

Will the G8 deliver according to its broken promises?

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As I head to the Baltic coast of Germany to prepare for the outcomes of another G8 Summit there is an ominous air to the news I am hearing from my colleagues on the ground there. It would seem that despite the outstanding mass mobilisation of people in Germany and London, where I was, last Saturday, the handover of a petition containing over a million voices to Angela Merkel and Tony Blair in Berlin on Sunday, their call is in danger of falling on deaf ears, again.

Chancellor Angela Merkel has importantly set the Heiligendamm Summit agenda to include a session focused entirely on Africa covering issues like HIV/AIDS, Health Systems, Infrastructure, Climate Change as well as inward investment in Africa. This offers a precious opportunity to address some of the root causes of poverty and voice the concerns of millions of people worldwide who have been part of the growing campaign for poverty eradication since 2005, but is it going to deliver? Will relentless advocacy of GCAP members in national and international coalitions around the world be taken on board?

The GCAP G8 working group, comprising over 120 representatives led by Kel Currah of World Vision, has been working all year to develop common lobbying positions for this meeting. Their specific focus is on getting some meaningful change in four main areas: aid, HIV/AIDS, health & education as well as climate change. They will issue a strong response to the outcome in Germany on Friday afternoon and in parallel GCAP coalitions in Africa and Asia will respond with the issues most relevant to their realities, once more showing the wide reach of the successful GCAP mobilisation.

The group is pushing for the fulfilment of the aid promises we all remember being made in Gleneagles, Scotland, namely to increase overseas development aid (ODA) by an extra \$50 billion by 2010. It saddens me to see how despite these promises recent ODA figures show that, in fact, aid by rich countries is falling - by no less than 5% last year. At the 2005 G8 summit in Gleneagles, it was agreed that 0.7% of national income would be made available in effective aid. The heads of state should now be bound to timetables for delivery of this aid, ensure it is not shackled by delivery conditions and show leadership in the donor community. What we see instead is a blow in the face of the poor. The leadership we have seen is not in boosting results, but in boasting figures: re-labelling military expenditures as ODA does not make for more money to the poor but rather less.

What looks like a polemic issue already is the promise to achieve universal access to prevention, treatment and care for all people with HIV and AIDS. Two years on, progress is unacceptably slow. Although a growing number of countries, including Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Lesotho, have produced detailed national plans for achieving the 2010 target, the donor funding response is inadequate. To achieve the 2010 target, the G8 must commit to a comprehensive funding plan that includes resources for the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Additionally, the G8 needs to support measures (including greater trade flexibilities) to promote the production and distribution of generic medicines.

On ensuring a comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS, the search for better tools for health promotion, prevention, access to testing, diagnosis and treatment must be fully financed; these objectives should be pursued in the context of a wider effort to support the development of better health services. The G8 should support the recruitment and retention of an extra 4.25 million health workers and free healthcare in developing countries. It is estimated that \$21 billion is needed for this. Still, this is not a luxury, it is a necessity as I see in my country South Africa where AIDS is the biggest killer of people leaving behind a trail of orphaned children.

Another critical element to call it a positive outcome from this summit is a real declaration of commitment to address climate change. Poor people and poor countries are often the first and worst affected by climate change, while having done least to bring it about. The G8 should reach collective commitment to reduce their own carbon emissions by 80% from their 1990 levels by 2050. Binding agreements must be made to keep global warming at less than 2 degrees. A failure to do so will cause floods to be more frequent, like those in Mozambique , and worse, the disappearance of countries.

While the images we see from Germany may be scenes clashes with the police, the overwhelming form of protest has been peaceful and good natured. In the UK , I can say that the spirit and energy I witnessed on the banks of the Thames last Saturdays as we boated down from Westminster supported by 5000 people, was wholly indicative of the power civil society has to hold their governments to account. And holding our governments, holding the G8 to account is our promise. A promise we will keep.

The next time Germany could find itself with the prestigious role of hosting a G8 Summit would be 2015. It would be a disgrace if they found themselves hosting the meeting at which leaders had to admit they had failed to reach the UN Millennium Development Goals. If the most recent alarming reports on the rising of the sea levels prove to be true, we can be sure of one thing: the meeting will not be at the same location in Heiligendamm because it will then be underwater.

I will report back from Germany on whether Chancellor Merkel has managed to wield her influence as host to avert this scenario or not.