

The Outlandish Revenue Service

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Campaigners demanding tax justice for developing countries were able to put their point of view to a minister this morning (Tuesday 1 September), when Stephen Timms, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, met them on the steps of the Treasury building in Horse Guards Road, Westminster.

Anna Thomas of ActionAid explained to the minister that a new group, the [Outlandish Revenue Service](#), would be campaigning for international action to curb tax dodging by multinational corporations. Tax evasion currently deprives poor countries of more revenue than they receive as international aid.

The campaign's first aim is to ensure that G20 finance ministers, who meet in London later this week, agree by the end of the year on tax proposals which will benefit developing countries.

Mr Timms said: 'At a time of such an unprecedented economic crisis it is important that we should support the interests of developing countries by making sure they receive the taxes due to them.'

The Outlandish Revenue Service is a group brought together by ActionAid, and launched today with the promise that it will 'will go to ludicrous lengths to get tax justice for developing countries'.

Campaigners in suits and bowler hats, carrying red briefcases, held a 'recruiting drive' outside the Treasury building in London's Whitehall. As Treasury staff arrived for work this morning they were given cards offering exciting jobs (unpaid, alas) tracking down the billions of dollars that developing countries lose through tax evasion.

If even a fraction of the lost tax were recovered, health, education and food production in poor countries could be transformed.

Anna Thomas said: "There is now a lot of momentum in the G20 on international tax cooperation. The UK government, which has played a leading role, must press ahead on the very important commitment that the proposals should deliver benefits to

developing countries."

A YouGov survey commissioned by ActionAid and released today found that most adults in the UK are unaware of the scale of illegal tax evasion by multinational companies operating in poor countries. Most of those questioned were surprised to learn that poor countries lose more money to tax evasion than they receive in aid. Once they knew this, nearly two-thirds agreed that the UK should help developing countries to clamp down on tax-dodging.