

May 27, 2010

Barbara Stocking
Chief Executive
Oxfam GB
Oxford House, John Smith Drive
Cowley Oxford OX4 2JY
United Kingdom

Dear Ms. Stocking:

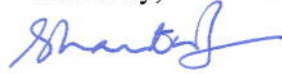
Thank you for your recent letter in which you expressed concern about the messaging around our documentation of teacher and health worker absenteeism in the 2010 Africa Development Indicators essay. We welcome this feedback, and the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with Oxfam, as we have with numerous others in seminars, media events and on the blog, [Africa Can](#). Such exchanges contribute to achieving the objective we all share, namely, to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, especially in Africa.

In addition to having the same objective, I think we agree on two other important matters. First, to fulfill that objective, we need to improve the delivery of basic services such as health and education--services that the evidence indicates are too often failing poor people. Second, the reason these services are failing poor people is a series of accountability failures in the service delivery chain. These accountability failures, emphasis on which you welcome in the report, are the cause of the problem for which, as you say, teacher and doctor absenteeism are the symptoms.

If the problem is weak accountability, then the solution must include strengthening accountability. At the World Bank, we are investing in systems—such as results-based financing and greater transparency of information about the quality of service providers—that increase poor people's ability to hold service providers and politicians accountable, and building the evidence base to understand what works and what doesn't. We would be interested to learn about the evidence linking the measures Oxfam is advocating with strengthened accountability.

In order to have more people participate in this conversation, I am posting your letter and my response on the [Africa Can](#) blog.

Sincerely,



Shanta Devarajan
Chief Economist, Africa Region