



Understanding Attitudes to Development

Public Perceptions of International Development and Support for Aid in Iceland:
A Qualitative Enquiry

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Abstract

In March 2013 the Icelandic parliament endorsed the next four years of overseas development strategy involving substantial increases in the aid budget, rising from 0.21% of GNI in 2012 to 0.42% in 2016, aiming to reach the 0.7% international donor target by the year 2019. Successful and sustainable international development policies and budgets are believed to require a constituency for aid in donor countries. Can we therefore assume a base of public support and presuppose an understanding of the importance of development aid amongst the Icelandic public? Unlike many donor countries no formal research has been conducted in Iceland documenting public attitudes towards aid. This study aims to present an in-depth picture of public attitudes to, awareness of, and engagement with aid and development, and has the secondary aim of evaluating what type of development communication approaches best engage people in development issues. Using a qualitative mode of enquiry and analysing data provided by seventeen participants, a detailed picture of not just what the public thinks, but why they think it has been constructed.

Although indicating generous public support for development in principle, the results reveal perceptions of development as humanitarian aid and uncover limited understanding of how long-term development works in practice. This information gap reinforces one-dimensional images of poverty in developing countries and engenders sceptical attitudes towards the effectiveness of aid. Although overwhelmingly motivated by moral factors, people perceive development messages to focus on charity and donations rather than justice and participation, creating a risk of disengagement with development issues in the long-term. The implications of this research call for a reframing of development messages, placing more emphasis on communicating long-term development challenges and encouraging more supporter involvement, with the aim of deepening the public's understanding of the complexities of development and providing them with a legitimate interest in holding development organisations to account for aid spending.

Keywords: public attitudes, international development, support for aid, development communication strategies.

Útdráttur

Í mars 2013 samþykkti Alþingi Íslendinga framlög til Þróunarsamvinnuáætlunar Íslands næstu fjögur árin og voru þau hækkuð verulega. Voru þau 0,21% af vergum þjóðartekjum á árinu 2012 en eiga að vera orðin 0,42% 2016. Var jafnframt stefnt að því, að þau næðu 0,7%-markinu 2019 en það er alþjóðlegt viðmið fyrir þau ríki, sem stunda þróunar- og hjálparstarf. Ljóst er, að árangursrík og sjálfbær stefna í þróunarsamvinnumálum og þau fjárframlög, sem henni fylgja, verða að njóta stuðnings almennings í þeim löndum, sem aðstoðina veita. Þess vegna vaknar sú spurning hvernig þessum málum er háttað á Íslandi. Má ganga að því sem vísu, að íslenskur almenningur styðji og skilji mikilvægi alþjóðlegs þróunar- og hjálparstarfs?

Ólíkt því sem er um mörg lönd, sem eru virk í alþjóðlegu hjálparstarfi, hafa engar raunverulegar rannsóknir verið gerðar á afstöðu íslensks almennings til þróunarhjálp. Í þessari rannsókn er hins vegar reynt að draga upp mynd af skoðunum og afstöðu Íslendinga til þessa starfs og af skilningi þeirra og þátttöku í því. Í öðru lagi er reynt að meta hvernig best er að kynna og koma á framfæri upplýsingum um þróunarstarfið í því skyni að auka þátttöku fólks í því. Með eigindlegri nálgun og greiningu á viðtölum við 17 manns er unnt að gera sér nokkuð góða grein fyrir skoðunum fólksins á starfinu og á því hver tilgangurinn með því sé.

Niðurstöðurnar benda til öflugs stuðnings við þróunarstarf sem slíkt í þeim skilningi að það sé mannúðaraðstoð en þær leiða jafnframt í ljós að skilningur á því hvernig langtíma þróunarstarf virkar sé takmarkaður. Lítil vitneskja um hana ýtir undir þá einhliðu mynd, sem jafnan er sýnd af fátæktinni í þróunarlöndunum og vekur efasemdir um að aðstoðin komi að gagni. Siðferðileg sjónarmið ráða langmestu um skoðanir fólks á þróunaraðstoð en margir telja, að hún felist fremur í góðgerðastarfi og gjafafé en í réttlæti og samvinnu. Getur sá skilningur orðið til að draga úr áhuga fólks á starfinu þegar fram í sækir.

Lærdómurinn, sem draga má af þessari rannsókn, er, að í kynningarstarfinu skuli lögð meiri áhersla á langtíma markmið með þróunarsamvinnunni og hvatt til meiri þátttöku almennings í því. Þannig er unnt að auka skilning fólks á þeirri margbrotnu starfsemi, sem í þróunarsamvinnunni felst, og auka áhuga þess á því að gera hjálpar- og þróunarsamvinnustofnanir ábyrgar fyrir því fé, sem þær fá til starfsins.

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Julie Ingham
Reykjavik, Iceland
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Acronyms

CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DARE	Development Awareness Raising and Education Forum
DEEEP	Developing Europeans' Engagement for the Eradication of Global Poverty
DCI	Development Cooperation Ireland (Irish Aid)
DFID	Department for International Development (U.K)
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GE	Global Education
GENE	Global Education Network Europe
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
ODA	Overseas Development Aid
ICEIDA	The Icelandic International Development Agency
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ÞSSÍ	Þróunarsamvinnustofnun Íslands

Introduction

What do people think, know and do about aid and development?

“Public support [for overseas development assistance] is a mile wide and an inch deep.”¹

1.1 A cautionary tale for public support

“A bankrupt man cannot pay someone else’s bills.” This comment, made in a television news interview on 21st March 2013², by a member of the Icelandic parliament for the Progressive Party was given in explanation for why, earlier that day, she had voted against an otherwise unanimous vote of approval for a parliamentary resolution endorsing the next four years of overseas development strategy (Alþingi, 2013). The representative claimed that to agree to the government’s proposed increase in the aid budget would be going against her own conscience when Iceland did not have the financial wherewithal to meet its own demanding domestic expenditures. This statement sparked a lively discussion in the media and in its wake an informal survey collected by an on-line newsite reported that 36% of the people who answered did not agree with Iceland participating in foreign aid³.

Although this mini-survey indicates almost two-thirds of respondents support Iceland’s foreign aid contributions, unfortunately we know very little about the public’s perceptions of development issues. Unlike many OECD-DAC member countries, formal surveys have not yet been commissioned in Iceland to document public support for aid, and so far there has been little

¹ Phrase coined by Ian Smillie (Smillie, 1999: p. 72).

² www.visir.is/section/MEDIA99&fileid=VTVA466DF26-49D3-A088-CA4A8EB828DA. Link to Stöð 2 news interview with Vigdís Hauksdóttir.

³ Approximately 700 respondents answered an on-line survey question posed by the DV newspaper 23/3/2013 which asked: Vilt þú að Ísland taki þátt í þróunaraðstoð? Translation: Do you agree to Iceland participating in foreign aid? (www.dv.is/fb/konnun/vilt-thu-ad-island-taki-thatt-i-throunaradstod/nidurstodur/)

research into the monitoring of public attitudes to aid or measuring the level of support for development spending. Given an absence of research into public awareness of development issues, this begs the question of whether we can take public support for the aid budget indicated by the aforementioned newspaper survey for granted. Can we assume that this parliamentary commitment on the part of politicians mirrors the support of the Icelandic public?

The facts are that in 2012 Iceland's official development assistance (ODA) was at 0.21% of gross national income (GNI) and the current strategy is to gradually increase the volume of ODA from 0.21% to 0.7% of GNI by the year 2019 in line with international donor targets (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011). This is a clear, but in the present economically straightened circumstances, very challenging target for Iceland. In their 2013 – 2016 development aid strategy document the Icelandic Foreign Office presents a clear account of why this amount has been targeted and on what the expanding aid budget will be spent (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2013a). But does this mean that we can assume a strong base of public support, and consequently presuppose that an understanding of the importance of development aid exists amongst the Icelandic public? What exactly do people think, know and do about aid and development? Does the public support the increased ODA target, or do they rather agree with our dissenting Member of Parliament for the Progressive Party?

More importantly we should ask, is public support important? If we step outside the Icelandic arena, we can observe international donor policy recommending that public support for development aid is fundamental to maintaining and increasing levels of aid (European Consensus on Development, 2007; Fransman et al., 2004). Moreover, since 2008 when the global financial crisis hit both developed and developing countries alike, the task of building public support for ODA has become more vital as national governments face financial pressures to make public spending cuts and donors are facing the possibility that these even more urgently needed aid targets stand in danger of not being reached. Public backing is necessary to influence politicians who must vote to allocate foreign aid against a range of demanding domestic expenditures (McDonnell and Solignac Lecomte, 2002). Lappalainen (2010) outlines how in the last decade a strong political consensus has emerged in OECD/DAC countries on the importance of effective development communication and public awareness strategies. These policies have highlighted the

importance of public support and re-shaped the aid community's efforts to build a knowledge base about development issues which ultimately strengthens efforts to reach the 0.7% United Nations (UN) target. According to OECD research carried out by McDonnell and Lecomte (2005), if we do not have an informed and supportive public, who understands and approves of the expanding aid budget, then our liberal democratic system is guilty of an accountability deficit and reaching the proposed development targets could well be undermined.

1.2 The importance of accountability in Iceland

The Icelandic government is no less accountable to their citizens and currently ODA within the Icelandic context is facing a challenge. The budget grew steadily from the year 2000 onwards until it peaked at 0.36% of GNI in 2008 when the country was hit by a major banking collapse and an ensuing period of economic struggle. In its wake, budget cuts were imposed and a reduction in ODA funding followed. According to annual reports published by the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) the ODA level sank to 0.19% of GNI in 2011, but it is now estimated to reach 0.26% in 2013 (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2013b). In April 2013 national elections were held in Iceland and the country saw a change of government. In the run-up to the election political party campaigns were occupied with promising to address domestic economic challenges. Therefore even assuming the new centre-right government commit to meeting the projected aid targets in the coming years, it may not be obvious to many citizens why their country should assist others when it is faced with its own steep climb out of economic depression. There is a danger that if public support is not won over the development targets may be threatened by policy weakness and unreliable funding. In order to build public support effectively, we need to accurately gauge what the public think (McDonnell, Lecomte & Wegimont, 2003a). But how are we measuring public support for aid and international development?

1.3 Tracking public support, quantitative versus qualitative approaches

The OECD's Development Centre has been documenting public support for aid in member countries since 1997, and surveys have shown consistently high levels of support running at 70%.

This strong measure of public support for development aid across donor countries has been based on variations of the following question: “How concerned would you say you are about levels of poverty in poor countries?” which although it gives information on public support for the principle of giving aid in general, unfortunately does not construct an informative picture of underlying attitudes and levels of understanding (Fransman, MacDonald, Mc Donnell, & Pons-Vignon, 2004; Mc Donnell et al., 2003a; Mc Donnell, Lecomte, & Wegimont, 2003b; Hudson and van Heerde, 2010). It seems that public support for development is as described in Ian Smillie’s famous aphorism “a mile wide and an inch deep” (1999, p.72). Or in other words, even though the public are concerned with global poverty in general, development aid is not very deeply understood, and this has raised serious questions about the validity of tracking public support for development aid through opinion surveys.

Recent qualitative research has revealed a more nuanced picture of underlying public attitudes. In-depth interview and focus group research has uncovered a lack of public awareness and understanding of development aid in spite of increased development communication efforts in the last decade to strengthen and deepen public knowledge (TNS for DIFD, 2008; Darnton, 2009; Henson and Lindstrom, 2010; Hudson & van Heerde, 2008). In donor countries these disturbing results have sparked off a number of studies from development communicators into the issue of how to re-engage the public (Crompton, 2010; Hudson and van Heerde, 2010; Henson, Lindstrom, Haddad, & Mulmi, 2010; TNS UK, 2010; Glennie, Straw, & Wild, 2012). These reports indicate that more engagement, education, participation and value-based communications may be a better way forward to counteract what is termed the ‘Live Aid Legacy’ or the ‘bounteous giver and grateful receiver mindset’ which encourages the public in their perception that support for global poverty is solely about donation rather than social justice, consumer decisions, advocacy and discussion.

1.4 Building a nuanced picture of public attitudes⁴

Based on the findings of the above mentioned qualitative research which recommends a changed emphasis in communication strategies about development, it is vital that development

⁴ Nuanced in the sense of identifying more subtle distinctions in people’s underlying attitudes.

policy makers in Iceland are able to accurately gauge public attitudes and awareness in order to build effective development communication strategies and counteract a possible loss of support. Not only for the purpose of shoring up public support for the proposed ODA increases, but to construct a broader understanding about the inter-connectedness of local and global issues which encourages people to engage with development cooperation's ends and means. However, in order for these messages to be effective they should be based on what the public knows, rather than on what it is assumed the public knows. And hence to the subject of this research: What exactly does the Icelandic public think about aid and development?

I became interested in this research topic after completing an evaluation on how development communicators in the UK were actively trying to build an educated citizenry informed about global issues. This sparked an examination of current development communication strategies in use by the Icelandic development community with a view to assessing the effectiveness of their methods and estimating their success in engaging the public in development issues. However, I quickly realised that in order to evaluate the effectiveness of development communications, we first need to understand exactly what our target group knows about these issues, and be clear about what attitudes the public have towards international development before we can hope to influence and engage them. Unable to find any relevant research into public attitudes in Iceland to international development and aid, I decided to direct my attention to gathering an in-depth picture of public awareness.

My research objective is to present an in-depth study of public attitudes to, awareness of, and engagement with global poverty issues and overseas development aid in Iceland. Qualitative interviews will be used to explore people's perceptions of international development and aid efforts with the purpose of understanding not just what the public thinks about these issues but why they think it. The factors that motivate support for development assistance and personal engagement in global poverty alleviation will be examined. A secondary aim of the research is to discover what type of approach best engages people in development issues and an attempt will be made to identify how current communication strategies in use by the development community impact the participants' perceptions. In summary, I seek to answer the following three main research questions: What are people's attitudes to development and aid? What factors motivate

them to support development work? How do they perceive development to be communicated? Ultimately, the intention is to analyse the data collected from seventeen semi-structured participant interviews constructing a detailed picture of the attitudes of my study group and drawing conclusions about the communication approaches that would be most effective in encouraging enhanced support for development cooperation.

1.5 A roadmap through the thesis

This thesis, *Understanding Attitudes to Aid and Development* is structured as follows: the introduction presents public attitudes to international development and aid as my chosen area of research and explains why the subject is worthwhile studying. A review of the literature relevant to the issue of public opinion and support for development is presented in chapters two, three and four. Chapter two begins with a historical review of the policy background to European agreements and resolutions regarding public awareness-raising and development communications which have led to the mainstreaming of development communication in current donor policies, including a presentation of the arguments in support of focusing public attention on development issues. Chapter three takes a look at what we know about the nature of public support for development aid and includes an explanation of how public support is measured in EU countries. In addition, the factors which determine public attitudes towards development assistance are reviewed and some possible motivations for aid are explored from the point of view of what causes both states and individuals to care about poverty and development aid. The approaches used in the dissemination of development information are discussed in chapter four and in what way these strategies impact public awareness. A summary of findings from studies on public perceptions in donor countries of development communication methods is presented both quantitative and qualitative; including a look at what type of strategies best engage the public. This chapter closes with a review of recent research findings considering the challenges to current development communication strategy.

The remaining chapters are devoted to the research methodology and the main body of the thesis which analyses the data and discusses the findings. Chapter five explains my choice of qualitative research methods and provides a detailed account of how the research was carried out, followed

by a description of the method of selection regarding interview participants. The research data is discussed in chapter six, presenting a content and thematic analysis of the attitudes, values and frames expressed by the participants in the qualitative interviews. Chapter seven analyses and explains the implications of the research findings paying attention to how the data accord with the issues in the theoretical framework, and considers to what extent the results obtained answer the original research questions. And finally, the conclusion summarises the main findings and outlines the implications of the research in terms of effective communication strategies and suggests directions in which further research could go.

Chapter Two

Building public awareness: the policy background

*“People would support us if they knew what we do with the [Official Development Assistance] resources”.*⁵

Efforts to focus on building public awareness of development cooperation and the dissemination of development information began in earnest in the 1980s and 90s, but at this time policy frameworks were weak and organisations struggled for funding. Since the late 1990s, however, there has been increased recognition of the need for strengthened policy frameworks, political support and funding for communication work (European Conference on Awareness Raising, 2005; O’Loughlin & Wegimont, 2007). In this chapter I will summarise the theoretical arguments in support of focusing public attention on development issues and follow by outlining the development of the aforementioned policy frameworks for the practice of development communication in Europe, but first it would be helpful to provide a brief historical background to the current development agenda the public are shareholders in.

2.1 The current development agenda

The introductory chapter describes the Icelandic government’s strategy of incremental increases to their volume of ODA reaching 0.7% by the year 2019. This target was first adopted by the UN in 1970 (United Nations, 1970) and more recently reaffirmed in 2002 in the Monterrey Consensus (United Nations, 2002), and again in 2005 by the European Union which committed the EU-15 member states to reach a level of 0.7% by 2015 (European Council, 2005).

⁵ From a speech by Claire Short, British Secretary of State for Development, at a conference on “Democracy and Development” (Valladolid, 7th March 2002).

Interestingly at our current date, the UN target, which has so far only been achieved by five donor countries⁶, will be 43 years old. The global development cooperation agenda is however aiming at more than numbers and on track with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is working towards a global partnership for development, which as outlined in goal eight includes the issues of trade, debt and migration. Additionally aid instruments and management systems are being improved with the goal of increasing aid effectiveness and fostering better conditions for development (United Nations, 2000). Current development thinking suggests that good sustainable development requires ownership, not only by the South, but also by the Northern publics; expanding aid budgets should be understood by the citizens of donor countries who should genuinely approve of its ends and means (Höck & Wegimont, 2003). Since public opinion research indicates a gap between strong public support for development co-operation and shallow public knowledge of development issues then effective development communication is seen as a tool to close this gap (McDonnell et al., 2003b; O'Loughlin & Wegimont, 2007).

2.2 Why is public support for development important?

Let's consider the issue of mandate first. The logic of political decision making in democratic societies states that politicians are accountable to their voters and if the target is to spend more on development cooperation then public support must be won over. The public are 'shareholders' because it is their tax money financing the aid programmes and their elected representatives shaping aid policies. Participation and the active involvement of all citizens is a requirement for a legitimate democracy. An uninterested and non-engaged public is not a political mandate for spending on ODA and this lack of support coupled with the pressure of making public sector cuts at home could cause the development agenda to be threatened by unreliable levels of funding (Foy & Helmich, 1996; Smillie, 1999; McDonnell et al., 2003a).

Secondly, public awareness of development issues not only builds the will for political funding, but can contribute to a global justice dialogue in public space. In research into public opinion McDonnell et al. (2003b) point out that since the late 90s development and global poverty issues had been increasingly framed in broader debates about globalisation. Jeffrey Sachs speaking of

⁶ Norway, Sweden, Luxembourg, Denmark and the Netherlands, although Britain announced in March 2013 that it would meet the 0.7% target this year, becoming the sixth country to do so.

the challenges of poverty, points out in his fourth of five Reith Lectures in 2007, that since September 11th 2001 there has been a growing awareness of the connection between human security in the South and public security in the North and that international solidarity will not be achieved without increased awareness in the North of the underlying causes of inequity in the South (Sachs, 2007). Some political discourses have moved from an altruistic to a more self-interested attitude to poverty reduction and public debate about globalisation has raised fears of negative impacts on security, welfare, culture, food security, social cohesion, jobs etc. (Hudson & van Heerde, 2010). Recent research from Darnton & Kirk (2011) points out ways in which these increasing conversations in the public sphere can be used to strengthen the realisation of interdependence between very different regions and cultures and build solidarity, opening up a space for the kind of political, socio-economic and pro-environmental change that is necessary to tackle poverty.

Of course global poverty is not seen as exclusively the responsibility of Western governments, individuals contribute through their attitudes which shape the decisions they make in their private lives. Private donations to non-governmental organisations are an indication of direct individual commitment to development. But public giving can also be in terms of time (voluntary work), campaigning and buying products (charity shops, ethical products, Fair trade organisations etc.). In research supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) into new ways of engaging the public in global poverty, Darnton and Kirk suggest that the sum of these direct actions and conversations in the public domain add up to more than just fulfilling the role of pressuring governments to carry out election promises; they state that the whole spectrum of public engagement in development matters, that public participation and debate open up the wider societal arena for the possibility of attitudinal change, on which we can build different paradigms of development with more effective results (ibid, 2011).

So, in summary, public attitudes, awareness and engagement matter for international development: firstly because this support supplies the government with a mandate for public spending on overseas development aid, secondly public commitment can have an impact in terms of money, time and product selection, and thirdly public debate initiates opportunities which may facilitate change.

2.3 The red thread of policy consensus

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, governments and development NGOs only began to focus on the importance of development communication and public awareness in the 1980s and 90s, and financing and political support were a struggle because donor policy frameworks were weak. But since this time a number of factors have caused the implementation of stronger policy frameworks. Firstly, there has been increased transparency and accountability obligation in OECD democracies traceable to the taxpayers' right of access to information which opened up through the freedom of information acts (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 1998). Unfortunately parallel to this development there has been a diminishing trust in public governance which has further increased the incentive for governments to open up and engage with citizens. These factors have steered the official donor policy environment into becoming increasingly focused on demonstrating the results of development aid (Scheunpflug & McDonnell, 2008).

Since 2000 other major forces behind the increasing communications about global development have been the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in 2005, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness which established results oriented deadlines, requiring concrete policy changes and increased resources for development. This political impetus has manoeuvred the work of development education and awareness-raising into a more central role in development practice, policy and funding in many OECD countries. In the last decade a number of congresses and conferences at both national and international level have built a stronger framework and support for public awareness of development issues and combined it with a call for better practice, improved quality and effectiveness. The main outcomes of these conferences are briefly summarised here.

In November 2002 governments, civil society, local and regional authorities from across Europe focused attention on the potential of global education in a congress which led to the Maastricht Declaration (Council of Europe, 2002). This statement drew attention to the political necessity of support for global education to encourage public engagement in development issues. It called for a European Peer Review system for global education, and for a target percentage of ODA to be

invested in global education. It linked together an increasing supply of development information with improved provision.

Then in 2005 the European Union committed in the European Consensus on Development to recognise the importance of development education and awareness-raising among EU citizens in order to address their participation in poverty eradication and sustainable development. A wide range of representatives from national and international organisations gathered at the Brussels conference and concluded that effective development education and awareness-raising are essential conditions to mobilise support to reach MDG and ODA targets. The conference stressed the need for coordination between national and European strategies across education policies and the need to set targets for resources in this area to support best practices and maximise effectiveness. The conference culminated in the production of a common framework for development education and awareness-raising published two years later (European Consensus on Development, 2007).

The Helsinki Conference was held in June 2006 under the auspices of the Finnish presidency of the EU, the conference cemented the growing political commitment and strengthened policy in the field of development education and awareness-raising at European and national levels and highlighted a number of issues, not least quality and effectiveness. During this conference a European multi-stakeholder group on Development Education was founded, counting amongst its members experts from national governments, European institutions, international organisations and civil society groups. The organisation Developing Europeans' Engagement for the Eradication of Global Poverty (DEEEP) is administratively responsible for this multi-stakeholder group⁷.

Since this time there is strong evidence to show that the Peer Review Process that grew out of the recommendation of the Maastricht Congress (2002), which is facilitated by Global Education Network Europe (GENE) made up of participating national ministries or agencies, is playing a useful role in helping key national stakeholders develop national strategies for more and better Global Education (GE). It has acted as an important support tool, reviewing the current GE

⁷ DEEEP website: www.deeep.org/multi-stakeholder-process.html

situation in a country and supporting national events and processes for the increase and improvement of GE. The process has resulted in greater national coordination, improved funding structures and bilateral learning initiatives in the countries reviewed⁸.

Taken together, this red thread of growing political and policy consensus outlined above has moved awareness-raising on development issues to the centre of the development agenda. Lappalainen (2010) concludes in a status report on development education in Europe that there is now increased political engagement with awareness-raising and this momentum needs to be maintained. The focus now is on providing more and better development information, and the call is for more adequate resources and co-ordinated political and policy support. This strengthened political framework supporting development communications has not only motivated the development community, but has also stimulated civil society, local and regional authorities and governmental and European actors to provide more information on development and organise activities which engage the public in understanding the issues and challenges of development issues, for example the Jubilee 2000 Campaign and the Make Poverty History Campaign in 2005. Although these initiatives were carried by the media they also spanned a diverse range of organisations in formal and informal learning settings, for instance programmes in schools, adult education, youth work and higher education sectors in many of the EU member states⁹. Of course, coordinated initiatives on this scale require substantial funding.

2.4 Spending on building public support for development

Although one could question Julius Nyrere's proposal (1974) that 100 per cent of aid should be spent on development education as the most effective way to fight global poverty, there is a growing claim from development communicators that the levels of funding in this field are not coming anywhere close to the targets that have been set. We can go back a decade to find support for increased investment in public awareness; in a report for the OECD Development Centre McDonnell et al. (2003b) state clearly their backing for development communication funding

⁸ GENE. Global Education Network Europe. For further information see: www.gene.eu/peer-review/

⁹ For further information see DEEEP: www.deeep.org which works on strengthening capacities of NGOs to raise awareness, educate and mobilise the European public for world-wide poverty eradication and social inclusion.

enabling broad public support for global poverty reduction which in turn will support stable funding for long-term planning of development programmes.

In 2005 the overall annual DAC members' budget for public communications and development education was approximately 0.26 % of total ODA, and in May 2005 the European Consensus on Development Conference proposed an increased funding figure of 3% of ODA as a minimum target to work towards improved quality, efficiency and effectiveness in public awareness and DE spending (Council of the European Union, 2005). As previously outlined in section 2.3 this conference produced a joint statement emphasising that new approaches to communicating the realities and complexities of development needed to be explored; co-operation must improve amongst donor agencies and NGOs, development communicators and educators must demonstrate that both donors and recipients are actually working towards the goals to reduce poverty. The MDGs were to be used as yardsticks to showcase what has been achieved thanks to more and better aid, debt relief and good governance, and enhancing accountability at home was vital because this would complement donor efforts spelt out in the Paris Declaration 2005 to improve aid effectiveness (European Consensus on Development, 2007). In spite of these recommendations the average DAC spending on public awareness-raising in 2010 was 0.35% with Belgium spending the most at 1.4% of ODA (OECD, 2010).

Section 2.2 stated that an informed public provides a mandate for higher spending on ODA. But is it reasonable to assume that public support is higher among people with better knowledge of development issues, and that open public debate on development issues encourages ownership and a more critical and aid supportive public? Fransman and Solignac Lecomte (2004) find evidence to show that the more the public know about aid and development cooperation policies the more supportive they are of them. Denmark, Norway and Sweden can be taken as an example of societies which are well informed on development issues by their governments and simultaneously known for their high levels of public spending. McDonnell et al. supply data to show that higher levels of public spending on development education and public awareness building activities correspond with higher ODA/GDP ratios (Mc Donnell et al, 2003b). Unfortunately though, alternative research shows that the public awareness/higher ODA link is not conclusive, this will be examined further in the next section.

2.5 The link between public support and levels of aid

Chapter three will outline how the OECD¹⁰ and the European Commission¹¹ have regularly monitored public support for aid which has consistently shown levels above 70% since the early 1990s. These polls are carried out precisely because public support for development assistance and levels of aid has been linked together (Mc Donnell et al. 2003a; Fransman et al. 2004). But how substantive is this link? Throughout this period when public support for development aid has been consistently high overall aid levels have begun to drop. The target of 0.7% of GNI promised by OECD donor governments to be spent on ODA at the UN General Assembly in 1970 has only been achieved by a handful of countries, and their most recent pledge was to reach 0.7% by 2015, the year by when the MDGs are hoped to be achieved. Total DAC aid declined from 0.33% in 1990 to a low of 0.22% in 1997, and even though since 2001 onwards there has been a trend for increased aid with 2010 totals reaching 0.32% of ODA/GNI these figures are now on the decline. In 2012 the DAC member countries provided aid totals of 0.29% of their combined GNI still well below the promised target¹². So if public support is measured to be high and aid totals are underachieving this tends to suggest that the link between public support for development assistance and political motivation to increase aid are not as strongly linked as the OECD would like to think. Of course it is important to take into account what is meant by a high-level of public support. Section 3.3 will discuss how the type of survey questions asked makes it difficult to estimate underlying values and attitudes.

The interpretation that these ODA figures cast uncertainty on the link between public opinion and aid policy are supported by a number of earlier studies on public opinion which found that public knowledge, or the lack of it, had very little impact on foreign policy issues (Holsti, 1992; Sniderman, 1993). On the other hand more recent studies argue in favour of a link, for example, Noël and Thérien (2002) say there is a positive relationship between the public's support for the equality of their domestic welfare distribution and their foreign commitments to redistribute. It is surely no coincidence that the five countries that previous to 2013 reached the United Nations' target of 0.7 % of gross national income (GNI) for overseas development assistance – Norway,

¹⁰ The OECD's Development Centre has produced a number of studies recording public support for aid in member countries. See: www.oecd.org

¹¹ Eurobarometer reports. See: www.ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

¹² Source: OECD website (Aid Statistics) www.oecd.org/dac/stats

Sweden, Luxembourg, Denmark and the Netherlands – are also countries that have traditionally performed well in domestic social indicators like health and education (United Nations, 2011). Stern (1998) says the most important determinants of support for aid are the level of compassion in a society and the public perception of aid effectiveness and that income levels and economic growth rates are not main factors.

2.6 But do governments actually listen to their publics?

There are some sceptics who cast doubt on the question of whether governments pay attention to what their publics think. Olsen (2000) in an analysis of five European aid donors insists that there is a ‘top down’ relationship. He explains that because the power of decision making is centralised in government institutions, often confined to an elite of political leaders and their advisors, there is a weak link between government and society in the development aid policy field. Olsen supports his argument with evidence that in the 1990s in France, the UK, Germany, Denmark and the European Union public opinion surveys showed that over 70% of the public supported the existing level of aid to Africa, but during the same decade the respective authorities reduced their aid budgets. His research analyses how focused the decision making process is and attempts to reveal missing links between mass public opinion as it is expressed in opinion surveys and elite decisions about aid funding by addressing the following questions: how centralised is the decision making process, how polarized is the structure of society, and how much cooperation exists between policy networks and society? Although this analysis shows that the centralisation of policy making in this field varies from country to country, it indicates that the framework of discourse in society always comes from the elite within the foreign policy sphere with very little debate from parliaments on development issues. Even though the public are consistently supportive in answering the question ‘are you in favour of aid’ in a politically correct way, the same surveys show that the public know very little about how development aid works. When asked specifically how they would like to spend tax dollars respondents place development very low on the list and domestic issues take a higher priority, which Olsen suggests gives a ‘truer’ picture of what Europeans think about development aid (Olsen, 2000). Stern’s previous finding (1998) that when compared to other foreign policy priorities, development assistance ranked 9th out of 10 policies corroborates Olsen’s results.

In cases of massive media reporting of humanitarian crises Olsen (2000) concurs that it is possible to argue bottom-up influence, because here there appears to be a more obvious link between the public's widespread feeling of humanitarian responsibility to help poor people and elite decision making. But this is an exception and in terms of the current international assumption that there is a link between public opinion and decision making and Olsen finally concludes that the leaders do not follow the masses. Mark Otter (2003) is another sceptic of the theory of bottom-up public influence on development assistance. He claims that because foreign aid is such a separate policy issue the usual rules of using public opinion as leverage do not apply, rather it is the interests of governments and the strength of lobbying groups which have most influence, in terms of linking aid with foreign trade and investments.

Regardless of the strength of the link between public opinion and its influence on policy making, the previously outlined policy consensus clearly emphasises that the importance of public opinion lies in providing a strong ethical foundation on which the political work of development is seen as important, rather than in deciding and taking part in particular policy debates. I would conclude that even though it still remains to be demonstrated that public support for poverty reduction programmes is successful in influencing aid volumes, the bottom line is that in a democratic society we should be striving towards transparency and public accountability. In an attempt to about-face Smillie's famous aphorism quoted in my introduction I would like to propose 'the deeper the public's understanding the wider their support will reach'.

In summary, chapter two has stated the importance of public support for development and outlined the considerable progress in the field of development communication policy since the 2002 Maastricht treaty. By tracing these milestones I have attempted to demonstrate how important it is to show strong political commitment for building development awareness by creating a good policy foundation and providing public funding. And finally I have considered whether there is a link between public support and policy-making. Chapter three will now present an overview of what we actually know about the nature of public attitudes and how this knowledge has been measured, before examining the theoretical evidence underlying motivations for public concern for poverty in the developing world.

Chapter Three

What do we know about public support for development aid?

Chapter two has discussed how taxpayer support is used to mobilise political decision making and explained that in an attempt to protect ODA commitments the development community have adopted the strategy of building public support for development programmes because this can act as an indicator to politicians who must allocate foreign aid against a number of competing budget issues. Some commentators have proposed that increased ODA has not been challenged until now because of unclear public perceptions about development aid: many people see it as extending a helping hand to victims of humanitarian crises and do not link it with longer-term development projects in poor countries (McDonnell et al., 2003b). But in difficult economic times at home we have to be prepared for a turn in the tide of public opinion. The growth of budget deficits and weakening economies in OECD countries since the financial crash in 2008 could threaten tax payers' support for aid, and as we have experienced in Iceland ODA was amongst the first budgets to be cut¹³. Recent research from the UK indicates that 60% of the general public support reductions in aid spending in the context of domestic public spending cuts (Henson et al., 2010), however there has been broad-based political support in the UK to 'ring-fence' development spending and to reach the target the 0.7 % of national income by 2013¹⁴, which seems to indicate a contradiction between the political consensus and public opinion. All this begs the question: do these research figures reflect lack of public support for development aid? This chapter will examine what is known about the nature of public support for development and explore how that support is measured.

¹³ As previously outlined Icelandic ODA dropped from 0.36% of GNI in 2008 to 0.19% in 2011.

¹⁴ George Osborne, the UK Chancellor, confirmed in his budget speech on 20th March 2013, that Britain this year will reach its target to spend 0.7% of gross national income on aid.

3.1 Methods of estimating public support

Normally governments have to gauge their citizen's support for development efforts by public opinion polling; this is because the normal tool of democratic electoral mandate is not as apparent in the case of development spending which is normally very low on a political party's electoral campaign list with domestic concerns usually filling up the main priorities (Olsen, 2000). The European Commission monitors public opinion on development assistance every four years in the form of Eurobarometer surveys for its member states in order to help with policy making decisions¹⁵; a summary of the data from recent reports will be examined below. In the Icelandic context no such formal public opinion survey has yet been conducted. But of course there are other means for governments to monitor public involvement in development concerns, for example the sum of donations from other organisations such as civil society groups, trade unions, local governments and the business sector plus individual donations to NGOs. The scale of such benefactions can indicate the degree of public involvement, as can public volunteering to the work of NGOs. Other indicators are to assess the scale of engagement in the public debate on development issues or to estimate ethical consumer behaviour, such as the purchase of fair trade goods. The importance of these practical methods of engagement were discussed in section 2.1, however comparable data across donor countries on such practical support is limited and in the following analysis the focus is on the estimate of public support and attitudes to aid gained from national polls and the Eurobarometer surveys.

3.2 The problem with polls

Unfortunately there is a limit to what opinion polls can tell us about public support for aid. Data collected is of a superficial type and tends to reflect how positive people feel about aid giving in general and how satisfied people are with the level of their country's contribution to ODA. A typical survey question asked across countries is: "Do you think it is important for your country to help poor countries?" In reply to this question the majority of respondents answer yes, which makes it difficult to estimate underlying values and attitudes and discover exactly what they would like their money to be spent on. However, criticism has been raised of the lack of

¹⁵ See Eurobarometer special surveys: www.ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_399_380en.htm

systematic wording in the polling questions; this deficiency in standardisation between countries does not allow for reliable international comparisons (Fransman et al., 2004). Another difficulty is the lack of public understanding of the difference between humanitarian aid and development cooperation. When people answer positively in response to increasing the level of ODA, later questions have revealed that they have imagined the contributions going to a humanitarian ‘helping agency’ to relieve a particular crisis (McDonnell et al., 2003a). Surveys hardly ever distinguish between different types of donor agencies, such as international organisations, national governments and NGOs. It is common for respondents to lump all types of organisations together and label them ‘helping agencies’ and to base their opinions on the most visible activities which attract media attention (Czaplinska, 2007). Sometimes dramatic events have changed attitudes at the point in time when the survey was carried out, for example the media reporting of the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 had a noticeable impact on public opinion surveys in 2005 (Hudson, 2010). As mentioned earlier Ian Smillie puts it succinctly when he describes public knowledge of aid as “a mile wide and an inch deep” in reference to the wide general level of support for aid in principle, but the low level of public awareness of what official aid actually does and the lack of knowledge of policy issues going beyond aid, for example trade, debt and immigration policy (Smillie, 1999, p.72). When formulating the qualitative questions for the participant interviews for this research these limitations were kept in mind.

3.3 What do the polls tell us?

With the above-mentioned limitations in mind we should consider the polling results from the most recent Eurobarometer survey undertaken in 2012 which measured that 85% of EU citizens say they think it is very or fairly important to help people in developing countries¹⁶. If this same question is examined consistently from the 1990s onwards we can identify a stability in public support for development (McDonnell et al., 2003b). Although there was a brief drop in the perceptions of the importance of aid in the second half of the 1990s, after that the decline was reversed reaching 91% in 2005 (Eurobarometer, 2005). McDonnell et al. (2003b) point out that general data on high levels of public support for development aid have to be considered with the

¹⁶ The exact wording of the question: In your opinion, is it very important, fairly important, not very important or not at all important to help people in developing countries? (Special Eurobarometer 392).

knowledge that the surveys are not consistent in making distinctions between the following: public support for the principle of aid giving in general, public satisfaction with the levels of official aid, and the respondents' actual level of awareness about development issues which is often low.

Polls show that one of the public's major misconceptions is in overestimating their government's aid spending and most people have little idea that the actual figure in most cases is considerably less than 1% of GDP (McDonnell et al., 2003b). So when respondents are asked if they agree with the European Union increasing its level of aid to developing countries doubt can be raised about the validity of the question when for many the percentage of spending is vague. We can see a decrease in support for the promise to reach the 0.7% target together with a drop in the number of people who say that the development aid budget should be increased, falling from 72% in the 2009 survey to 61% in 2012. With respondents who would choose to maintain development aid at current levels or even want to reduce aid, increasing from 19% in 2009 to 35% in 2012 (Eurobarometer, 2012).

Another fallacy, previously mentioned, is the wide spread assumption that foreign aid will be spent mostly on humanitarian assistance (Fransman et al. 2004). This assumption is usually formed from superficial media coverage of developing countries. In research into development information sources accessed by the public McDonnell et al. (2003b) point out that television, followed by the print media, are the primary sources given for information derived on developing countries by the publics of the OECD countries. According to this research the public are influenced by the media's one dimensional portrayal of development and their focus on the more sensationalistic aspects of news from developing countries, showing images dominated by disaster, conflict and famine. (The impact of these images will be discussed further in chapter four.) Finally, the surveys reveal that this predisposition to a humanitarian focus is compounded by very low public awareness of the existence of the MDGs, 88% of the public confessing ignorance of what they are, and when informed of the goals there is often low confidence in their achievement capacity by the target date (Eurobarometer, 2005). So much for quantitative measurements of public opinion, but what can qualitative research add to this?

3.4 Qualitative research providing a more nuanced picture

Recent qualitative research has revealed a more nuanced picture of underlying public attitudes. In-depth interview and focus group research from the UK has uncovered a lack of public awareness and understanding of development aid in spite of increased development communication efforts in the last decade to strengthen and deepen public knowledge (TNS for DIFD, 2008; Darnton, 2009; Henson and Lindstrom, 2010; Hudson & van Heerde, 2008). A worrying portrait displaying the lack of awareness of an average member of the British public is portrayed by Andrew Darnton in his 2009 review for the UK Department for International Development (DFID) on public support for development. On the one hand this example individual has readily answered “very concerned” to DFID’s survey question about his/her degree of concern for levels of poverty in poor countries (74% of respondents), however, subsequent qualitative research reveals that his/her understanding of aid is riddled with misconceptions; the most common being the interpretation of aid as donations to charities in response to disasters. This ‘average’ individual also believes that the causes of poverty are internal to poor countries (whether natural or man-made), with little mention of the conduct of developed nations, the working of global trade, international debt and long-term development aid. Corruption is the topic he/she seems most happy to talk about in relation to global poverty, stating that most financial aid to poor countries is wasted, and often concluding with the statement “There is nothing I can personally do to tackle poverty in poor countries” (Darnton, 2009).

Following on from these disturbing results development communicators in donor countries have conducted a number of qualitative studies into the issue of how to re-engage the public (Crompton, 2010; Hudson and van Heerde, 2010; Henson, Lindstrom, Haddad, & Mulmi, 2010; TNS UK, 2010; Glennie, Straw, & Wild, 2012). These reports state the need to counteract what they term as the ‘Live Aid Legacy’ or the ‘bounteous giver and grateful receiver mindset’ which has been a successful way of framing development messages for in terms of fundraising strategies, but encourages the public in their perception that support for global poverty is solely about donation rather than social justice, consumer decisions, advocacy and discussion. The

reports recommend that a better way forward for development communicators would be to focus more on engagement, education, participation and value-based communications.

In summary, both quantitative and qualitative research have contributions to make, but quantitative research has its limitations in terms of gathering underlying motivations and assessing the people's attitudes and perceptions based on the understanding that they have of development. Whether we use quantitative or qualitative research to establish public attitudes to development issues it is vital that we collect information that correctly reflects public opinion. A key driver to understanding public attitudes to development is motivation and a qualitative approach is best suited to this line of enquiry. In this next section the factors are reviewed which drive individual motivations and concern for poverty, because these determinants have important consequences for development agencies and policy makers (Eurobarometer, 2010).

3.5 Theoretical motivations for giving aid

So if the public are supportive of aid in general, but do not have a deep understanding of development issues, then what motivates them to support and spurs them to engagement?

This section contains a brief review of the existing literature on motivations for international aid donations and includes a consideration of both state or international motivations and individual public motives. But first I feel that any discussion of why states and individuals give aid should be preceded by a few facts about the current need in the world. World Bank and UNDP figures state that over a billion people have less than 1.25 dollars a day to live on, and around 2.7 billion people attempt to survive on less than two dollars a day; each year six million children die of malnutrition before their fifth birthday; more than 40 per cent of the world's population do not have basic sanitation, and in excess of one billion people have no other choice than to use unsafe sources of drinking water¹⁷. So what actually motivates states and individuals to support foreign aid? Let's take a look at state motivations first.

As discussed in more detail below research specifies many different reasons for why states give aid; from economic motivators, such as the need to make investments, increase commerce and

¹⁷ <http://www.millenniumproject.org/document/UNMP-fastfacts-E.pdf>

obtain foreign exchange, and political motivations, for example building alliances and promoting democracy, plus the issue of protecting human security, such as environment, terrorism, the spread of disease, to moral motivations, such as humanitarian relief, reducing poverty, human rights etc. Hudson (2010) states that although a mixture of rhetoric is used currently states seem to be moving more towards the self-interest discourse as a more fruitful source of support for development assistance, even though studies show that the public's main motivation for supporting aid is moral or humanitarian.

We can trace a long history of motivations given for state self-interest and find references as far back as Adam Smith who writes that having wealthy trading partners is an advantage in creating a larger market, but a disadvantage in war and politics (Smith, 1776). More recent influential research from Burnside and Dollar (2002) discusses the consequentialist logic of power politics and self-serving reasons for giving aid and shows that the strategic alignment of the recipient and donor state positively affects allocation decisions. To illustrate with an example from the UK context; according to a DFID study on public perceptions of developing countries, ending poverty is the greatest moral challenge facing our generation, but it is also in the nation's interest (DFID, 2000). Burnel (1998) notes that DFID's material interests are portrayed as linked to the fate of the global South through trade links, political and social stability and global threats such as terrorism and immigration. The UK Commission for Africa Report (2005) aptly named *Our Common Interest* identified self-interest as the first reason for being concerned with Africa's problems; the argument goes that it is better for developed countries to support developing countries to meet their national commitments in terms of global public goods i.e. environment, security, peace, unhindered trade etc. than to take on the costs of the increase in global public bads. In view of these self-interested arguments, we need to ask: Does this more 'political' strategy exert a stronger influence on public levels of concern than moral rhetoric? However, before that question is addressed it is important to take a look at the state's moral rhetoric surrounding motivations to eradicate poverty, since it provides background discourse in society which can influence public attitudes.

Consider the influence of ethical and humanitarian convictions upon aid donors, for example as set out by President Harry Truman in his inaugural speech making the case for the modern post-

war aid regime¹⁸? Busby (2007) makes a case for aid morality building civic virtue and an appropriate international identity, for example that Japan became a major foreign aid provider because it was tied up with the country's sense of itself as a good international citizen. Noël and Thérien (2002) point out that development cooperation can be seen as an international projection of donor country domestic policies and social values and therefore reflect a vision of the society people want to live in. They give the example of the Nordic countries and their commitment to a welfare society and equity as a good example of countries pledged to aid generosity. In an examination of how a state's social economic arrangements affect their aid giving Stern (1998) finds that domestic income equality and the size of the government sector in relation to the overall economy appear to be strongly correlated with support for aid. Countries with smaller income gaps between the rich and the poor and where government spending as a percentage of GDP is higher he also finds to be significant. Noël and Thérien (2002) underscore this finding by showing that when a country has achieved justice at home it is easier to extend the principles and achievements accepted domestically to the international arena. In an article examining whether states and decision makers ever act for moral reasons Busby (2007) asks how much of this is 'framing' or the strategic use of political rhetoric and how much a true moral notion of humanitarianism? Jeffrey Sachs frames development assistance to the poor in the language of both self-interest and moral or global justice rhetoric. As an advocate who always upholds moral obligation for reaching the MDGs, he often falls back on emphasising the global economic and human security threats arising from poverty (Sachs, 2007). Joint moral/self-interest factors can also be identified as contributing to state motivation when a country with historical links with former colonies is attempting to build cultural links and repay historical injustices as well as combat immigration issues (McDonnell et al. 2003b).

If we now turn to analyse the factors driving individual level attitudes to poverty, Hudson and van Heerde (2010) point out that an individual's concern can be both moral and self-interested. In research which involved statistical analysis of public surveys and content analysis of UK newspapers, they probed into the factors driving individual level attitudes for concern for poverty reduction programmes and analysed whether those attitudes are related to media framing of

¹⁸ From Harry S. Truman's inaugural address given on January 20, 1949. "I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in cooperation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development. . . . Only by helping the least fortunate of its members to help themselves can the human family achieve the decent, satisfying life that is the right of all people." See website: www.bartleby.com/124/pres53.html (paragraphs 48 and 56).

poverty. Hudson and Heerde found that although political and economic frames dominate media coverage of poverty in developing countries individual level concern for poverty is driven by moral judgements. Respondents who believe that poverty is a moral issue are more likely to be concerned about poverty in developing countries, but people who are motivated by self-interested attitudes, that is the possibility that poverty may affect the country as a whole, are less likely to be concerned.

Hudson and van Heerde (2010) point out that their research opens up questions for development agencies relating to the nature of democratic citizenship and strategies for government engagement. Should politicians act on what citizens think? Should they follow the liberal democratic conception of citizens as capable of rationalising consequences with the government's role being to maximise the information available on which voters base their decisions? This type of governance is termed preference accommodation. Or should government try to shape people's decisions and preferences, labelled preference shaping, and attempt to create a 'civic identity ideal' to help people decide what is right to do? Previous to this Goldmann (2005) had reflected on these alternative strategies and suggested a third or 'middle way' based on the idea of deliberative democracy, or the concept of joint problem solving between the government and the people. Such a 'middle way' would require a mixed communications strategy of both creative public preferences shaping in the form of improved development education approaches and preference accommodation strategies i.e., more efficient approaches to understanding what drives public attitudes. Colin Hay (2007) argues that by relying completely on preference accommodation methods we risk the danger of disengaged citizens; citizens who assume that individual influence and attempts at political engagement are outweighed by the costs and they rationally disengage and leave policy making to those in authority. This theory is upheld by Hudson and van Heerde's research findings claiming that people are more concerned who display individually driven moral motivation rather than national interest or self-interested motivations for concern for poverty. They suggest that the visualisation of the self-interested consequences of poverty are too widely distributed, the impact is not individual and is absorbed by the country; for example - poverty in developing countries affects export demands and in consequence UK jobs, therefore one should be concerned about poverty in developing countries. In conclusion they state that it is not sufficient for government development agencies to disseminate information giving

people the facts about the world shaping their lives; they rather need to encourage deliberative democracy and interactive policy development (Hudson, 2010).

Chapter three has analysed the nature of public support for development aid by tracking trends in public support as evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative monitoring, and has examined the underlying motivations for both state and public concern for poverty in the developing world. As previously outlined in chapter two donor countries have used these theories to develop policy frameworks to improve development communication and public awareness, and from these frameworks strategies for targeting development information have emerged and communication approaches have been developed. The next chapter will discuss theories concerning how the different means of disseminating information about development can influence public awareness.

Chapter Four

A look at the impact and effectiveness of development messages

The OECD recommends in a policy brief that development information must be improved in the following three areas: information and communications about development aid, advocacy and campaigning and development and global educational activities (Scheunpflug & McDonnell, 2008). One of my research questions addresses the issue of how the public perceive development is communicated and how it impacts them, and although the focus of this inquiry has centred on the impact of general information about development from the media, NGOs and agencies, it could be useful at this point to provide brief definitions of these three types of information dissemination.

Development communication is information disseminated about aid work and development challenges, policies, projects and results communicated to the public by development agents in donor countries. This information is used to build both public and political support for donor's development policies and aid budgets. Taxpayers and NGOs place pressure on governments to be transparent and accountable in their communication methods and presentation of results achieved. For most donors the last decade has seen a move towards closer involvement of the public and is reflected in a change in the nature of communications from glossy annual reports and press releases to a more interactive approach using digital technology which invites a more participatory process (European Conference on Media and Communication Strategies, 2005). Advocacy and campaigning is the second type of communication strategy which uses information to argue on behalf of a particular issue and has the goal of achieving change by bringing strategic, planned objectives into play to effect change. In many DAC countries ODA finances civil society campaigns on development issues (Scheunpflug & McDonnell, 2008). The third approach to communication is to invest in development education. This can be defined as an active learning

process which enables people to move from basic awareness of international development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of global issues to personal involvement and informed action¹⁹. We are now nine years into the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development²⁰ (ESD) in which governments have committed to promote ESD not as a particular project, but as an active approach to learning which educates citizens to create solutions and learn their way for the benefit of themselves and others to a better future.

Of course these three approaches to information dissemination are interlinked and all try to influence society towards greater social justice by using learning; however the theories and methods underpinning the approaches differ. The basic philosophy of education is that multiple perspectives should be presented and free individuals must decide for themselves. Advocacy and campaigns try to mobilise citizens to press for policy change and social justice, and the key focus of development communication for the public is to inform, raise awareness and gain support for reform (Scheunflug & McDonnell, 2008). This chapter will focus on the different means of disseminating development communication and discusses what has had the most impact on public opinion in this area. Surveys show that the media, because of its greater coverage potential, has much more influence on the public than information from donors and NGOs (TNS for DFID, 2008), therefore an examination of the impact and importance of the media in communicating development issues will be dealt with first.

4.1 The influence of the media on public opinion

According to a European Conference working paper called Media and Communication Strategies, TV is the dominant media, followed by print, then internet, with radio in fourth place as the public source of information on development issues in OECD countries (European Conference on Media and Communication Strategies, 2005). This report points out that we must bear in mind that information is not education, calling for solidarity is different from calling for reflection, talking about poverty does not necessarily mean explaining its causes, and therefore

¹⁹ There are many definitions of Development Education, but this definition was approved by the DARE forum (2004) and endorsed by CONCORD during their General Assembly in November 2004.

²⁰ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/>

media stories can often lack a sense of context. However, the media machine as the main source of public information on development issues in OECD countries, and news reporters and journalists in particular, play a crucial role as multiplying agents for raising awareness amongst the public. Although research carried out for the report found examples of programming which communicate challenging and realistic messages, taken as a whole the reports are often inadequate, lacking information and conveying a superficial message which can easily lead to a biased overall perception of the South, by the North. The media tend to report developing country stories when a crisis situation arises which may have potential consequences for developed countries; this can be for a variety of agenda and audience viewing concerns. Unfortunately, shocking pictures and emotional content are considered a guarantee of good audience viewing figures (Ibid.).

This media focus on disasters is a two-edged sword; on the one hand it can be a very powerful tool because the use of shocking pictures and very emotional content enable journalists to raise interest, compassion and solidarity towards people in need; however they are not put into general context exposing wider development concerns. There is little focus on why the developing country is suffering from poverty, for example issues like armed local conflicts and poor public policies are glossed over and consequently the public do not understand why the situation is so long-lasting. An even more worrying side to this focus on disasters rather than long-term development issues, is discussed in research conducted by Hudson and van Heerde which found that because of this media emphasis the public experience feelings of impotence in the face of these overwhelmingly negative messages and distance themselves which results in a lack of engagement with news stories on the developing world. They suggest there is a negative relationship between awareness from TV/news media and public concern for poverty, concluding that the negative sensationalistic and superficial nature of media coverage of global poverty works against individual's feelings of effectiveness in solving the issue and that other sources from schools, religious organisations, charities and books have a more positive effect on people's concern for poverty (Hudson & van Heerde, 2008).

In 2002 DFID and the BBC examined this challenge from the media's point of view and carried out an interesting research study called 'Making Sense of the World' which conducted workshop sessions between the public and representatives from the media and revealed that the main barrier

to engaging viewers with developing world stories is their lack of background knowledge about the subject. Audiences found news stories about the developing world difficult to understand and despite a relatively high interest in the news generally, there tended to be only low levels of interest in stories about the developing world, accompanied by a limited understanding of why it should matter to them. Facts and figures published by NGOs are not enough to build understanding and visibility. The point is to make the story relevant for people's lives, so that viewers can identify with the story being told. Reports should move away from presenting a one-dimensional picture by providing a more balanced view of events and paying attention to follow-up news stories which give the positive side of an originally 'bad' news story (DIFD and BBC News, 2002).

Turning our attention to the print media, Hudson and van Heerde (2008) in research into public attitudes towards poverty find that individuals were presented with an inadequate discussion of development issues in the sample of UK newspapers they researched during a one year period in 2005. Interestingly enough, 2005 was a special year in the UK in terms of international development events: Gordon Brown's advocacy of an international finance facility, the Make Poverty History campaign, Live 8 concerts, plus Tony Blair's emphasis on making global poverty the main focus of G8 and the focus of the Gleneagles Summit on debt relief. The research searched for newspaper articles on global poverty and only raised 112 articles, whereas for the sake of comparison a search on climate change produced more than 3,000 articles. Hudson and van Heerde conclude that this limited information is a factor in the public's lack of understanding of global poverty and consequently this gap raises practical problems for development organisations in terms of their education targets, because they cannot rely on the mass media to educate the public. It would be interesting to carry out a similar study for an extended time on the Icelandic media.

4.2 Media and NGOs can learn from each other

'Making Sense of the World' explores how NGOs and the media can work together so that long term development issues are introduced into media coverage of humanitarian issues. This

DFID/BBC report (2002) points out that the media and NGOs respond to very different priorities, and as a result, experience challenges in working together closely. This can create a space for misunderstandings and stereotypes. The media are not neutral; journalists have to work under pressure from editors who will not invest in coverage which brings lower audience ratings. This does not allow time to cover in-depth issues surrounding development co-operation. Due to these time restrictions, for example short time-slots on the evening news, the media tend to cover the aforementioned crisis situations, especially when they are deteriorating and may have potential consequences on Northern countries. Plus they often use shocking pictures and emotional content which are a good guarantee of gripping public interest.

The aforementioned European Conference Media and Communication Strategy paper points out the need to develop credible collaborative partnerships because all development communicators have something to learn from each other. NGOs are good sources of information and expertise as they work in the field, and are also involved in development education. Since NGOs are the experts in the field and the media demand reliable information from first hand sources there is room to develop collaboration. Many NGOs do not know how to work efficiently with the media; however a good example would be Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) which has cultivated a role of information providers towards the media, who now refer to them to confirm data. Another success story comes from 2004/2005 when there was an unprecedented public response to the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster; it stayed headline news for a long time and only gradually disappeared. Human stories were used extensively to tell news of the disaster, the media followed up on the aid effort, the use of funds, aid coordination, governance and the links between emergency relief and long-term reconstruction were discussed. In short, there was a movement towards reporting the whole picture (European Conference on Media and Communication Strategies, 2005).

It is often the case that NGO and agency heads of communications find it difficult to get development messages and good news stories on television and in daily papers, unless there is an official visit from a celebrity or a minister planned. The media seem to think that development is too 'boring' to report. Therefore a number of official donors have developed specific media strategies in the last few years, for instance DFID, DCI in Ireland and the Netherlands Ministry of Development Cooperation. DFID, for example, found that it is difficult for a government body to

directly finance the media to make documentaries or place articles in newspapers without being accused that the information is government propaganda and consequently not perceived as a credible source. To tackle this DFID set up a documentary research fund for creating programmes on developing country issues through a third party broadcasting organisation which has no obligation to report on DFID activities (European Conference on Media and Communication Strategies, 2005). However, difficulties aside, the Media and Communication Strategies working paper stresses that dynamic working relations with the media is key to improving coverage of development issues.

4.3 Improving communication strategies to engage the public

So far this chapter has reported extensively from the paper Media and Communication Strategies published in preparation for the 2005 European Conference on Awareness-Raising and development Education for North-South Solidarity. Another major conference which furthered professional cooperation between government agencies, NGOs and the media was held in Ireland in 2006 by Dóchas and published a code of conduct for the media titled, *Images and messages relating to the Third World*²¹. This code has contributed to good practice methods and guided NGOs to be attentive to messages that could over-simplify or sensationalise aspects of life in the developing world. In summary, both conferences pointed out that the main barrier to engaging the public is a lack of background knowledge about the developing world. Therefore the challenge is to build a link with the public by presenting background information which supports and expands the public's understanding of development communications. It has been shown that the public expect the media to simplify the huge amount of complex information they are faced with every day about the world. They want it to be presented in a comprehensible and accessible way. The public know when they are being presented with the same-old negative, one-dimensional image and are demanding a more balanced portrayal of life. They want the complex situations to be presented in clear language with identifiable reference points with stories that relate to the public's everyday lives which connect them to why they should be interested in these issues.

²¹ Code of Conduct on Images and Messages (2006). Approved by CONCORD accessible at: www.deeeep.org/codeofconduct.html

Finally, it is worth considering a more recent study *Finding Frames: New Ways to engage the public in global poverty* (Darnton and Kirk, 2011). This report states that recent qualitative research has shown that the public do not understand global poverty any differently now than they did in the 1980s. The problem is labelled the Live Aid Legacy and characterised by the relationship dynamic of ‘Powerful Giver’ and ‘Grateful, but Passive Receiver’. The development sector are warned of the urgent need to transform their existing practices radically and it is claimed that a new approach applying ‘values and frames theory’ offers a solution to the problem of public engagement with global poverty.

According to Darnton and Kirk, public engagement is being weakened by NGOs turning members into supporters through the transaction model of support, or ‘clicktivism’ which is the trend towards encouraging people to donate on-line at a minimum effort to themselves. Although this model has achieved increased incomes for NGOs it has resulted in holding people at arm’s length and generated high levels of supporter turnover. In this model people simply understand tackling poverty as making donations to charities from the comfort of their armchair with resulting disengagement, which Darnton and Kirk warn will eventually cause collateral damage for the NGOs fundraising efforts in the long-term.

Darnton and Kirk’s research goes on to explain how ‘values and frames theory’ can achieve transformational change by reinforcing the positive values we already hold and activating them by using deep frames. In explanation, values are the guiding principals that individuals use to judge situations and decide their course of action. For example, people who have self-transcendent values engage more in pro-social behaviour; these are values such as Universalism, Equality and Social Justice, which are the motivations the development sector should be appealing to. If we reinforce these values, their opposite values will be suppressed, such as Power, Wealth and Status. Frames, which are the chunks of knowledge in our minds with which we understand situations, ideas and discourses in everyday life, can activate values. Words carry ‘frames’ and activate all the knowledge and experience we carry associated with them. Danton and Kirk claim that ‘values and frames theory’ can teach us which words or frames we should use in our messages to activate positive values, and therefore development strategies and practices can have an enhanced impact.

An example of a negative frame which is identified in Danton and Kirk's study and which appears in this research, is the 'moral order frame' which activates a value that perceives nature as moral and that natural hierarchies of power are, by extension, moral. This power becomes bound up with a conception of morality that places man above nature, Christians above non-Christians, whites above non-whites. This frame underpins our concept of mission and our participation in charity work. However, by emphasising alternative frames, for example the 'embodied mind frame' and the 'participatory democracy frame' we can connect to more positive value systems. Darnton and Kirk state that words such as 'development', 'charity' and 'aid' which are at the heart of how the development sector describe itself activate a moral order frame in which underdeveloped nations are seen as backward children who can only grow up, or develop, by following lessons given by adult nations higher up the moral order (Darnton and Kirk, 2011).

The *Finding Frames* study concludes by encouraging the development sector to discuss these identified tensions and approach change through reflective practice and debate. One of their main recommendations is for NGOs to shift the balance of public activities away from the 'transaction' frame, for example a marketing focus on what £5 can buy or what one-off donation campaigns can achieve, towards placing more emphasis on providing people with opportunities to engage over time by offering a 'supporter journey', or in other words to become more involved. This can be achieved by presenting fundraising and donations as being supportive of long-term development work, and encouraging community fundraising which involves taking an active part in activities.

In summary this chapter has discussed findings regarding how development communications influence public opinion and has considered recent research on the challenges to current development communication strategy. The major concern is the information gap which has been identified in terms of communicating the context surrounding poverty alleviation and development aid. Research studies have been presented which suggest ways of improving the working relationship between NGOs and development agencies involving both clearer reporting and more supporter involvement with long-term development assistance.

Chapters two, three and four have presented a theoretical framework pertinent to the subject of public attitudes to aid and development. The framework has outlined the policy background to

public awareness raising and the importance of focusing public attention on development issues, it has discussed the nature of public support for development aid, how it is measured, what motivations people have, and has closed with a consideration of how development messages impact the public and what strategies best engage people. Now it is time to turn to the research itself, which will describe how the research questions were answered and what conclusions can be drawn, but first Chapter five will explain how the research was carried out.

Chapter Five

A word on the methodology

This chapter describes the research process starting with a background explanation of why the topic was chosen followed by a restatement of the research aims. Since the research questions were investigated using a qualitative research approach justification is offered for the choice of these methods. A description of the research cycle process is supplied in some detail along with accounts of how the data were generated and results analysed. Finally the research design is linked with the data reported in chapter six.

5.1. So what are you studying?

On returning to university after almost 30 years working in the private sector in Iceland my choice of Master's study was International Development. My interest in this field stemmed from following a friend's involvement in development work and an increasing awareness of our changing global environment. My progress along this chosen path of study has been slow but steady with study targets being squeezed in around running a business, teaching and family commitments. However, as I went about my life and the subject of my academic study surfaced, the following inevitable query was heard from colleagues, business associates, interested students, family members and friends, "So what is it you are studying, exactly?" — and my stock reply of, "Well, I'm studying International Development" meant that I was faced at best with a request to expand further and at worst with a blank stare. I quickly discovered that it was necessary to throw light on my statement with a specific definition of what exactly *Development Studies* is and supply examples of subject areas which are entailed in such studies.

Over the past few years, as I have continued to encounter this inevitable question asking for clarification and been called upon to explain the term ‘development’ again and again, I decided to use people’s enquiries as an opportunity to probe and explore exactly what they knew about the topic. At this point it would provide background to explain that in the course of one year in my professional life I have the opportunity to meet and interview more than 200 individuals in a language evaluation setting and it is part of the assessment process to encourage them to ask me questions. During this informal interview process I began to absorb more about people’s attitudes to development and concurrently started to take note of how development was communicated in the public arena in Iceland, especially in the media and on development agency websites.

I had the opportunity in 2011 to participate in development research in Cambodia, and on my return to Iceland I was asked to communicate the results of the project to a number of interested groups. On the one hand I was pleased by how interested people were in the topic, but on the other surprised at the gap in background knowledge about the whole context of international development, and so I started looking into research on public attitudes to development aid. I discovered that very little research had been carried out in Iceland and consequently decided that this field would be my chosen area of research. My premise is that if we have very little information about *what* the public think about various aspects of aid and international development issues, and there is little research or theory on *why* people hold the views they do, then development communicators in Iceland are ill equipped to develop communication strategies which might reinforce, maintain or change public attitudes in this area.

5.2. The research objectives

The research work in this study aims to gather a rich understanding of what Icelandic people think about development issues. It seeks to answer the following key research questions: What are public attitudes to aid and development? What factors motivate people to support development work? What are people’s perceptions of how development is communicated? Because my aim was to examine people’s attitudes to and their perceptions of international development and the role of aid, and because I wished to gather in-depth and nuanced perspectives from my participants, I chose a qualitative approach for my research. My approach

uses the interpretive paradigm and seeks to understand the emic perspective, or experience from the perspective of people themselves (Bailey, Hennink, & Hutter, 2011). The interpretive paradigm focuses on ‘the importance of interpretation and observation in understanding the social world’ (Snape & Spencer, 2003: 7) and it recognises that people’s experiences are constructed within social, cultural, historical or personal contexts; that people try to make sense of their world from a wider social context and interpretations are sometimes commonly shared and inter-subjective (Prasad, 2005). In summary the interpretive approach recognises the importance of these broader contexts on how people make sense of their lives and share meanings, and my goal was to gain detailed understanding of people’s underlying attitudes to and motivations for participation and support of international development work.

5.3. Choice of research methods and possible contribution to future research

According to Bailey et al. (2011) the choice of a qualitative mode of enquiry is appropriate where there has been a limited amount of research done into the structure of attitudes and the language used by people in communicating their attitudes, as I have stated is the case in Iceland. The method of data collection chosen was one-to-one, semi-structured interviews which involved discussing, encouraging and prompting the participants’s thoughts and stories on the topic of development aid in-depth. The purpose was to gain insight into people’s perceptions of global poverty and attitudes to development aid, seeking to capture individual motivations for participation in and/or support of development work. According to Bailey et al. (Ibid.) in-depth, semi-structured interviews are best suited to seeking information on individual perceptions, motivations and meanings people attach to specific issues.

Initially I had thought of approaching my research by using focus group discussions, but according to Bailey (Ibid.) in focus group discussions the stories often centre on other people’s experiences rather than individual experiences of the group participants, thereby producing information on the norms and values that exist in the community more broadly. And although important, I considered that focus groups would be a more efficient tool for measuring the impact of development communication messages on public attitudes, a research approach which initially I had intended to follow up subsequent to analysing the first stage of collected data on

what the public thinks. In fact, in the course of my research I carried out two pilot focus groups on how development communications from development actors affect public opinion, and both groups provided very rich data, but unfortunately, after much thought I decided that because of the volume of data provided and time constraints, this aspect of my research enquiry would have to wait for a further research stage and that I would place my emphasis on the area of individual attitudes, perceptions and motivations of development. I have provided an outline in the conclusion of the direction such focus group studies could take in future research. Therefore my selected research approach was to use in-depth, semi-structured interviews because in addition to shedding light on individual attitudes, the stories and motivations of individuals in in-depth interviews can be linked to their background characteristics (Bailey et al., 2011) and I was interested to examine whether this had an impact on individual attitudes.

If in the future further quantitative research work is done into public attitudes to development aid then this qualitative study might contribute towards constructing an instrument that could be used to provide a valid measurement of the strength of certain attitudes and the importance of certain factors driving attitudes to development aid. In terms of further qualitative research it is my hope that this study will provide an in-depth and nuanced picture of people's attitudes and perceptions of development aid on which more specific inquiries could be built. For example, research into which communication approaches best promote support for aid, or an examination of how people's wider values influence their attitudes to development aid, or a further exploration of what factors influence people's behaviour when it comes to participating in actions to alleviate poverty.

5.4. The research design process

The design of the semi-structured interview guide (a copy of which is available in the appendix) was inspired by the conceptual framework of my study (see chapters 2, 3 and 4). Recent data and analysis on public perceptions of development aid in the UK were extremely helpful in this regard. After examining the questions posed from a number of qualitative studies which have been discussed in chapter four (Henson et al., 2010: TNS UK, 2010: Glennie, Straw, & Wild,

2012) I developed an interview guide which I hoped would elicit responses to the following six key areas:

- How well informed do people consider they are about poverty in developing countries and where do they get information on this?
- How important do they think it is to help people in developing countries? Why?
- What do they consider to be the causes of poverty in developing countries?
- Who do they consider responsible for alleviating global poverty?
- What individual support do they have for development assistance (if any) and what drives this?
- How do they perceive public messages about development are communicated and how does this affect their opinion of development?

Bailey et al. (2011) explain that it is difficult to ask questions directly about attitudes in an interview given that attitudes may be a theoretical concept for some people and are difficult to respond to and therefore need to be operationalized in an interview guide. The question, 'What is your attitude to international development and global poverty?' is not really palatable for many people. However, I attempted to identify people's attitudes by asking about certain elements contained within their attitudes. Ajzen & Fishbein (1980) define attitudes as 'the evaluation of perceived consequences of the intended behaviour', and based upon this definition I might ask about the perceived consequences of poverty in the world to discover more about people's attitudes to development. Therefore a series of open-ended interview questions were developed which expanded upon the above-listed six key areas. Each question was supported by a number of topical probes which were originally deductive in nature because they originated in theory related to my research topic and from issues identified in the literature review, however as described in section 5.5 below, after the pilot interview stage the interview guide was reviewed and other more inductive probes were considered and added.

It should be clearly stated that the questions in the semi-structured interview guide used in the interviews were designed to elicit responses based on the interviewees personal opinions, attitudes, perceptions and experiences, rather than their knowledge of development aid. Although

I was not testing their knowledge of development aid per se, an analysis of the data did aim to collect information regarding the scope of people's understanding of how development works and what it involves. There was, however, one exception to this rule of avoiding questions based on knowledge, when towards the end of the interview the participant was asked to estimate government development aid spending and what they knew of the Icelandic Development Agency (ICEIDA), but only if they had not yet mentioned either of these topics in the course of the interview. Although my interview guide was semi-structured, it was designed to be flexible (Charmaz, 2006), and the interview questions were kept deliberately open-ended, so that the interviewee's experience was not one of responding to my questions, but of participating in a conversation in which they were telling their own stories (Bailey et al., 2011).

5.5. Pilot studies

The initial interview guide was drafted using deductive methods, but the pilot stage allowed for the incorporation of inductive methods as the initial questions were refined after three pilot interviews. Bailey et al. (Ibid.) suggest that researchers preferably conduct pilot interviews with people who share similar characteristics as the actual interviewees but who live outside the research community. Therefore for the pilot interviews I chose two interviewees who were very interested in the topic of development work and one individual who was not at all interested. These were people that I knew from the course of my work and study and who agreed to be pilot tested. On analysis of their responses I used key issues that were identified in the interviews to refine the questions and the probes for the upcoming participant interviews. The pilot study was very useful and enabled me to check that the questions were clear, open-ended, the order was logical for the interviewee, and that the information gathered was in fact addressing my research questions. In this way I was able to make inductive inferences and to develop issues more deeply with each interview. After conducting three pilot interviews I felt I had refined the interview guide to cover most aspects of my research topic.

5.6. Language issues

The interview guide was made available in both Icelandic and English, because although I was expecting to carry out the research in Icelandic, I knew that I might be asked to conduct some interviews in English. Previous to the pilot interviews the Icelandic interview guide was back translated and checked against the English interview guide (Bailey et al., 2007) and both interview guides were tested during the pilot interviews. In total, twelve participant interviews were conducted in Icelandic and five in English. At the invitation stage I always suggested to the participant that we hold the interview in Icelandic, unless I felt confident that the speaker was a fluent speaker of English. Of course, I made it clear before the interview that the option was open to speak in the language they felt most comfortable with, and the majority of interviewees chose their native language. Of the five interviewees who opted to speak in English, two had studied overseas at graduate level and used English regularly at work, two were fluent speakers due to their backgrounds and one was bilingual. The remaining twelve interviews were conducted entirely in Icelandic.

The pilot interviews had convinced me of the benefit of committing to one language and keeping to a pattern of questions and answers in the same language, because switching between the two distracted from the thought processes and comfort of the interviewee. The interviews were transcribed in the language recorded, and I considered analysing the data in the original language of each transcript, but since the data would be presented and discussed in English it was decided to translate all the interviews, which although time-consuming made it easier to cross-reference, group and categorize codes at the coding stage. Therefore a limitation of the research could be some loss of detail in the translated transcripts, however to counteract this I checked the translations for accuracy and appropriateness and was confident that my familiarity with the language and the culture of Icelandic expression would capture the precise meaning of the dialogue. In this way my translation attempted to preserve the colloquial style of language and phrases used by my participants, and expressions were always noted down which held cultural meaning or communicated cultural concepts which I then retained for analysis (Bailey et al., 2011).

5.6. Selection and number of participants

Once the pilot testing had been completed my selection of participants started in earnest. I was looking to recruit from a broad study population – the Icelandic public, however, based on recommendations by recent qualitative surveys conducted in the UK the aim was not to recruit extreme cases. This meant, I was not seeking development professionals, nor those who were strongly against development aid. I was aiming for a diverse, yet balanced sample of participants in terms of gender, with a mixture of ages, educational backgrounds and with both rural and urban profiles. Through my professional work I was lucky enough to have access to a large data base of adults' email addresses and I assembled a contact list of 200 people who had attended training courses in the last three years. I drafted an email invitation to participate in my research which explained that I was hoping to conduct research into public attitudes to international development and development aid and that no specialist knowledge was required, simply a willingness to share thoughts and opinions in an interview.

Initially I received 27 replies (from the 200 email invitations sent) from individuals interested in participating in my research. I then replied with further details describing how long the interview might be, that it would be recorded and that confidentiality would be assured and the information would only be used in my research. This time I attached a brief profile to the email which the participants were asked to complete. The profile asked the interested party to supply three pieces of information; to place themselves in one of three age groups (18 – 34, 35 – 54 and 55 +), to indicate completion of education levels (compulsory school, upper secondary school, trade or skills certification, university, post graduate, other), and to supply their place of birth and indicate whether they had lived outside Reykjavík for more than ten years, or abroad for more than five years.

At this point I received nineteen completed profiles. I had explained that my research interviews could take place over a six month period, and I started to arrange interviews with my study population according to the above mentioned aim of obtaining a diverse yet balanced sample, that is, as I proceeded I checked that I had equal numbers of men and women, balanced numbers of interviewees from the three adult age groups, a range of educational backgrounds and members

of the public who grew up both in the Reykjavík area and in rural areas. In the end I interviewed twelve of the original nineteen interested participants, and apologised to the remaining seven, who were not interviewed either for the sake of obtaining a diverse sample or due to the duration of my interview schedule which was so long that a number of the consenting interviewees were otherwise engaged when it came to conducting an interview. During this period I interviewed a further five randomly sampled participants who were approached separately. These were interested parties who were either introduced to me or presented themselves to me during the research process.

Of course, qualitative research does not usually constitute a statistically-representative sample, but I attempted to obtain as diverse a demographic range as possible. Another possible limitation of this research could be that the data reflects the opinions of a sample of the Icelandic public with the time and interest to participate in my research. Researchers have struggled with this issue in public opinion research (Goot, 2008; Shaw, 1994; Sheridan, 1993) the trade-off between the information gathered and the degree to which responses are representative of general views. Goot (2008) points out that participants in studies of this kind, due to their public spiritedness i.e., their willingness to add to the cultural wealth of the community for the benefit of social research, may be more inclined to be supportive of international development and aid.

I continued to proceed with data collection in an inductive manner transcribing each interview as it was completed in order to identify key issues and make inferences to use in subsequent interviews. Of course during the main interviews the framework of the interview guide remained the same, but small changes were made to refine questions in order to phrase them in a more open way, or adding a probe and writing notes on the interview guide to motivate the interviewee more by probing. Because I was not limited in the period of time I allocated to conduct interviews, the first began in October 2012 with participant number seventeen being interviewed in May 2013, this meant that I had time to devote to this inductive, cyclical process of qualitative data collection as outlined by Rubin & Rubin (2005). Eventually I felt that I was not recording any new information, and decided to stop after interviewing seventeen members of the public.

5.7. Interview protocol and ethics

Ethical considerations were taken in making sure that the participants fully understood the nature of the study and the fact that their participation was completely voluntary. This was explained twice, first at the invitation stage, and then when arranging the interview details. As well as introducing and explaining the purpose of my research in the beginning of the interview, I informed the participant that the interview would be confidential and data would be kept anonymous. At the invitation stage I had explained that I would like to audio-record the interview and the participants' permission was given on return of their profile, but consent was always checked again before recording started.

In fourteen cases out of seventeen the interview was conducted in a classroom location. The classroom was comfortable, colourful and had a sofa corner with coffee facilities. The room was private and meant that the interviewees could relax without distractions. Interviews were always arranged at times that suited the interviewee and the interview usually took 60 minutes, but I advised them they should plan for a 90 minute visit so that the interview would not be rushed. Initially I was concerned that this would be too much of a time commitment for most of my interviewees, but in fact, everyone readily agreed and most interviews took around 70-80 minutes to complete and although I always checked with the participants in most cases they were not in a hurry, because arrangements had already been made for the complete time. I provided my subjects with refreshments and appropriate snacks and was always pleasantly surprised that the participants seemed to enjoy the opportunity to share their views, to talk and to be listened to, and after thanking them for their participation I was always rewarded with a statement to the fact that they had enjoyed the interview experience.

5.8. Method of analysis and presentation of results

My approach to the analysis of the qualitative data broadly follows the principles of grounded theory which is based on an inductive approach (Charmaz, 2006), and I have incorporated the approach as outlined by Bailey et al. (2011), that is, my core analytic tasks are inductive applying repeated analyses of the verbatim transcripts in a circular manner throughout the analysis process, but certain deductive elements can also be identified in aspects of the code development as

derived from the conceptual framework. My overall approach consisted of identifying content and themes in the data and building up a series of codes which allowed me to explore possible answers to my research questions.

After transcribing the interviews, I started by identifying codes from my textual data. Initially I progressed deductively coding participants' answers on the basis of the main questions from the interview guide, however on a close reading of the data inductive codes began to be added which reflected issues of importance to participants themselves (Bailey et al., 2011). When considering codes for a particular question, the answer provided by each participant was examined in its entirety rather than focusing on the direct response to the particular question. Sub-codes were then derived to identify the themes underlying the responses to each of the questions, for example in a discussion of the specific causes of poverty, some of the sub-themes identified were greed, the global economic system and corruption of developing country governments. This process of sub-coding was continued until the ability to discern distinct themes was exhausted. This resulted in a multi-layered system of codes, and after that the entire data set was then combed through relating particular chunks of text to codes. In order to validate my identification of codes, after four interviews had been coded I asked another development researcher to review my codes to ensure that my categorisation of the data was as thorough as possible. This input was very beneficial because differences of opinion over the allocation of particular segments of text to a particular code could be discussed, and further definitions of sub-codes could be noted and developed. Therefore adjustments to the coding framework were made at this time and enhanced the inductive conceptual process and circular manner of the research cycle (Ibid.).

The purpose of the above description is to present sufficient information to replicate the study and to ensure that all necessary steps were taken in my method of approaching the research topic. In the following chapter the results of the data analysis will be described. The data analysis attempts to identify the perspectives of the study participants and understand the motivations attached to their behaviour. The results described in chapter six do not present the entire coding framework, rather the focus will be on the main themes identified in relation to the participants' perceptions of global poverty and international development and the role of aid. The presentation of my results have been organised around the six main interview questions in the study as

outlined earlier in section 5.4. Throughout the chapter verbatim quotations are presented to illustrate the particular themes identified, and the language employed by interviewees to communicate their perspectives on development will be discussed. Relevant quotations have been chosen from the interview transcripts which support points made by the participants with the aim of enriching understanding and providing a clearer insight into the issues. An attempt has always been made to indicate when a significant number or the majority of the interviewees have made the same point to emphasise the importance of that opinion.

Chapter 6

So what exactly do people think? A presentation of the data

This chapter presents the data collected from seventeen in-depth, semi-structured interviews with members of the public. As outlined in the methodology chapter, codes with similar attributes were grouped together into broad categories and developed into seven core issue areas which are as follows: how well informed are people about development and where do they access this information, what images do they have of developing countries, what do they think causes poverty, who do they consider responsible for alleviating it, what motivates them to want to do something about it, what are their perceptions of the success of aid, and what type of messages about aid and development influence them. The results discussed in each core category present a content and thematic analysis of the data and describe the participants' perceptions and attitudes, alongside underlying values and frames which were identified in the qualitative interviews.

6.1 Interest in global poverty and international development

My first interview question for this study aimed to explore how well-informed people are about development issues and where they access their information about global issues. By analysing the richness and range of people's responses generated by exploratory discussion about following international news, I attempted to evaluate their interest in, concern for, and gauge their background understanding of development issues.

6.1.1 Sources of international news

Most interviewees claimed to be interested in following global issues in general, with eight displaying active interest, six moderate interest stating that they follow stories in the international

news that specifically interest them and the remaining three displayed a low level of interest. Television, on-line news sites and newspapers were consistently mentioned as the top source of information by my interviewees. The two older age groups (interviewees 35+ and 55+) identified T.V. as their main source ahead of newspapers with on-line news sites in joint second place. The younger interviewees (18-34 years) identified online sources first, followed by T.V. sources, with only one participant under 35 mentioning the print media.

When prompted for further details about frequency of access to international news, most interviewees from the two older groups claimed to watch at least one main news programme per day which usually included a summary of international news supplemented by flicking through a newspaper to gain a round-up of the main headlines. This was in contrast to the younger age group who on the whole much preferred to look for their own choice of news on-line sometimes following links to further discussion of news. One younger interviewee expressed a frequent view that TV news and the print media was like being ‘spoon fed’ and searching for information on the internet was preferable and went on to say:

Because I can listen regularly to talks on TED [website sharing inspiring ideas and talks] and read articles here and there, and just get more idea of the big picture - which I mostly get from exploring the internet.

(Male, 18-35)

6.1.2 Perception of Icelandic news as limited

A majority of the interviewees from all three age groups perceived Icelandic sources of foreign news to be rather superficial, with several participants stating specifically that the news was simply translated and often just summarised information from foreign news agencies. A few interviewees said that they sometimes conducted a wider search by first visiting on-line news sites such as *mbl.is* or *visir.is*²² where they could usually find links to fuller reports on foreign news sites which used quotes from sources and they indicated this was more reliable:

²² Open access on-line news sites operated by news agencies which also publish the main daily newspapers in Iceland.

If I am following news in Iceland that comes from abroad, I try to get to the original news and find out what people actually said. My feeling is that the Icelandic news is just translated, and often it is not done very well, so that's why I am interested in getting to the source. (*Male, 35-55*)

Although approximately half of my interviewees expressed frustration with Icelandic news reports and indicated they sometimes searched for foreign sources, when the remainder of participants were prompted only two people stated they made a special effort to supplement or verify the information provided by consulting wider sources. Most explanations given concerned the time and effort it took in searching for additional information, but one person brought up the point that international news was weighted in favour of English-speaking people:

I sometimes chose to read more and follow a link to a foreign site, but sometimes the English is too difficult and I don't understand, but can always check out the photographs. (*Female, 55+*)

Amongst the participants who consulted wider sources, several had lived or worked abroad for periods of time and quoted popular on-line news sources in foreign languages, and several participants from the two older groups quoted some of the more well-known international media as sources for gaining a fuller picture behind the Icelandic headlines:

While I was in Germany I constantly followed the news from all over, but when I came to Iceland I found out that I have to be more active, because they don't have so much foreign news here - you really have to go to the BBC, or CNN, or Der Spiegel...(*Female, 35-55*)

6.1.3 Minimal awareness of development stories and recurrent scepticism

Despite claims of interest in following global news from the majority of participants, it was difficult to elicit specific stories about the developing world. When asked whether they had noticed information about development in the last twelve months, most of the interviewees referred to high profile TV campaigns like Red Nose Day or the occasional interview in the paper with an Icelander who had visited or worked on a development project. When asked whether they had noticed any documentary coverage about development on T.V. in the last twelve months only two people mentioned noticing documentaries dealing with poverty issues. It was more common

for interviewees with a high interest in international news overall to have some interest in development issues and to have accessed development news from on-line sources, whereas interviewees with only moderate interest in foreign news tended to have a limited awareness of news from the developing world.

Amongst the interviewees who claimed interest in development issues a degree of scepticism could be identified regarding the type of information supplied by the media, with some comments about the precedence and relative value the media give to typical ‘western news’:

What I mean is - it’s fine if the news comes from near us, like if two people die in Norway - that is huge news, but in the other news more than a 1,000 people died²³ and that didn’t get as much time as the other news. (*Male, 55+*)

Throughout the whole body of data recurrent scepticism could be detected in connection with images of poverty in developing countries (further discussed in section 6.2). The majority of participants perceived a media focus on immediate crisis situations and pictures of human suffering, which as one participant put it “makes a good story for five minutes and then disappears”. However, only two participants (who both claimed and exhibited an active interest in global issues) spontaneously took these comments a stage further and voiced their criticism of the absence of follow-up reports and the lack of stories about the long-term development situation.

6.1.4 The importance of personal experience

Beyond information gathered from media sources, personal contacts were often quoted as a source of information about development. None of my interviewees had personal contact with individuals in poverty overseas, for example by volunteering or working for a development agency; but five of my interviewees had stories to tell sourced from personal contacts, that is they had information from friends or family who had worked in developing countries or for aid organisations:

²³ The participant had been speaking previously about a tragic disaster caused by the collapse of a textile factory in Bangladesh in April 2013.

I know that my brother-in-law went to [city in East Africa], a while ago now, - and he was working with making and installing and teaching them about pumps and things like that. (*Male, 35-55*)

Three people had the opportunity to travel widely themselves and had encountered poverty, although their accounts were observations rather than engagements with poor people. Many interviewees referred to personal interview accounts they had read in newspapers with individuals who had travelled to and worked in developing countries, and frequently these accounts were considered to be more credible coming from an individual's perspective.

6.1.5 Little exposure to specialist development websites

Through an examination of what wasn't said, it was noticeable that none of my interviewees, even those more engaged in supporting NGOs, mentioned development organisation websites as a source of information about the developing world, and when prompted only two people said they had accessed NGO websites to compare conditions when they were thinking of sponsoring a child.

In summary of this section appraising overall interest in international development, a recurring answer from the majority of my interviewees was that although they liked to remain informed about news and global issues in general, when asked about issues relating to development and aid they confessed to not being as well-informed as they would wish concerning this topic. The majority of interviewees perceived a lack in their knowledge and understanding of issues relating to development and aid. As one participant put it when asked if she felt informed about global poverty issues:

I don't know. In a way one is so wrapped up in news every day, but I wouldn't claim I knew what was happening.....and how in-depth my knowledge is – I just don't know. (*Female, 35-55*)

Although many interviewees ended their conversations about following global issues by stating that they felt not very well-informed about development issues, and in many cases confessing in the beginning of the interview to a limited knowledge on the subject, it became clear as the

conversation progressed that people were still keen to voice their views on why poverty exists, who should be responsible and to recount stories about the lack of success of development aid.

6.2 Images of poverty in developing countries

At this point in the analysis it would be beneficial to portray the series of images which the interviewees related to poverty and international development, because these images, both latent and sometimes consciously expressed, recurred at all stages of the interviews and underpinned the ideas and concepts expressed throughout. An attempt has been made below to reflect in the order of discussion the frequency of recurrence and relative importance of these images in the participants' recorded comments and stories. Data was identified and compiled from all stages of the interviews for this particular section, however a specific picture was built-up of interviewees' perceptions of poverty by asking them which countries first came to mind when they thought about developing countries and what type of issues they considered these countries faced.

6.2.1 Africa one big 'poor' country

Unanimously all participants named Africa as the first 'country' that came to mind when envisioning developing countries, eleven people went on to mention parts of Asia, South America, India and China. More often than not whole geographical areas were labelled as developing areas rather than individual countries, but 'Africa' was always top of the list:

When I was a child, I was told that I should eat my food because the children in Africa didn't have any, so it has always been the theme of Africa that has flooded over one throughout all the years. (*Male, 55+*)

Developing countries? Isn't that Africa and countries like that? Poor countries? The first country that comes to mind is Africa – I don't know why really, — it's probably because that's what you see in the news, you know, — starving people who need help... (*Female, 18 – 34*)

When prompted for names of poor countries in Africa only several interviewees easily named more than three sub-Saharan African countries, around six could name two or three, mainly

Malawi, but the rest found it difficult and explained that they realised that Africa was not one country, but knew little about individual countries.

I'm sure that everything is different in the whole of Africa, but in my mind I put all these countries under one roof. (*Female, 35-55*)

Yes, that is the question, which countries, there are a million countries in Africa! Well, you know, you see the stuff in the news, and I forget so quickly, one imagines that the whole of Africa is just burning – like it's one big hellfire of AIDS and poverty. I don't know, one imagines Africa as the main place, the place that the white man has exploited the most. (*Male, 18-34*)

6.2.2 Images of poverty as a 'black hole'

When asked about the issues associated most with developing countries, the majority of interviewees focused on concepts of need and listed a lack of some basic resource they felt that people did not have. The predominant matters named in this regard were shortage of water, food, and lack of education:

When I think of them, I think of water shortages, food shortages, illness, lots of flies, and lots of sick children with large stomachs and malnutrition. (*Female, 55+*)

In the developing countries people do not have good health, or food, or water, or any of these basic needs. (*Male, 55+*)

Frequent comparisons were made between how much 'we' had (in Iceland) and how little 'they' had which placed an emphasis on the distance between 'our' privileged and 'their' underprivileged life ('us' and 'them' constructs are discussed further in section 6.2.4). Emphasis has been added for illustration in the following example:

I know that the largest part of the world lives in bad conditions and we have such good conditions. And I think it is not really that important what is happening here [the financial crash], it is nothing in comparison with the injustice that *they* have to live through... (*Female, 35 – 55*)

Several interviewees stated that ‘we’ were not aware of all that we had, and took the relative luxury of our lives for granted (again emphasis added for illustration):

We need to teach our children that it is not to be taken for granted that we have everything here on the table. That there are children out there in the world that don’t have this, that they don’t have these things and don’t even have the basics that they need to live... (Male, 55+)

In general, this type of value comparison was underpinned by a sense of a general ‘lack of fairness’ in the world, with several participants making references to injustice and inequality, but generalising this comparison to the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ and the rich group who ‘have’ were regularly objectified into some abstract group at the top of the social strata, rather than ‘all of us’ who ‘have’ in Iceland.

6.2.3 Relative poverty

Some people compared relative states of poverty between ‘poverty at home’ and ‘poverty out there’ stating that although some people here were suffering from the financial crash and straightened economic times, that it was not poverty on a comparable level:

Of course it should be important to us if someone is starving out there in the world – maybe because we have it so good – and we have it very good, even though we are all in this financial crisis, of course, there are people in different financial situations, but at least no one is dying of starvation. (Female, 18 – 34)

The same point was raised by several interviewees that we did not have the same lack of food, even though some people were here queueing for support on a weekly basis:

One hears a lot about poverty in Iceland, some people say OK we are giving out food parcels here, but if you look at the countries where there is real poverty then parcels are not being handed out there, people are searching in the rubbish for food. If we compare ourselves with the global situation the need is much more in other places than here. (Male, 55+)

Interestingly, one person stated that rich countries had poverty of the spirit as opposed to physical poverty.

6.2.4 'Us' versus 'them' constructions

The language chosen by participants to discuss their perceptions of poverty in developing countries indicated both generalisations and a clear separation between 'us' and 'them'. People were often referred to as 'the poor' and countries, frequently the whole of Africa, as 'poor countries'. Only two interviewees brought up differences between groups in developing countries, otherwise poor people and poor countries were undifferentiated and associated together as a uniform group:

Well, I don't know much about different countries in Africa, but my aunt went to a country there, and I don't know which country she went to, but she arrived in a city with really high buildings and guys in suits – completely amazing – just the same as here, but then she drove for just 10 minutes out of the city and she came to a town with children dying in the streets, and people with, you know, very little clothes for covering – just bits of material, and it was just a neighbouring place to this big city. (*Female, 18-35*)

The use of 'us' versus 'them' comparisons were also very prevalent when the issue of education came up, and almost all interviewees mentioned education as a matter they associated with developing countries. People's lack of education was a constant theme with frequent mention that 'we' in Iceland could teach 'them' how to fish:

We can teach them things – things like teach them to fish, teach them to make a net or wind a net, so they can start working with these things, and that is what I think would be best for them. (*Male, 55+*)

The constant concept of 'they' needing education and 'us' imparting it was such a recurring theme that I coded these references as 'the philosopher's stone' because although education is absolutely vital to development, the impression many people conveyed was of education as a miracle solution, and the perception expressed was of a type of 'healing elixir' that 'we' in Iceland could pour into an 'empty space' and fill people with knowledge. Frequently the participants talked about how education in itself would bring people out of poverty:

And of course they must have some kind of education so they can make a life for themselves – yes, we can send experts, and we do that, that's what we do in these developing countries that we are trying to help. (*Female, 55+*)

The language used conveyed a perception of ‘them’ as passive actors waiting to receive ‘our’ knowledge, which of course, it was implied, was the correct knowledge for the situation. However, in some cases there was a disconnect between, on the one hand, people’s belief in the value of ‘us’ knowing exactly what ‘they’ need, and imparting valuable education to ‘them’, with on the other hand, contradictory statements at other points in the interview about how the wrong kind of aid for the local context is often provided (see section 6.7.1 on corruption). In general, the stereotyping of poor people as empty vessels waiting for ‘our’ education and knowledge to be ‘passed down’ simply reinforced the ‘us’ and ‘them’ dynamics, and perpetuated an image of passive people without agency:

I was pleased to hear that we are passing on our knowledge for example in Malawi — of fishing for example — because my son was there once and he was talking about how the conditions were there, and he said that some of the people just sat and waited[for the right conditions to fish]. (*Female, 55+*)

Entirely absent from all interviewees’ discussions of developing countries were stories of local knowledge and whether the wider business or political context could support growth once ‘our’ gift of education had been dispensed. Finally, people’s use of ‘us’ and ‘them’ in this context revealed an inconsistency in how they classified the two groups. Interestingly the ‘they’ group was lumped into one undifferentiated group, frequently described as ‘the needy’, ‘the poor people’ who ‘lacked’, while the ‘we’ grouping was differentiated into two separate groups, sometimes it referred to the collective ‘we’ i.e. all of us in Iceland, or in the rich countries, or ‘we’ who had obligations to do something about poverty, but mostly the understanding was of ‘we’ the governments and international organisations in the developed countries, and in this sense people were delegating the responsibility to some other group within ‘our’ system .

Taken as a whole, an analysis of the data relating to the images participants have of developing countries suggests that people generally have two-dimensional perceptions of aid and development, which could be summarised as ‘us’ — governments and organisations in developed countries responsible for helping ‘them’ — passive and helpless poor people in developing countries. My analysis also suggests that this conception was reflected in the language constructions used. On the whole the interviewees lacked a wider understanding of, and therefore the language that could express more details of what life is like in developing countries. The

language used frequently reverted to ‘us’ versus ‘them’ comparisons which had the effect of further distancing people in poor countries and undermined a sense of empathy. This would suggest that development communication strategies would benefit from concentrating on providing more complex and detailed stories of people’s lives and experiences in developing countries in order to give the public more ways to understand and be able to talk about poverty and development. This point will be returned to in chapter seven.

6. 3 Causes of poverty in developing countries

The interviewees were asked what they perceived to be the main causes of poverty in developing countries through an open-ended question, and I was aware that prompts in support of this particular research question could be extremely sensitive to suggestion, therefore I focused on gathering spontaneous replies as much as I could. Initially, I had considered supplying a supporting list of causes of poverty to prompt responses to the question, however because my aim was to collect people’s perceptions as they were I decided to focus on eliciting unprompted responses and only used prompts when spontaneous answers were exhausted or unforthcoming. The analysis that follows attempts to weigh the relative importance given to potential causes of poverty in developing countries by the participants, and considers people’s conceptions of the issue of poverty, how they ‘frame’ it, why do they think poverty exists, and their perceptions of the factors that cause it.

At this point it would be helpful to briefly review what academic literature suggests the public perceive causes of poverty in developing countries to be. Broadly, people identify five explanatory factors (Harper, Wagstaff, Newton, & Harrison, 1990; Carr, Taef, de Ribeiro, & MacLachlan, 1998; Hine & Montiel, 1999; Bolitho, Carr, & Fletcher, 2007; Panadero & Vazquez, 2008):

- Internal causes and the poor themselves, for example laziness or lack of education
- Natural causes, for example drought, floods, earthquakes etc.
- Exploitation, for example by developed countries or the global financial system
- War and conflict
- Developing country governments, for example corruption and greed

All of these factors with the special exception of war and conflict were touched upon by my interviewees to a greater or lesser degree, however I have prioritised the themes below according to their relative importance as identified by my participants. First the spontaneous responses which shaped recurrent themes will be discussed, and this will be followed by an analysis of the gaps, or causes that what were not spontaneously touched upon and when prompted it became clear they had minimal salience in people's considerations. Overall, it is possible to say that whether the interviewees were very expressive or found the subject of the causes of global poverty very difficult to tackle, there was a broad recognition of the fact that the causes of poverty were very complex. Many participants mentioned that there were probably many factors, which they might not necessarily be aware of, converging to perpetuate poverty.

6.3.1 External causes, greed, exploitation and injustice

By far the most spontaneous response from the majority of participants given as the cause of global poverty was described as greed, sometimes termed selfishness, and evidenced itself in narratives about exploitation and injustice. For several participants the allocation of greed extended to humanity in general:

But it is always causing a problem this greed, you know, "I'm going to make sure I get my slice of the cake, I'm going to protect this for me". (*Female, 35-55*)

But overall this element of greed was mainly assigned to two distinct players outlined below with the main emphasis on the first group, closely followed by the second. The majority of interviewees named the first group as governments in the rich countries contending for wealth and power. When assigning this greed, frequently 'we' in the Western world were initially spoken of as a group, but it was common to add a later qualification of 'rich country governments':

Our Western world who think of ourselves as well-off, to a large extent want to keep it like this, yes I think it's like that. I mean if the whole world would live in the same luxury as we do, it couldn't work. I think there is a lot in it, that the governments of the Western world want to keep it this way, hold the

others down, out of fear of there not being enough to go around. [Previously this interviewee had discussed the possibility of global food shortages.] (*Male 55+*)

It was not common that a direct causal link was made between governments and the public as one participant did:

Of course, it's the industrial countries that are producing the goods and taking all the world's resources, and these governments are nothing more than the voters who put them there. (*Male, 35-55*)

The second most common references were to the greed of developing country governments evidenced in corruption and exploitation of their people. Frequent mention was made of corrupt politicians and dictators and in twelve interviews out of the fourteen that mentioned this point generalisations were made, that is no particular country or dictator was specified:

In the developing countries, there we can see the people who are governing have loads of money and they keep it in other countries apart from their own, but their own people are totally poor – but the dictators have enough money. (*Male, 18-34*)

When participants made a reference to the corrupt practices of governments in developing countries, mostly unnamed countries in Africa, even if they mentioned a specific country that they had read or heard about, frequently their point would be carried beyond that particular country and the corruption discourse would become more generalised and be transposed onto the whole continent:

There are so many terrible wars in these countries, like in the Congo in Africa. We shouldn't donate money to the governments in these countries because they will take half the money in weapons, or something like that.... (*Female, 18-34*)

This tendency to generalise has already been discussed in section 6.2 concerning images of poverty. Finally, in every discussion of the greed of developing country governments there was an underlying presumption of the innocence or victimisation of the population who were thought of as being exploited or manipulated. One participant said:

These people cannot break out of the poverty trap because their governments keep information from them, they don't get to know what their opportunities are – they are kept like slaves in some places.
(*Female, 35-55*)

A secondary group of players emerging from the interview data in relation to the causes of poverty in developing countries could be identified as multinational businesses, individuals in rich countries and international organisations. Seven participants spontaneously discussed multinational companies involved in resource grabbing, or control of the global market for profit, with pharmaceutical and oil companies being commonly named as examples of this. The overall reason for the inequality caused by this group was financial greed. Here is a typical comment:

I think there are very powerful forces in the world that live off keeping others in a bad position. Big companies for example. In these richest companies in the world it is the money which controls everything, and it controls far too much. They can control the society with this money. (*Male, 35-55*)

When demographic factors were considered in relation to the discussion of globalisation and exploitation by multinationals as a cause of poverty in developing countries it is possible to say that the participants who introduced these factors had on the whole travelled extensively, or studied and worked outside Iceland or had completed a higher education level.

In relation to individuals causing poverty five participants talked specifically about greed or selfishness in terms of over-consumption of goods resulting in global inequality:

The reason is that we who have the money we want to hold on to our luxuries and high standards. For example, take how much food each person throws away — and just that one thing, if people could reduce that then there would be more for others, but it is like everyone knows — but no one does anything.
(*Male, 55+*)

Corruption and mismanagement of finances by international organisations were only mentioned by four participants, and their underlying attitudes were that organisations that were supposed to be reducing inequality were at the best being ineffective:

I know a large part of this international money is being spent on administration and the money that goes to the U.N. and the World Bank – that is a bottomless pit! The I.M.F. have not done anything good for any of the countries they have tried to help. They are just big shots who are stealing a load of money that they think they own. (*Male, 18-34*)

Underlying many participants' answers when discussing all the groups outlined above was a general sense of injustice whatever they thought the cause of global poverty to be, and even amongst those who found it challenging to name causal factors there was awareness of the interplay of complex issues and frequent admissions of their own perceived lack of knowledge, which taken as a whole conveyed a sense of individual powerlessness against 'the system':

I don't know what causes this injustice — when some people in some countries have loads of money and others have nothing at all. I mean someone must be benefitting from all this. I mean some countries must be benefitting from having this huge gap between these very poor people, and then, these well-off countries — I mean there must be some hidden agenda but I don't know what it is. (*Female, 35-55*)

6.3.2 Internal causes, the wider social context and natural impacts

When discussing developing countries many interviewees frequently referred to people's inability to participate in society as a cause of poverty. These references were often cloaked in the language that expressed a lack of something, need or want: a need for water, healthcare, or a lack of education which was the most popular example:

I think that a lot of these people who are born into poverty — they don't get educated, and they don't get the support which we have received in order to help themselves and work themselves out of it....
(*Female, 55+*)

The underlying assumption was that if this gap was filled, the lack of whatever was removed, the need was met, that in some way people could make their way out of poverty by being taught the necessary knowledge and skill. These suppositions were strongly linked to images of need or lack and were talked about in isolation. They were not accompanied by any specific observations or discussion of the political, economic and social context.

A few participants made references to natural factors such as geographical and climate impacts and natural disasters causing famine, but the issue of disease received only minimal mention. The underlying assumption was that because natural disasters were seen to be forces outside human control, people in need of humanitarian aid were seen to be ‘innocent victims’ and as being ‘deserving’ of ‘our’ help and support.

Two participants when asked about the causes of poverty brought up the issue of religion and gave examples of how people’s conditions or behaviour were controlled by religious constraints:

Many of these countries have very different religions — and that plays such a big part in all this mess too. You know, my husband has travelled a lot to India, Nigeria, Libya, Guatemala, — but of course there is such a lot of poverty and the society is divided very unequally, and those people have such different cultures and religions. There’s the Hindu religion, and then there in Nigeria there was some completely different religion, and then the Mohammedan religion in Libya, and there nothing was allowed — we couldn’t get to know anyone, and at this time there was a war with Chad, and people just got thrown out, and one cannot judge it or understand it, you know. (*Female, 55+*)

6.3.3 Gaps in knowledge concerning the causes of global poverty

Some causes were conspicuous by their absence from general consideration and here I would like to briefly touch upon the issues of war, over-population alongside debt and trade concerns. Very few references were made by the interviewees to war or conflict being a cause of poverty. Two people mentioned the war in the Congo, and this conflict was seen as the consequence of the corrupt nature of the country’s government. One individual criticised the hypocrisy of rich countries trading in both arms and aid. Again a demographic pattern could be identified here, with participants who spontaneously shared comments about conflict issues having spent time living abroad and/or completed a higher education. Only two participants mentioned over-population as a cause of poverty and in general when interviewees were prompted it was seen as the consequence of lack of education and the related issue of lack of birth control was not mentioned.

Andrew Darnton (2007) in a review for DFID called *Global Poverty and the Public*, describes how in the UK, in spite of two major countrywide campaigns, the Jubilee 2000 campaign which

tried to raise awareness of debt as a factor in global poverty, and the Make Poverty History campaign in 2005, which highlighted debt, trade and aid as the trio of political influences on poverty, the majority of the British public remain unaware that debt and international trade are issues in global poverty (Darnton, 2007). In this research, none of the interviewees spontaneously brought up debt or trade issues in connection with causes of poverty in developing countries, and when prompted some said they had not considered these issues as factors before, and others that they had little knowledge of the subject and didn't feel qualified to comment. Although none of my participants mentioned issues of debt or trade in relation to the causes of global poverty, conversely, my two informed pilot interviewees, both discussed these influences on poverty extensively.

To sum up this analysis regarding participants' attitudes to the causes of global poverty, it was possible to determine a pervasive discussion of the theme of greed from two main players as a distinct causal factor, however the range of additional factors discussed by participants could not be obviously ranked and it was clear that people thought that poverty was caused by a complicated interaction of multiple factors. Some interviewees confessed to feeling overwhelmed when discussing the issue and were unable to identify and discuss particular issues, and many who made an attempt punctuated their reply with apologies about their lack of knowledge on the subject. Taken as a whole, the dialogues suggest that poverty in developing countries is seen as a result of greed and corruption from governments and powerful players from both developed and developing countries, with the poor being regarded as victims of this greed and corruption.

6.4 Who is responsible for alleviating poverty?

Interviewees were asked specifically about who they perceived to be responsible for working towards reducing poverty and underdevelopment, and although quite a few participants found this question challenging, I judged it to be important to elicit an unprompted answer as far as was possible. However, answers relating to responsibility were also interwoven into discussion about the causes of poverty in developing countries and dispersed throughout the interviews as a whole. An overall analysis of answers revealed that responsibility was assigned to the same parties as participants had discussed when assigning blame for the causes of poverty, that is developed and

developing country governments, international organisations and individuals in developed countries, but this time multinational companies were an obvious missing party.

Taken as a whole, most interviewees' first spontaneous response was to the effect that it was the responsibility of the industrialised countries given the unequal distribution of wealth in the world today:

Well, I think it is the bigger and richer countries. I think that it should be those countries that have the resources to spare. (*Male, 35-55*)

Six participants mentioned rich countries' historical responsibilities which needed to be redressed after colonialism:

It is true that some countries have been exploited for the benefit of others and that has created imbalances and we need to find ways of rebalancing the system. (*Male, 18-35*)

One interviewee added that Iceland had been a colony under Denmark itself and had up until the time of the Second World War been struggling and therefore should empathise with countries needing development aid.

The vast majority of interviewees generally gave international organisations a major role in addressing development issues, the usual suspects were the United Nations and the European Union. Often the incidence of assigning responsibility was rather balanced between these international entities indicating that people were assimilating them into one responsible entity:

Of course the developing countries are responsible for themselves, but I think all these international organisations [had just been discussing the United Nations] cost a lot of money, they are just like the pension funds, and I think they carry a lot of the responsibility. (*Female, 35-55*)

An analysis of the language used to discuss responsible parties revealed consistent use of the collective 'we' when referring to all groups assigned responsibility: the people in Iceland, the Icelandic government, developed country governments and their citizens, and international institutions. Interestingly, it was common to change the reference to 'they', i.e. the governments,

when discussing actual action that should be taken. This change of pronoun indicated a distancing of individual responsibility and a focus on state responsibility when it came to actions that made a difference:

We should all take responsibility for what is happening there. But we can always do much more than we are doing – but of course, it is the most important parties that have the most impact [the international organisations and industrial country governments], they should take the first steps. (Female, 55+, emphasis added.)

Most interviewees used the collective ‘we’ liberally when assigning responsibility for alleviating poverty. Only two participants distinguished between the international community’s and Iceland’s responsibilities:

I mean Iceland should play its part in being responsible. I personally think that we should much rather spend our time on having a direct influence, rather than on supporting the international community and getting ourselves heard in Europe — instead of actually doing something. (Male, 18-35)

In a number of cases the interviewees specifically said it was equally the responsibility of the developing country governments, and in two replies it was stated that the primary responsibility lay with the developing countries themselves. If participants did not mention developing country responsibility spontaneously, they were later prompted about it and in several cases people revised their statements to say that developing country governments should be equally responsible for their own people, but more frequently the participants said that although developing countries should bear some responsibility they thought that the inequality in the system made it difficult for them and therefore they considered that the main weight of obligation lay with ‘rich country’ governments:

The governments of these countries [developing countries] should be responsible, but in a way, they are often not qualified, so then it should be the countries which are better off that should step in. (Female, 35-55)

Throughout the conversations about responsible parties, language analysis in connection with people’s references to developing countries revealed a split in perception and discourses, clearly

identifying two separate parties, on the one hand ‘them’ or ‘the poor people’ and on the other ‘their governments’ which revealed an underlying perception that the people are victims without much agency to act for themselves and their governments are seen as the responsible parties.

Only two interviewees mentioned that some responsibility should be taken by multinational companies, or big business, and mentioned the pharmaceutical and arms industries in this regard; the suggestion was that more effort could be put into holding corporate responsibility to account. However, this debate about corporate responsibility was not picked up by any other participants which I felt was a surprising missing ‘responsible group’ considering the recent financial crisis in Iceland and the debate that has been present in society regarding more responsible capitalism.

When prompted about whether individuals in developing countries should be responsible themselves for taking action to alleviate poverty, a few interviewees expressed an underlying belief that small individual actions could have an impact on people’s lives, often discussing the reduction of individual consumption and food wastage. However, participants expressing this belief were in the minority:

We can maybe start with small things, teach the children not to throw away so much food, start doing it yourself, because they do what you do, you have to teach by example of course, and this could be a small things that you do to show that you can affect your life and have an impact on other people’s lives.

(Female, 35-55)

In response to this question, the majority of people responded with some form of skepticism about whether they as individuals could have any appreciable impact, often expressing the view that only governments and international agencies had the power to make a difference. Frequently the scepticism seemed to cover a sense of frustration at the perception that they stand helpless in terms of being able to take action against the problem:

Yes, we should all bear some responsibility. I think that I am responsible, but I don’t think I am really aware of this responsibility – what it means and what I should do - I mean I want to be responsible and I want to make a positive contribution, and you know, I am trying to do something positive, even if it’s just trying not to waste water, but I do very little about it, you know. *(Male, 18-35)*

This issue of the public's perceived lack of knowledge and agency in connection with having a real individual impact on poverty is an area that development communication strategy could address and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

6. 5 Awareness of who carries out development work and what they do

Since the previous section has outlined that the majority of participants place a large responsibility for working towards reducing poverty and underdevelopment on the shoulders of 'rich country' governments, then this section takes the next step and analyses the interviewees' perceptions of which organisations carry out development work and their awareness of what type of work is carried out. Do people distinguish between long term development work carried out on the whole by government development agencies and short-term humanitarian aid carried out by NGOs? What do they know of the Icelandic development agency's contribution in comparison to what they know of NGO activity in this field? The majority of interviewees when asked to share what they knew about Icelandic organisations involved in development work responded by naming humanitarian relief agencies and NGOs. In this section a contradiction was identified between what the participants think is best to do in terms of development, that is commit to sustainable development projects, or as they unanimously termed it, 'help people to help themselves', and their perceptions of development work which were expressed in the stories they told of short term projects and aid extended in disaster situations.

6.5.1 Long-term development versus humanitarian aid

Qualitative research from the UK has described the public's definition of aid as 'donations to charities in response to disasters' (Creative, 2006), and research by Ida McDonnell at the OECD Development Awareness Centre found that across donor nations, the principal understanding of aid was 'short term charity for humanitarian relief' (McDonnell et al., 2003a). Contrary to these results, the majority of my participants could make a distinction between these two forms of aid, understanding in general that development had long-term goals connected to improving education and livelihoods, albeit with rare mention of infrastructure and governance, whereas aid was

defined by its short-term goals of offering humanitarian assistance and help in times of disaster, described here in a colourful manner:

But the government and these organisations should be looking more at long-term development help, rather than just sending food around the world. It's like pissing on your own shoe – it is only warm for a short time and that is not something that is useful, you see. *(Male, 55+)*

Overall there was a consensus that long-term development was the desired kind of help, but many interviewees qualified this statement by saying that humanitarian aid was necessary too:

But I would like to see that they are helping people to provide for themselves. Not just sending food and for a short time everyone is happy, and then in two years when they have run out the people starve again. I would rather see the money spent on helping them to produce food themselves. But of course, I would want the people to be sent the food if there is no other alternative for them. *(Female 35-55)*

Although the data indicates that people understand the difference between long-term development and humanitarian aid, it is clear that the majority of the interviewees only spoke easily about development aid in terms of stories about short term assistance. For example, when asked if they could name any Icelandic development and aid organisations, around eleven of the interviewees could easily name between one and three of the major NGOs in Iceland, four people could mention more than three, and two only named the Icelandic Red Cross. However, when it came to giving examples of the work these organisations were involved in only two people attempted accounts in connection with sector wide or sustainable development work, and the remainder of interviewees mainly spoke of the following activities; supporting 'adopted' children, giving presents of hens, goats, water wells etc. and the efforts of the Icelandic Earthquake Rescue Team in Haiti. This was a typical reply:

The only organisations that occur to me are the Red Cross and UNICEF. I can't think of any other organisations. But sometimes I give money when I receive a collection request in the post. Yes, sometimes I have paid for water, and sometimes I have bought a goat, and for some years I supported a child in Uganda.
(Female, 55+)

But interestingly, when prompted about what type of aid they would most like to support, even though the majority of participants stated that they considered long-term aid of more value than receiving short-term hand outs, they lacked any frame of reference to discuss it. Repeated statements can be identified in the data to the effect that some type of sustainable development support would be better than money handouts. Here is a typical statement:

I think that's the best help we can give, that is to help people help themselves. Not just to give them money. (*Female, 55+*)

Frequent references were made to people's need to have the means to live, to have a livelihood for themselves, supported by suggestions of imparting knowledge which would create food, water and jobs, but there was little further speculation of how this would be sustained.

So I think that number one, two and three is that we must somehow help people to provide a livelihood for themselves, so they can live and get food and water, and later they will have something to live for. And of course this means that people must have some kind of education so they can make a life for themselves. (*Male, 55+*)

There was a recognition of the need to respect people's dignity and independence with some participants commenting that the developing countries should be in control of the development process themselves, but often this perception of the value of participatory development was in contrast to suspicious comments about who to trust with administering the aid. People made distinctions between the worthy recipients of aid and the corrupt developing country governments (this will be discussed further in section 6.7.1 on perceptions of corruption):

No, we shouldn't pay the money to the governments in these countries – we should ourselves oversee and control where the money goes. It should be put into a project, not into the government of the recipient country, because they will take half the money in weapons or something like that and the people will not get anything. (*Male, 18-35*)

Interestingly, in spite of the participants' preference described here for sustainable development, the data analysed in the next section clearly reflects a lack of understanding of who carries out

long-term development work, and what was especially noticeable was a lack of knowledge regarding the Icelandic government's role in long-term development and the processes at work.

6.5.2 Knowledge gap about ICEIDA and the development aid budget

As described above, most stories of development work were linked to humanitarian assistance or projects performed by international NGOs with only four out of the seventeen interviewees spontaneously referring to a 'government development agency', and only two of them actually able to name the agency as ICEIDA (ÞSSÍ). A further five people had heard of work being done in Malawi, but were not certain which organisation was responsible. This participant's response is illustrative of this general uncertainty about who was delivering development aid:

Participant: Well, they are teaching the Malawans to fish, and teaching them fishing methods and how to process the fish. Yes, I think that's mostly what they are doing there, and then maybe as well how to access water.....

Prompt: Who are you referring to when you say 'they'?

Participant: Yes, you are asking about that...well I'm not really sure, but I think it's some Icelandic organisation.

(Male, 55+)

In the absence of any spontaneous mention of government development aid or provision by the state the participants were prompted, and it then became clear that more than half of the interviewees had not registered that an organisation like ICEIDA existed, and when this group were asked to speculate on the type of projects they were carrying out, three interviewees supposed that they were involved with training people how to fish or develop geothermal capability, but the remainder stated that they had no idea. This participant's supposition was typical of this group:

The Red Cross are also doing lots of good things, but whatever the government is doing I just don't know. One sees so little from them. One often thinks that the government is – like an institution that is just – well, no information comes from them... I think I have heard that they have been with fishing and teaching people to fish in boats. But I'm not sure and I don't know which countries they are in.

(Female, 55+)

At this point in the interviews, after the topic of ICEIDA had been introduced (spontaneously or otherwise) and I had ascertained what they knew, I used the opportunity to supply basic information about the organisation and its activities. Then I asked the participants if they knew (or could guess) how much of the national budget had been allocated to development aid in 2012. Only one person had heard the exact figure in the news, two further interviewees were close to 0.21% and three more guessed at 0 point something, the remainder overshot the amount by anything from 1% to 5%. As a follow-up I outlined the foreign aid spending targets to 2019 and set the budget in an international context and then asked whether they supported the proposed increases. After this explanation, all the participants agreed with the proposed increases, although some with reservations. Here are some examples, the first being the most frequently expressed opinion:

I think it's important that Iceland participates in international commitments, even though I know we take rather a small part. (*Male, 18-35*)

These poor 'Misérables' in Parliament, "Should we give 0.1% or 0.05%?". The amount is so small, but they can be whole months or years checking it out and spending more on the decision-making process in the meanwhile. I think Icelandic political finance is a scandal. That's what I think. And what they are giving to development aid....we can easily give that. We do not lack for anything. (*Male, 35-55*)

Well, if the money is controlled, then I think it's fine. We can easily give this money, Iceland has enough money, and we can easily be participants in this. (*Female, 55+*)

Yes, if we have the money to spare, but we also need to know what it is going to be spent on. We need to show more responsibility and follow what is done with it. (*Female 33-55*)

The obvious danger with tackling this issue in a qualitative study is that my questions could be seen to be leading interviewees to express opinions on matters which, before they were supplied with information, they did not knowingly have. However, on the other hand it is difficult to estimate people's support for the development budget if they do not know the relative amounts to be allocated.

In summary, the majority of participants understood the distinction between long-term development assistance and humanitarian aid, and in principal supported long-term development targets, but only had the frame of reference to discuss short-term project work. Most participants displayed a lack of knowledge and understanding of the government's role in long-term development work and this information gap raises the question of whether public support for achieving development aid targets can be effectively measured when the public have very little knowledge about how much is being spent, what it is being spent on, and who is spending it.

6. 6 Motivations for support and participation

Until now this analysis has presented an overview of the data on the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards global poverty which hopefully has constructed a picture of *what* the interviewees think about various aspects relating to development and aid. In this section I examine the data to understand *why* the participants hold the views and opinions they do; here people's underlying motivations and the main influences on their attitudes are considered.

6.6.1 The strength of moral arguments

A key finding from recent qualitative research in the UK (Henson and Lindstrom, 2012; YouGov, 2012; Hudson and van Heerde, 2010) was that strong moral views underpin public attitudes to aid and development. This finding is clearly evidenced in my research where throughout the interviews the majority of participants expressed a recognition that inequality should be addressed and that all people should have what they need to survive. Here are several examples expressing this impulse to redress what was 'not right' in the world with strong moral undertones:

There are people out there in the world that don't have what we have here and don't even have the basics they need to live, and I just feel that we have a duty to do something about it — a duty to society to do something to help those who don't have enough and those who are underprivileged. (*Female 55+*)

We have enough here in Iceland. Even though we went through that crisis, we have enough money to give of what we have – there are huge numbers of people without enough food. I think it's better for us,

for our peace of mind to give what we can, and if we can do something — we should just do it, you know — its our duty. (*Male, 18-35*)

We don't have a say into what situation or where we are born. So if we put ourselves into other people's shoes and imagine we have nothing, then I think we would accept whatever help we could. We should want to help people if we can — it's a question of having a good heart. (*Female, 35-55*)

However, often when interviewees expressed this moral compulsion to redress the balance of injustice the message was expressed in paternalistic tones; that because we were rich, or knowledgeable, and had enough, that we had a duty to help those who were poorer, or less educated. In short, that we had a moral duty to share or pass on what we knew for the benefit of others. Chapter four described research carried out by Darnton and Kirk (2011) for Oxfam which identified this attitude as 'moral order' framing with hierarchies of power (in this case Western above non-Western cultures) seen as natural and therefore also moral. Here 'moral order' framing can be identified in this participant's motivation to help:

We can send experts to these developing countries we are trying to help, teach them how to make a life for themselves — we can teach them about health — and how to improve their land and fisheries. We can teach them everything we know from our country and this will help them. They just need the know-how. (*Male, 35-55*)

Overall an underlying theme of fairness expressed in talk about the problems of unequal distributions of power, money and resources globally were obviously present in the majority of interviews, often accompanied by claims to the effect that inequality was just 'not right' or 'fair':

I think it's so unfair that some people's lives are so terrible. I think its just our responsibility to do something about it, and I don't think we get anything out of it, I just think it's our duty to help them. (*Female, 18-35*)

This concept of fairness was usually connected in some way to comparisons between the plenty that we have in Iceland and what others lack. Participants' statements were either expressed in terms of gratitude, 'we are so lucky to live here' or guilt, 'sometimes I just cannot watch these campaigns on the TV, you know'. Occasionally people indicated they were motivated by a need to unburden their conscience, as one man explained:

We have enough to spare, even though we owe money in Iceland, we have a good health system, we have work, we have a good education system, our fridges are full of food, many people drive around in jeeps and have several cars. Should we be complaining? We should be able to give others a little bit – because we have more than others and giving to others will make us feel better. (*Male, 55+*)

Issues of both historical and current injustices were brought up by several participants, stating that many countries should be giving aid because of historical exploitation which had contributed to poverty and underdevelopment, ‘we have robbed Africa in the past and we are still doing it now’. Normally the pronoun used was the general ‘we’, as in we in the developing world; however one participant even went so far as to implicate Iceland in the exploitation:

We are still saying, oh yeah, that was the British, or the Germans, and the Belgians – they were terrible – they destroyed whole countries in Africa, but we are doing it today – just vacuuming up the fishing stocks off the coast of Africa. (*Female 18-35*)

In agreement with the findings discussed in the theoretical framework (section 3.5) there were very infrequent comments in the interviewees’ discussions to the effect that participation in and support for aid and development was motivated by self-interest; that is to say very few gave as a reason to participate in development work the fact that it would improve global security, or that dealing with global challenges affects us all – in terms of pollution and immigration, or because it would benefit Iceland economically. There were a few statements in support of self-interest but they were isolated accounts. Here are two examples:

Personally I think we should be helping poor people to manage in their own country, because there is a lot of movement of people from countries which are very poor into countries where they are uninvited guests, and that is not good for society. (*Male, 35-55*)

Well, if people are very poor, then they are more susceptible to all kinds of diseases, and that is very expensive for society. (*Female, 18-34*)

6.6.2 Poverty at home versus poverty overseas

Discussions about why we should be concerned with global poverty were often balanced by a consideration of the challenges that needed to be addressed at home. In most cases the interviewees spontaneously brought up discourse they had encountered about prioritising poverty in Iceland. I say ‘brought up’ because these statements were often preceded by ‘people say’, or ‘you read about’, or ‘my colleagues were discussing’ and these constructions allowed the participants to present this dialogue as the opinions of others. Overall most participants’ statements showed they had little direct experience of current hardship in Iceland, although three older participants had experienced a childhood where their families had managed on the basics, and two told stories of families they knew who were currently in very challenged circumstances. The majority of participants stated that they knew poverty existed in Iceland, often referring to people queueing for food packages, however most people (twelve out of seventeen) were of the opinion that poverty in Iceland was not of a comparable nature to poverty in countries where there was a lack of ‘all basic needs’:

Of course, we must be aware of what is happening around us, there are people in Iceland who do not have a good life, but poverty – well poverty in Iceland does not exist in comparison with the poverty we are talking about here, in developing countries. (*Female, 55+*)

Conversely, three participants made statements along the lines of ‘charity begins at home’:

I think there is good cause to help our own countrymen first, before we help the wider world. No, I think it is right to help my own people before I help anyone else. (*Female, 18-34*)

But even so, this dialogue did not seem to influence people’s overwhelmingly positive response to supporting the proposed increases in the aid budget once the amounts had been explained (see the discussion in section 6.5.2). However, it should not be forgotten that these prompted views could have been modified as a result of supplying exact figures on aid contributions, which the participants had not heard before and thought were surprisingly low. Finally there was also a sense from some participants that Iceland had been too extravagant in the past and had to learn to budget more carefully, as one interviewee put it:

People around me are saying that now we have this really bad economy we should stop giving aid to other countries, but I totally disagree with that you know. I mean even though we are not well-off at the moment, we just have to be more sensible, more practical about how we spend our money. But we should definitely support projects and help other nations to fight poverty. (*Female, 35-55*)

In relation to this ‘poverty at home versus poverty out there’ theme, it is clear that the government needs to examine its efforts to communicate to the public how much aid money Iceland spends in comparison with spending at home, if they wish to accurately estimate the level of public support. This point will be returned to in the discussion section.

6.6.3 Practical participation

A distinction can be made between ‘issue engagement’ which broadly is concern about poverty expressed in attitude support and then ‘active engagement’ which is practical support shown through actions and behaviors (Darnton, 2007). Therefore an analysis of people’s motivations for support of aid and development should necessarily consider accounts of what they actually do to tackle global poverty and not just what they think about it.

By far the most common gift of donation in terms of money claimed by my participants was the regular financial support of an ‘adopted child’ organised through NGOs. Seven individuals were currently participating in such a scheme or had in the past, or a member of their close family was supporting a child. The majority of people were attracted by the direct personal impact they could have on a child’s life for what they considered a small amount of money. Here is a typical comment:

I wanted to make a difference, and I thought that the money I would give away every month, this small amount, would actually support someone at the other end of the world and that was a really nice feeling.
(*Female, 35-55*)

In second place the interviewees talked about gifts which I classified as ‘Christmas donations’ in which it was common for people to choose a number of charities to give to just before Christmas. These donations were diverse, but many were connected to a gift for family and friends e.g. the

donation of a goat, or the gift of water. When prompted about their motivation in these cases, several participants replied to the effect that a small amount can make a difference, but the overall underlying factor behind the donation stories was a ‘feelgood’ motivation:

Yes, I feel better for just having done it. I don’t get a certificate or anything like that. It’s just the satisfaction of having done something that might help. (*Male, 35-55*)

Next came talk about the donation of clothes to the Red Cross organisation, this action was often qualified by a statement about how easy this was to do, as if people felt guilty that it did not cost them much effort:

Sometimes I give clothes, which isn’t very difficult for me, that’s all I do, but if someone else can use it, well – and of course I make sure the clothes are clean. (*Female 35-55*)

The next most frequently mentioned donation was of money as a follow-up to watching TV campaigns such as Red Nose Day. When the participants were questioned about what had triggered their decision to give, frequently responses described a strong emotional compulsion. For example people experienced gratitude for what they had in comparison to what they had seen in the reports and were moved by the need to give, or they were shocked by the images of children suffering and were motivated to help, or they felt sympathy and wanted to improve the situation for someone else. It was common for people to follow these explanations by saying that they just wanted to make a difference. But what coloured most of the accounts were the underlying feelings of guilt triggering the donations:

In general I think these big campaigns like Red Nose Day get your attention and put pressure on you to give by showing pictures of children in need, and you are ready then to donate your money, because you think —OK, now I can give something and they can just get on with it. It sort of gets you off the hook. (*Male, 35-55*)

Depending on our viewpoint these motivators could be identified as people expressing a shared humanity or alternatively individuals driven by guilt, but it is clear from an analysis of the data that these financial donations were triggered by a cocktail of emotional motivations.

This cocktail of responses for why people were giving was not backed up by rational arguments; the majority of statements indicated that the motivation for these gifts came from the heart. In contrast, those who did not give, or had never donated, or felt the need to excuse how little they gave, tended to defend their decision by rational arguments, the most common being financial constraints:

It's not possible to give to everything. I just have a certain amount of money that I can give away, and I have to choose and limit myself. (*Female, 55+*)

But sometimes the participants cited misappropriation of aid funds, or stated that a large percentage of the money would not get to the recipients:

No, I don't donate to these campaigns. I mean you hear that they collect a huge amount of money, but whether it ends up where it is supposed to is another question. (*Male, 35-55*)

To some extent it was possible to classify different types of 'givers'. For example some interviewees seemed to be committed, automatic, habitual givers who stated that they sometimes had to limit themselves to giving to a specific number of causes at one time:

I was a member of so many groups. I had to sort myself out at one point and just – you see it all adds up, these amounts are not a lot on their own, but on a yearly basis if you are in five societies, then it all adds up. (*Female, 55+*)

Others were occasional givers and were often swayed by a trigger; a TV campaign, peer pressure or telephone and street canvassers. A third group claimed they had thought about giving, but hadn't due to lack of funds, but these statements were often accompanied by a reflective tone:

I always think that if I could afford it I would [donate something], but it's just that I have never particularly been able to afford it. So I just say no — but you know, what is 1,000kr anyway? One should give — I don't know. (*Male, 18-35*)

There was some criticism from a number of interviewees who had committed to supporting a child for a period of time of what they labelled excessive marketing. Here people described the

tactics of NGOs as manipulative in that once a commitment to support a child had been made the individual had experienced the pressure of further requests from the same organisation to give more, either for that particular child or for other causes. On the whole, this made them angry, uncomfortable and guilty, and in the case of two participants had succeeded in alienating them, because they told me that they had eventually cancelled their subscriptions because of this:

Shall I tell you why I stopped? They were always sending me collections for more and more things. First it was support for the food and clothes in the school, then it was to buy Christmas cards, then they would say we have a campaign for this now, and then they would tell me to send a package now, or deposit some money now — and I just thought they were getting too demanding. It was too much. Because it happened at a time when I didn't have too much money to spare, and so I just stopped altogether.

(Female, 35-55)

On the whole, the action of giving time or volunteering to support development was absent from my participants' stories, but amongst the few participants who had been engaged in some type of voluntary work their motive for participation had been connected to their role as a member of a social or work group. Two interviewees told me that they had given their time to organisations like the Red Cross which took the form of volunteering to work in charity shops; both participants were retired when they did this and had initially volunteered as part of a group of friends. One interviewee had participated in a workplace project to raise money for a classroom in a specific school, and although the original motivation had come from participating in a peer project, it had eventually led her to learn a lot more about the country and culture of the recipients:

There was so much that our involvement in the school showed us. We learnt a lot about the country and culture. We realised that building the school was bringing employment to this area and it felt like we were doing something upbuilding together as a group, and we were very proud of this. *(Female 35-55)*

A further two of my interviewees were members of social networks or groups which had driven their engagement and interest in development and aid; one through a faith based group and the other through a social charity network. Both interviewees had experienced their participation in a social group to create an attitudinal change which had only served to increase their engagement in these issues.

Finally, there was an obvious absence of the mention of the power of buying products in support of development processes. Only one of my interviewees brought the subject of consumer practices up spontaneously, and when participants were prompted on the whole they had very little idea what the Fairtrade concept was about, or where they could obtain such products. Although in continuation of this discussion, several people voiced the idea that it would be good if products could be identified as following fair labour practices:

Yes, in recent years I have started thinking about what I am buying, especially in connection with clothes and things like that, especially because today there is more open discussion about slave labour and exploitation of women and children in factories and things like that. (*Female, 35-55*)

In summary, an examination of the data suggested that the dominant drivers of support for development were moral and humanitarian motives, and that the 'self-interest model', that is motivation to help developing countries because it affects people personally or their country individually was not a major consideration. Overall the participants stated that the main reason they supported the concept of development aid and humanitarian assistance was because of a feeling of responsibility, as a human being, to help people in need. Furthermore, it is clear that the action of participating in work towards tackling global poverty, whether it was supporting NGO work, donating goods to charities, giving time or participating in projects, contributed to increasing many participants' perception that they could make a difference. But from those who had actively participated in projects, sponsoring a child, collecting to build a school etc. a stronger sense of engagement was expressed with the development effort. I will close this section with a quotation from a participant which succinctly expresses how important engagement is to attitudinal change:

Yes, I would like to be more active personally. I think that should be encouraged, you know. Then people would be more involved, and I think ...discrimination doesn't disappear by just talking about it, prejudice disappears if I get to know people from Africa, from Asia, from India, or I have an Arab friend. We can talk endlessly about things, but if we are not involved in some way in the lives of people from these countries then our attitudes will not change at all. (*Male, 18-35*)

6.7 Perceptions of aid effectiveness and development communication

An analysis of the data gathered on perceptions of aid successes and failures will be examined in this section, which necessarily includes a discussion of participants' attitudes to how messages about aid and development have impacted on them.

6.7.1 Perceptions of aid failures and corruption

The academic literature suggests that there is an anomalous relationship between perceived aid effectiveness and public support for aid; a large proportion of the population in donor countries believe aid to be wasted, but nevertheless support international development assistance (McDonnell, 2006; Riddel, 2007). Qualitative research in the UK has shown that both supportive and critical members of the public suspect corruption and wastage all along the supply chain; from ineffective organisation by charity administrators to corruption in the governments of developing countries (PPP, 2007; Creative, 2008). Stories of corruption in qualitative interviews emerge clearly as one of the main issues that people find easy to talk about in relation to development work (PPP, 2005; Darnton, 2007). People's reactions to corruption have been shown to differ with less engaged respondents getting angry with corrupt leaders and more engaged respondents worrying about the exploited people (Creative, 2008).

On the whole, this quirky relationship was reflected in my participants' accounts. The majority of interviewees revealed an underlying scepticism about the effectiveness of aid, expressed by manifold stories of corruption and mismanagement. But even so there was plenty of evidence which underpin people's convictions that support should continue in spite of their perceptions of ineffectiveness. However in agreement with previous research, it was clear that most of the participants found it easier to tell stories about wasted aid than aid successes. The most common stories were told about aid not reaching the poor but being detained and then diverted into the coffers of government officials:

You often hear stories in the news about how the money never gets there. Much of it never gets all the way to the end, you know — to the people who need it. Because somewhere along the line, someone is taking the money and often it is corrupt politicians in the countries themselves. (*Male, 55+*)

When questioned about their sources for this recurring theme about money being syphoned off by developing country officials, participants usually said they were just stories they had read or heard. This is a typical unreferenced statement:

There is so much corruption in these African countries, I mean there are some presidents and dictators there who spend more on limousines [other variations on this statement were; private jets, or lobbying companies in America etc.] than is spent on the whole education system [variation: health system] in their country. (*Female 18-35*)

Only one interviewee reflected critically after a statement that ‘corrupt officials were pocketing the money’, that they needed more infrastructure in these nations. This tendency by the majority of participants to generalise about corruption indicates a need to communicate a deeper understanding of background context in developing countries.

Just as frequent as descriptions of corruption in developing countries were stories about money wastage by international aid agencies. Several participants talked about wastage of aid funds and connected this to high administrative costs, which frequently led to stories about the staff of government agencies living in luxury in poor countries:

So much of the money we give to these organisations goes into their running costs and not to the people who need it. I heard from my daughter that some people working in [specified a country in Africa] are pocketing the money that we are paying. You know, one hears of such things. So information needs to be more transparent. Because if we do not know exactly, then we will always hear these stories. (*Female, 55+*)

Some interviewees told stories of aid mismanagement which failed to address local needs and their underlying concern was ‘these organisations are trying to help people, but they leave them even more helpless and vulnerable’. Here is an example one participant told:

Yes, the Icelandic church for example sent powdered milk to infants in Africa and they didn’t think about the facts — that the water was not good enough — so it was useless. And I’ve heard about people doing development aid some place where they have raised factories and forgotten to build roads so when they have monsoon rains the factories are abandoned. (*Male, 18-35*)

Four of my interviewees brought up a case they had heard in the news about the embezzlement of funds by an Icelandic development agency official²⁴ and anger was always expressed in the retelling of this story coupled with disenchantment which sullied the whole development aid sector:

There was some news recently about some man who was working for an aid agency who had been embezzling funds. He had taken many millions, and I felt very angry. I thought when I heard this story that I would not give to these collections in the future, and I'm sure that other people will give less, and I think the whole thing damages aid work. No question about it. (*Female, 35-55*)

However, eleven of the participants when prompted about their perceptions of the success of aid and development indicated that in spite of these negative perceptions one had to continue believing, trusting and hoping that things would eventually get better. Here are some example statements:

Well if I want to help, then I don't have any other option. It's not going to help if I put 10,000 kr. in an envelope and address it to Uganda — that's not going to work. So I just have to believe that these organisations are doing their job. I must believe it. (*Male, 35-55*)

People say to me, "How can you risk paying that money to that organisation. How do you know that the recipient ever gets the money?" But, of course, one has to trust that it does, you see? One has to stay optimistic and positive about the whole thing. (*Male, 18-35*)

I think it is more important to carry on trying, than to worry about exactly what the progress is. It is more important to carry on, you know. If we can help one person, if one person benefits from it, then that is great. (*Female 55+*)

And the majority of speakers stated their support for an increase in the aid budget (as discussed in section 6.5.2), even though an analysis of the data reflects people's overwhelming suspicions and scepticism about the effectiveness of aid in real terms. This irregularity indicates that aid effectiveness may not be the dominant driver of support for aid.

²⁴ See: www.icelandreview.com/daily_news/former_ICEIDA_Director_Confesses_Embezzlement (news item dated 19.04.2013)

6.7.2 Stories about aid successes

It was interesting to note that the negative stories about development work on the whole were from unreferenced sources, however the stories which reflected positive results tended to be sourced directly from people the participants knew.

My mother bought some products made by African women from small beads. I think it was from Southern Africa. It's a project where the women are given beads and they make whatever they want to and that organisation sells the products and they receive the whole proceeds in their hands. These women were just starving before. *(Male, 18-34)*

Many stories told as examples of positive experiences of development work described small projects at the individual or community level, such as gifts for schools or enabling access to water through building a well, or they were personal success stories told by individuals who had sponsored a child:

My aunt has been sponsoring a child, and this child didn't have anything. She didn't have an opportunity to educate herself. She had nothing. And my aunt just sent 1,000 kr a month and now she can read and do maths and stuff like that. Yes, my aunt gets letters from her and she shares them with all of us. *(Female, 18-35)*

The stories of aid successes tended to be isolated stories of individual projects and no participants supplied examples of aid working well at a regional or country level.

In summary, participants' stories of failed or wasted aid easily outweighed any positive stories they told. This could be explained by a tendency that people have to remember the negative rather than the positive, or it could be that the media is not visibly presenting stories of aid successes to the public. One interviewee stated:

Maybe its just an impression I get from the news [has just been talking about stories about aid money not getting to the people who need it], and if I went deeper into it, I would have some facts. I suppose it's very easy to pick up these stories. *(Male, 18-34)*

In summary, the overall impression conveyed by the participants is one of broad support for aid to developing countries in principle, but when questioned, a gap in their ability to talk about or picture aid really working manifests itself, and this results in a huge amount of scepticism and talk about corruption in practice.

6.7.3. Disempowering images and messages

People's perceptions of the failures of aid connect closely to the theme of disempowerment in their accounts and stories of why they participate. This section will analyse what types of messages the participants thought were ineffective in engaging them to support development work. Several interviewees brought up the topic of negative images often shown in 'doom and gloom' programming, by this the participants were referring on the whole to harrowing images of children suffering from malnutrition seen in television campaigns. These were campaigns organised by NGOs and designed to encourage people to donate and in some cases it was clear that the collection efforts had the opposite effect with several people describing a temptation to adopt avoidance tactics with regard to protecting themselves from these images.

I think it has such a terrible impact on me when I see these pictures on the TV, sometimes I cannot watch...you know — the message is just too negative and unfortunately I have to switch it off. I suppose I'm just hiding my head in the sand because it's so difficult to know about it. (*Female 55+*)

When prompted to describe the type of images or messages people remembered from these programmes, the overall picture described was one of malnutrition, disease and lack of medical services, lack of water, education and general hardship, examples of which have been given previously in section 6.2 on images. Frequently the language used to convey these images revealed a sense of frustration and feeling of helplessness. The comment below from one interviewee was echoed by other participants when discussing television campaigns:

When they are showing pictures — I think it is terrible to see the children with, you know, some of them have swollen stomachs, suffering from malnutrition. And of course, I just feel very sorry, but frustrated and resentful too — just because it is like that — why does it need to be like that? (*Female, 35-55*)

Three interviewees when discussing NGOs annual television campaigns mentioned that they were usually encouraged to donate when watching the programmes, but brought up the point that they felt there was little follow-up to the individual stories and project plans. They were left wondering about the success of the venture and would have liked to hear whether their donation had been effective:

I usually want to give, and – I saw this story about these people and how they needed some water, you know, a well in their village, and so I rang up... but you never hear when they get it, and how much it helped, and whether, you know, a year later, whether... that was enough, or well, if things are just as difficult. Anyway, at least I never see that. (Female, 55+)

The underlying one-dimensional message perceived by these participants uncovers a gap in the way the complexities and limitations of aid are discussed and presented. This could explain the contradictory stances of why people give generously when they are confronted with need, but at the same time like to express the view that much aid is wasted. Because the participants perceive that development messages are not providing a lot of background context and some people's perceptions that information is not being supplied about the realities involved in long-term development seem to be causing scepticism about the effectiveness of aid.

Several participants made critical comments about this superficiality and over-simplification in the reporting of stories from developing countries. They suspected that there was more to the one-dimensional image than met the eye. Some people suspected that a marketing ploy was in progress, and this was expressed as scepticism towards the fundraising tactics and images:

When I was small, I was always told to finish the food on my plate or it would be sent to the Biafran children. I think it's just the same now. They still show pictures of starving children – maybe that is the most effective. It has the most impact on people. In a way we are being programmed to think of Africa like that, but they should also be showing what is going well, the hospitals and the schools. They should be showing what the money is doing. (Female 35-55)

A few participants told stories which expressed feelings of being manipulated and indicated doubt about whether they were being told the real situation in developing countries. One participant told this story:

I became interested in a campaign run by Save the Children, and I actually sent them a question asking whether they continue to support the children when they come of legal age. Because I knew of an organisation which supported children in Romania who were leaving orphanages, and they taught them how to do grocery shopping and cook for themselves, because otherwise they can easily fall prey to modern slavery like prostitution and crime. But I didn't receive an answer, and so I tried to look for an answer and I couldn't find it, and I think that put me off – I mean, it's a natural question – a common sense question, and I got bounced off – they told me I could find some reports on the internet, but the reports addressed a lot of issues and didn't answer my question clearly, so they directed me to a bunch of information which didn't say too much. (*Male, 18-34*)

The same interviewee discussed these stereotyped images in terms of Western charities as white knights throwing 'candy' to help African people, stating that this message was far too simplified:

I saw one of these TV shows where they interviewed the CEO of an organisation and he was surrounded by children and he was feeding them lollipops. It's the same imagery as you saw when the Allied Forces entered France after the World War. We see these heroes coming in throwing candy at people and saving them. But that's not good enough for normal people, because we have to realise today that if people are intelligent enough and educated enough they are going to ask basic common sense questions. (*Male, 18-35*)

Comments such as these were spoken in cynical tones, indicating that the participants were aware that the messages assumed a naivety on their part and they knew that some information was being hidden from them:

I think all these NGOs they oversimplify the issues often and it's difficult to understand what is actually effective. I think they try to portray what they do in a positive light, even though it may not be functioning well. (*Male 35-55*)

On the whole these enduring images of poverty and hardship reinforced the one-dimensional understanding of the lives of people in developing countries, which has already been discussed in section 6.2 as the 'Live Aid' model of donation. This model casts developed countries as the

‘generous giver’ and developing countries as the ‘grateful receivers’, images which reinforce perceptions of passive, dependent or victimised poor people in developing countries, in addition to framing donations into a transaction format, in which support for poverty is perceived solely as being about donation of money, rather than social justice, consumer decisions, debate, advocacy and discussion.

6.7.4 Effective and engaging messages

Towards the end of the semi-structured interviews the participants were asked to reflect on what type of stories they would like to hear about development. Many people expressed an interest in hearing stories about ‘teaching people to help themselves’, or in other words about sustainable development rather than short-term financial support which many people associated with aid-dependency. This was a popular theme and occurred throughout all stages of the interviews. Requests for this type of communication often went hand in hand with a desire to hear more about individual success stories:

I would like to know more of the story, you know, how that goat changed something in that woman’s life, and for her children, and then I know that I personally have done something — helped to change something. (*Female, 18-34*)

A few participants made statements to the effect that they would like more background about the political and societal context in support of development stories:

When these stories are reported they are always rather superficial. They don’t usually report how it works, and how things really are. We only get some superficial idea of what is happening. We get to see quick scenes when they need the money. One is told that the need is urgent, but no background information about why or what is being planned for ten or twenty years into the future. I think that information is missing.
(*Male 35-55*)

In summary, from many participants there was a desire for more positive stories to be told, stories which could build individual connections, supported by more background context, helping to convey a deeper understanding of how development works. The frequency of participants’

negative stories reflected a one-dimensional image of development work which indicated that the difficulties of aid were not being communicated. There is a danger that people's perceptions of simplified stories are reinforcing superficial images and creating a sense of frustration which is strengthening a perceived lack of progress towards global poverty targets. In the next chapter I will recommend that there should be more clarity put into the challenging objective of communicating the difficulties of aid.

Chapter seven will discuss the implications of these research findings, but first I would like to conclude this analysis of the data with a quotation from a participant whose words capture the mood of the majority of the interviewees when asked whether they thought any headway was being made in the endeavor to alleviate poverty:

If we look at the bigger picture, then I don't think so. But when we look at things done on an individual basis, you know – they are building some kind of a village where the children are given an opportunity to work, then I think they are achieving some small patches of good. But as a whole picture, when there is famine and you see people with bloated stomachs, then you think, no, I don't think anything has changed. But I mean it is such a big and complicated problem, and you cannot solve things by applying the same solution in each place. I think things will get better with time. Change just happens very, very slowly, you know? That's the problem really. We're just thinking about this in the short-term, and we should be looking at the problem long-term.

(Male, 18-35)

Chapter Seven - Discussion

Information gaps, counterproductive messages and communication strategies

The aim of this research is to present a detailed picture of people's attitudes to development issues. The key research objectives are to explore public attitudes to aid and development, identify factors motivating people to support development work and gain understanding of how development communication is perceived. A qualitative mode of enquiry was chosen to answer the key research questions and through the detailed analysis of data provided by seventeen semi-structured interviews with members of the public, results have been presented which endeavor to provide in-depth and nuanced accounts of the participants' perspectives towards international development and support for aid.

This discussion of the research findings will focus attention on three core sets of implications arising from this study. The first set of implications can be grouped around the indications of information gaps that need to be filled to support people's understanding of development and the effectiveness of aid. These information gap implications have arisen from an analysis of the data relevant to the initial research aims of discovering people's attitudes to aid and development in terms of what they perceive about it, how they consider it is caused and who is responsible for alleviating it. The second set of implications arise from an investigation of the data relating to why people support development aid and what motivates them to engage and participate in aid work. Critical analysis of the data has identified a situation in which the messages people perceive contradict their moral motivation to support development which has serious implications for how NGOs go about gathering supporters. The third set of implications are centred on communication strategies, in terms of what impact development information has on people and

how it can be made more effective. These latter implications have arisen from an analysis of the data collected in answer to the research questions which sought to discover how successful people considered aid to be and what are their perceptions of how development is communicated. The following discussion will focus on the data that is directly relevant to these three main sets of research findings.

7.1 Information gaps which hinder understanding

The results of this study suggest that there are gaps which hinder the participants' awareness and understanding of aid and development issues. Rather generalised knowledge about development processes were uncovered in terms of the developing countries themselves, the help they might require, the factors contributing to global poverty and what long-term development involves. These findings are in agreement with the qualitative research discussed in the literature review (Darnton and Kirk, 2011, Glennie et al., 2012). With regards to people's sceptical attitudes to media sources, these findings are also in agreement with previous research (European Conference on Awareness Raising and Development Education, 2005; Hudson & van Heerde, 2008). However, this study recorded exceptionally critical voices from the participants regarding perceived gaps in Icelandic news reporting and a marked preference for foreign news sources. In addition, the unusual popularity of sourcing development stories from personal contacts was a finding original to this research which could be a reflection of the size of the Icelandic community, but since people attached more credibility to these sources it is a finding that could be capitalised on. The final gap to be considered in terms of sources of development information is the noticeable absence of mention of NGO and development agency websites.

In terms of images of poverty in developing countries, the research uncovered limited background knowledge of individual developing countries with a tendency to generalise especially with regards to unreferenced stories of aid failure and corruption. This supported the perception of one-dimensional images of poverty and people readily constructed images of 'poor countries' as places where everyone was in need, or lacked the basics. These superficial and limited images accord with results from previous research and this type of framing of poverty has been dubbed the 'Live Aid legacy' or the bounteous giver and grateful receiver frame, in which

aid is seen as charity and not justice (Glennie et al., 2012). One very dominant image in this research which was not emphasised in previous research is the participants' overwhelming belief in the power of passing on education to transform poverty, which is a positive message in itself, but the action was always discussed in isolation 'teach them to fish' as something 'we' could instil in 'them' and the process was not discussed in any context of participatory local learning or national economic and political background.

In spite of comparisons made with economic difficulties at home the participants indicated strong support for the foreign aid budget and this finding differed markedly from previous research conducted in donor countries (TNS UK, 2010, YouGov, 2012; Eurobarometer, 2012).

Participants considered that poverty in Iceland was not on the same comparative level as the 'absolute need' in developing countries and there was a tendency to refer to the financial crash in 2008 and state that in spite of this collapse people in Iceland lived in comparative luxury. The majority of participants described their experience of the crash as if it had caused a new appreciation and revaluing of their standard of living in Iceland. The implications here are that the government could confront this head on and focus more when reporting aid funding on relative levels of spending on domestic and international priorities, while emphasising the moral case for reaching the aid targets even in times of financial cutbacks in Iceland.

The participants' strong support for the aid budget combined with minimal knowledge of the Icelandic Development Agency, its role and allocated budget, uncovers a vital information gap which needs to be addressed. This research indicates there is support for the concept of development aid in principle with people recognising a moral commitment on Iceland's part to work towards alleviating poverty in developing countries, but at the same time people have sceptical attitudes and a general perception that long-term aid is not 'being successful' or 'moving forward'. These attitudes are supported by the information gap which has previously been discussed, such as lack of nuanced information about developing countries, who carries out long-term development and what is done. Public scepticism is further compounded by the limitations of only being able to visualise development as short-term project work or humanitarian aid so that when charities are campaigning for emergency funding their messages encourage the perception that nothing has changed. Based on the perceptions gathered here this

glaring inconsistency needs to be addressed. It was very noticeable in the data that participants were more aware of development work done by NGOs than by ICEIDA, and although this fact is noteworthy in itself for ICEIDA, it should not be forgotten that the Icelandic Development Agency collaborates and provides support towards the activities of many Icelandic NGOs, and perhaps they need to make more of this fact.

In summary, these results indicate an information gap which needs to be filled in order to support people's understanding of development. The implications of this finding are that in order to communicate development more effectively, communicators should provide more detailed stories with more background context, giving the public more ways to understand and talk about global poverty and development. A case can be made for making improved efforts to communicate the complicated issues surrounding development more clearly and thoroughly, moving from a one-dimensional portrayal to a more nuanced picture and simultaneously increasing awareness of the aid budget, what it is spent on, and the profile of the Icelandic Development Agency. Basically, this set of implications concerning information gaps indicate that on the whole people do not have credible or positive images of development to discuss and find it easy to fall back on scepticism. Neither do they have a strong sense of global interconnectedness or a clear idea of how global poverty might affect them. The research findings have uncovered an information gap that needs to be filled.

7.2 Counterproductive messages are not strengthening people's moral values

An important research question addressed in this study was the attempt to understand how people's attitudes are formed and what motivates them to lend their support to development aid. The results show that issues of fairness, humanitarian motives and a strong moral commitment come across overwhelmingly in most participants' discussions. These findings are in agreement with previous research on individual motivation outlined in section 3.4. However, an interesting difference between previous research findings and this study was identified in the Icelandic participants' willingness to attribute the causes and responsibility for poverty to external factors which they discussed in terms of the greed of rich countries and international organisations and general injustice in the world. Previous research from donor countries has found that the public

tend to identify the causes of global poverty with internal causes, such as climate, war and over-population. Although this attribution to external factors and ‘greed’ concurs with the strength of the participants’ underlying conviction that development should be supported for the reasons of justice and fairness, it does not accord with the absence of discussion surrounding wider political issues as a cause of global poverty, such as debt, trade and international taxation, which indicates an additional information gap to focus on.

An implication indicated by the research is that although people are clearly motivated by moral values, the development messages they perceive are not encouraging these values. Previous research described in section 4.3 recommended that NGOs should tap into people’s values of fairness and moral commitment to support development, balancing the need to fund-raise with the need to increase people’s sense of agency and engagement with the issues. The participants in this research study perceive Icelandic NGO messages to focus on the transactional frame. In other words that NGOs are communicating the message that the main way to reduce poverty is by a direct monetary transfer from rich to poor. People also perceive development messages to emphasise a strong charity frame, and they tend to remember the use of harrowing images in collection campaigns which they donate to, but complain of a lack of follow-up information, which in the end reinforces the one-dimensional image of passive and dependent recipients without agency fixed forevermore in situations that do not change. Another counterproductive strategy is the use of emotional motivators which trigger feelings of manipulation, guilt and anger, distancing people from the issue rather than encouraging their involvement. Of course, NGOs use these methods because they have been successful in the past and because they raise funding, precisely because people are motivated by moral and humanitarian factors. However, ultimately the communication specialists are tapping into a whole group of negative frames which are separating the public from their original moral motivational frame (Darnton & Kirk, 2011). In the end these methods reinforce a perception that aid has not worked and contribute to people losing belief that they as individuals can have an impact on other people’s lives in developing countries, hence the proliferation of stories from my participants of aid wastage and corruption, and the occasional claim that the television is switched off ‘because they just can’t cope with it’.

In summary, although people are overwhelmingly motivated by moral factors, messages about development do not encourage these values, rather the opposite, focusing on the fund-raising transactional model of charity rather than justice, payment rather than participation, creating the risk of disengagement with the issues in the long-term.

7.3 The impact and effectiveness of development communication strategies

As outlined in the introduction to this study, a secondary aim of the research was to discover what type of approach best engaged the participants in development issues and examine how development communication strategies impact people's perceptions. An analysis of the data relevant to people's perceptions of how development is communicated uncovered a third set of implications which focus on communication strategies and ways in which aid and development could be communicated more effectively.

Firstly, in terms of perceived aid effectiveness, a quirky relationship was uncovered between people's scepticism about the effectiveness of aid, expressed by manifold stories of corruption and mismanagement and their underlying conviction that support should continue in spite of these perceptions of failure. In agreement with previous research, the evidence found that aid effectiveness was not the dominant influential factor, even though participants found it easier to tell stories about wasted aid than aid successes. This research indicated that people did not have easy access to stories of aid successes, resulting in an inability to picture aid working well which manifested itself in a huge amount of scepticism and talk about corruption in practice. Connected to the difficulty people had in visualising successes were complaints that there was little follow-up to campaign stories, no continuity, no outcomes reported and little sense of background context which explained causes and consequences. The evidence here implies that more background context should be communicated and attempts made to deepen people's understanding of the complexities of delivering aid, following stories through, without avoiding the difficult issue of corruption.

Overwhelmingly present across this research data was the recurrent theme of the value of sustainable development constantly repeated in the participants universal use of the phrase 'we

must help people to help themselves’, and nowhere was the phrase more quoted than in answer to an enquiry about what type of development stories people would most like to hear about. Here the results differed from previous quantitative research findings which claim that the public only understands development in terms of humanitarian aid as opposed to long-term development. The participants in this study understood this difference in principle, but found it difficult to describe examples of long-term development, producing more easily stories of short-term aid assistance. The implication here is that if people are broadly in support of long-term development then they need to be able to visualise the long-term nature of the process and understand that there will be both successes and challenges involved in this work. A more detailed understanding of what long-term development involves will build accountability between ICEIDA/NGOs and Icelandic taxpayers, providing them with a legitimate interest in holding these organisations to account for aid spending.

To conclude this section on the research implications for communication approaches, the research data indicates that the stories people would most like to hear about were positive stories, stories that connect to individual lives, stories telling the how and why of successful projects not just their outcomes. People want to hear reports with background context they can understand and reports which follow up on campaigns showing how the aid has achieved results. The evidence showed that the participants were asking not just to be told that money has been spent and that aid works, but they wanted a deeper understanding of the process of how it works. In short, they wanted to know how spending by Icelandic taxpayers contributes to falling poverty, hunger and inequality in other parts of the world. Recommendations based on these results would be for development communicators to move away from portraying one-dimensional messages which have led to limited understanding and focus on more contextualised stories that people can connect to and follow through to a success stage, countering the tendency for people to remember negative stories and confronting the impression that ‘nothing ever changes’.

Conclusion

The study set out to understand more about public attitudes to international development, to discover what motivates people to support aid, and to analyse the impact of messages about development with a view to recommending improved effectiveness of communication. The results of this study indicate there is an information gap which needs to be filled in order to support people's understanding of development aid. Secondly, that there is a disconnect between people's support for development in principle characterised by strong moral motivations to give and their scepticism about aid effectiveness, and finally, that in order to be more effective development communication in Iceland should address these issues with strategies that will construct a deeper understanding.

Taken together the implications arising from these research results seem negative, that is they deal with information gaps and messages that could be improved. But it is important to state that the study does not indicate that public attitudes are fixed, inflexible and present a stumbling block for development support. It is clear that the vast majority of the participants, although they might have conflicting views about aid effectiveness, display a strong moral compass in terms of their commitment to alleviating poverty and are across the board supportive of development aid. It is important that these humanitarian values should be built upon and the concerns people voice about corruption and wastage be addressed directly. The most encouraging finding, because it can be targeted and built upon, was the majority of participants' ready and open admissions to a gap in their understanding of development issues and their appetite for a richer understanding of how aid is used and how development takes place.

Based on these results I recommend that development communication strategies should attempt to combat these issues by providing a constant and steady flow of credible images of development, supported by more background context, making an effort to explain the development processes at work, the challenges faced and the progress made. Emphasis should be

placed on the 'bigger picture' incorporating positive stories about education, infrastructure projects, better governance, advancing well-being and personal freedoms, but set against a wider political and economic background context. The whole communication strategy should be argued on the grounds of common humanity with reference to positive values and avoiding moral-order frames and disempowering images. A sector wide debate should be encouraged with the ultimate goal of creating a forum to open up two-way conversations with the public. Certainly a challenge, but the achievement of which would build accountability towards the Icelandic public.

Although this research has provided a starting point into understanding why Icelandic people hold the particular views they do, there is a need for a more comprehensive picture to be constructed and especially in the area of why people are motivated to support and how messages affect attitude formation. I recommend that further work be carried out into these areas addressing questions such as: Which communication approaches work best in promoting support for development work? In this context, what is the qualitative and quantitative effect of the media? How do people's life experiences, education, socio-economic backgrounds and wider values influence their attitudes to international development and aid? What factors influence people's behaviour when it comes to participating in actions to alleviate poverty?

Finally in the context of addressing these questions, I would like to provide a suggestion towards future research in this field which has arisen from the process of this study. The idea involves a further qualitative research programme utilising focus groups to examine deliberative interaction between the public, development professionals and members of the media. I had envisioned carrying out such a programme in the early stages of this study, but discovered that it was beyond the scope of this research undertaking. In the methodology chapter of this thesis, it was explained how in the preparatory stages of this research focus groups were discovered to be extremely rich sources of data and I recommended them as an efficient tool for measuring the impact of development communication messages on public attitudes. Bailey et al. (2011) state that focus groups produce information on the norms and values that exist in the community more broadly, rather than the individual experiences and values gathered by in-depth interviews.

Here is a brief outline of a two-stage qualitative research programme, the first stage of which would be to conduct a series of focus groups in which a cross-section of members of the public stratified by their interest in global issues are shown a series of recorded material communicating development issues. The material should be varied and reflect news stories, campaign materials and educational materials; each item would be followed by a guided discussion with the aim of testing attitudes and reactions to the materials. In this way an attempt could be made to dig beneath the surface of public opinion to understand better why people perceive these issues in different ways. The second stage would be to follow up the focus groups by a ‘deliberative workshop’ which would bring together selected members of the focus groups (group 1) with media reporters and NGO communication specialists (group 2) to explore new ways of engaging the public with the developing world. The workshop would present a creative exercise providing a research opportunity to see how the different stakeholders respond to new information. After this session a joint discussion would be held to generate constructive recommendations on strategies of how best to communicate development issues. This was a research model I had considered exploring when I became interested in what the public know about development and how it is communicated, but quickly realised that the first stage was to gain in-depth perspectives on public attitudes to international development and the role of aid which I hope this thesis takes some steps towards.

In conclusion, it is my sincere hope that this research will contribute towards providing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of attitudes the Icelandic public have to international development, and that in addition it will provide constructive suggestions concerning how development communication could be improved to enhance public support. Because it is my belief that the way forward to encouraging more engagement and participation in development is by opening up dialogues with the public, promoting attitudinal change in society on which a new, more effective, paradigm of development can be built.

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Appendix 1

Semi-structured interview guide

1. Introduction: *Introduce and explain the purpose of the research. Explain how the data will be recorded and reported without participants being identifiable and the final research outcome — a Master's thesis.*

[Paraphrase] This research is being conducted to understand better people's attitudes towards development aid. I am interested in talking to you about poverty in the world and the need for international development work. I am interested to know whether you take part in any aid efforts or support development organisations in Iceland. I'll be asking you some questions and as you know the conversation will be recorded, which you have very kindly agreed to. Everything you tell me will only be used for this research project. Your name will not be used and care will be taken so that you can not be identified from your answers. Do you have any questions before we begin?

2. Background Information: *Ask a few questions to get an impression of their background and to put the participant at ease.*

Q: Could you tell me a little bit about yourself first? (Just so I can get a better picture of you and your background?)

Prompts: Personal/family circumstances? Children? Where from/grew up/worked/lived abroad?

Education and current occupation? Influences? Hobbies?

3. Interest in global/developing world issues. *Here I am trying to gauge their interest in development and how concerned they are about global issues, as well as finding out where they access the information.*

Q: Next I would like to ask you a little bit about how you see yourself in the world today. Do you follow the international news? Are you interested in global issues?

Prompts: Where do you get information? Media/TV/newspapers/internet/websites? How keen? daily/infrequently Which issues interest you?

4. Concern about global poverty. *Here I am trying to discover how globally connected people feel. Whether they feel global poverty affects them? Are they aware of any consequences? This could uncover some motivation behind concern.*

Q: Do you think it is important that we in Iceland try to do something about global poverty?

Prompts: Is it important to help people in developing countries? Does it have an impact on our life? In what way? Why help? Moral obligation? Justice/security issues/charity? *If the subject of poverty at home comes up —compare domestic difficulties with global poverty?*

5. Perceptions of developing countries and issues connected to them. *The aim here is to identify which countries people think of as developing countries and what they know of them in general, how they see the problems they face. This may uncover images they have of poverty and development and underlying knowledge.*

Q: When you think of developing countries which countries come to mind? What challenges do you think they face?

Prompts: If they mention an area of the world, probe for individual countries. Ask why they think of those countries? Have they visited a developing country? Experience of the visit? Probe about issues? What causes them? What do they know about them?

6. People's perceptions of the reasons for poverty and inequality in the world. *The aim here is to gain understanding of how people perceive international development and global systems to work; to gain an insight into their understanding of the causes of poverty and inequality.*

Q: What do you think are the main causes of poverty in poor countries?

Prompts: Why do you think that? Can you explain that? What else?

***Possible answers:** unequal ownership of resources and power, over-population, lack of education, war and conflict, trade barriers, international debt, corrupt leaders and governments, exploitation by multi-nationals or richer countries, natural disasters, climate change, inefficient aid. Notice whether people are seen as victims of political/economic/natural forces*

7. People's perception of who is responsible for global poverty reduction? *The aim here is to gain understanding of many underlying attitudes about how people understand the causes for poverty and possibly could shed more light on how concerned they are, how connected they feel, who they expect to do something about it.*

Q: Who do you think should be responsible for global poverty reduction?

Prompts: Have you heard or seen that they are doing something to reduce poverty in poor countries?

***Possible answers:** individuals living in the developed world/governments of the developed world/governments of the developing world/the people themselves. Notice whether people think they can have an impact personally? Whether national or international efforts weight heavier?*

8. People's understanding of how Icelandic organisations contribute to development. *The aim here is to collect stories about development work and projects that people know about or have heard of. This might also build a background to people's own personal involvement, engagement or participation in development projects.*

Q: Could you tell me what you know (or have heard) about Icelandic organisations that are doing something to help poverty in poor countries?

Prompts: Which organisations? What have you heard they have done/are doing? Where? Was it successful? Notice whether they are talking about humanitarian aid or development aid? Do they know the difference? Short term projects or long-term development assistance?

9. People's individual contribution to/support of/engagement with development work. *Here the aim is to assess the extent of the participant's support of development aid and uncover their underlying motivations for those actions. Plus to build up a picture of their knowledge of development organisations and what they do.*

Q: Can you tell me if you have supported or taken part in any type of development help?

Prompts: Contributions? Donations? Members of organisations? Charities? Free trade support? Voluntary work? If you do, why did you do it? How did you get involved? Why? Appeals/campaigns? (Or) why do you think other people do it? How did/does it make you feel? Has what you do/donate/participate changed since the financial crash of 2008? How do you choose who you contribute to? Do you think about how the money will be used? Are you interested in long-term or short term projects? Why? What is the difference?

10. People's knowledge of government development aid. *The underlying aim here is to assess people's knowledge of ICEIDA, the work they do, the aid budget and MDGs etc. These prompts are only to be asked if the participants have not yet expressed any knowledge of Icelandic development aid.*

Q: Have you ever heard of an organisation called ICEIDA? (Þróunarstofnun Íslands)

Prompts: What do you think they do? In which countries? What? How much? Funding? Do they know the percentage of the Icelandic Government's contribution? *Once the participant had shared this information or guessed— if they ask be ready to supply them with the actual amount and put it in an international framework and register their reaction. Ask: how they feel about the amount the Icelandic government have committed to? Do they support these increases?*

11. People's wishes regarding the emphasis of development work. *The aim here is to gain underlying perceptions of what is important to focus on in development work. This could contribute more information regarding people's motivations and overall understanding of the complexity of development.*

Q: What would you like to see Icelandic organisations spending money on? What aid do you think is most important to give?

Prompts: Which are most important? Why? Do you know of any examples of this type of help? Who did it? Was it successful?

Possible answers: *poverty reduction/health/education/growing the economy/ creating jobs/fair trade/humanitarian relief/terrorism/peace keeping/reconstructing countries after war/disasters/tackling corruption/supporting democracy*

12. People's perceptions of how development work is communicated. *The aim here is to understand how people perceive the information from development organisations is being communicated and what type of messages and stories best engage people in development work.*

Q: Have you noticed any messages or reports with information about how this development work is being done?

Prompts: Fundraising and campaigning messages? How do organisations persuade you to donate money? What is emphasised in the campaigns? What are their messages and stories? How does this make you feel? Is it successful? What kind of information gets you interested in development projects? What makes them interesting? What type of stories would you like to hear about? What emphasis would you like to see? How would you like the organisations to report the information?

13. People's perceptions of the success of aid. *The aim is here to build an underlying picture of people's perceptions about the success or failure of development; to collect stories, positive or negative, and understand people's attitudes to what has been done so far and what impact they feel they can have.*

Q: How do you think overseas aid money has helped poor people in developing countries?

Prompts: What do you think has been achieved in the last 40 years? What kind of influence do you think aid is having? What results are you aware of? How do you feel when you think of work done to help people in poor countries? Successful? Positive? Negative? Corruption? Any examples? How do you know about this?

14. Closing questions. *The aim here is to let the participants know that their interview will soon be over, and to give them opportunity to add something more to the conversation.*

Q: Do you think there is anything more we could be doing to have an impact on global poverty?

Q: Before we finish, is there anything else that you would like to add to what we have been talking about?

[Paraphrase] I would like to thank you very much for spending your time with me on answering these questions. Is there anything you would like to ask me before we finish?