



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Think-tank urges government to compensate Africa for brain drain

Donors must channel funds to replace lost skills, says Africa Research Institute

In a briefing published today - '*After The Promises: Re-thinking UK policy in Africa,*' - the Africa Research Institute urges the government to dedicate a share of its international development budget, in proportion to the tax contribution of African professionals working in Britain, to reduce the skills deficit in Africa's health, education and engineering sectors.

More than a third of South African and Zimbabwean nurses work in OECD countries, a significant proportion of the estimated 20,000 skilled Africans who seek work in industrialised nations every year. "It is neither feasible nor morally defensible to prevent qualified African professionals from seeking opportunities abroad," says Mark Ashurst. "Skills migration is a drain on the investment in education and training made by African governments, while the cost of exporting expatriate skills to sub-Saharan Africa is at least US\$4billion a year".

In Kenya, one training scheme to upgrade the skills of entry level nurses has attracted more than 7,000 applicants since 2005. But clinical placements for nursing students are in short supply, and other teaching resources are limited. "The UK has benefited from the migration of African professionals. Donors should fund new capacity to upgrade the skills of African professionals, especially in health," said Mark Ashurst.

Time for more realism, less grandiose ambition on Africa, argues Africa Research Institute

In the same briefing, The Africa Research Institute calls on the government to offer fresh new thinking on the implications for the allocation of aid – more realism, less grandiose ambition.

The Africa Research Institute cautions that politicians on all sides invoke Africa policy as proof of their conscience and compassion. Democracy, trade, technology and regional integration are transforming Africa – but often in ways which policymakers did not

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anticipate, argues the UK's only Africa-focused independent think tank. Furthermore, contrary to many politicians' hopes, UK influence in Africa is in decline.

The UK has more than doubled aid to sub-Saharan Africa from its 2003-4 level and was the first G8 nation to commit to the UN's target of allocating 0.7% of national income to development by 2013. Even so, Africa will achieve none of the principal UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Effective allocation of donor funds needs keen scrutiny, candid debate and more competing ideas – which parliamentarians in Westminster have failed to sustain.

'We often hear discussions about whether aid works or does not work – but that is yesterday's argument. There is a lot of rhetoric about 'pro-poor' development and 'good governance', when what really matters is the local environment and local imperatives. We need more realism, less grandiose ambition," says Mark Ashurst, director of Africa Research Institute.

He continues, "The sheer complexity of donors' agenda in Africa has become an obstacle to sustainable reform. All too often, African institutions, parliaments and policymakers are undermined by the cosy relationships between their governments and foreign donors. Amid the myriad projects and competing priorities of donors, local institutions routinely find themselves out the loop."

After the Promises sets out six key points to inform UK policy in Africa:

- Rising inequality and entrenched poverty in every 'successful' economy
- Key Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved
- Agricultural growth slowed by narrow focus on 'poverty reduction'
- Bilateral trade and aid deals frustrate closer regional integration
- 'Governance' agenda is often naïve, at worst counter-productive
- Strong case for funding skills training in proportion to African professionals in UK

Notes to Editors:

The **Africa Research Institute** is a non-partisan think tank based in London. Our mission is to draw attention to ideas which have worked in Africa, and to identify new ideas where needed.

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The briefing *After the Promises: Re-thinking UK policy in Africa* can be downloaded from the Africa Research Institute website:

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