

Development Advocates Urge G20 to Make Good on Aid Promises

Jerome Socolovsky | Washington23 June 2010



Photo: AP

A child sits near shacks in the slum area of Boa Vista in Luanda, Angola (File)

The Group of 20 leading industrialized nations are scheduled to hold their annual meeting this weekend in Toronto, Canada. Ahead of the summit, development advocates say the G20 has made "shockingly little progress" on its commitments to the developing world.

The leaders of the world's 20 most important economies say they hope their summit will solidify the global economic recovery.

But Falu Njie of the [United Nations Millennium Campaign](#) warns that the crisis is far from over for much of the world.

"Of course, they are saying now that recovery is in the making. But this is mainly in developed countries," said Njie. "Developing countries have had serious problems and this needs to be recognized."

Njie was one of several development experts who spoke in a conference call sponsored by the [Jubilee](#)

[USA Network](#), an organization that advocates debt forgiveness for developing nations.

A report by Jubilee USA says that only about half of the \$50 billion that the G20 has promised to the world's poorest countries has been delivered. The advocacy group compares that to the hundreds of billions of dollars that went to bailing out corporations in the financial crisis.

Briggs Bomba of the human rights organization [Africa Action](#) warned that there could be a new debt crisis if new G20 aid is in the form of loans through the International Monetary Fund, or IMF, rather than grants.

"We continue to see the IMF operating from the old paradigm from conditionalities that again have had a devastating effect on the continent in terms of development and economic progress," said Bomba.

Bomba said debt relief efforts of the past have made progress possible in Africa. He cited an expansion of free primary and secondary education in Kenya and Zambia's cancelation of user fees at health facilities that enable poor communities to receive treatment.

Now, he said, that progress is at risk.

"The new cycle of indebtedness that is coming in threatens to wipe out the gains that we saw with debt relief and create new unsustainable debt," he said.

Bomba said G20 leaders have an obligation to help Africa because it is suffering from a crisis that originated in developed world.

But Marian Tupy, an analyst at the [Cato Institute](#) research group here in Washington, says that with G20 governments facing their own fiscal problems, it is unlikely they will promise new aid money in the near-term.

He said that previous aid to Africa has been a failure.

"It has, of course, led to a massive almost unimaginable amount of corruption," he said. "And it has also led to white elephant projects [i.e., projects of little value], waste of money and dislocation on the African continent."

Tupy says the best the G20 countries can do for Africa is to stop subsidizing their own farmers so that African farmers can compete on the world market.

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