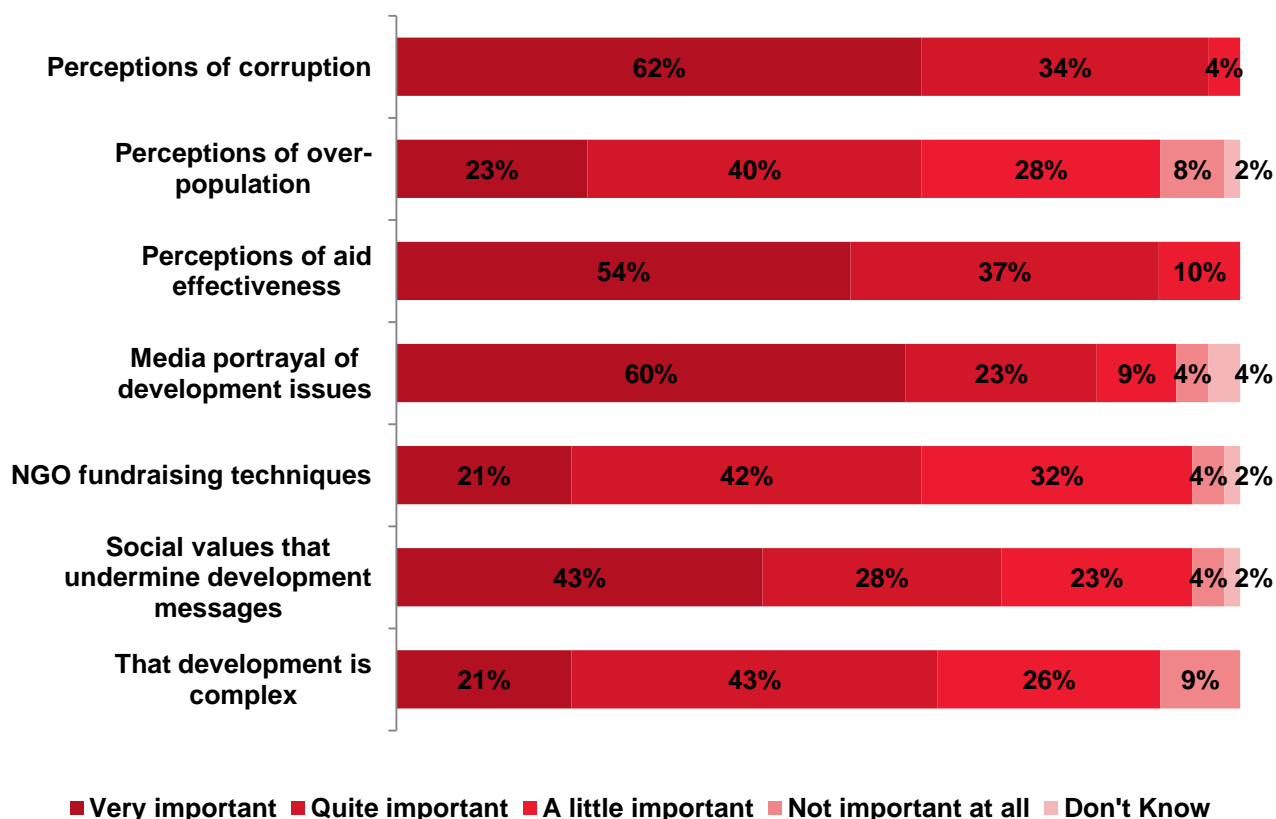


Figure 6. How important do you think the following are as barriers to more positive public attitudes to development? (N=53)

These results are consistent with DFID’s research on corruption (62% very important) and aid effectiveness (54% very important), suggesting that the lived out experiences of sector professionals are raising the same issues as the formal research. Similarly perceptions of over-population were seen as an issue (23% very important, 40% somewhat important), but not nearly as important as corruption or aid wastage, consistent with Dfid’s finding.

In this research, we also asked for the perceived importance of some of the potential drivers for this perception, which found that 60% felt that media portrayal of development issues are very important as a barrier to more positive public attitudes. NGO fundraising techniques were believed to be at least a little important by 95% of respondents. However, respondents felt that consumerist and individual social values that undermine development messages were less of an issue, with 43% of respondents suggesting these were very important, an additional 28% quite important.

Public support for development is on a downward trajectory ... and development education is key in reversing this trend.

When asked about changes to public support for development, responses varied. 35% suggested it is more positive, 23% neutral and 37% suggested a negative change. Looking forward to the next year, changes in public support for development are expected to be negative (55%) or strongly negative (17%). These results are shown below in Figure 7.

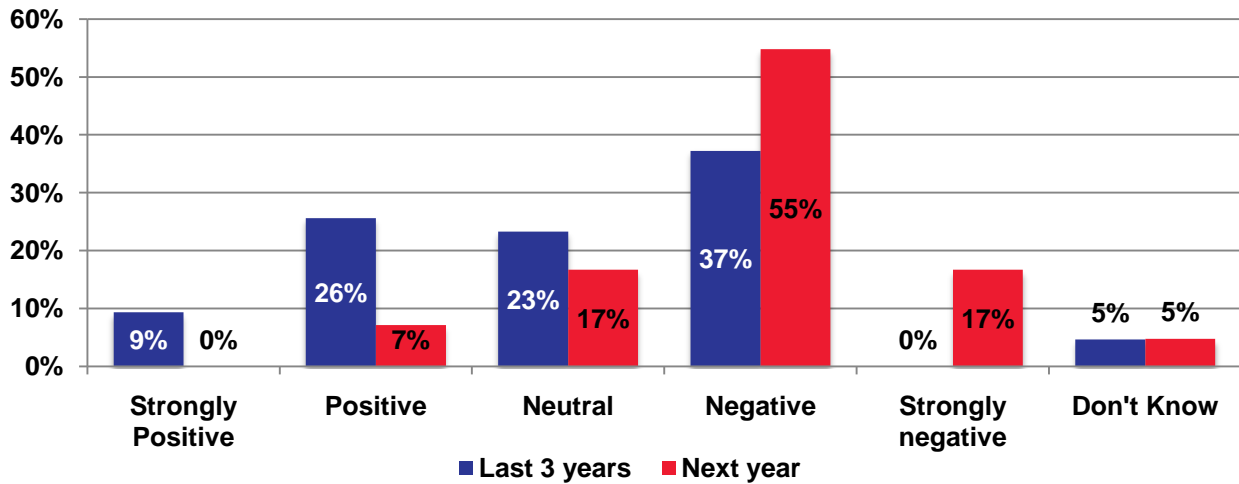


Figure 7. How would you characterise *changes* in public support for development in the last year 3 years? In the next year? (N=43)

The historical view of the of the sector is more optimistic than the public’s actual responses as collected by DFID, who since 1999 have regularly assessed levels of the public who are “very concerned” about poverty in poor countries. After a peak in 2005 around the time of the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** campaign, there has been a steady decline in those reporting that they are ‘very concerned’ about poverty in poor countries, as shown in Figure 8.

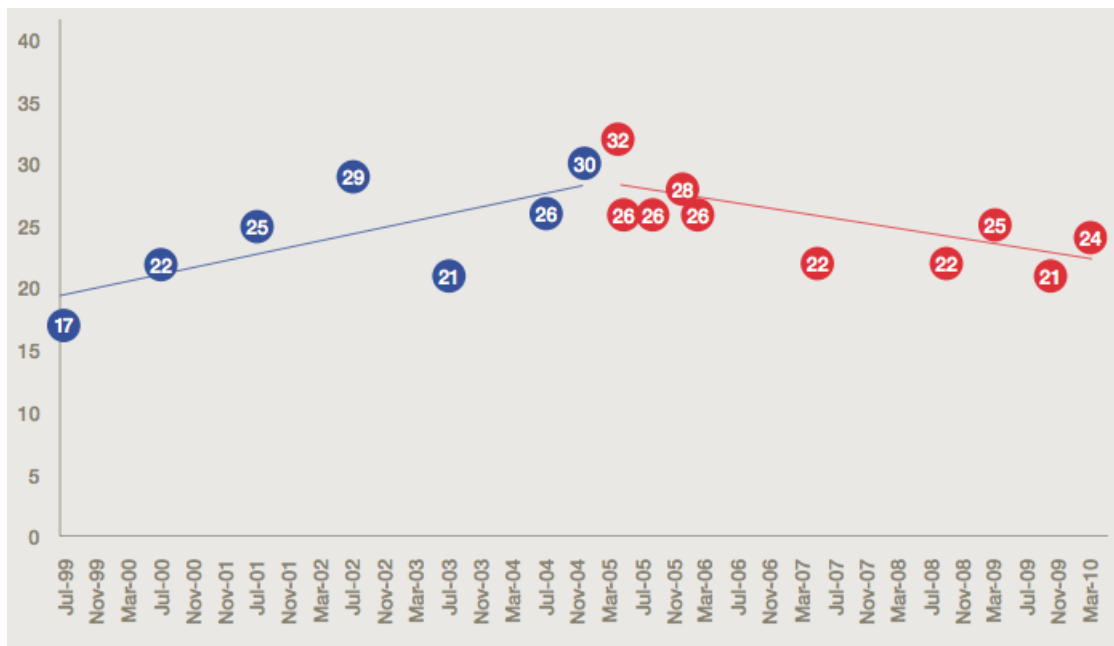


Figure 8. Levels of ‘very concerned’ reported by the UK public (%), 1999-2010 (Source: Darnton & Kirk, 2011, based on DfID Figures)

As a follow-up question, we asked respondents to what extent they agreed with that statement “There needs to be a stronger focus on development education to counteract declining public support for development.” The results are shown in Figure 9, and show that 91% of respondents feel that development education needs to play a stronger role to counteract declining public support for development.

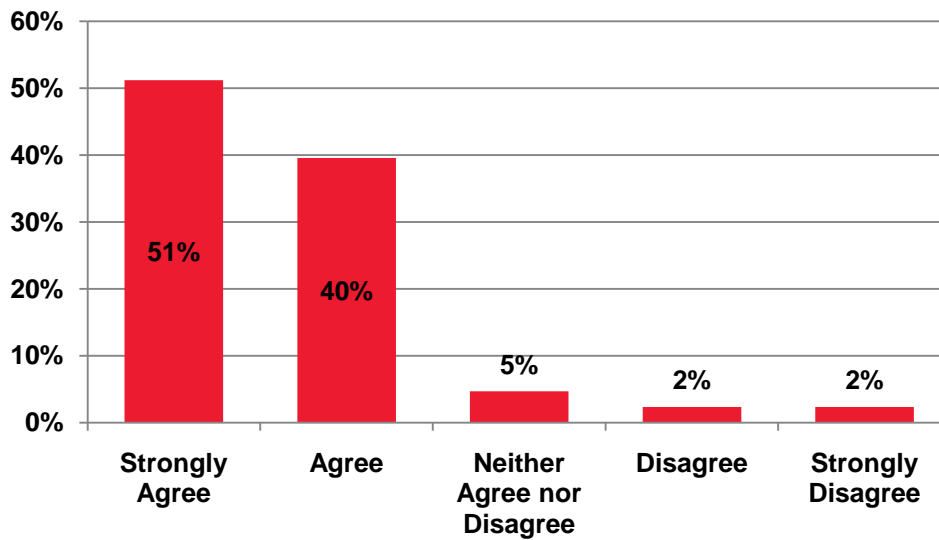


Figure 9. To what extent do you agree with the following statement, “There needs to be a stronger focus on development education to counteract declining public support for development” (N=43)

The sector sees development education as fundamental to building support for the global ‘big society.’

Given that 96% (N=53) of respondents said that their organisation engaged in development education, we were eager to understand their reasons for investment. We asked respondents for both their personal views, and their perceptions of the views of senior management in their organisation about their reasons, the results of which are shown in Figure 10.

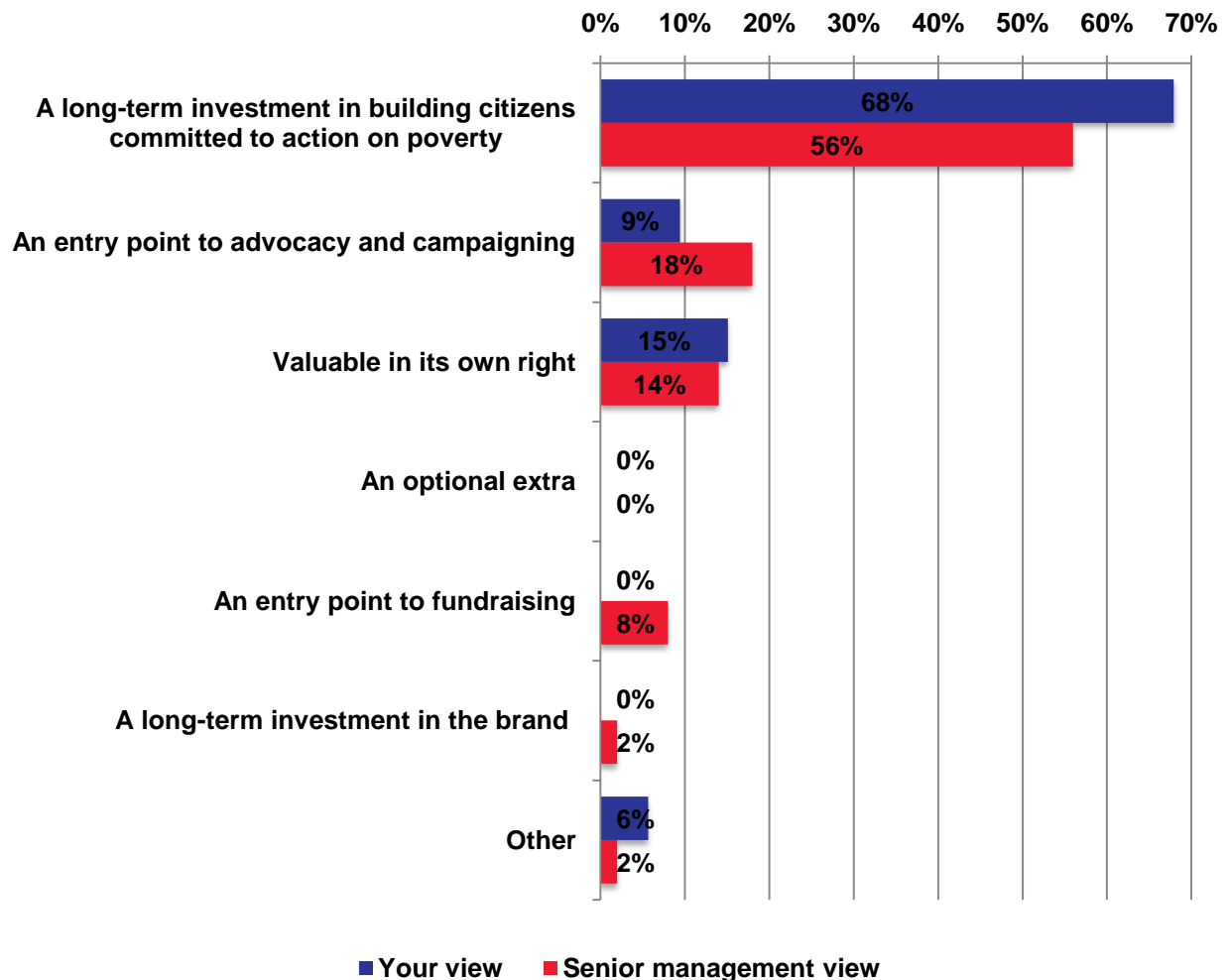


Figure 10. Which of the following statements best matches *your personal* and *your organisation’s senior management’s* view of development education? (N=53)

A clear majority of both respondents (68%) and senior management (56%) responded that development education was “a long-term investment in building citizens committed to action on poverty.” This strongly echoes the vision of a ‘big global society,’ following in the footsteps of the Prime Minister’s pursuit of the ‘big society’ here in the United Kingdom.

This was put clearly by one participant who selected other, and said their support of development was because it is “vital to a sustainable and just future society, the eradication of poverty, the questioning of stereotypes and the prevention of intolerance, racism and political apathy.”

As a follow-up optional question, we asked participants the extent to which they agreed that “There needs to be a stronger focus on development education to foster responsible global citizens for the future,” the results of which are shown in Figure 11.

95% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

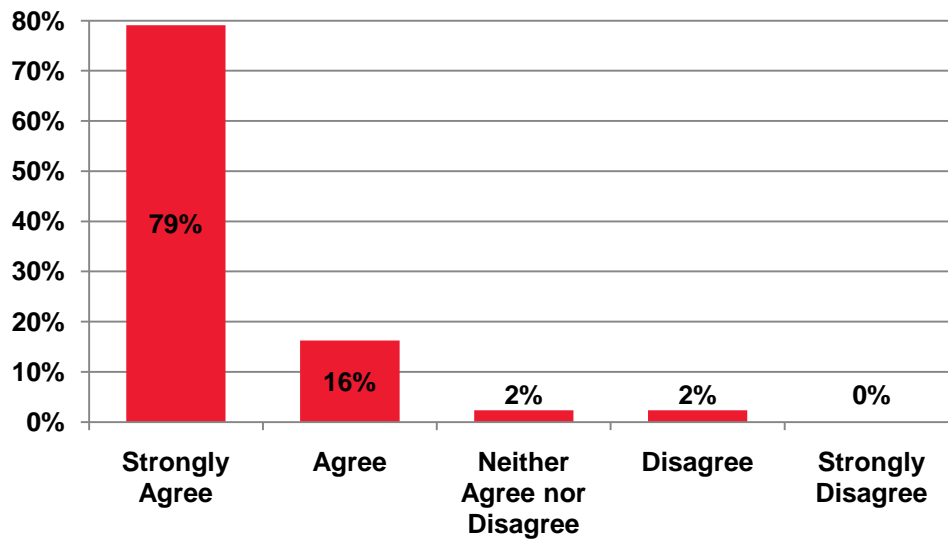


Figure 11. To what extent do you agree with the following statement about the future of development education: “There needs to be a stronger focus on development education to foster responsible global citizens for the future” (N=43)

DFID needs to keep funding development education work across the whole population, not just schools.

The new government has instigated a review into development education activities, including the abolition of the Development Awareness Fund. We asked respondents what they thought DFID should focus on in the future of its development education work, as shown in Figure 12.

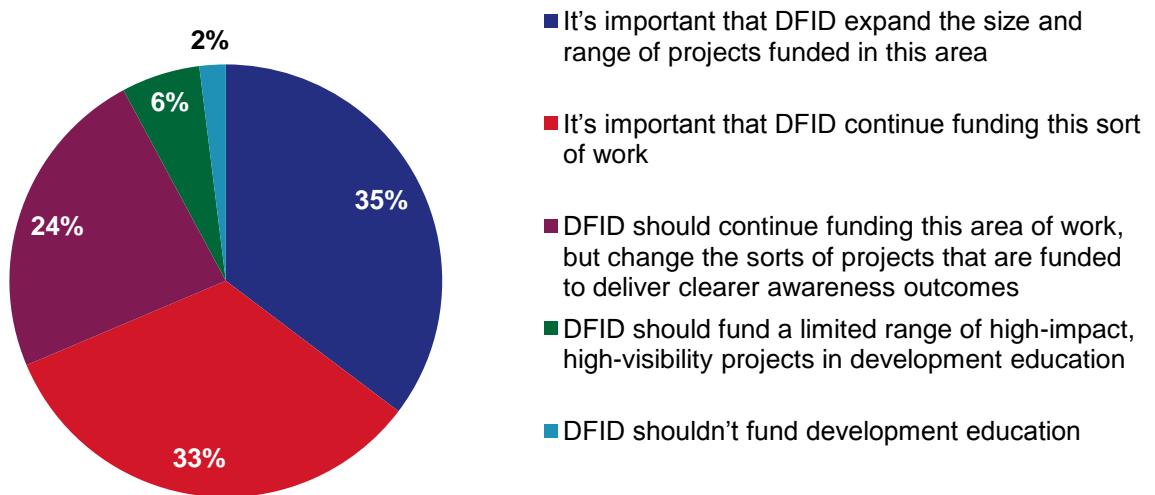


Figure 12. DFID are currently reviewing their future plans for development education and development awareness. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view about how they should proceed? (N=51)

DFID has indicated that funding for development education work will be focused on schools, a decision that an overwhelming majority of respondents disagree with. As shown in Figure 13, 93% of respondents feel that DFID should open its development education funding to focus on the whole population, and just 7% feel it should be restricted to schools.

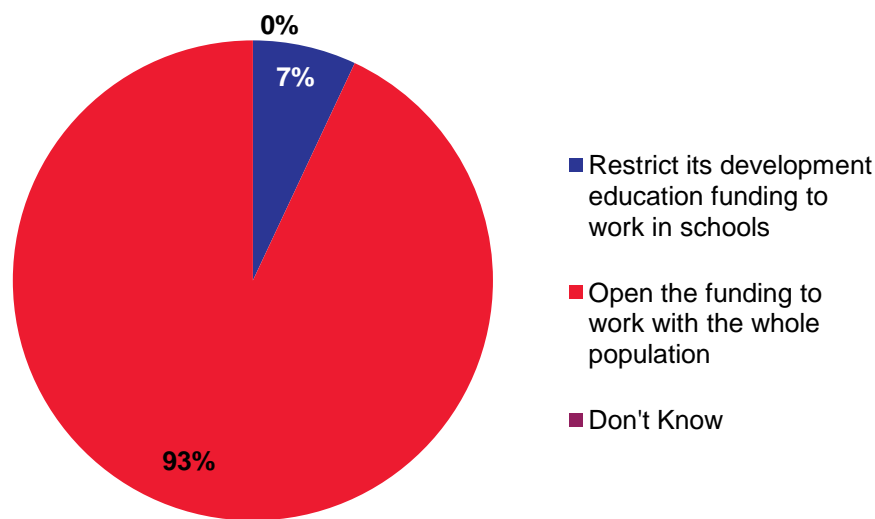


Figure 13. In your opinion, should DFID... (N=43)

This response comes against a setting where 71% (N=41) of respondents work in schools, a smaller group of which (17%) do development education *only* in schools. The full range of audiences for development education is shown to the right in table 3.

Young people	66%
Schools	71%
Adults	46%
Further / Higher Education	34%
Faith Groups	34%
Other	20%

Table 3. Who is the audience for your development education work? (N=41)

Regardless of the focus of respondent's development education work, there is strong support for DFID to support development education work across a range of audiences.

Core Funds	69%
DFID DAF grant	33%
Other DFID	13%
Don't Know	5%
Other	30%

Table 4. How is your development education work funded? (N=39)

In terms of funding for this development education work, most organisations support their work through core funds, with more than half also funded in some way by DFID, as can be seen in Table 4. Others also received funding from the European Commission, V, local government authorities, the lottery, charitable trusts, sponsorship and fees from service provision.

As these resources come under pressure from the withdrawal of DFID's support, there is a mixed outlook for the amount of development education work being done, as shown in Figure 16.

33% of respondents expect to decrease their development education work, while a 29% expect it to stay roughly the same. 36% expect to increase their development education work.

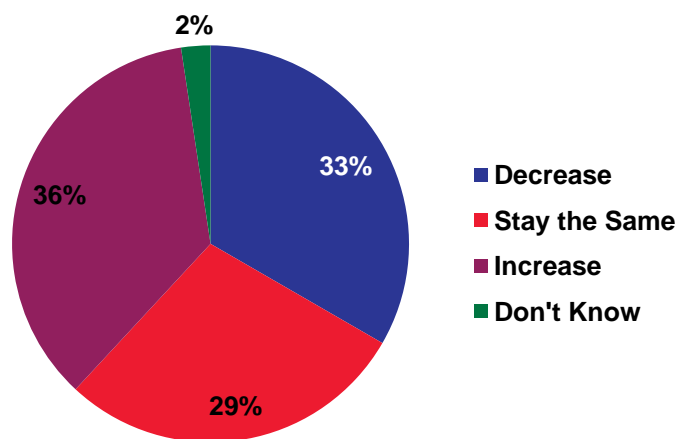


Figure 16. Do you think your own organisation's development education work will increase or decrease over the next three years? (N=42)

References

Darnton & Kirk (2011) *Finding Frames: New ways to engage the UK public in global poverty*.

TNS (2010) *Public Attitudes Towards Development: Spring 2010*.

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/public-attitudes-april10.pdf>, retrieved Jan 2011

