

Eliminating World Poverty:

A Challenge for the 21st Century

A summary

“ This booklet outlines the main themes of a new White Paper* which sets out our policies to help achieve sustainable development of the planet. It is first, and most importantly, about the single greatest challenge which the world faces – eliminating poverty. Nearly one in four of the people of the world live in absolute poverty. We cannot build a just and sustainable world unless we tackle this problem.

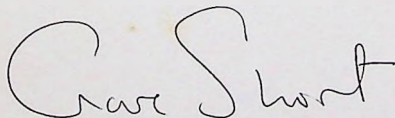
The good news is that we can succeed. The overall successes of development in recent decades have been remarkable – people live longer; fewer mothers die in childbirth; fewer infants die from preventable diseases.

The problem is that the numbers of people living in absolute poverty are continuing to grow and the amount of human suffering is growing.

The challenge now is to apply the lessons of success more broadly. This White Paper commits Britain to using its influence directly and in collaboration with others to mobilise a much stronger international commitment to poverty eradication.

This is not just a moral duty. We also owe it to the next generation to address these issues as a matter of urgency. If we do not do so, there is a real danger that, by the middle of the next century, the world will simply not be sustainable. The combination of population pressures, environmental degradation and the conflict and disease to which this will lead could impose catastrophic pressure upon the planet.

There is real opportunity for Britain to use its influence to help mobilise a new international commitment to poverty eradication. The Government will need the support of the British people to succeed in this. If we work together, we can make real progress. ”



Clare Short

Secretary of State for International Development

November 1997

* Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the 21st Century is available from: HMSO Publications Centre. See back page.

“ Together you and I will begin to build the new society, a society in which each of us has the chance to grow, to achieve, to contribute, to create dignity for ourselves, and not for ourselves alone but for others also; a society in which each of us has a stake, a share; and we will give back to our children what they deserve - a heritage of hope. ”

Tony Blair

April 1997

These words not only reflect the British Government's hopes for the people of Britain, but for the people of every country of the world.

Have you ever considered what life will be like when your children grow up?

What sort of world will your grandchildren see?

Today's world is very different to the one our grandparents knew. What happens in one country can affect the lives of people everywhere. Decisions we make in London or New York can have a profound effect on those thousands of kilometres away. We travel to distant places and buy goods in our shops from every corner of the globe. We all depend on each other. If our grandchildren are to have a safe future, we must improve opportunities for all the children of the world.

In May 1997 the British people elected a new Government with a new agenda – a Government committed to human rights, a more ethical foreign policy and a new approach to international development emphasising more strongly that development matters to all of us. The new Department for International Development (DFID) is responsible for taking this forward.

This is a summary of our new approach. It outlines our plans for eliminating poverty in the world and helping to improve the lives and opportunities of poor people. But above all, it is about building a secure future for our planet and its people.

The Challenge of Development

We want to see a global society where everyone can live in peace and security; have a say in how their community is run; and have access to those things we so often take for granted, like clean water, fresh air and the chance to earn a living and bring up healthy, educated children. We want governments to be accountable to their people; obey the rule of law; protect human rights and create opportunities for economic growth.

But to create such a global society is a formidable challenge. Today's world offers many opportunities, but poorer countries are often unable to take advantage of them. To create the sort of global society we want our children and grandchildren to enjoy, we must help poor people towards a better future.

Why does international development matter?

First, because we have a moral duty to help the poor and needy and to try to create a more just world.

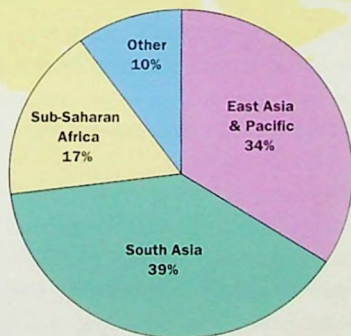
Second, because it's in all our interests. Global warming, polluted oceans, disappearing forests, shortage of fresh water, more and more

We shall refocus our international development efforts to eliminate poverty. We shall support policies which create sustainable livelihoods for poor people, promote human development and conserve the environment.

mouths to feed and not enough land on which to grow food – these things affect us all, rich or poor, wherever we live.

Around 1.3 billion people – nearly a quarter of the world's population - live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$1 (65 pence) a day for all their needs. Seventy per cent of these people are women. They have no access to health services or schools. They feel isolated, powerless, and have little say in how their lives are run. They are often victims of domestic violence, crime and conflict. For many, the prospects of a better life are getting worse as overpopulation and economic growth destroy the environment.

**Regional Distribution of the
1.3 Billion People Living on Less
Than \$1 (65 pence) per day, 1993**



The number of people living on less than \$1 (65 pence) a day at 1985 purchasing power parities adjusted to current price terms.

Source: *World Development Indicators 1997*.

The Challenge *of Development*

But there is a brighter side. On average, people are in better health and live longer. Since 1960, child death rates in developing countries have been cut by more than half. People have more food to eat and the percentage of the population with access to clean water has doubled to 70 per cent. In the last 50 years more people have escaped from poverty than in the previous 500.

We can make even better progress if we build on this experience.

Meeting the Needs of Today and Future Generations

Development must be sustainable. That means we must meet our needs today and those of future generations without sacrificing the resources we need now and in the future. For without sustainable development we will not be able to eliminate poverty.

What are the issues we need to think about?

For a start, we will not be able to achieve sustainable development and make progress in eliminating poverty unless we protect everyone's human rights, including those of the poorest and most disadvantaged people. Every man, woman and child has a right to such things as security, freedom and dignity, regardless of their race, gender, religion or beliefs.

Everyone has basic needs – for fresh water, food, basic education and health care. We must help provide these basic needs for all so that poor people can take charge of their own future.

Another important factor for achieving sustainable development and helping eliminate poverty is providing the right conditions for economic growth. Poor people, particularly women, must be given opportunities to work, generate income and share in the fruits of development.

Meeting Targets

Britain is in a unique position to help lead the world in the fight against poverty. If we are to win this fight we must have internationally agreed policies which promote sustainable development and encourage conservation of the environment. A number of international development targets have already been agreed by the United Nations and we intend to do all we can to meet them. The most important one is to reduce by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.

Economic Well-being

- a reduction by one-half in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015

Human Development

- universal primary education in all countries by 2015
- demonstrated progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005
- a reduction by two-thirds in the mortality rates for infants and children under age five and a reduction by three-fourths in maternal mortality, all by 2015
- access through the primary health care system to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015

Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

- the implementation of national strategies for sustainable development in all countries by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015

Building Partnerships

We need to get the balance right between helping countries develop, helping people enjoy better lives and protecting the environment.

We are committed to spending more money in developing countries on basic education, basic health care and clean water. But we must look at the wider picture.

Building new health centres alone will not reduce the number of mothers who die in childbirth. Women also need to be able to exercise choices, and benefit from improvements in obstetric services and rural transport. Otherwise poor women will continue to be at least one hundred times more likely to die in childbirth than women in Britain.

Building new schools alone will not be enough to improve

- ***We shall work closely with other governments and organisations to eliminate poverty, and use our influence to encourage others to achieve the international development targets.***
- ***We shall pursue these targets through partnerships with poorer countries who are also committed to them.***
- ***We shall work in new ways with the UK private and voluntary sectors and with the research community.***
- ***We shall measure how effective our efforts are against the internationally agreed targets, including the aim of halving the proportion of the world's population living in extreme poverty by 2015.***

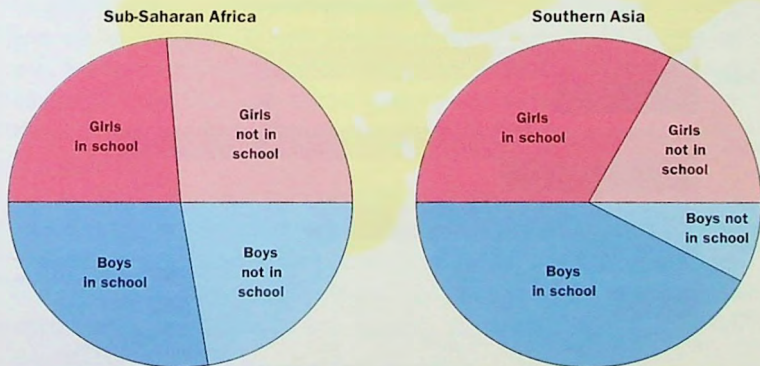
children's education and their future well-being if their families cannot see the benefits of sending their children to school, and that means girls as well as boys.

Working with the International Community

Britain cannot achieve its development goals on its own. It is vital that the international community work together to support developing countries in their efforts to overcome poverty.

Britain already spends half of its money for development - about £1.1 billion - through international organisations like the World Bank, the United Nations, the European Community and the Commonwealth. Their unique position allows them to take the lead on many of the major problems facing the world today, such as the AIDS pandemic, human rights, the plight of refugees and the environment.

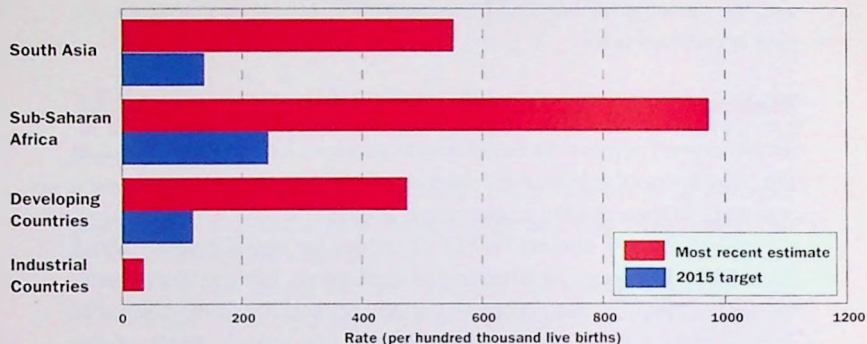
Proportion in Primary School in 1995



Proportion in primary school is the number of enrolled pupils/students aged 6—11 as a proportion of the total population in that age group.

Source: World Education Report 1995 (UNESCO).

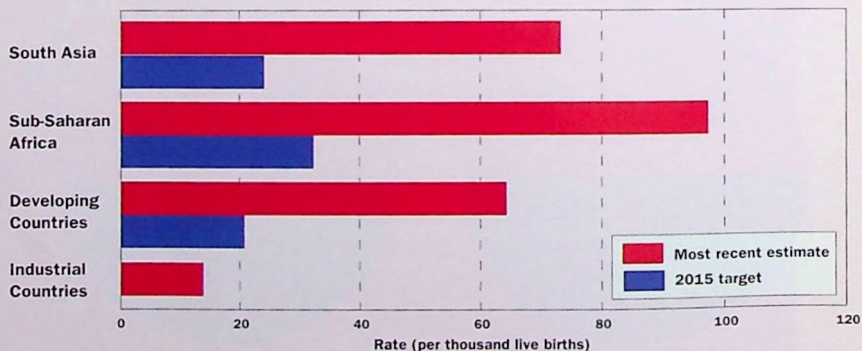
Maternal Mortality Rates



The graph shows what is required to achieve the target of reducing maternal mortality by three quarters by 2015.

Source: *Human Development Report 1997*.

Infant Mortality Rates



The graph shows what is required to achieve the target of reducing infant mortality by two-thirds by 2015.

Source: *Human Development Report 1997*.

We will use our influence within these organisations to try and ensure the international community is committed to eliminating poverty. We will encourage them to support activities which help the poorest people, including provision of schools, health services, sanitation and transport. We would like them to think about achieving equality between men and women and about sustaining the environment.

Building Genuine Partnerships

There must be genuine partnerships between countries, both rich and poor, if we are to address the problem of poverty effectively. Developing countries will need to work out strategies designed to achieve sustainable development and eliminate poverty. Britain and the rest of the international community must be there to give them support. Donors must work together and coordinate their efforts.

We are ready to enter into long-term partnerships with poor countries which are themselves committed to getting rid of poverty and are following the kind of policies needed to meet that goal. We will give them a longer-term commitment, more resources and greater choice in how they use those resources. These may range from financial support for specific activities to training and sharing skills and experience.

We will use these partnerships to encourage economic growth which at the same time helps eliminate poverty. This might include support for good government and human rights; investment in roads and railways, health and education; measures to create jobs for poor people and action to promote equality for women and to end the exploitation of children.

We will concentrate our efforts on those areas where needs are greatest and where we can get results. In countries whose

Building *Partnerships*

governments are not committed to helping the poor, we will try and help through other organisations like voluntary agencies or local government.

Although our priorities will be focused on the poorest countries, we will also help eliminate poverty in better-off places. We shall continue to help those countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia in their efforts to build democratic societies and market economies and we shall try and make sure that all their citizens benefit from reform.

In Times of Emergency

More often than not, it is the poorest people who get hit by natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and hurricanes, or by man-made catastrophes.

In Britain, we've always responded to emergencies around the world, helping reduce suffering and save lives. We will continue to work with our partners in voluntary organisations and the private sector to make sure help is always on hand wherever and whenever disaster strikes.

Our aim is not only to save lives through emergency relief, but also to help communities rebuild and protect against disasters in the future.

Partnerships in Britain

With the Private Sector

We intend to develop a new partnership with the private sector in Britain. We want to work with British businesses, since long-term trade and investment is essential to stimulate the growth which benefits everyone, especially those most in need.

In future, developing countries are going to be increasingly important markets for British goods and services so, it makes business sense as well as moral sense for British businesses to be involved.

As part of this new partnership we will, for example, provide information to British companies about trade and investment opportunities in developing countries; make sure that development projects make full use of British business skills, and work with British businesses to develop local business networks in developing countries.

With Voluntary Organisations

We want to strengthen our partnerships with voluntary and non-governmental organisations. We plan to work with them to win stronger public and international support for the fight against poverty.

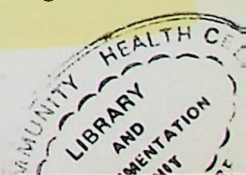
With the Scientific Community

- Over 11 million square kilometres of Africa are infested with tsetse flies which bring illness and death to both humans and animals. Highly effective trapping devices have been developed to replace the use of environmentally-damaging insecticide in many African countries.
- New wood-burning stoves which cut the amount of fuel wood needed for cooking by half have been developed costing as little as £2. This in turn reduces deforestation and air pollution and the cost can be recovered in just a few days.

These are just two examples which illustrate the importance of scientific research for improving lives and conserving the environment. We will continue to invest in research in both developing countries and through partnerships with the scientific community.

To eliminate poverty it is vital that we improve our knowledge and help poor people gain access both to that knowledge and technologies.

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A Consistent Approach

Why do we need to adopt a consistent approach to development? Development assistance plays an important part in tackling poverty but it is not the only aspect of our relations with developing countries. These cover many other things, including trade, defence and security, the environment, agriculture and finance. All too often in the past a trade or agricultural policy has undermined development. If we are going to get rid of poverty, all our policies must be consistent and aim for the same goal.

There are four important areas where all our policies must work together if the world's poor are to benefit.

- *We shall make sure that all Government policies affecting developing countries promote sustainable development.*
- *We shall build on our ethical approach to international relations and see that everyone enjoys human rights, that governments are accountable and that employers adopt certain standards and human rights in the workplace.*
- *We shall use our resources to promote political stability, strong societies and effective responses to conflict.*
- *We shall encourage financial stability and reduce the debts of developing countries to levels they can cope with.*

The Environment

What happens to the world's environment matters to every one of us, rich or poor, north or south. We need to tackle environmental problems at both national and international levels.

At the national level, poor people are often the ones who suffer most from environmental damage and because vital resources such as land have been badly managed. In poor rural areas, where people have to compete for scarce resources to make a living, the poorest get squeezed out leaving them no choice but to exploit precious soils and forests. In towns and cities poor people often live and work where pollution is worst, and their health suffers as a result.

We must conserve our precious natural resources or the world will not be able to support growth in the future. In rural communities we will work to promote sustainable agriculture which tackles hunger and poverty but at the same time does not damage the environment. We will help poor communities manage forests to benefit both present and future generations.

By the beginning of the next century, more than half of the world's population will be living in towns and cities. Air pollution, poor sanitation and contaminated water will be major concerns for millions of people. We want to work with local communities to develop urban programmes that provide employment, shelter, schools, hospitals, clean water and sanitation.

At the international level, we must address serious global problems such as climate change in a coordinated way. If emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide continue to rise, by the year 2100 average global temperatures will have risen between 1 and 3.5 degrees centigrade. Sea levels could rise by up to a metre over the same period. Some 46 million people now live at risk from

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flooding. By 2100 it could be 118 million. Britain is at the forefront in combating climate change. We are reducing our own emissions of greenhouse gases and urging other developed countries to do the same. We are also helping developing countries limit their emissions.

We will also work with developing countries to help them manage their forests and better natural habitats, to protect freshwater resources and combat land degradation and the growth of deserts. We will assist them in making their power generation more efficient and support greater use of renewable sources of energy.

We will also continue to make money available through special funds, on top of our development assistance budget, to help the developing world play its part in conserving the global environment.

Trade, Agriculture and Investment

Why should there be fair trade?

Trade and investment are vital for eliminating poverty. They help generate growth which in turn helps people get jobs and earn a livelihood.

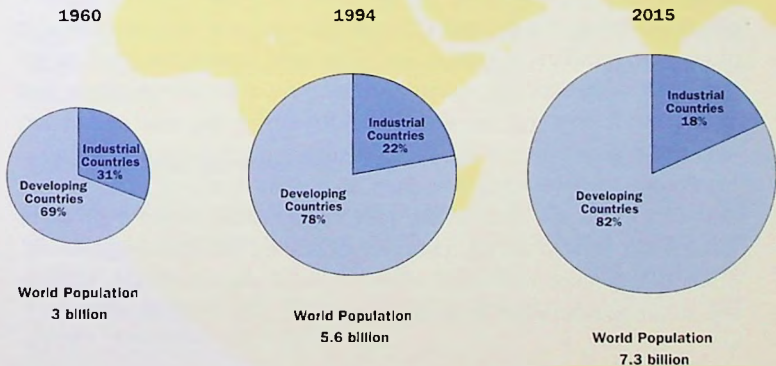
It is important that we help developing countries take advantage of increasing international trade and investment. We support an open and fair trading system which benefits all countries. We will work with international organisations to make trade in goods and services easier by dismantling trade barriers and improving access to markets.

One area where poorer countries find it difficult to compete is in agriculture. We want to make it easier to trade in agricultural products by improving access to markets and phasing out export subsidies. We are committed to the reform of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy and will make use of the new opportunities this presents to benefit developing countries.

Foreign investment can bring huge benefits to developing countries – jobs, exports, new skills and new technology. But the conditions must be right to attract that investment. This means having stable and accountable governments and stamping out corruption. Developing countries also need laws to deal with such things as monopolies and mergers and restrictive business practices. We are working within international organisations to develop the best ways of putting these in place.

While it is essential to dismantle barriers to international trade and investment, we must make sure that the benefits from this help eliminate poverty.

Population Growth



Source: Human Development Report 1997; World Population Projections 1994-95.

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We want to make sure workers everywhere enjoy human rights and are free from exploitation. This is especially so of women and children. Many millions of children are exploited in sweat shops, on plantations and for sexual purposes. We want them to have more say in the decisions that affect their lives. We will increase our support through international organisations to eradicate abusive child labour, and encourage employers to adopt human rights in the workplace.

We will also work with producers and importers to increase trade in goods and services that provide income for poor people but come from renewable sources and do not damage the environment.

We will also do our best to make sure that the export and advertising of pharmaceutical products and items such as baby milk is done in a responsible way. And we are working with other governments to get a global ban on tobacco advertising.

Efforts to reduce poverty are often undermined by bribery and corruption. Bribery often starts in developed countries so we strongly support initiatives to make the payment of bribes to foreign public officials a crime. It is generally poor people who bear the heaviest cost of corrupt activities. If people are to be able to exercise their rights and live in a just society, countries must have a framework of law and regulation. To this end, we will support reforms in the legal sector and help make governments and the civil service work more efficiently.

People in developing countries also need practical help in how they can make the best of the new opportunities brought by fairer world trade. How to set up customs procedures and trade regulations, promote their goods and meet international product standards – these are all areas where British expertise can be used to good effect.

Political Stability and Preventing Conflict

Half of the world's poorest countries are suffering, or have just emerged from, serious conflicts.

Children, women and elderly people are 10 times more likely to be victims of conflict than soldiers. Millions are forced to flee their homes. Today there are over 30 million refugees and they are among the poorest people in the world.

We all want to live in a peaceful and stable world. Without peace and security we cannot eliminate poverty. We want to understand the causes of conflict and help societies resolve their disputes without resorting to violence. Working through international organisations, such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth, we will try to prevent and resolve conflict.

The protection of human rights will be at the centre of our programmes of humanitarian assistance and we shall continue to support organisations which help the victims of conflict.

We will also try to limit the means of waging war by playing an active part in arms control negotiations. We want a global ban on the use of landmines and have pledged more support for mine clearance programmes.

Economic and Financial Stability

A major problem facing many poorer countries is that of debt. By trying to pay back the money they owe to richer countries they no longer have enough resources to spend on vital services such as health and education. The fact that these countries still owe money discourages others from investing in them.

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Britain has long had a policy of converting loans to grants, and where possible we will cancel the debts owed to us by poorer Commonwealth countries which are committed to eliminating poverty. We will do all we can to encourage other donors to do the same.

We shall encourage financial stability and reduce the debts of developing countries to levels they can cope with.

Money laundering – the movement of money made from crime to hide where it has come from - can have a serious effect on a country's economy, even corrupting the entire political and financial systems in some extreme cases. So we are helping countries set up task forces and controls to combat money laundering.

These measures also play an important part in the international fight against the illicit trade in drugs – a trade which undermines the social and economic development of many countries and poses a serious threat in our own society. Britain is one of the major donors to the United Nations Drug Control Programme. Through this we fund a wide range of projects aimed at tackling the drugs problem.

Poverty is one of the root causes of drugs trading in many developing countries. By tackling poverty and helping poor people develop lawful occupations we can help to stem the drugs trade too.

Building Support *for Development*

International development cannot succeed without the support of the international community. That means the support of each of us.

The British people have always shown that they care about what happens in poorer countries through their support for voluntary organisations and the contributions they make to help the victims of disasters. We want to strengthen that support by giving you the facts about the forces that are shaping our world.

It is important that you know about the causes of poverty and inequality in developing countries and what we can all do to help. It is also important that you understand the threat to all our futures if we fail to tackle problems like environmental degradation and overpopulation.

We want to increase development awareness in Britain. We believe children should learn about development issues at school and that every adult should have the chance to influence the Government's policies. So we are going to set up a working group to take these ideas forward. We will also establish a special forum to be

- **We shall increase public understanding of why we all depend on each other and the need for international development and we shall ensure that resources for development are used as intended.**
- **We shall provide the necessary resources for the development programme.**

held every year where individuals and groups from all sectors of society can share their experiences and ideas on development.

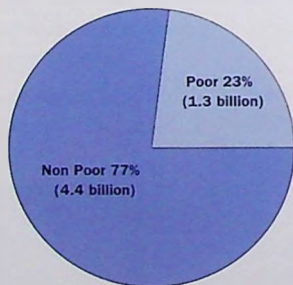
The Department for International Development will publish an *Annual Report* so you can see the progress we are making.

We will consider the case for a new International Development Act to update the legislation governing the use of public money provided for international development.

In recent years, the international community has provided less resources to support poorer countries. We want to reverse that trend. We are committed to increasing the amount of money we spend on development and in future all the assistance we give to developing countries will be in the form of grants, not loans.

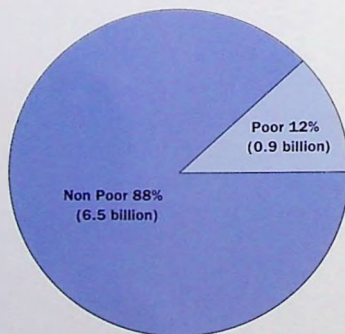
Numbers in Poverty Below \$1 (65 pence) Per Day

Current Position 1995



World Population 5.7 billion

Target 2015



Estimated World Population 7.3 billion

The number in poverty is defined as the number of people living on less than \$1 (65 pence) a day at 1985 purchasing power parities adjusted to current price terms.

Source: World Development Indicators 1997; World Population Projections 1994-95.

The Future

Sustainable development is central to our aim of building a new society. Not just a new society in Britain, but a new global society. We must all be committed to work for our children's futures, their children's futures and the future of our world.

As taxpayers, consumers, parents and tourists you can help us build a better life for everybody on this planet. We hope we can count on your support.

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DFID

Department For
International
Development

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A Challenge for the 21st Century

(A Summary) Is also available in:

Bengali
Gujarati
Hindi
Punjabi
Urdu
Chinese

From the

Department for International
Development,
94 Victoria Street
London SW1E 5JL

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the sort of issues discussed in this
booklet, you can do so in our White
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