

TRANSCRIPT OF DEVELOPMENT DRUMS EPISODE 8 – TIMKAT

Host: Owen Barder. Guest: Jonathan Glennie

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Owen Barder

Thank you for downloading Episode 8 of Development Drums. This is Owen Barder in Ethiopia, very happy to be introducing a new episode after a long break over Christmas.

I'd like to wish our listeners a Happy New Year and offer a special thank you to those of you who got in touch, wanting to know what the next episode would be.

Now today's episode is a bit different from past editions of Development Drums because basically we are going to do a book review. I am joined today by Jonathan Glennie who is the author of a new book, *The Trouble With Aid*.

Jonathan is currently the Christian Aid country representative in Colombia and was previously involved in the Make Poverty History campaign. Jonathan, thanks for coming on the show.

Jonathan Glennie

No worries, hi.

Owen Barder

Let's start by explaining about the book. There are lots of rather dollar very worthy books about the aid business and in my view this not one of them. This is a short readable book, full of anecdotes and examples about the way that aid works. And missing out all the kind of lofty rhetoric that you often read in books like Jeff Sachs' books on ending poverty [*The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*]. So the ideas that might otherwise be quite boring, such as aid conditionality, are brought to life with examples that illustrate and support the arguments.

Jonathan, do you want to tell us why you wrote the book? It's quite critical of aid and you spent a long time campaigning for more or better aid. So why did you write this book?

Jonathan Glennie

Yes, it's true. I did. I was part of the Make Poverty History campaign when I worked for Christian Aid in London and clearly an important part of that movement was a campaign for more and better aid. So, in fact, really by default, I was campaigning for more and better aid although it wasn't an area that I really – I focused more on the better aid, I would say. I wrote this book and thanks very much for those comments. I mean, that's precisely what I was trying to do. Not another academic treatise.

There are lots of books, especially at the moment about the impacts of aid and some of them are really good. Most of them are quite long and a lot of them get into the technicalities quite quickly. I was very much thinking about campaigners, thinking about people very interested and passionate about Africa and aid, and I wanted to present, I suppose, arguments that do the rounds in the academic community and actually very much in the Ngo community but tend not to then be shared with most people. I think I have to say that. So, I wrote a short book and I hope it communicates well.

Owen Barder

I think it does. I think it's full of really interesting examples and anecdotes. And it doesn't slip into jargon which is one of its great strengths. And one of the things you've said is it is the only book that looks at the overall impact of aid. And you've divided that analysis into four parts.



The direct impact of aid; second, the impact of aid on policies in developing countries; third, the impact of aid on institutions and governance; and then lastly, the macroeconomic impacts on growth and exchange rates.

And if I've understood you right, your argument is that when you take all four of those effects into account, government aid to Africa can actually have some quite harmful effects. And it's possible that those harmful effects might outweigh the good the aid does.

Jonathan Glennie

But, it doesn't, doesn't...

Owen Barder

Is that right?

Jonathan Glennie

Yeah. Well, that's absolutely right and it's really a response to what I considered to be a one sided analysis of aid. And this is true in a lot of the books – even the books that talk about is aid working, they'll look at what I've described as the direct impact of aid; how many schools have been built? How many roads have been built? How many children have been vaccinated? And they are really, really important. And in my book I made very clear that those impacts of aid in general have been positive. And I don't want to undermine at all the impressive work that NGOs and governments do with regard to those issues.

But I do want to say, actually there are other impacts of aid as well. Impacts to those working in the business, know quite a lot about. Conditionality, the way that governments are forced to change their economic and social policies if they want to receive aid. Really importantly, accountability. Who are governments accountable to as more and more people are accepting the institutions, the state that is vital if we are going to have long term development something that wasn't accepted in the '80s and early '90s.

Owen Barder

So we are going to come to those details. But let's just in aggregate, in total – it's not clear to me from the book whether you are saying that in total aid does actually do more harm than good.

Jonathan Glennie

Yes.

Owen Barder

Well, it's just that there are some circumstances some of the time where because of these negative things that you described and which we'll talk about in a second. But you are saying that just in some circumstances some of the time it does more harm than good.

Jonathan Glennie

Yeah. It's much more the second. In some circumstances some of the time I think it's something you might agree with Owen that trying to say aid does good worldwide or aid is bad worldwide. I don't actually find that that particularly helpful things to think about. Has aid helped Botswana in the last 30 years? Has aid helped Vietnam in the last 30 years? How could a change in the way we give aid to Bolivia – they are actually what we need to be talking about.

And then I'm actually concerned about this idea that doubling aid to Africa as this kind of general response to poverty is the right way. I'm happy to see aid increase to some countries. I think Botswana might actually be a good example which is relatively well governed and relatively little amount of aid. But in other countries have for far too long received far too much money for reasons of policy, conditionality and provisions of accountability especially, and therefore aid should be reduced to those countries. It's much more an individual analysis of each circumstance. I know that gets complicated and I know that that sometimes isn't that helpful for making big campaigns.



But I do think it's really vital because when you speak to African civil societies, it's those people themselves that tell you we are not so sure that all this focus on aid is a good thing.

Owen Barder

So let's go into each of the four issues in turn. And the first one is about the direct impact of aid. So, you have a really quite useful and succinct description of the aid industry today and the changes in it. And then you talk in the next chapter about the impact that aid has for example people having access to health clinics and schools, particularly where user fees were abolished. And then you also talk about some of the examples where it's either not been a success or the success has been less clear. And you use examples about mega projects such as dams and infrastructure which have been quite damaging on the environment or have had damaging impacts on the community. Now I just want to be sure in this chapter you – if I've read you right is that you are saying that most aid projects in terms of the direct impact do have good impact, but there are some that don't work properly where the harm outweighs the good. Is that right?

Jonathan Glennie

Yes, I think so. I mean I don't go into a hugely technical analysis of each aid project or to kind of analyze that. But I do say that I'm happy to accept that all of the positive impacts of aid have been very positive. And I don't want to fall into the trap, which I think some people who are nervous about aid, let's say, or who criticize aid, try and coalesce everything to support their argument. I don't want to do that. I want to actually be on this and say, look yeah, the positive impact of aid have been very positive. Let's put that on the positive side of the ledger. And then let's look at all of the impacts and see overall on balance what we ought to be doing. I mean my view actually is that all of those positive impacts, that's about money, that's about money being available. And is an important part of the book which says we can't just reduce aid, we have to replace aid. There are very many ways in which money is leaving Africa. You know, we can build schools, we need money but we don't necessarily need aid.

Owen Barder

The next chapter, which I found the most vigorously and persuasively argued, deals with the strings that donors attach to aid, which is known technically as conditionality. And you say, if I've understood you right, that the impact of aid on the policy of government in developing countries has in many ways been more important than the direct impacts of the aid activities themselves. Tell us a bit about your argument on the impact of the strings that are attached to aid.

Jonathan Glennie

Well I think that's true and I think that's actually quite commonly accepted by a lots of people. It was certainly the intention of the aid givers. They weren't in the business of giving a little bit of money here for a school, a little bit of money here for a hospital. What they were much more interested actually in was structural adjustment. And that was the phrase that was – became common. So I make the case that when you look at the direction, the change in direction of African policy over the last 20, 30 years and economic policy and social policy, it's a strong case to make. But the impact those policy changes have had on poor people, the loss of jobs, the charging for basic services, the undermining of productive capacity.

All of those impacts, which were very much associated with aid because the issue was if you don't make these changes, we won't give you the money are actually deeper and importantly more long term for development in Africa, for people in Africa than the sometimes often positive changes which was actually how the money was actually spent. Some people say that aid conditionality, well it didn't work, that it's impossible for donors to insist on this kind of policy changes. And I make the case and I think make it strongly that that's simply not the case. Africa and most countries in Africa especially the high aid dependent ones have significantly shifted their policies on a range of issues and that's linked to aid.

And I also make the case that even if you don't agree with me, I think I'll also make a strong case that those policy changes have been negative for poor people in Africa. And even if you don't think that, then you should still agree that the policy changes are more important than the direct impact. And therefore, if you are making an overall evaluation of aid, you have to take them very strongly into account.



Owen Barder

I think it is important to distinguish the normal, perhaps the more common critic of aid conditionality is exactly what you just said which is it doesn't work, the conditions donors attach to aid aren't rigorously applied enough or that the governments to which they give aid have other rather more pressing political priorities, and that means that the strings that get attached to aid actually don't make any difference to the decisions that government makes. But you're making quite a different argument which is you're saying that it does actually make a difference in some countries and when it does make a difference, it has actually made things worse rather than better.

Jonathan Glennie

I don't think it makes a difference in some countries. I think it has made a massive difference. I agree with some of the analyses which demonstrate that in – on certain occasions governments have refused, have fought against the impositions of donors and there is evidence that that happens. Of course that happens in negotiations but when you look at the last 20, 30 years of economic and social policy in Africa, I think it's simply irrefutable that the direction has been taken under very great pressure from the donors, and the anecdotes and evidence of that are just insurmountable. Every African civil servant will have a story of how they had to do X because otherwise they weren't going to get money. And actually one of the most pernicious aspects of it is that African governments have learned what policies are and aren't acceptable. So in a lot of cases those negotiations simply, that used to happen, simply don't happen any more because they know that they wouldn't get X policy through. They know that it's a waste of political...

Owen Barder

So it becomes a form of self-censorship basically.

Jonathan Glennie

It's – there's a huge amount of self-censorship that goes on because the accepted policies are well known.

Owen Barder

Now is it your take that the conditionality, if used well, if used in pursuit of good policies, if used in pursuit for example of policies encouraging governments to use more of their money for social services or to reach marginalized communities, that that would be a good form of conditionality and it could actually make policies better in developing countries?

Jonathan Glennie

I think...

Owen Barder

The problem is that we just use conditionality to pursue the wrong policies.

Jonathan Glennie

I think that to a certain extent that's true. I mean I think especially on human rights issues, I think that the pressure of – I suppose the international community can be brought to bear on any country, not just a recipient country.

My emphasis would more strongly be on the U.N. and other forms of pressuring countries to do the right thing. In general, I am very nervous about conditionality because it undermines democracy. And that's the subject of the next chapter we are about to talk about.

So in general I don't really have faith in the better aid kind of vision that one day we will achieve this conditionality whereby donors are insisting on the right thing for African governments. There is no evidence that that's happened in the past. And I am afraid there is little evidence that that's about to happen.

Owen Barder

You're listening to Development Drums with me, Owen Barder, in Ethiopia. And my guest today is Jonathan Glennie. And we're talking about his new book, *The Trouble With Aid*.



We have talked about your chapters on the direct impact of aid and on the impact of aid on policy. Let's turn now to the third of your four effects, which is the impact of aid on democratic institutions.

Here you say that the way that donors behave makes it harder for citizens to claim their political and economic rights. So for example, you talk about the parallel systems that donors set up to manage programs.

You say that technical assistance can actually reduce rather than increase capacity. You say that aid can fuel corruption. And you say that aid can make things worse by keeping bad governments in power longer than they should be.

And I suppose deep down what this comes to is that if money goes to governments other than from taxing their citizens, then the relationship between a government and its citizens is undermined. And so almost inevitably, aid is going to undermine the institutions and accountability of government.

Is that a fair summary of your view on how aid does damage to institutions?

Jonathan Glennie

Yeah, I think it's a reasonably fair summary, especially the last bit, and that's the fundamental bit. I've just been reading an article by Adrian Wood who is a previous DFID economist. He makes I think similar arguments. It's not a simply a case throwing money at the problem. It's more complicated, that politics is involved and it's something that is very difficult to measure.

I can't put up statistics on accountability as against statistics on how many schools are built. It's a complicated, subtle issue. It's very, very linked to this concept of aid dependency that everyone recognizes but which is hardly ever recognized in policy documents. It's this understanding that you have when you speak to African civil servants – African civil society when they say we've become apathetic about voting because what good does it do, only half of all these are accountable to us; the other half are the donors.

Owen Barder

Is there something that we can say about why that problem has been more of a problem in, say Zaire, as it used to be, but less of a problem in places like Korea or Botswana or indeed in post-war Europe under the Marshall Plan where aid is seen to have had good direct impact...

Jonathan Glennie

Yeah, well I mean I think that's a really important point and that's one of the main points I made really. You look at Botswana. It received huge amount of aid in the '70s, then a significant reduction. It hasn't received huge amounts of aid relative to its GDP since.

The same happened in Korea, those kind of short bursts of aid and the same actually happened in the Marshall Plan in Europe although its context was entirely different because the institutions were very well developed previously.

The difference now is that most African countries are about to enter their fourth decade of very high aid receipts. And that's why the issue of aid dependency has come to the fore. It's not the case of a small amount of money or even a large amount of money over a short period of time.

It's a question of decade-after-decade accountability of government to citizens has been systematically undermined because actually it's more important what donors think than what citizens think.

And as we understand more and more the importance of the state and the importance of democratic and accountable institutions for development, it's not just a question of building up separate systems, of getting money in there so people can be vaccinated.



In the long term we have to develop systems, we have to develop institutions. And that's I suppose the major worry of many of my colleagues in African civil society and it's a major worry of mine. It's a major worry in the academic literature. But it's not something that's come out much in our campaigning or our policies on aid as NGOs and in fact as donors or recipients.

Owen Barder

Many of the people who support the idea of budget support, which is when aid donors give aid to government budgets, say that budget support suffers from fear of these problems that budget support can actually contribute to building these institutions because the money is flowing into the budget.

Then it's up to parliament and civil society and the local decision-making process to allocate and account for that money. Is that – I got the sense from your book that you do think that budget support has less of the problems. So do you think that if donors give more of their aid as budget support that you could get around this institutional problem?

Jonathan Glennie

I understand the push for budget support. I think it came as a recognition of some of the arguments I make in this book. And they are common. I mean I am not saying that I have totally made great leaps and bounds in terms of the theory that over micro-conditionality causes great problems and therefore ideally lump-sums would be given to governments, more or less trusted in order to promote their policy of decision-making.

Unfortunately, it gets one of the real cruxes of the point. It's simply very, very hard to do that and that's what we are seeing. Budget support – you know DFID always uses the cases of Ghana and Tanzania and hardly any others. It's not clear where budget support is really working. Ultimately, this issue of donors having the power over tax payers is still the main issue.

Governments and the U.K. government did it in the case of Ethiopia. It's going to happen all over the place when democratically elected governments in Africa do things that are not viewed as sensible or right by donors. They will pull budget support. Those self-censorship issues, those knowledge of the bounds of the possible which in my view have been really detrimental, not just to Africa but to all sorts of developing countries in recent years.

I am working in Latin America at the moment and you can see all over the place. Latin America has just broken out of that feeling that nothing else is possible, only neoliberal policies and they are implementing other things and not all of them are working, but they are just feeling that yes we can, to use the current phrase, try different things. In Africa that's simply not going to be possible as long as the main arteries of funding come from donors.

Owen Barder

And finally the fourth of your arguments about effective aid is on the macroeconomic impact. In this chapter you say that – well you say first the growth doesn't all – economic growth doesn't always lead to poverty reduction and then you say that there is contradictory evidence about whether aid leads to growth in the first place and you talk about the possible bad effects of aid because of what's known as Dutch disease, which is where the exchange rate is pushed up by aid inflows and that can lead to a loss of competitiveness. I know this isn't the major part of your argument but I just wanted to...

Jonathan Glennie

I also talk about the positive impacts of aid on growth. I try and give a balanced analysis, it is not trying to bash aid; it's trying to look at that as a macro – look at the macroeconomic impact and say look some of these are going to positive, some of these will be negative. The main point again is that they have to be taken into account by people making policy about aid, and in this case they absolutely are, I mean the plethora of IMF reports especially and from all over the place looking at the macroeconomic impacts of aid.



Owen Barder

Okay, so we have now got four overall effects of aid, the direct impact, the impact on policy, the impact on institutions and the macroeconomic impacts. What I felt about all of those is that in every case those – the negative impacts that you talk about are things that donors could fix if donors behave differently. In other words, they are not inherent to the aid relationship that even if you think that there are these damaging effects. They're all things that if the donors changed the way they behave and changed the way they work together and work with developing countries that you could actually get rid of the harmful effects and still keep the good effect. Is that, is that too optimistic?

Jonathan Glennie

I think that's probably the crux of our disagreement then, Owen. Because my argument really, and I suppose if I were able to address leaders of African countries, I would say that yes, it is possible to envisage a world in which donors no longer sought to impose their conditions and their wants on poor countries and that, although I'd say it is harder to envisage a world in which the accountability problem is solved. I think that any donor-recipient relation where so much money is received from abroad will almost inevitably undermine the accountability of government to citizens, but even if we can envisage that world, I would urge African leaders and African people to look at the history of the last 50 years of aid and show me where, not show me where, I am not very relevant, but to look where that's actually happened.

And then to look at the current policies that are in play. There are some countries undoubtedly leading the way on this. Great Britain is one of them, Norway is another and there are a number of that really seem to understand and get this issue of accountability and conditionality, but the majority of donors, and I think we're privileged living in the U.K. because we don't actually see the reality. The majority of donors see aid very much part and parcel of their security and foreign and economic policy.

The idea that they are going to follow Britain and delink aid from all of those concerns, well the evidence of them suggest it. I am all for trying to modify the aid system that's what we have to try and do, but I think realistically looking at it in the next 10 years, do we really expect aid to get so much better, I don't think there's the evidence for it.

Owen Barder

So at the end of the book you describe a number of things that rich countries could do, and you say should do, to address the problems that developing countries have other than through the aid system. For example, doing more on trade, doing more on migration, tackling domestic subsidies like agricultural subsidies that distort markets and make it hard for developing countries to trade their way out of poverty. You talk about arm sales and illegal capital flows and corruption and intellectual property rights and so on. Do you think that there is any more prospect of rich countries really addressing those issues in a way that is good for developing countries than there is for making the kinds of reform to the aid system that you think are fairly improbable?

Jonathan Glennie

Well I think that's a very good point. I think that's a very good critique, I mean we do live in a very, in a world in which these things are slightly unlikely, but I want to make one thing really, really clear: if aid falls to Africa tomorrow, if aid is halved to Africa tomorrow that would be an absolute disaster for African countries. What I am setting out is not radical aid cuts it's a different vision of the political future. It's over the next 10 years not to seek double aid but seek to reduce aid for the reasons that I have given and I think that the fundamental problem of accountability is one that's not going to go away. That's why African governments should not wait for the west to do the right thing. They should set in train and this I think is what also you are finding in Latin America which I think is an area of great interest at the moment politically and economically. They should set in train those policies which will lead to reduction aid dependency and increase in revenue and more accountability to citizens regardless of whether the west is onboard or not. And that is a very difficult way to go down. Clearly, Europe and U.S. and China and Japan are extremely powerful players but it's suggesting a shift that there is far more money leaving Africa at the moment than arrives there in aid in the form of capital flight for instance.



Western campaigners should be focusing on that and so should African governments rather than holding out for this day that one day aid is going to be delivered in a fantastic form. There is no evidence to suggest that it will. They should be focusing on climate change. They should be focusing on all these issues that actually are much more generous to Africa. We allow our western leaders to come out of meetings and say we are being so generous, we are giving an extra 0.01% of our GDP to Africa which sounds great because it is kind of lots of notes on the end. But it is actually a really tiny gesture compared to what they need to be doing which is trade rules, climate change some of the things you have mentioned.

Campaigners need to be focusing on that and not letting Western governments get away with the small change that is the aid market. And I suppose, even if you disagree with some of my analyses that aid is doing harm in many countries in Africa – and I hope that the book sways you that I am right – but even if you disagree with that, I suppose the second main argument is, even those people that do want to see more aid don't think it is as important as a range of other issues.

But with very limited amount of resources and time, campaigners need to focus on the really important things and allow aid slowly to fall off the map.

Owen Barder

One thing you're careful to say in the book is that the problems you identify, you refer to them several places as problems with government aid as distinct from aid from non-governmental organizations, NGOs and charities. But on the face of it, some of the problems you described seem like they would apply to aid given by NGOs as much as they do to government aid. So did you exempt NGOs from your criticism because you think that actually that kind of aid is a lot better? Or because you didn't look at it in much detail, so you didn't want to comment? Or is it because you worked for an NGO?

Jonathan Glennie

It's basically the first one. I don't think it's necessarily better, but it's a far, far smaller scale. So – I work for Christian Aid. It's true that we have certain issues as a powerful organization when we turn up in Rwanda, there will be accountability issues. There will be in a sense policy conditionality issues, in the sense that we won't work with everyone, we'll work with those people we think share our vision and mission.

So those issues do exist in the NGO world. But on a far, far smaller scale. I don't think it's sensible to think that they're making big differences in the accountability or the policy direction of whole countries. That's why I focused on big aid. And also I think that – there's a chapter in the book, I think it's chapter 8, which looks at why aid is really given, where I explain in my view the kind of political reasons for aid given from donors, what they hope to achieve by buying countries to a certain extent, and by buying access to – for their businesses. And that aspect is much less important with NGOs, because in general, they're more concerned – genuinely – with the poor. Obviously they have political issues, and I'm not saying that NGOs are perfect at all. But all of the aspects I look at in the book are relevant to NGOs, but at a far smaller scale and therefore not quite so important.

Owen Barder

I should just say in defense of people who work for official aid agencies, that the people I know who work on aid in developing countries genuinely are interested in the welfare of the people.

Jonathan Glennie

Absolutely, without a shred of a doubt, I didn't mean imply that at all. The people that work in development agencies tend to try and do absolutely their best within the limits of where they're working. What all I wanted to say is that aid is very much part of the foreign policy of most countries in the world.

Owen Barder

So let me sum up my overall view of the book. I thought it was a really readable, commendably short explanation of why aid is not as effective as it could be. I thought it brings to life a subject which, frankly, when you start reading about the Paris Declaration and all that stuff, can be pretty dull. And I thought it



explains what seems at first like a paradox, which is that giving money to somebody, you would think ought to make them better off, how that can actually make people or a country worse off.

So while I – I think the analysis I agree with, but I do in the end disagree with the conclusion. Because I think these problems are real, I think they are being talked about. And I think they are to some extent being addressed. I don't think they're being addressed enough or fast enough. But I do think they're soluble. I do think that – I take the view that we can create aid giving institutions and you've talked about NGOs as being an example of that. And I don't see why some of the advantages of aid giving institutions can't be replicated by official donors.

Jonathan Glennie

Do you think aid dependency is a very serious issue in Africa? And if so – especially with regard to accountability. And want to make it really clear that policy conditionality, despite what some analysts might say, is very much still going on in Africa. But with regard to aid dependency, do you think it's an issue? And the second question then, Owen, is how much longer do you think African countries should receive these very, very high levels of aid? And in fact what we're calling for – and I say we as the general kind of NGO community and U.K. government and everyone – is doubling of that aid. How long for? 2015? In 2025, do we still want to be – Africa to be receiving these very high levels of aid?

Owen Barder

Well, you talk about very high levels of aid. But they're actually not all that high. They're much smaller, the current levels of aid, than for example, Europe was receiving in the Marshall Plan. They're probably about a quarter or a fifth per head. What we're talking about at the moment...

Jonathan Glennie

That was for a very short amount of time.

Owen Barder

Right, but what we're talking about, what we're saying at the moment is that for the last four decades, we've been giving about \$0.20 per person per week to Africans. And at the end of that, we're now saying, well we've been giving you \$0.20 a week for years now and you're still poor, so you must have squandered all our help and assistance. \$0.20 a week is not a huge amount of aid. And so I don't...

Jonathan Glennie

It is relative to the size of their economies. And the actual number, if you're looking at the accountability of governments to citizens, the actual amount of money in terms of cents and dollars is not the key factor. The key factor is the amount of aid as a percentage of government spending, compared with the amount of revenues as a percentage of government spending. In most countries in the world – in the 1960s, for instance, Africa and South Asia received roughly the same amount of aid per GDP, 2.3% according to the stats I got off the World Bank. And now the average is about 9% in Africa, whereby in Asia it's reduced to 1%. In countries like Mali, Mauritania, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Burundi, have received for decades up to 30% of their GDP. Their GDP, not their government spending, in aid. So the point about aid dependency is not that a lot of countries have received boosts from big money previously and that's really helped. It's about decade after decade of very high levels of aid. And that is new – and that's why we're in new era of aid now.

Owen Barder

But – and I would like to see a world, as I'm sure you would, in which countries didn't need that kind of support. But I would also like to live in a world in which if there are people who are so poor that they can't feed their children or can't educate their children or can't access basic healthcare, that people who are rich in the world as a matter – not of charity, but of social justice, transfer the money from people who have that money to people who need that money. Now, do I think that it ought to come with all...

Jonathan Glennie

Yeah, I agree with that.



Owen Barder

...the policy conditionality and strings attached that you described? No, I don't. But do I...

Jonathan Glennie

Yeah.

Owen Barder

Do is want to see a world in which we say, no, we don't want to live in a world where people who need those kinds of resources, we're not prepared to give it to them, because we haven't figured out a ways to do that that doesn't interfere with their governance and accountability. No, I want to go on giving money to the poor as long as the poor need it. And this is not a huge amount of money from the point of view of the rich world. Do I think it's more important...

Jonathan Glennie

No, it's a tiny amount of money.

Owen Barder

...than fixing the trade rules or climate change? No, I don't. I think that those kinds of policies that rich countries should be pursuing for poor countries are exceedingly important and probably much more important than anything we can do with aid. But – I live in Ethiopia, you live in Colombia. You must see as I do every day, you go to a clinic here where somebody is being treated for a disease as a result of some donor giving the money for that and you're changing people's lives. And you go to some of these places and you just want to give them all the money in your pocket, the amount of good they're doing. And I don't see a problem with us trying to find a way to do that in a way that doesn't do the harm that you described.

Jonathan Glennie

Yeah.

But – I mean – on that moral impulse is – I suppose, writing a book like this, some people were worried about writing a book like this, especially from an NGO background, because people thought it might undermine the moral impulse to want to do something. And I've really tried not to do that. I share absolutely that moral impulse, we need to find a way of sharing everything that we have, especially as it derives in many ways from a history of colonization and oppression of these countries. It's just that in – I'm arguing that in overall analysis, we will, yes. And it implies tough decisions. And in a sense, it might be easy for me, because I don't have to make them, I'm not in a position of power. But those medicines that you mentioned that are a result of aid have to be put on the positive ledger of the aid equation.

But then we also have to look at the possible cuts in jobs, the possible economic downturns, the possible increase in poverty which was a condition of receiving that aid. And I see this as the fundamental question, probably between your analysis and mine. We may share a very similar analysis of the concern about aid dependency, concern of policy conditionality and those things. You are more confident that aid can be improved, and I am less confident. That might be almost a good summary.

Owen Barder

Jonathan, thanks very much for coming on Development Drums.

Jonathan Glennie

Thank you.

Owen Barder

I have been talking today to Jonathan Glennie, whose book, *The Trouble With Aid*, is publish by Zed Books at a very reasonable £12.99 for the paperback. You can find the link to his book on the Development Drums website, which is developmentdrums.org. Jonathan, thanks very much.

Jonathan Glennie

Thank you.



[Music]
