

(March 2015)

Response to “Disgusted of North Yorkshire

Dear Disgusted of North Yorkshire,

We all have a lot to learn from our children. Here's one story that might lift your heart.

Since the turn of the 21st century I have attempted to explain to my young son that Daddy is helping to change the world in specific ways; I would pull out of my wallet a small summary of the MDGs to give more details. One day, when about 10, he asked how it was going and in response I mentioned that each country's attainment varied, and that this was partly due to lack of their own effort; it wasn't just a matter of more money. He explored the topic a bit more with me as he was getting into bed for the night, and in the morning declared that he had the answer: “It just wasn't fair”, he said. “If I have to be assessed by school exams and the results are shown to my parents, why aren't country's individual attainments on the way to the goal being publicly assessed and noted. Let the ‘parents’ (citizens) see how the ‘children’ (countries) are doing.” What a good idea!

So, on that day in 2007, inspired by my son's indignation, I floated and later got agreed by my boss's boss that at least by 2010 the UN should start publishing all countries' MDG assessments (whether the member state liked it or not) - an idea which until then had been considered a political impossibility. The mid-point to 2015 was 2007/8 and the UN was under pressure to produce some assessments at that time. Some countries had already volunteered their own reports, but lots of countries had no reliable ‘school report’.

It is true that some UN staffers in New York were already thinking of the idea, but none really pushed it at political level. All credit to the young boy who spurred me to push for this change, and to the Big Boss who put it to the Big Table.

So, let's get Greening Jnr and Lowcock Jnr, and so on, in charge they'd do a good job.

Yours,

Still inspired but increasingly isolated of north Oxfordshire.