

## The 200 day challenge to beat tax dodging

Published: January 13, 2026, 4:30 pm

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*The following press release was issued by Christian Aid overnight. I am pleased to support their call:*

Tougher tax legislation could bring in billions of extra revenue to fight poverty

Stopping multinational companies from dodging their taxes, which cheats societies out of billions of pounds of lost revenue, must be a top priority for the next government, a new coalition of 17 British organisations said today, which marks 100 days before Britain goes to the polls.

The Tax Dodging Bill campaign, whose members include ActionAid, Christian Aid, the Tax Justice Network, the Equality Trust, NUS and Oxfam, is calling for all political parties to pledge to introduce a new Bill in the first 100 days after the election to tackle corporate tax dodging and to make sure the additional revenue raised is used to fight poverty.

A policy paper launched today by the coalition estimates that a well-crafted Tax Dodging Bill could bring in at least £3.6 billion a year to the UK treasury - the equivalent of £600 for every household living below the poverty line — as well as billions of pounds a year for developing countries - which could be spent on schools, hospitals and other essential services.

The organisations have proposed a Tax Dodging Bill which would make it harder for big companies to dodge UK taxes, stop them from getting unjustified tax breaks, make the UK tax regime more transparent and ensure UK tax rules don't incentivise British companies to avoid tax in developing countries.

Christine Allen, of Policy and Public Affairs at Christian Aid said: 'Tax dodging by multinationals operating in the UK costs billions of pounds a year in lost revenue, both in this country and in some of the world's poorest nations. That money is desperately needed to tackle poverty. Tax avoidance is a fundamental moral problem running through our global economy.'

The issue of companies neglecting to pay their fair share of taxes has caused widespread public outrage and has been the subject of various pledges by political parties, but campaigners say these moves don't go far enough and farther reaching changes to tax rules are needed to outlaw this behaviour.

Jenny Ricks, Head of Campaigns at ActionAid said: 'It's clear the British public have had enough of tax dodging and aren't convinced politicians are doing enough. The tax rules need to change so big companies, whether you're Google, Amazon, or a UK company operating in poorer countries, pay their fair share. Making sure developing countries can raise their fair share of taxes offers a path out of poverty for billions of people.'

Nick Bryer, Head of UK Campaigns at Oxfam said: 'The fact that some of the world's biggest companies are dodging their taxes, whilst a nearly a billion people are still going hungry is scandalous. To fund the fight against poverty and to tackle increasingly extreme inequality, we need to make sure big companies are paying their fair share, here and in the world's poorest countries.'

A recent public opinion poll showed massive public support for tackling tax avoidance by large companies, with 85 percent of British adults saying it is 'morally wrong, even if it is legal'.

In the ComRes poll in November 2014, 78 per cent of respondents also said it was important to them that 'large UK companies pay their fair share of tax in developing countries in which they operate'.

Toni Pearce, NUS President said: 'Corporate tax dodging sees those most able to contribute failing to properly do so, leaving the rest of society to pick up the bill. We are clear that we need action from government to ensure that loopholes are shut-down, so that everyone pays their fair share, which is why I want to see all parties committing to introduce a Tax Dodging Bill if they get elected in May.'

Full list of organisations in the coalition: ActionAid, Christian Aid, Church Action on Poverty, Church Urban Fund, Equality Trust, Global Poverty Project, Health Poverty Action, High Pay Centre, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Methodist Tax Justice Network, NUS, Oxfam, Quaker Peace and Social Witness, Restless Development, ShareAction, Tax Justice Network and War on Want.