

INTRODUCTION

The annual DATA Report strives for cold calculation. It represents an attempt to track down and present the facts, brutal, honest and clinical as they are. But cold, hard facts can leave you just that – cold. The big promises and grand ambition from 2005 are only slowly being delivered, and the energy and enthusiasm that welcomed the Gleneagles commitments in 2005 could easily start to wane. Thankfully that energy and dynamism isn't waning where it really matters – in Africa. Africans are hard at work putting the modest increases that have been delivered to work. They're busy proving time and again that success is possible, that the promises that the G8 made, when delivered, will be put to use to achieve their intended outcome – saving lives, reducing extreme poverty. These successes should inspire us all to deliver fully that which has been pledged.

2008: AN OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN SUCCESS

This 2008 report comes out at a pivotal moment. Just before the EU leaders analyse their own record in Brussels, just before France takes over the Presidency of the EU, just as the G8 are about to convene in Japan, and amidst a serious debate about the future of US foreign policy and the role of development therein.

This report is being released at the midway point of two efforts to realise real change for the world's poor: the longer-term effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) between 2000 and 2015, as agreed in the Millennium Declaration of 2000, and the short-term effort to get Africa on track to achieve these goals between 2005 and 2010, as agreed and pledged by the G8 and EU in 2005.

Above all, it is a year in which the growing body of evidence for what is possible on the ground has become impossible to ignore. Last year DATA hailed the fact that 1.3 million Africans living with HIV/AIDS were on life-saving antiretroviral drugs – just one year later, that number has surpassed 2.1 million. Last year DATA celebrated the fact that 20 million more children were in school since 1999 – today that total has grown to 29 million. But there have been gains in other sectors as well. Though still too high, child mortality rates have declined. Rwanda and Ethiopia have posted significant reductions in the incidence of malaria, by 66% and 51% respectively. Almost 26 million children received a package of basic immunisations between 2001 and 2006. And whereas there were only three democracies in Africa in 1989, that number had increased six-fold by 2005.

Such statistics are not exceptions: they have begun to weave a broader story of the potential in Africa. There are currently 18 countries on the continent (not including oil producers) whose economies have been growing at an average of 5.5% per year for the past ten years.¹ What goes into those

growth rates is a complicated combination of factors, but many of the critical elements highlighted in this report are present. Eleven of the 18 countries are democracies,² 13 of them have reached HIPC completion point and another is at decision point.³ These 18 countries put almost 14 million more children into primary school between 1999 and 2005, have increased the percentage of their people with access to clean water and have reduced their child mortality rates; access to ARVs and bed nets has increased as well.

These are the stories that must be kept in mind while reading The DATA Report. This is what Africa has accomplished with the modest assistance that has been delivered thus far. This success gives broken commitments no place to hide – no excuse that these programmes don't work, no excuse that the money is wasted. It starkly shows that, if commitments are broken, it would be the result of broken will. Moreover, it places a clear spotlight on the decision facing the G8. They can either choose to build on the successes to date and initiate an honest effort to meet their commitments, or they can choose not to and instead continue down the path of incrementalism. Incrementalism will continue to help some people in Africa, but would be a disaster for most. It wouldn't solve the food emergency or help the poorest people adapt to climate change that they didn't bring about; it wouldn't stem the ongoing spread of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS; and it certainly won't bring about the ultimate goal – help for Africa to 'build the successful future all of us want to see'.⁴

THE DATA REPORT: AN EXERCISE IN ACCOUNTABILITY

A whirlwind of momentum whipped up by campaigners encouraged world leaders to make some significant promises to Africa at the Gleneagles Summit in Scotland in July 2005. The commitments laid out in the Gleneagles G8 Communiqué weren't the be-all-and-end-all of development; they alone weren't going to be 'the end of poverty'. But, if delivered, they could help begin to 'make poverty history' for millions of Africans. They represented a turning point in which the world's most powerful leaders were willing to sign their countries up for real, concrete deliverables. They signed, we celebrated – and we began to watch, closely.

DATA set out to conduct an annual assessment of the extent to which the G8 are keeping these commitments. The DATA Report represents an effort to evaluate the specific commitments that countries themselves have made and their progress to date. DATA has tried to strip off its campaigner's hat to ensure that it monitors the commitments that were made, using its best interpretation of those commitments and the best available data, rather than comment on the quality of those commitments.

The 2008 DATA Report follows the structure of the 2007 version, with a few noteworthy exceptions. DATA has included more analysis of commitments that African leaders themselves have made in key sectors including health, education, water and sanitation and trade. DATA has also offered some analysis of African efforts to ensure better governance and security, as part of the report's governance and security chapter. Both the analysis of African progress toward their commitments and the donor analysis are hindered by the availability of data. There are very few sources of data measuring African progress and, while some efforts such as the Africa Monitor and the Ibrahim Index are leading the way on African accountability, much more must be done

to allow for accurate evaluation. To assess donor progress, DATA has relied on figures from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which has provided preliminary estimates for overall development assistance in 2007, but which provides only sectoral analysis through 2006. Despite the welcome efforts of the DAC to push for more detailed and transparent information in a timely fashion, it in turn is limited by the extent to which individual donors report such information.

This report is also limited by the timeliness of data. The measure that is available from the DAC of 'official development assistance' (ODA) reflects expenditures in a given calendar year, but these expenditures may be the result of political budget decisions made one or more years earlier. This means that a report, like this one, published in 2008 assesses 2007 expenditures based on budgets set in 2006 or even earlier. This prevents DATA from taking into account more recent actions by donors. For example, if a donor read this report in June 2008, recognised that it was off track in meeting its commitments and took urgent action to rectify its forthcoming budget for 2009, these resources would likely not be captured by the DAC until its April 2010 report is released, at the earliest.

It is for this reason that DATA has this year introduced an enhanced 'pipeline' analysis. The pipeline is an effort to use donors' own budget documents and DATA's analysis of past relationships between budgets and ODA to predict how much ODA will be disbursed in 2008. It is not a perfect tool, but DATA hopes that it will spur further analysis by the DAC and donors themselves to give advocates – but more importantly recipients – a better indication of the levels of development assistance that are forthcoming.

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

Many of those seated around the table in Hokkaido will be new faces from the G8 leaders who gathered at Gleneagles. Rather than excusing the collective group from the responsibility to deliver, DATA believes it is time for this generation of G8 leadership to do just that – lead – by improving upon the quality of the promises they inherited, providing specific timetables for delivery and then sticking to that plan. In year three of these commitments, the G8 are only 14% of the way to delivering on them. This leaves just three years to deliver the remaining 86% of the commitments: a tall task, but not an impossible one.

Looking forward, we need the reassurance that the G8 have a plan to get to their 2010 commitments. There is still time to deliver upon the commitments. Admittedly, for some countries, doing so will be quite difficult, given that in the first three years spending has been so low. But the cost of inaction, of continuing to perpetuate hope without delivering, is higher. On the second half of the path to 2010, the G8 owe the world – and especially Africa's poor – a greater degree of clarity, honesty and effectiveness. If the G8 are not planning to keep their pledges, what are they planning to do to build on the undeniable successes on the ground? There are three years left for the G8 to show the world that their promises mean something and to show Africa that, when the G8 commit to a partnership, they can be trusted to hold up their end of the bargain. The time for statistical obfuscation is over. The time for accountable action is long overdue.

As the cold, hard facts follow the G8 to Hokkaido in July, the results that they have helped Africa to achieve thus far should inspire them on to the heights they have already pledged that we would reach, together.

JAMIE DRUMMOND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ERIN THORNTON POLICY DIRECTOR