

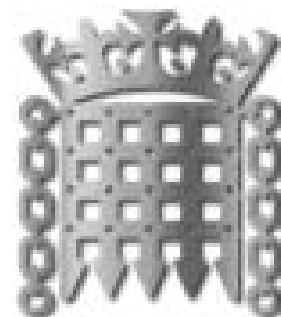
# The Hidden Heroes of International Development

*Remittances from the Southwark African  
Diaspora to families and villages in Africa.*



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*Photo on front page: Harriet Harman talks with street children in Victoria Park, Freetown, Sierra Leone 2004*

## **Introduction: Remittances to Africa from the African Diaspora in Southwark**

The London Borough of Southwark has the largest community of African origin in the UK. As well as working hard, often in low paid jobs, and supporting themselves and their family, many Africans in the UK send money back to their country of origin.

This money, “remittances”, is a vital, largely unseen, contribution to tackling poverty and helping development in Africa.

The Government has made International Development a priority by:

- Creating a new Department of International Development (DFID) with a Secretary of State at the Cabinet table

- More than doubling the UK overseas Aid Budget

- Setting up the Commission for Africa

- Making International Development a priority for other well-off countries in the meetings of the G8 and the European Union

But the role of the UK in international development is more than what the Government does. As well as the work of Aid charities, such as Oxfam and CAFOD, hard-working men and women in the African Diaspora are making a huge difference with their generosity through remittances. The Government’s aid budget is £4.4billion – remittances are more than half that, contributing £2.3billion to developing countries. The Department for International Development is taking steps to support remittances and in his pre-budget report in December 2005, the Chancellor acknowledged the key role of remittances.

**Remittances 5.148** Remittances have a significant positive economic impact in developing countries, although they should be seen as a complement to aid, not a replacement. People from developing countries who are living and working in the UK are an important source of remittances, with flows to developing countries totalling around £2.3 billion annually. The Government is active in a number of areas to facilitate the flow of remittances, including working with recipient countries on financial sector development, engaging with the private sector to improve remittance services, and working to increase domestic financial inclusion. The Government intends to keep the amount and destination of remittances and their contribution to development under review.

122 2005 Pre-Budget Report

The African Diaspora in Southwark feel that the importance of remittances is not widely understood so in order to assist formulation of policy to support remittances I carried out a questionnaire on the extent and destination of remittances.

It is clear that it is by no means easy for Southwark families to afford this remittance. They make their repayments out of taxed income and they pay on average £7 for every £100 sent back.

But the money is important. I asked one of my Nigerian constituents how he could be sure that remittances were not wasted on those who didn't need the money or projects which local people didn't want. He answered with the question, "why would low paid Africans who already struggle to make ends meet send money back home if it wasn't absolutely necessary and if they weren't convinced it was doing a great deal of good?"

It is clear from the findings of this survey that remittances play a vital role in Africa, helping:

Children go to school  
Ensure the care of the elderly  
Set up small businesses  
Support health clinics

*Harriet meeting  
with HIV/Aids  
workers and their  
clients, Abuja,  
Nigeria 2004*



The lessons we can learn from this are

- ❖ Government does best when it formulates policy on the basis of listening to people and learning what people themselves are doing in their lives. This is as true for International Development as it is for health or education.
- ❖ It is important for Government to acknowledge explicitly where people make a huge contribution to achieving government objectives – in this case, tackling poverty in the developing world. People will believe that Government does not see and understand what they are doing unless it is specifically acknowledged.
- ❖ Government wants to ensure that it spends public money wisely and there is no waste. This is as true for international development as for any other area. Government can learn from people who spend their own money, because they will be determined to avoid waste.
- ❖ We need to recognize the effect on hard-working families of the struggle to send remittances back to Africa and see what can be done to help them with the costs of the remittances.
- ❖ We need to recognize the effect of sending remittances on the standard of living in hard-pressed inner city areas. The reality is that the African diaspora community has to work harder because they send back money to Africa as well as supporting themselves here.

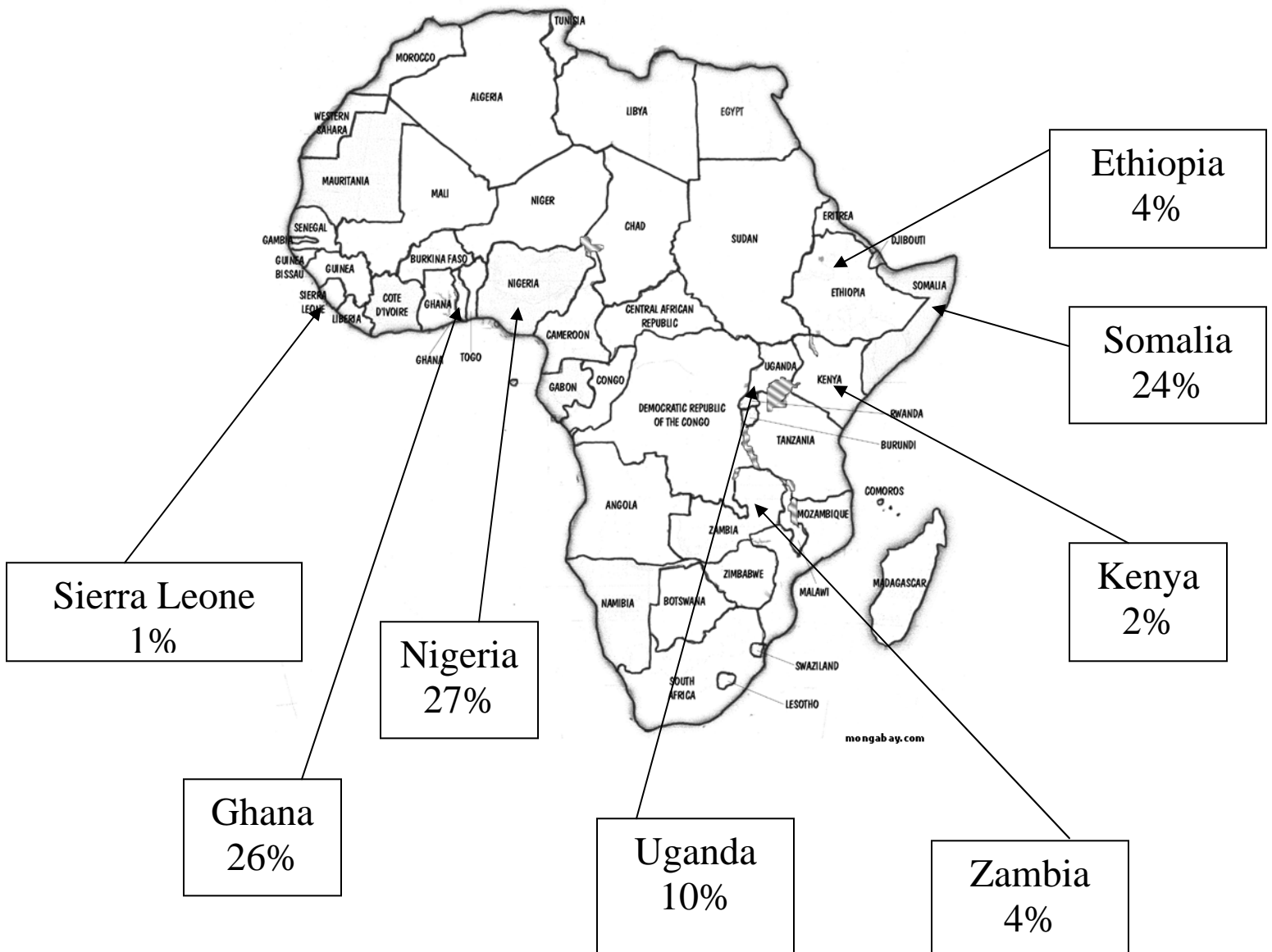
# Who sends money back to Africa?

The occupations of Southwark residents of African origin who send money to Africa include:

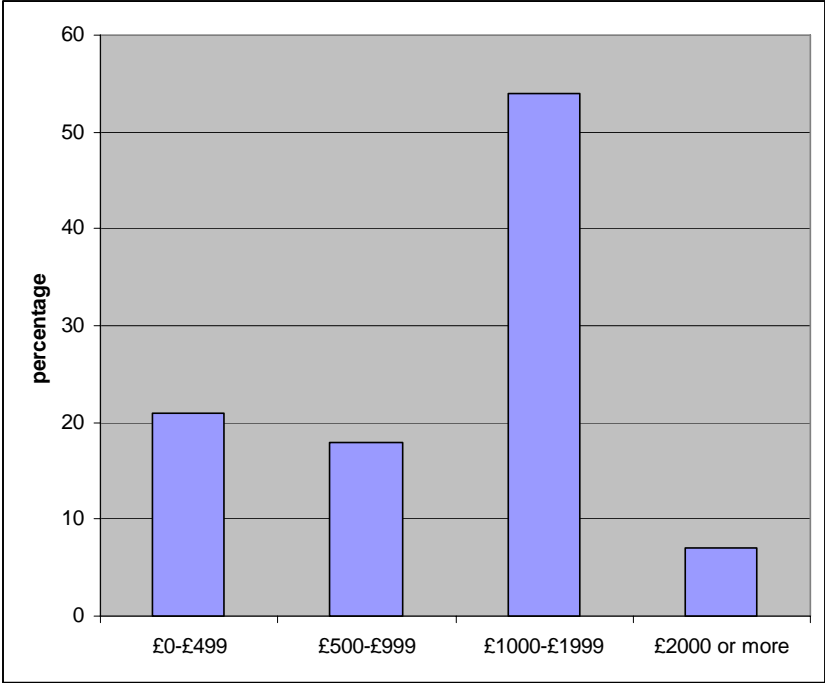
Administrator/clerical officer  
Buyer  
Care worker/assistant  
Caterer/Chef  
Civil Servant  
Cleaner  
Community representative  
General store/sales assistant  
Nurse

Project worker  
Security Guard  
Self-employed  
Service Engineer  
Social worker  
Solicitor  
Teacher  
Police Officer

## Where does the money get sent?

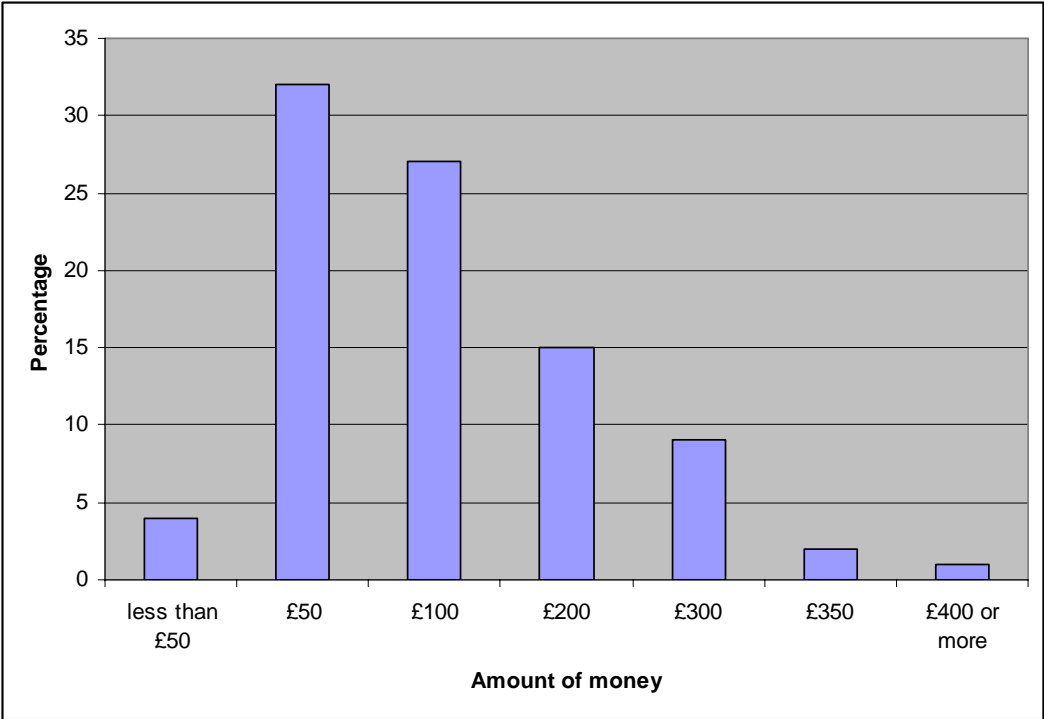


## The monthly earnings of those sending money to Africa

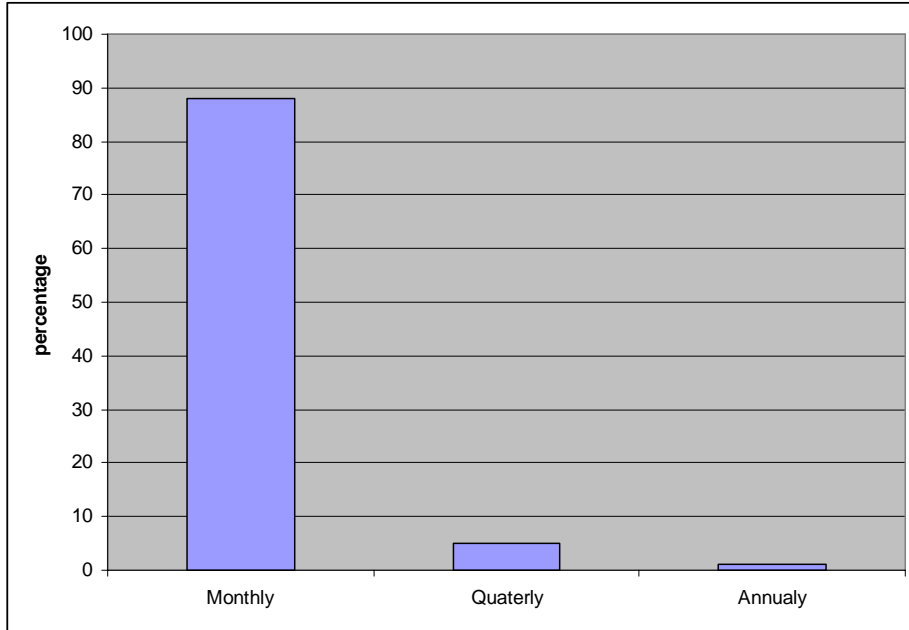


Many of those sending money back to Africa take on two or three low income jobs in order to earn enough not only to support themselves and their family here, but also to have enough to send money back home. This will often mean working unsocial hours which can be non-unionised, with poor health and safety standards and sometimes below the minimum wage.

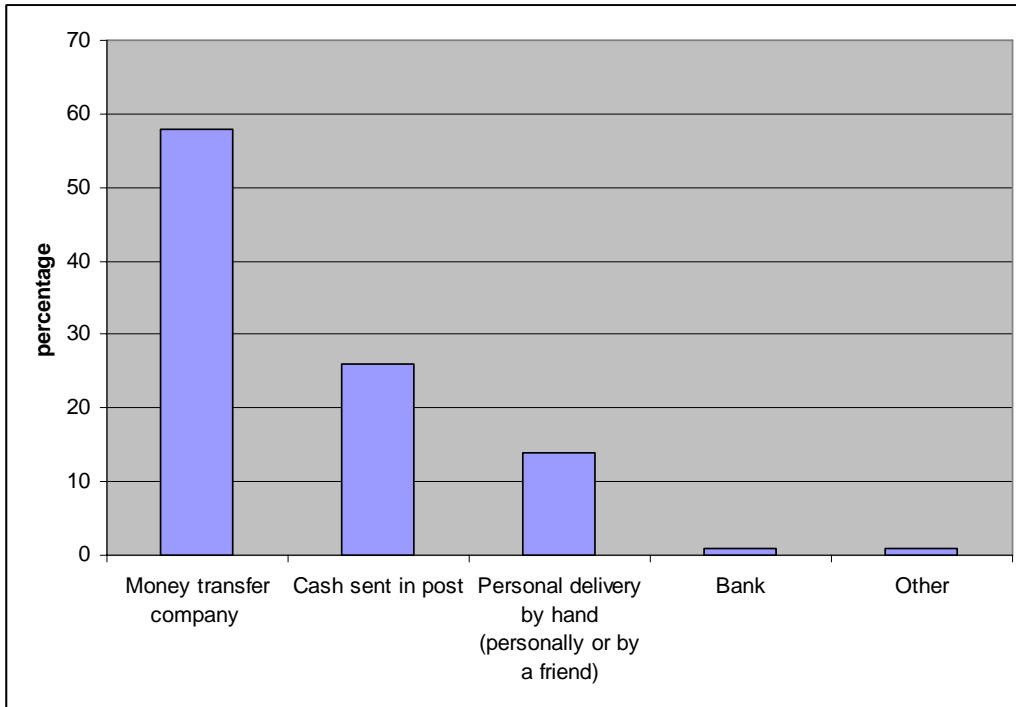
## How much money is sent per month?



## How often money is sent to Africa?

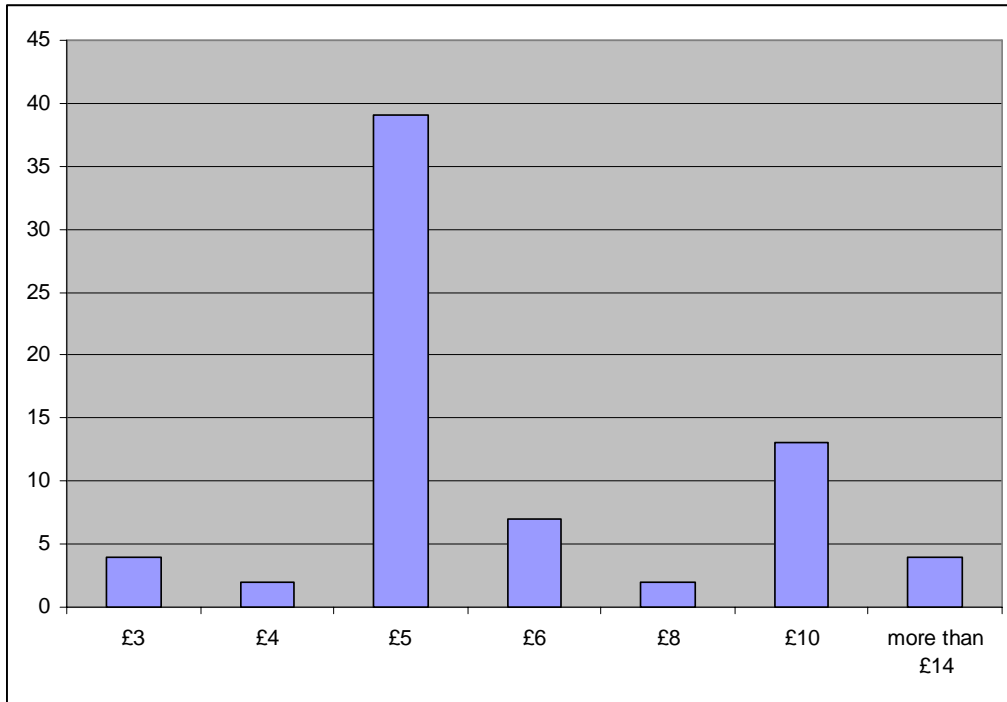


## How is it sent?

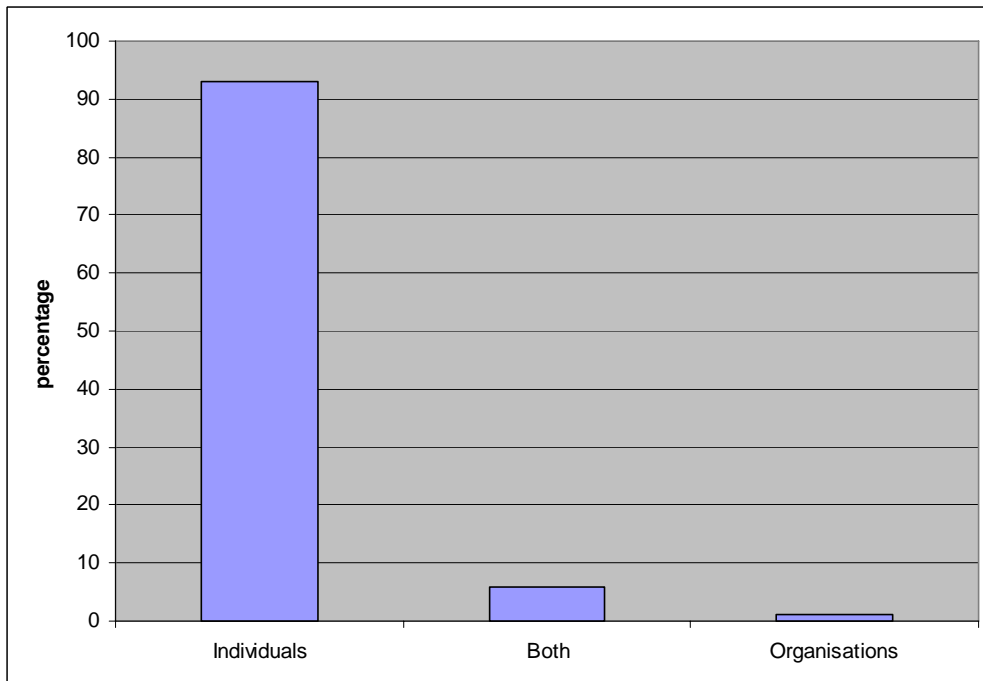


Banks are rarely used as even where the sender has a bank account, the recipient in Africa is unlikely to. Money transfer companies include Western Union, Moneygram, Chequepoint and Travelex and other smaller companies, many of which can be seen in Rye Lane, Peckham High Street and Camberwell.

## How much does it cost to send 100?

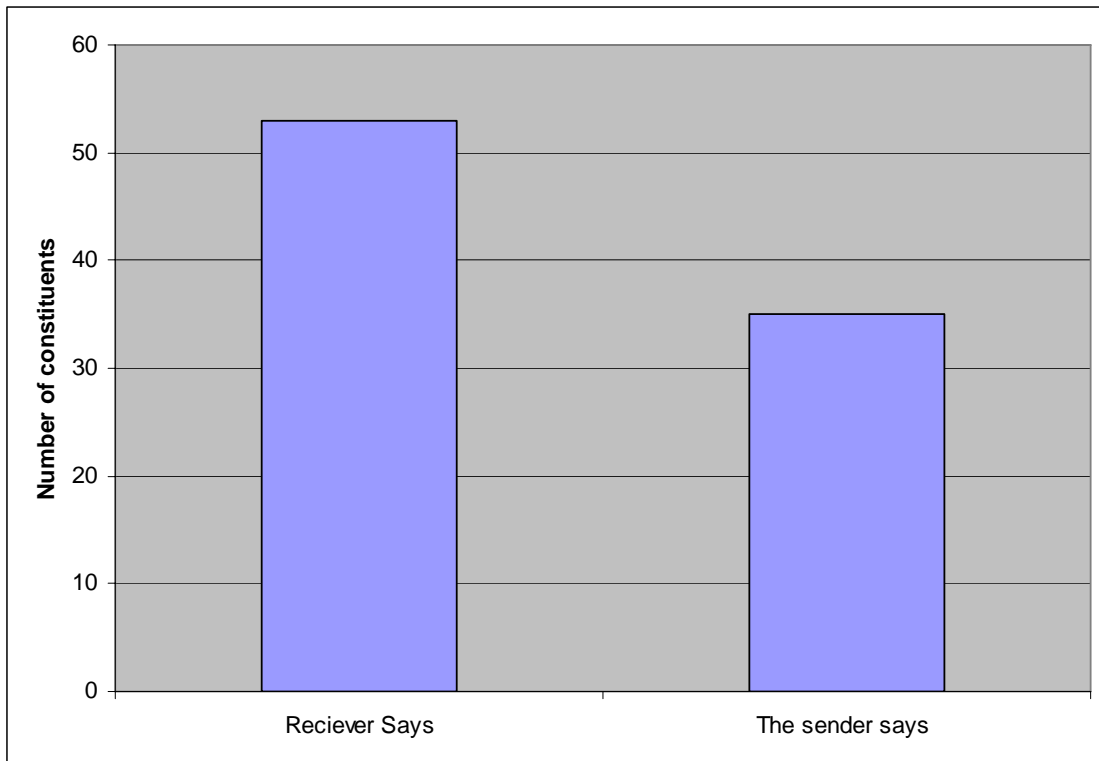


## Who is money sent to?





## Who decides what the money should be spent on?



### What is the money used for?

- “General family needs”
- “School fees”
- “Food”
- “Digging wells”
- “For elderly parents”
- “To pay bills”
- “Help with financial problems”
- “For the upkeep of children”
- “Payment of house rent”



*Harriet and women with their children waiting outside the Igumbilo clinic to see the nurse. Tanzania 2005*

### **Some comments from constituents:**

*“It makes my parents, brothers and sisters happy. My parents won’t live the old age happily without the remittance...”*

**A Government Officer from Nigeria now living in Southwark**

*“The amount of remittances varies from month, sometimes you get calls from month to month. Sometimes you get calls two or three times from different relatives and what they need are money”*

**An unemployed woman living in Southwark from Somalia**

*“My remittances make a huge difference to the lives of my family as they are able to access virtually anything of their need.”*

**A Services Development Manager who sends money back for his mum and children in Zambia**

*“The money we send contributes 60% of community back home”*

**A Local Government employee who feels the financial pressure of sending money to his family in Somalia**

*“There is no social security for our people at home, from the few amount we earn in this country we share it with our loved ones back home”*

**A resident from Southwark who sends a fifth of his monthly income to his family in Nigeria**

*“Well I don’t send money back in Nigeria in large amount. I only send money to my daughter who is at the university and staying with friends. This is a responsibility I have to bear since my daughter’s father is dead.”*

**A cleaner who sends money to Africa monthly for her daughter in Nigeria**

*“I would only send money one of the person looking after my mum as I am the only child my mum have and it’s actually not easy for me unless sometimes my kids helped me as it would even take months without sending money to her.”*

**A resident from Camberwell who feels under financial strain because she has to send money to Africa to care for her sick mother in Sierra Leone**

*“The money is the life blood of those left behind especially in these times of drought extreme poverty, HIV, deaths that result in children being orphaned and who need support, school food and fees etc.”*

**A part-time Advocacy Worker from Kenya**



African Families Foundation



Saint John's Church Peckham



South London African Women's Organisation

**Strictly Confidential**  
**Rt. Hon. Harriet Harman QC**  
**MP for Camberwell & Peckham**  
Remittance to Africa  
Research Project

*Many of my African constituents send money back to their home country. These are a vital and largely unseen contribution to 'international development'. To help the government understand the impact of remittances on those who are sending as well as those who are receiving and to enable the government to support remittances, I am undertaking a survey which I will be submitting to the Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown. I would be grateful if you could help me with this survey by completing it and sending it back to me. It will be treated in the strictest confidence and is for the purpose of my survey only. This questionnaire is available on my website if you'd like to complete it by email.*

1. Which Country do you send money to? ...
2. How much do you send back per month? ...
3. Do you send it to individuals or an organisation? ...
4. How often – weekly, monthly, or annually? ...
5. How do you make sure it arrives? ...
6. What is the money used for? ...
7. How do you send the money? Cash or cheque or money order or money transfer company or personal delivery (by hand) or with friends or other means?...
8. Do you say what the money should be used for or does the person receiving it decide? ...
9. How much does it cost you to send £100? ...

10. How much do you earn per month? ...

11. Are you employed or self employed? ...

12. What are you employed as? ...

13. Does sending money back to Africa put you under financial pressure? ...

14. Is your family here in the UK supportive of you sending money overseas? ...

What else would you like to tell me about your remittances?

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If you wish to, please give me your name and address.

Name .....

Address ..... Postcode .....

Telephone .....

Please return this form to the address below:  
Rt. Hon. Harriet Harman QC MP  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

11 May 2004

*Dear Harriet,*

I'm very grateful for the work you are putting in to supporting the Commission for Africa. As you know, it is one of my foremost priorities, and I am very much in agreement with your proposal that Africans in the UK should play a major role in the Commission.

I know that many Africans play a central part in the life of your constituency in Camberwell and Peckham and I'd be grateful if you would, on my behalf:

- tell them about the Commission and its planned work; and
- invite them to feed into the work of the Commission.

As you will be staying closely involved throughout the work of the Commission, perhaps I could suggest that your constituents contribute to the work of the Commission through liaison with you.

I know that you have already had a meeting here at No 10 with my lead policy adviser on the Commission and with the Commission Secretariat about

*Best wishes,  
Yours ever,  
Tony*

The Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP

Appendix 3



*Hugh Bayley MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Africa  
And Member of the Select Committee on International Development in the Town Hall Southwark*

Appendix 4



*John Battle MP, Member of the Select Committee on International Development with Cllr Tayo  
Situ and Cllr Ola Oyewunmi in the Town Hall, Southwark*

## Appendix 5

Usually the Parliamentary Select Committee on International Development takes evidence in Westminster to assist it in preparing its reports. The Committee took evidence outside Westminster when it came to Southwark Town Hall to hear the views of Sierra Leoneans in Southwark to assist it in its report on Migration and Development.

This took place on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2004. It was an important and unprecedented occasion that was attended by 200 Sierra Leoneans from Southwark and beyond. The Report was published in December 2004 entitled 'Migration and Development: How to make Migration Work for Poverty Reduction'. It was welcomed by the Government as a positive and constructive contribution to an important policy debate.

Soon after this report Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for International Development, came to Southwark Town Hall on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2005 to address my constituents. One of them raised the issue of sending money back home and the positive effects it has on the lives of their relatives and communities. In the discussion that followed, the audience said that the money supports their families back home in a variety of ways. See page 10 for a copy of the full questionnaire.



*Hilary Benn Secretary of State for International Development speaking in Southwark Town Hall, February 2005.*

## Acknowledgements

### **I would like to thank:**

African Families Foundation, Goldsmiths Road, Peckham  
St Johns Church, Meeting House Lane, Peckham  
Ugandan Aids Foundation  
The Black Churches in Camberwell & Peckham  
Unison Southwark  
South London African Women's Organisation  
Sunny Lamb- Black Business Initiative  
Cllr Tayo Situ  
Cllr Dora Dixon-Fyle

**Edited by Dora-Dixon Fyle  
and Charlotte Montague  
Office of Harriet Harman QC MP  
House of Commons  
February 2007**



*Villagers waiting to meet us in Mwangata, Tanzania, 2005*



*The Women's Research and Legal Advice Centre in Dutse, Jigawa State, Northern Nigeria, 2004*



*The Community Action through Sport Project in Lagos, Nigeria, 2004*