



# Understanding public perceptions of International Aid

## Summary and key findings

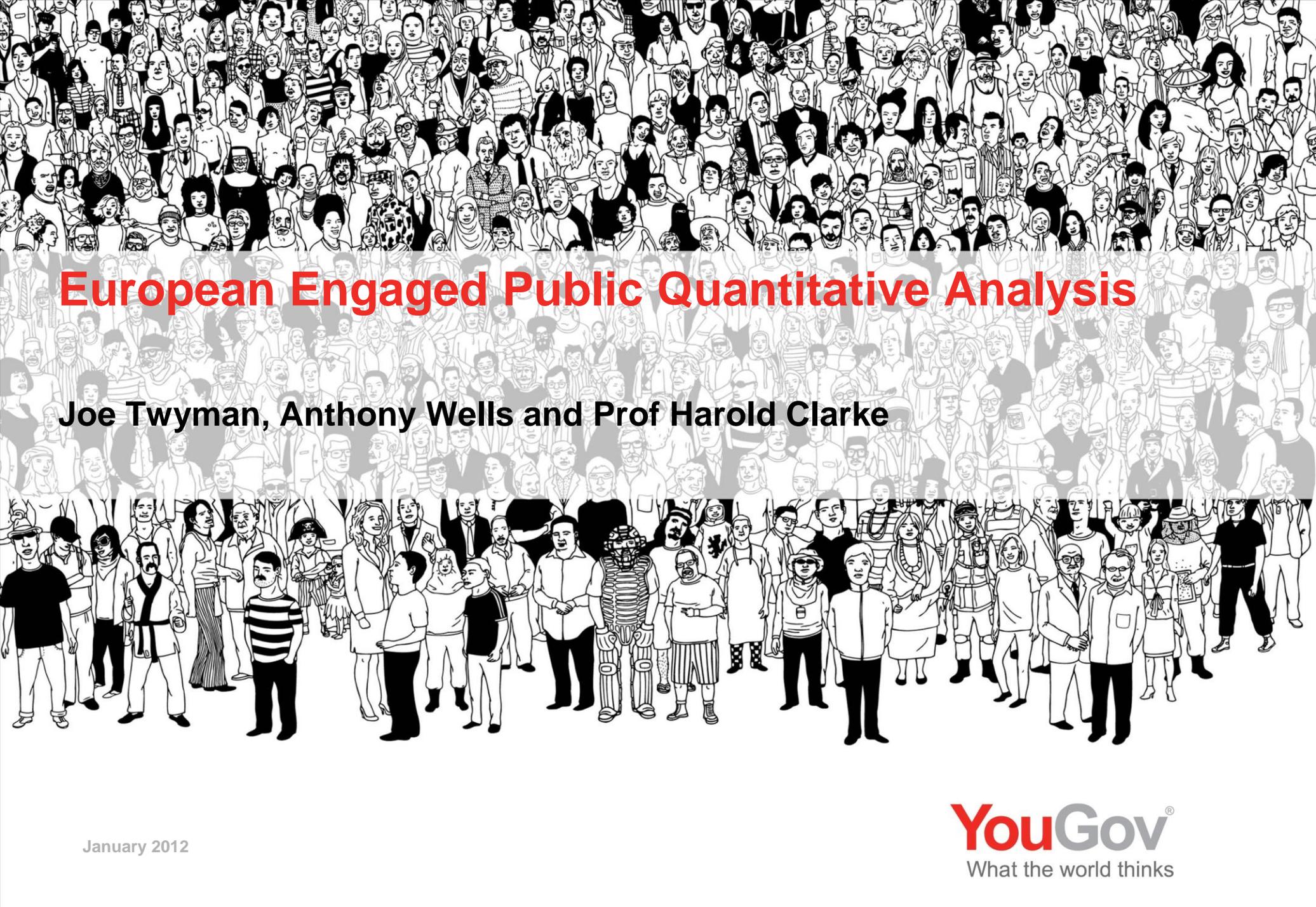
Prepared for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation



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January 2012





# European Engaged Public Quantitative Analysis

Joe Twyman, Anthony Wells and Prof Harold Clarke

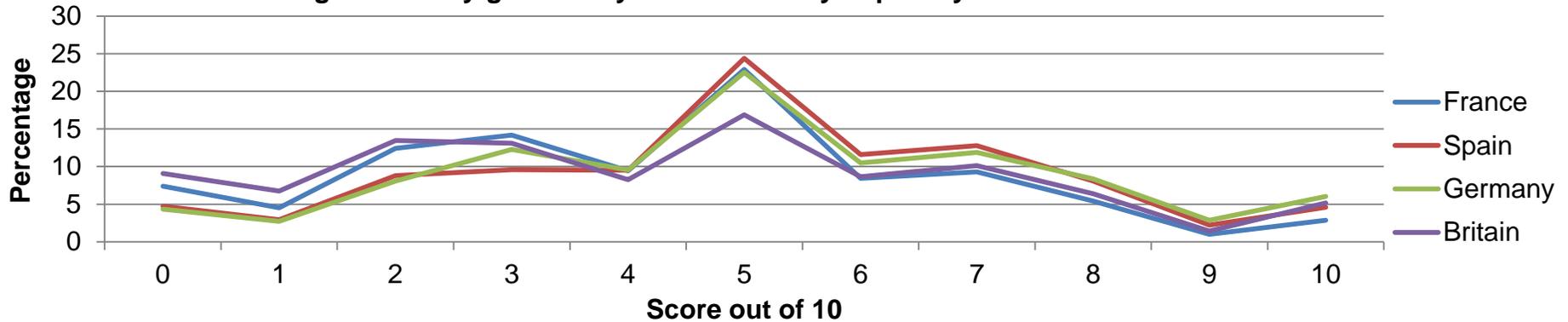
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# Quantitative Analysis

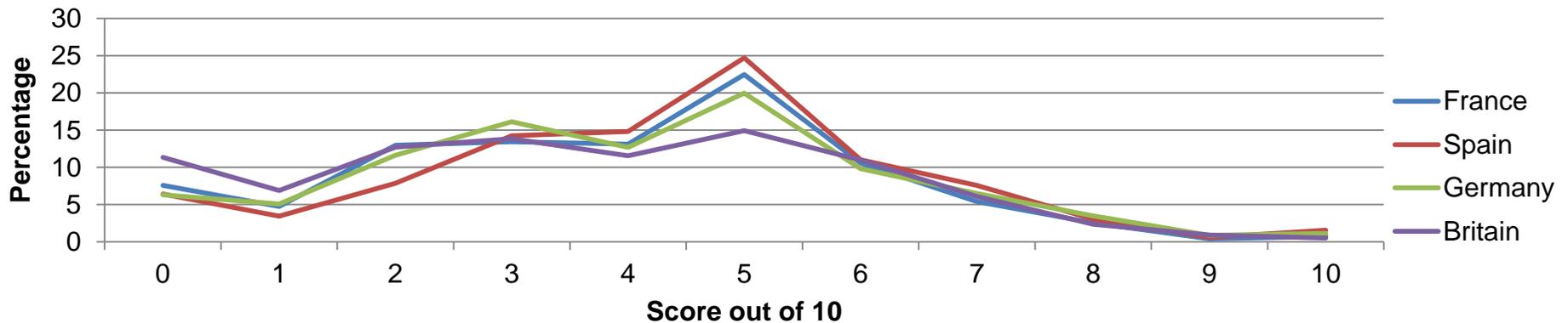
## Support and effectiveness

Please indicate the extent to which you think that the government should give overseas aid, where a score of 0 means that it should not give aid at all, and a score of 10 means that it should give aid very generously. Where would you place yourself on this scale?



Means: France 4.3, Spain 5.0, Germany 5.1, Britain 4.3

Overall, on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'very ineffective' and 10 means 'very effective,' how effective do you think government spending on overseas aid is?



Means: France 3.9, Spain 4.3, Germany 4.0, Britain 3.6



# Quantitative Analysis

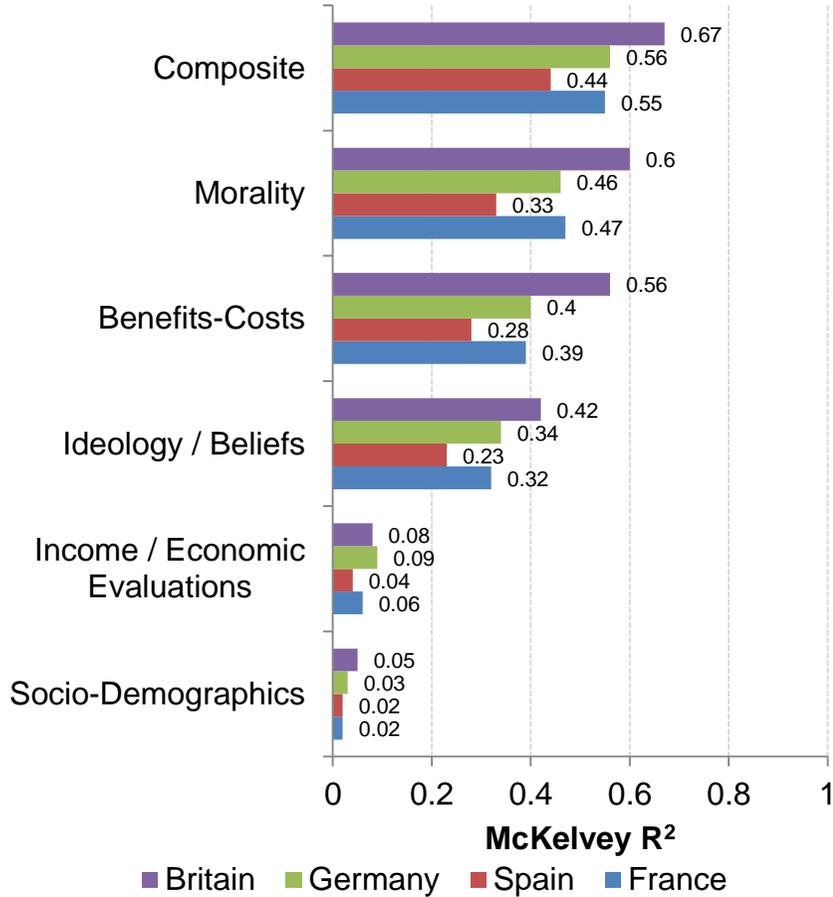
## The key points

- 
- People in countries where the public don't support more overseas aid spending see it as something that doesn't benefit them personally...
  - But arguments directly appealing to self-interest don't work as well as traditional moral ones. People think aid should be altruistic
  - People would be more likely to support aid if they thought it really did reach the poorest
  - But most think aid is inefficient and ends up being lost to corruption in developing countries
  - Misperception of aid as being given directly to governments in developing countries, when people would like to see partnerships between donor governments and charities
  - People want to see lower mortality rates and less hunger to convince them aid is working (and, in France, more democracy and civil society)
  - Best proof points are those linked to specific defined benefits and those tackling problems not countries. Arguments based on economics, trade and terms like "investment" do not seem to work well.

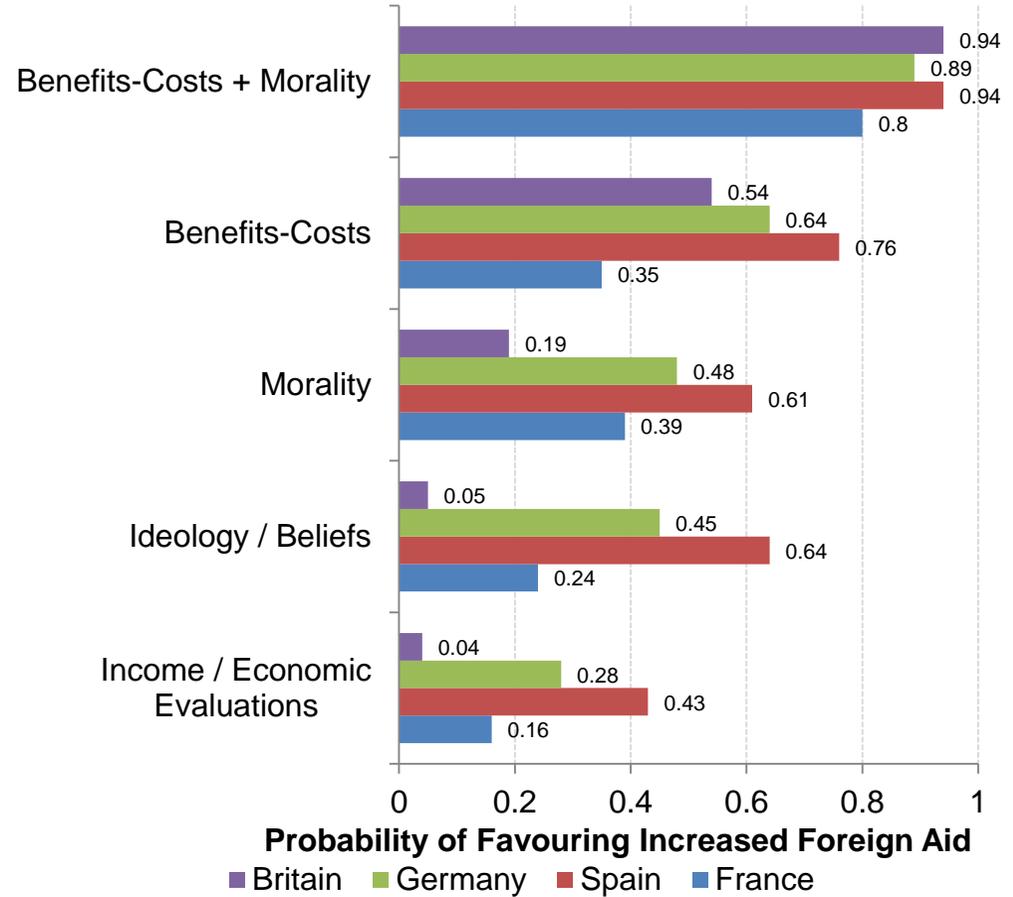
# Key Driver Analysis

## Explanatory models and influencing change

Ordinal Probit Models of Attitudes Towards Increasing/Decreasing Overseas Aid



Changes in Probability of Favoring Increased Aid as Significant Predictors Vary From Min to Max



**Morality has the greatest explanatory power, but cost-benefit considerations are the strongest for influencing change**



# European Engaged Public Qualitative Analysis

Tom Black

January 2012

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# The Aid Conundrum

Morally right, but corruption means effectiveness is questioned

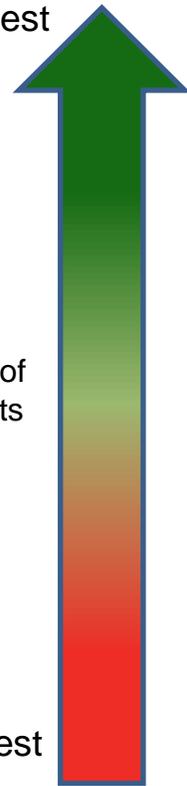
- 
- The moral argument is won, and the principle of aid is established
    - Aid is *'the right thing to do'*
  - BUT, perceived **corruption** and **lack of success stories** mean the appropriate level of aid spending is debated
    - The strategic and economic arguments are rejected
  - Overwhelming **narrative of corruption** within the aid system (particularly recipient governments)
    - Anecdotal evidence and stories resonate and reinforce this narrative
  - 'Aid' is viewed as short-term, disaster relief
    - In contrast with the desire for long-term solutions
  - General knowledge and understanding of the issues is **low**
    - Information is passively received, and few actively pursue more detail
  - Commonality across geographies and ideologies on these points

# How Aid is Perceived

Morally justified, but also inefficient and ultimately unsuccessful



Strongest



Strength of arguments

Weakest

Moral arguments



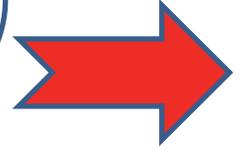
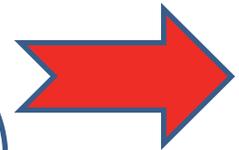
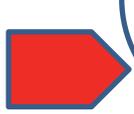
Aid is the right thing to do



*Moral tone of the debate undermines other arguments, making it less acceptable to frame the issue in terms of self-interest or even mutual benefit*

Economic arguments

Strategic arguments



Aid is wasted

Aid is unsuccessful

*Narrative of corruption and waste validated by anecdotal stories from friends, family and the media*

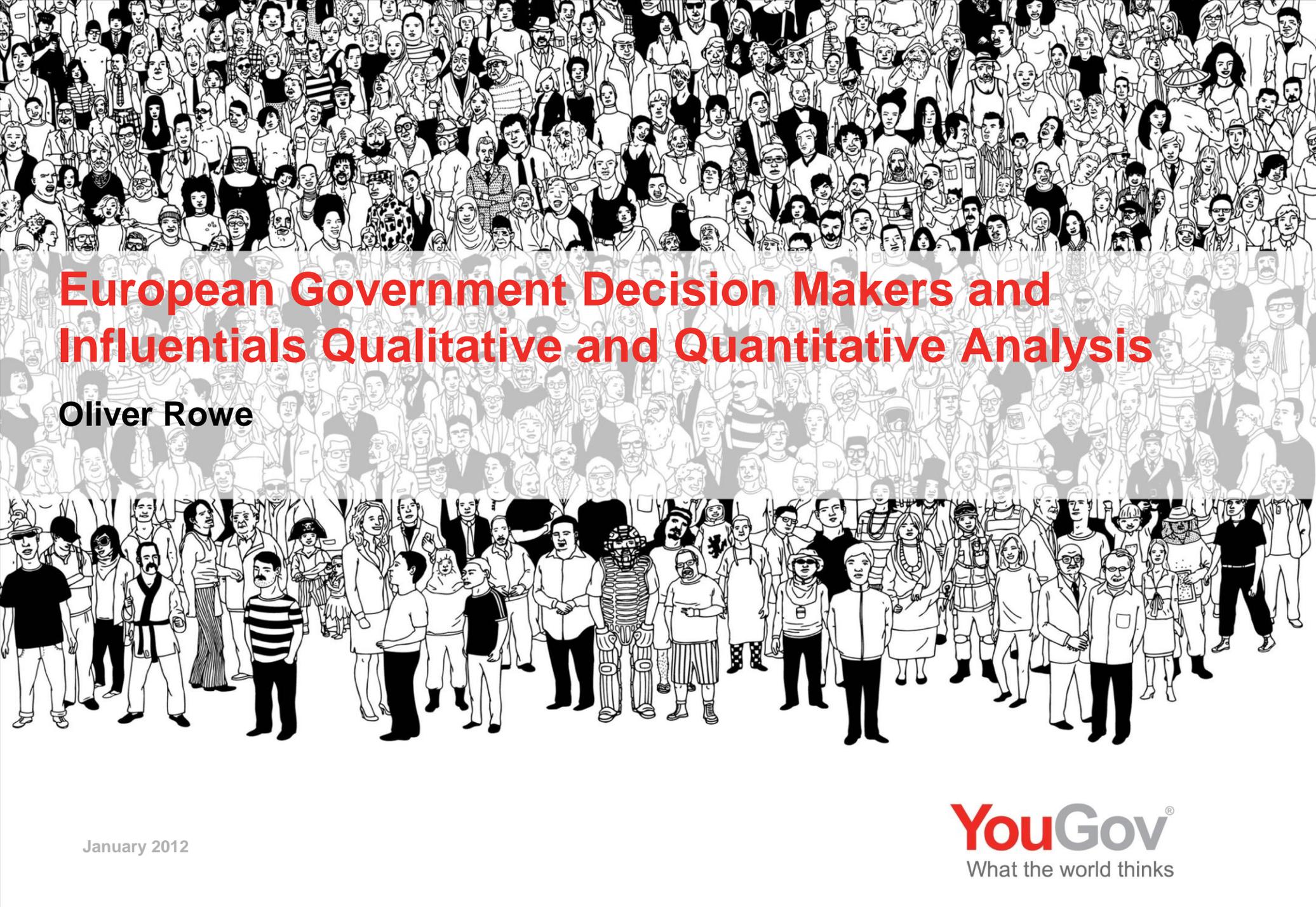
**Morally, the *principle* of aid is accepted, but because the strategic and economic arguments are not, the *appropriate level* of spending is disputed**

# What the Public Want

## Strategic success and an end to aid

- Explain the process of foreign aid
  - *What* aid is, *who* receives it, *how* it works, and what its *impact* is
  - Explicate 'where the money goes'
- Show **success** and demonstrate **progress**
  - Illustrate how aid has improved people's lives
  - With the objective of reducing the need for aid in the long-term
- Go direct to the people and circumvent the governments
  - Demonstrate *partnerships* with local organisations
  - Explain how aid gets to the people who need it
- Concise, straightforward messaging from sources 'on the ground'
  - Complex, jargon-heavy messaging is disenfranchising
  - Uncomplicated, emotionally powerful stories are more effective

**Ultimate objective: to reach a point where aid is no longer needed**



# European Government Decision Makers and Influentials Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

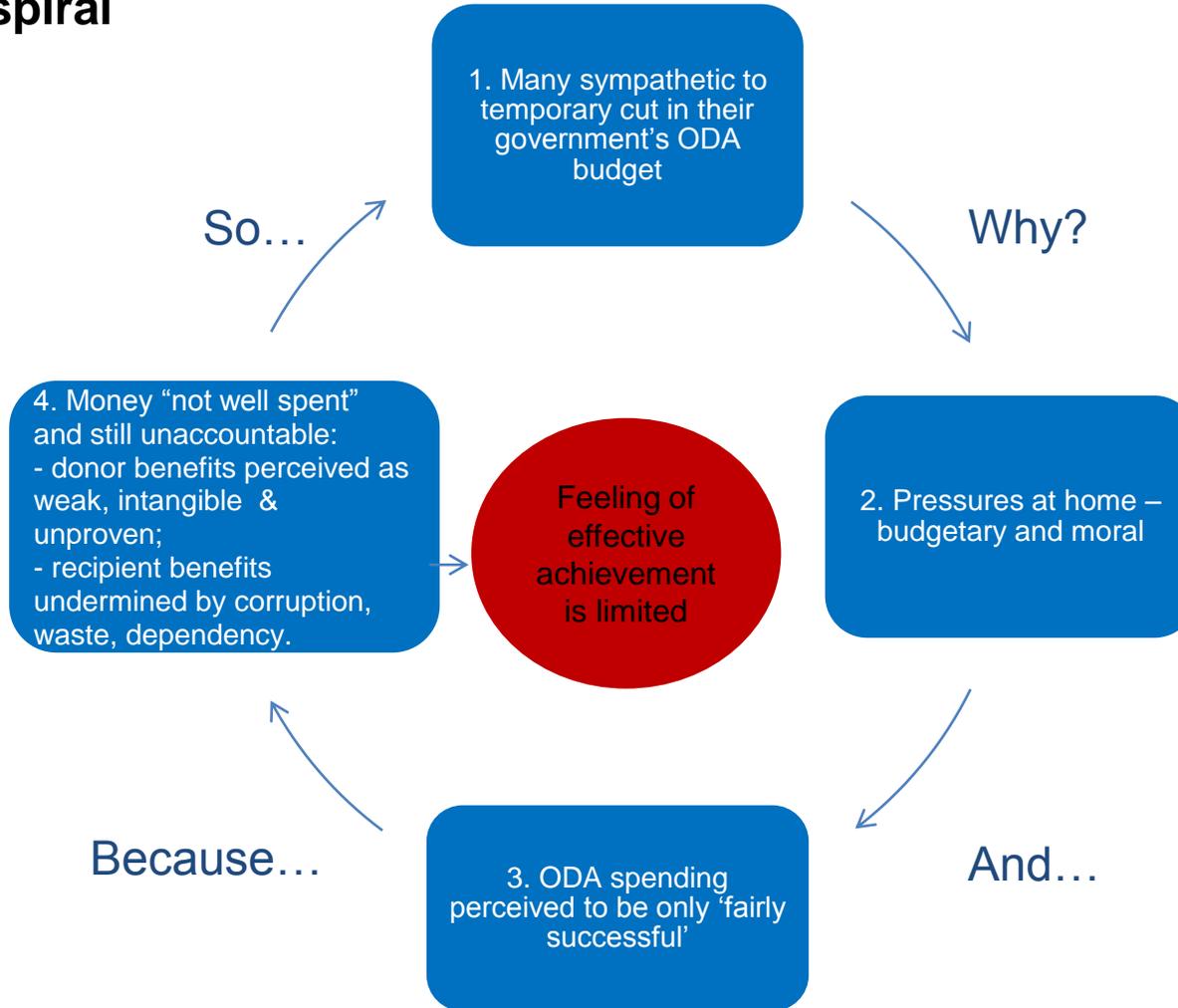
**Oliver Rowe**

January 2012

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# European Government Decision Makers and Influentials

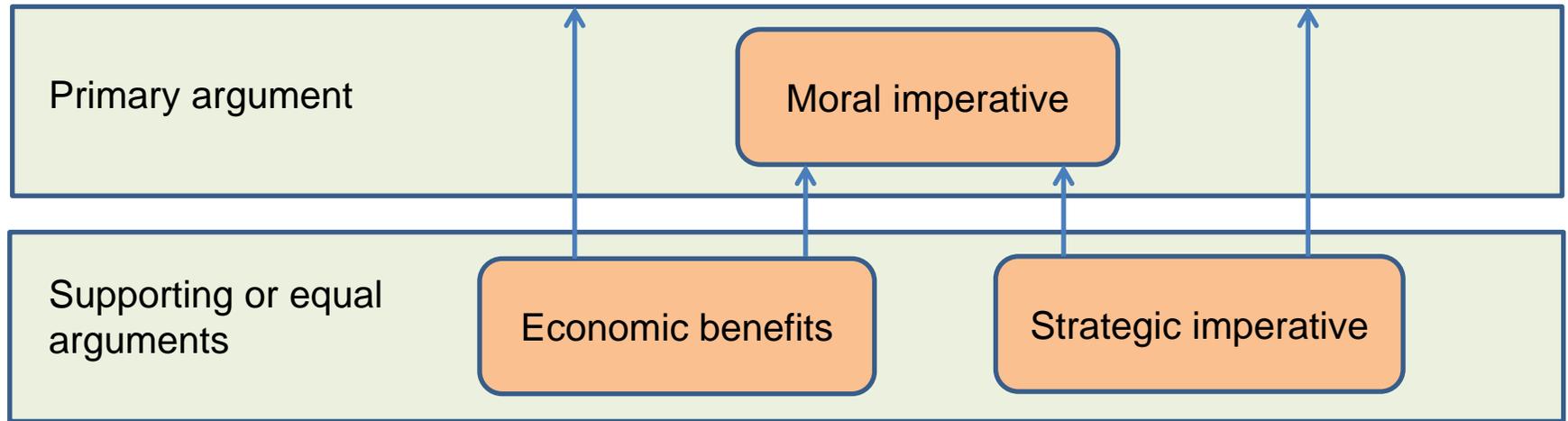
## The negative spiral



**Negative spiral for minority surrounding government expenditure on aid but majority remain supportive of commitment to 0.7% of GNI goal**

# European Government Decision Makers and Influentials

## The key arguments for aid expenditure



### *Preferred arguments:*

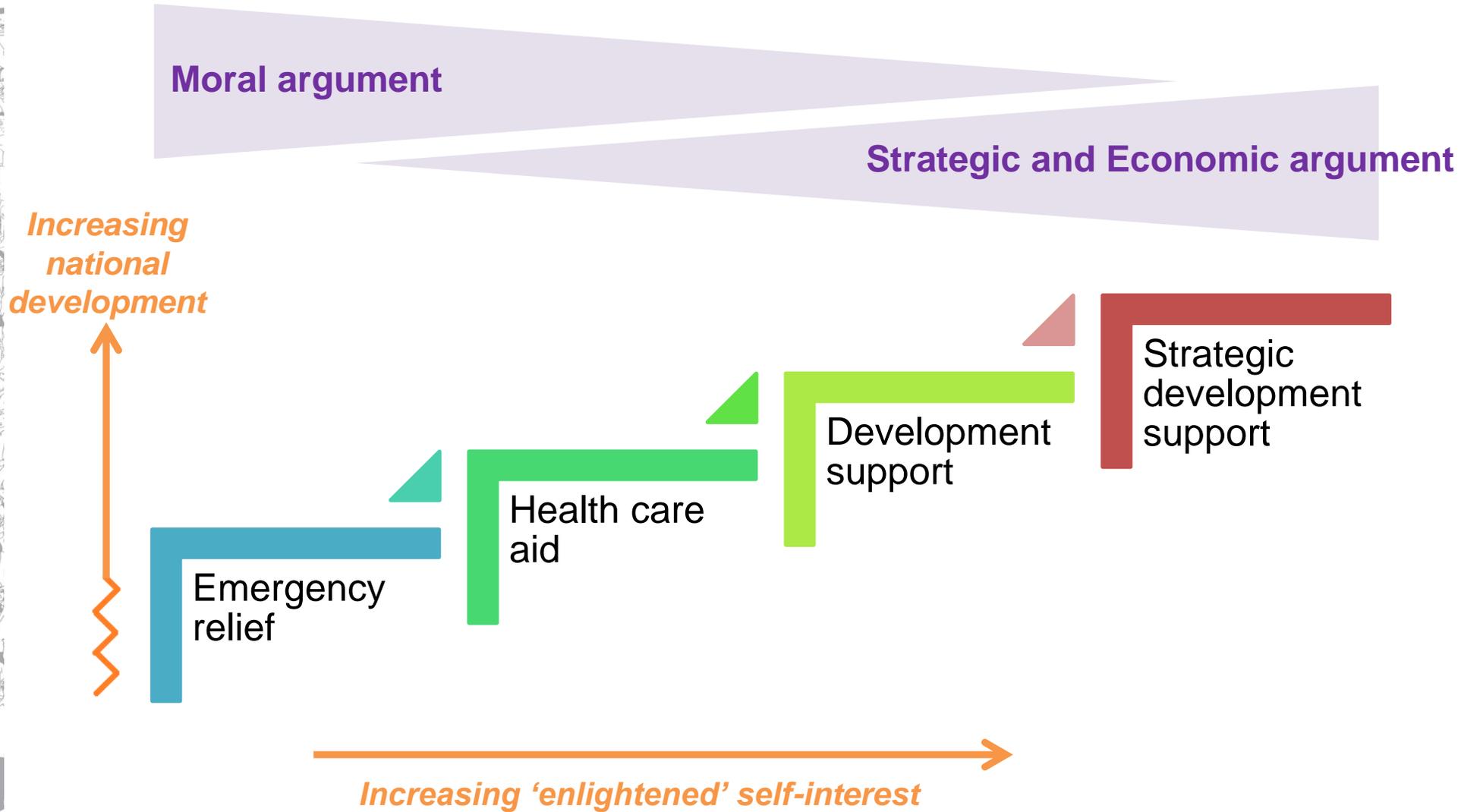
**Moral:** Helping people in the poorest countries is basic fairness and justice because all lives have equal value regardless of where someone is born.

**Economic:** Aid teaches sustainable practices and reduces the burden of disease in developing countries giving people access to the resources and skills to pull together, to pull themselves up by their own boot straps and become self-sufficient.

**Strategic:** Aid helps us prevent war and acts of terrorism without risking the lives of our sons and daughters and the wealth of our national treasury in foreign conflicts. As it has been said: “Development is a lot cheaper than sending soldiers.”.

# European Government Decision Makers and Influentials

## Changing argument for aid as national development increases





# *Framing the Aid Debate*

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# *Beyond Research: The Outside Context*

# A collapse of old institutions & a need for the new

A wider context of trust breakdown and institutional collapse



*Sector by sector our faith has been eroded*

*A media narrative was set of people against institutions*

*The demise of the old has left a gap for the new*



*Working with a high level of transparency*

*Evolving and changing, adapting to expectation*

*Strong sense of social contract*

# 1 A time of tough choices

But new institutions can't immediately change the economic landscape

*Difficult decisions for individuals and nations*

*Re-evaluation has been forced everywhere*

*Scepticism and doubt fostered by climate*

*Aid inevitable sucked into this*



# *Deep-rooted Morals*

## Moral argument is unquestionable

An intrinsic part of European moral compass

*Rooted deeply in national consciousness*

*A taboo issue to be seen to disagree with charity*

*Stems from positive ethical beliefs...*

*... as well as colonial & developed world guilt...*

*Although nature of moral argument differs by nation*

## Strategic arguments only serve to undermine morals

Strategic case understood, but strongly rejected

*Strategic arguments recognised*

*But felt extremely undesirable to give aid for these reasons*

*Feels like another attack on collective moral code*

*Speaks of manipulation, which jars with former empires*

*No-one wanted to feel this self-interested*

## But people are torn because they question effectiveness

Climate leads to a questioning not of morals but of efficiency

*Economic narrative is forefront in minds across Europe*

*Morals are unchanged, but delivery questioned*

*A logic that allows sidestepping morals carries more weight*

*The negatives eat away at the moral argument*

*Therefore not about providing new arguments for aid...*

*... but tackling negatives that make a case against it*



# *The Why, How and What of Aid*

## A model of aid communication

Research points to a frame of thinking about aid comms

*Why*

*The logic and moral argument for aid donations*

*How*

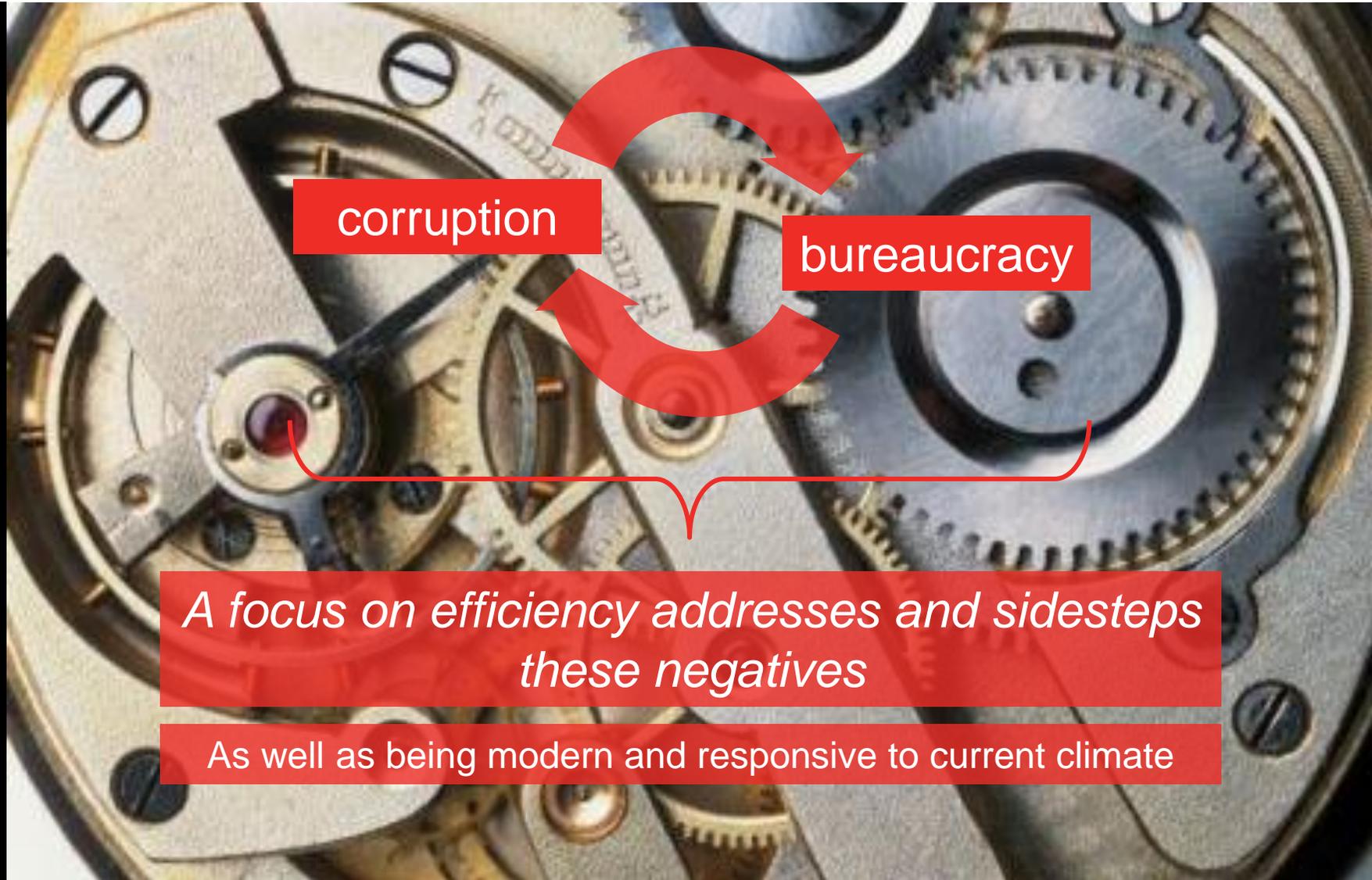
*The way aid travels from donor to recipient*

*What*

*The actual effect aid has and progress it makes*

## Efficiency counteracts the two big negatives

Raising the argument to a different level



## Living Proof identifies the way forward

Anecdote the weapon working against us; which we should learn from

*Negatives of aid not based in fact, but stories*

*Demonstrates the power of stories*

*Living Proof a great exemplar of effect stories*

*Humanised, repeatable stories more resonant*

*Connecting at an emotional level crucial*

*Macro & micro stories the way to show outcomes*

*Telling the real story of aid a new route to aid effect*

# *A Messaging Framework*

# Why, how, what as a comms framework

The research suggests a framework for delivering aid communication

*why*

*we should fund aid*

*a moral argument that is deeply held*

*focus on removing the undermining negatives of corruption & bureaucracy*

**how**

*aid reaches projects*

**A Focus on *EFFICIENCY***

*the real aid journey*

**what**

*effects aid has*

**Telling the real *STORY* of Aid**

*the real aid effect:  
Living Proof*

# 4 Efficiency as a journey

Not about efficiency now, but the mission for greater efficiency

*Demonstrate change and response to climate of recession*

*Call for a new focus on efficiency*

*Working harder to make every penny count*

*A duty to efficiency, to maintain work at a pivotal point*

*Lays foundation of case against reduction*

*Adopt the language of efficiency*

## Telling stories

The research can point us to guidelines around stories...

*Stories need to be humanised*

*Must be simple, evocative and easy to visualise*

*Can complete the circle from need to effect*

*Can be an engine to drive effectiveness perceptions*

*Should build to a positive trajectory*

*Focus on peoples and communities over countries*

*Innovation and novelty stands out*

*Use stories to contextualise data*

## What we learnt about language

... as well about our language

*Not about new language but how language is used*

*Sound-biting is counter-productive*

*Language doesn't trigger a re-think, emotive stories do*

*Need to aid understanding and ability to re-tell*

*Language should be simple, straightforward & honest*

*End acronyms and industry speak*

*Counter negative words infecting the sector*

## Stories are only, well half the story

Stories are only as powerful as the way they are told

*Already have a lot of positive stories through Living Proof*

*Need to bolster these at a macro level*

*Real job is around the activation of stories*

*There is a need to:*

*Package stories  
for greater  
editorial value*

*Use in media  
education &  
outreach*

*Utilise to work  
stories into news  
agenda*

## Efficiency

## Real Aid Journey

## Real Aid Effect

<p><b>Aid organisation storyline</b></p>	<p><b>Making aid efficiency a priority</b> Telling the story of maximising our resource</p> <p><i>We have a renewed vigour around maximising every cent, as quickly as we can.</i></p>	<p><b>Directly to aid workers</b> Telling the story of the journey aid takes</p> <p><i>Aid is sent by the most direct route to charitable organisations, cutting out every possible middleman.</i></p>	<p><b>A visible effect</b> Telling the story of the difference aid has made</p> <p><i>See for yourself the direct and indirect changes your aid has been responsible for.</i></p>
<p>Desired consumer outtake:</p>	<p><b>Aid organisations are stamping out corruption and bureaucracy.</b> I can see aid organisations are taking tangible steps to improve the efficiency of their operations. I believe aid organisations are committed to making the most of aid donations, doing everything they can to make the money count.</p>	<p><b>Most aid goes directly to where it's needed to make a difference, not into the hands of the undeserving.</b> I didn't realise most aid goes directly to charities and aid organisations. I feel better knowing aid doesn't go to inefficient, corrupt governments. I understand better how aid is put into action on the ground.</p>	<p><b>Aid has improved lives and societies in a way that wouldn't have happened otherwise.</b> I've heard a powerful aid story that resonates, which I'll want to tell others. I'm proud of the difference aid has made to people and their societies. I didn't realise all the knock-on effects aid has.</p>
<p>This story is relevant because:</p>	<p>Traditional institutions have collapsed and there is a need for a new relationship between organisations and society. The biggest barriers to aid are corruption and bureaucracy; which are both addressed by becoming as efficient as possible.</p>	<p>The journey aid takes is misunderstood; misperceptions here are the leading cause of perceptions of corruption. Knowing aid goes directly to charities already making a difference is a primary means of changing attitudes.</p>	<p>Tragic human stories are prevalent around aid (to raise funds); positive stories a lot less so. Striking positive stories, that can easily be retold connect better and have more conversational collateral.</p>
<p>Back-up messaging &amp; tangible proof</p>	<p><u>Evidence of how our organisation &amp; our aid delivery is becoming more efficient; and how we are measuring this</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are responding to the climate, initiating a move to greater efficiency; which we'll do transparently</li> <li>• We are adapting to the economic reality by making what we have work even harder</li> <li>• Maximising efficiency will ensure our work isn't threatened at a time when we're so close to breaking through on crucial goals</li> </ul>	<p><u>Evidence of the path aid takes from donor to recipient &amp; beneficiary</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our aid cuts through bureaucracy to make it straight to the organisations that are making a difference on the ground</li> <li>• Most aid is sent directly to organisations already established and working in the specified area</li> <li>• The spending of aid is overseen by the donor</li> <li>• Aid is not given to foreign governments to distribute as they see fit</li> </ul>	<p><u>Evidence the effect of aid through the lives changed and societies altered</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aid changes lives allowing people to reach their potential</li> <li>• Each person aided has a positive knock-on effect to their society</li> <li>• Focused on the stories of the difference that can be made, not horrific stories on the need for aid</li> <li>• Stories at a human, emotive level</li> <li>• Ideally 'end' aid stories, by showing what happened to the people used in the call for aid</li> </ul>

# Deck in one slide: a potential comms framework

The research suggests a framework for delivering aid communication

