

## Tories pledge \$1bn a year to wipe out malaria

- Shadow chancellor moves into Brown's aid territory
- Bono's 'guru' accompanies Osborne on Uganda trip

**Will Woodward in Ruhira, Uganda**  
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### Guardian

The Conservatives will today make their first significant pitch on international aid by unveiling plans to spend \$1bn (£510m) a year on malaria treatment until the disease is eradicated worldwide.

George Osborne, the shadow chancellor, will deliver the pledge at the end of a three-day visit to Uganda with Jeffrey Sachs, the UN adviser also known as aid "guru" to the singer Bono who is widely acknowledged as the world's leading development economist.

The UK's contribution to beating malaria would amount to a third of what Professor Sachs says is the necessary annual global budget. Malaria kills about a million people a year worldwide, yet is easily treatable. The World Health Organisation says that between 70,000 and 110,000 children in Uganda die of malaria every year and about 16 million of the 25 million population have the disease.

Mr Osborne told the Guardian last night: "We think it doesn't get the attention it deserves. Understandably there's a lot of global effort on HIV/Aids but malaria is kind of the poor cousin. Tackling malaria is one of the great central challenges. It's something where aid money can have a really direct impact, because you can actually pay for interventions, like bed nets, which make a direct practical difference on the ground.

"If the whole world spent \$3bn a year you could have, within three years, a comprehensive malaria programme that would provide a net for every bed that needs it. And not just that but clinics, treatment, diagnostics, the whole works."

Today he will promise to put 0.7% of Britain's GDP into aid by 2013, matching Labour's commitment to meet the EU's target two years early.

The visit of Mr Osborne and Prof Sachs is a minor political coup in policy territory where Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have received global acclaim for tripling the UK's aid budget and delivering debt write-offs for poorer countries. Mr Brown will return to the global stage this week when he flies to India to discuss education and the impact on climate change of the country's fast-growing economy.

Mr Osborne asked to meet Prof Sachs, who is director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University in New York, and after the two men hit it off, asked to be invited along to see one of his projects. Yesterday they visited Ruhira. The settlement is one of 12 "millennium villages" in 10 African countries where experts led by the professor are trying to show that by working with local people on water, health, education,

agriculture and technology aid, the UN's goal of halving extreme poverty can be achieved with aid of about £55 a person.

In Ruhira, which joined the scheme in March, the community is already making great strides. Through the provision of fertilisers and training for farmers, agricultural yields have been trebling. Yesterday Prof Sachs proposed trials of wheat as a cash crop and promised an internet facility at the Omwicwamba primary school.

He said: "It's always stunning to see how fast progress is. That's why I always say yes, we can achieve the millennium development goals, there is time. But it requires this focused organisational effort and adequate basic financing to establish the core investments."

The economist has lacerated the aid record of the Thatcher and Reagan governments and is a fierce critic of the Iraq war. He lambasted the estimated \$40bn in bonuses paid out on Wall Street and in the City of London this year, when aid given to end extreme poverty was still short by about \$140bn a year.

There was now a consensus on aid, he said. "This is not a left or right issue or a conservative-liberal issue, but something that pretty much reaches across the board. I find, actually, the biggest difference tends to be those that have seen and those that haven't." Mr Osborne said: "It's not simply a question of forcing countries to sign up to an IMF-style agreement ... to privatise their health service when we in Britain would never accept privatising our own service. Perhaps there's a point in the middle between those who say 'aid doesn't work and it all ends up in the Swiss bank accounts of corrupt African dictators', and those who say 'the only thing you need to do is chuck money in their direction and the problem will be solved'."

Prof Sachs concurred: "Anti-malaria bed nets do not end up in Swiss bank accounts."