

Letters: Tax havens no game for poor countries

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[Letters: Tax havens no game for poor countries | Business | The Guardian](#).

From this morning's Guardian:

The scale of debt under which many of England's top football clubs now labour ([Questions over health of Premier League](#), Sport, 19 May) is indeed a matter of concern. So too is the number of top-flight football clubs now based offshore. Owners using tax havens have been able to hide the financial meltdown of a number of clubs from view until too late. Stakeholders, club supporters in particular, have been betrayed and the football authorities caught napping.

Christian Aid recently [sought to establish the true ownership of every club](#) in the four top English leagues, the Scottish and Welsh Premier leagues and the Irish League in Northern Ireland. We discovered that 14 English [Premier League](#) clubs and a further five in the [Championship](#), together with one in League One and two in the Scottish Premier League, were now based offshore.

In the developing world, that same secrecy leads to tax dodging on a truly massive scale. We estimate that every year, the revenue lost to developing countries amounts to \$160bn — around one-and-a-half times the size of the international aid budget. If available to use, it could save the lives of some 350,000 children under five every year. Financial secrecy comes at a price. For football fans, it can jeopardise the existence of their clubs. In developing countries, financial secrecy costs lives.

Alex Cobham

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