

What is Aid?

Aid is another word for 'help'. Richer countries give poorer countries aid to help them to make a better future for themselves.

How it works

Six weeks later, Yasmin owes Tom seven CDs (the original CD plus six more in interest) and she still can't afford to get her bike fixed. She talks about her problem with Mr Lo who runs the youth club. He gives Yasmin a puncture repair kit and teaches her how to fix the bike herself. Now, if she has another flat tyre in the future, she will know what to do.

Yasmin's friends think it's unfair for Tom to charge Yasmin so much when he has a weekend job that pays well. They talk with Tom's friends and together they persuade Tom to drop the debt. Yasmin and Tom are friends again.

Giving people the tools and skills they need to fix their own problems is one example of aid. Persuading people to drop unfair debts is another.

In the story of Yasmin and Tom, Mr Lo is like an aid agency. Oxfam gives people the skills and tools they need to fix problems themselves because this is better for them in the long run. When the friends persuaded Tom to drop the debt, that's a bit like when people joined together as Make Poverty History and persuaded the richer countries to drop the debts of 35 countries.



Oxfam is teaching these women in Uganda how to build a new health centre.

Why do some countries need aid?

Poorer countries need aid to help them provide things like schools and hospitals. More aid would mean that every child in the world could go to school. Aid could give life-saving treatment to millions of people living with HIV/AIDS. It could pay for two million extra teachers, and four million health workers, which would mean free medical care and schooling for everyone.

However, there are some problems with aid. Sometimes richer countries prefer to give money to some countries and not others. The money may only be given for one year and not the next, or the amount may change. This makes it hard for poorer countries to make plans for the future.

Even so, Make Poverty History achieved something amazing by persuading world leaders to drop the debts of 35 countries. Those countries have now got a chance to get back on their feet for the first time in many years. But it's important to remember we need to *drop the debts* as well as *give aid*.

What can I do to help?

Talk to your teachers, parents and friends about these issues. Maybe you could do an assembly at school about poverty to help people learn more about what needs to be done and why.