

Owen Barder CV

I work at the intersection of public policy, innovation, digital transformation, knowledge and research. I build and lead high-performing multi-disciplinary teams which achieve real world impact by developing innovative partnerships to improve people's lives.

Career history

Years	Position	Achievements
2019 - 2025	Precision Development Chief Executive Officer (2019-2024) Strategic Adviser (since 2024) 250 staff Also: Non-Executive Director, Social Finance 2019-2022 Schmidt Futures Innovation Fellow 2022-2024	<p>Precision Development is a global social enterprise that uses technology, data, artificial intelligence, user-centred design, agile development and machine-learning to transform public services to improve the livelihood of people living in poverty by providing them directly with customised information. Precision Development (PxD) was co-founded by Nobel laureate Michael Kremer. Under my leadership, PxD grew from serving 3 million to building systems for 17 million smallholder farmers living in extreme poverty. PxD completed a successful Build, Operate and Transfer programme for the state government of Odisha, now operated by the state government and serving more than 8 million people. We implemented private sector approaches to product development and management; and built and rolled out a global open-source technology platform. We built a world class, global leadership team to which I handed over in 2024. I led the organisation through significant change in leadership, culture, strategy and direction, including managing the effects of Covid 19 on funding and service delivery. I was simultaneously a Schmidt Futures Innovation Fellow – a member of a group of innovative changemakers in science, social science and government; and a non-executive Director of Social Finance.</p> <p>I am currently writing a book on why and how governments should support innovation, science and technology.</p>
2011 - 2019	Centre for Global Development in Europe CEO & Senior Fellow Built from scratch to 40 staff \$5m a year Visiting Professor in Practice at the LSE 2015-2021 Specialist Adviser to Select Committee on International Development 2016-2019 Senior Associate, Institute for Government 2011-2014	<p>I founded and led the Centre for Global Development in Europe, an international economics and development policy think tank. I built and led a team of high-skilled economics, policy and data professionals which provides analysis and advice to governments, international institutions, private companies and international organisations. I established a culture of rigorous, innovative, world-class research and innovation, leading to real-world impact.</p> <p>As well as establishing and leading CGD Europe, I personally led the design and delivery of innovations working with private sector and academic partners in many areas, including co-chairing the Working Group that invented Development Impact Bonds to bring private capital to social problems; increased financial inclusion through smarter rules on anti-money laundering; chairing the High Level Panel that led to globally accepted recommendations on improving and expanding humanitarian cash transfers; promoted trade access for developing countries; and promoted insurance markets to improve government response to natural disasters.</p> <p>I represented the UK at the founding meeting of the Open Government Partnership.</p> <p>I hosted and produced the popular Development Drums podcast. I was also a Specialist Adviser to the House of Commons Select Committee on International Development, and taught graduate seminars in public policy and development at the LSE as a Visiting Professor in Practice, specialising in growth, technology, knowledge, innovation, public policy and public finance. I also held a number of advisory posts, including the ONE Campaign Africa Advisory Board, advising Bono.</p>

2008 - 2011	Development Initiatives Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Director of AidInfo	<p>I created and led a team which developed and implemented the International Aid Transparency Initiative, an international open data standard, enabling the public and private sectors to share financial information, geospatial data and activities, outputs and impact in international finance and development cooperation. I established and led a team which coordinated policy objectives, technology and drafted the IATI standard, which has been implemented worldwide by more than 1,500 organisations.</p>
2006 - 2008	Department for International Development (DFID) London, UK Director of Global Development Effectiveness Director of International Finance and Development Effectiveness 200 staff £3.5 billion a year budget	<p>As a member of DFID's Leadership Group, leading 200 professional staff, I was responsible for a wide range of policy and institutional partnerships, including measuring impact and results; relationships with the World Bank; regional development banks; BII; global funds; development finance institutions; the IMF; debt relief; development topics at the G-8; the international development architecture; coordination with other donors; improving aid effectiveness; innovative financing; improving financial accountability in developing countries; statistics; and fighting corruption. I was the UK "IDA Deputy" responsible for negotiating the replenishment for the World Bank and other multilateral institutions. I managed DFID relationships with other donors and with international organisations and foundations. I led significant strategic changes in DFID, including: greater use of evidence and quantified measures of impact; a focus on economic growth, climate change and trade; and implementing international measures to tackle corruption. I managed the DFID Chief Statistician and was responsible for the statistics cadre.</p> <p>As a leader, I was top, or joint top, among DFID Directors, in annual staff surveys in measures of engagement, leadership and management. I was much in demand as a leadership mentor, and I took part in a scheme to mentor women professionals to accelerate their career progression (two of whom went on to become Heads of Mission).</p>
2004 - 2006	Center for Global Development Berkeley California Senior Programme Associate Also: Visiting Scholar, Economics, University of California, Berkeley 2004-2006	<p>I led the inter-disciplinary team which designed and implemented the first Advance Market Commitment – a new form of public-private partnership to stimulate innovation and scientific research. I built a coalition of governments which implemented the first AMC – for pneumococcal vaccines – and secured \$1.5bn of funding. The first vaccines financed by this programme were given to children in 2010, about 15 years faster than under previous financing mechanisms, saving around 20 million lives. This first AMC was later used as model for a public private partnership to accelerate development of vaccines against Covid-19. I contributed to new global thinking on how public bodies can support science and stimulate innovation with public benefits. Michael Kremer, with whom I worked on this first AMC, was a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2019, in part for this work.</p>
2002 - 2004	Department for International Development (DFID) London, UK Director of Information, Communication and Knowledge 290 staff \$250m a year budget	<p>As Director of Information, Communications and Knowledge, I was responsible for DFID's external communications and press relations; the role of information, innovation and science in growth and development; DFID's own information technology, systems and knowledge management; promoting development awareness in the UK; managing DFID relationships with NGOs and funding civil society organisations; office and information security; accommodation and office services; and promoting the role of knowledge sharing, information and communications in developing countries. I was the Senior Responsible Owner for two significant digital programmes. I was also a member of the UN Secretary General's Task Force on Information and Communication Technology in Development. I led DFID's change management process to relocate professional and policy posts from London to Scotland.</p>

2000 - 2002	Department for International Development (DFID) London, UK Chief Economist for Africa & Head of Africa Policy Dept	<p>I was responsible for setting priorities & performance management for development cooperation in Africa; coordination with other donors; regional institutions; G-8 Africa Action Plan; HIV/AIDS; trade policy; the environment; reducing conflict and peacekeeping; and aid effectiveness.</p> <p>As chief economist for Africa in DFID, I gave professional guidance, mentoring and support, and quality assurance, for the network of economists and statisticians across Africa responsible for macroeconomic and microeconomic analysis.</p> <p>I led the introduction of a joined-up Government-wide fund for conflict reduction in Africa. Elected chair of the international Strategic Partnership for Africa, a group of African governments and donors.</p>
1999 - 2000	Number 10 Downing Street Office of the Prime Minister, London, UK Private Secretary to the Prime Minister for Economic Affairs	<p>I was Private Secretary for Economic Affairs for the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, reporting to Jeremy Heywood. Responsible for coordinating advice and decision-making on broad portfolio of domestic economic policy issues including: macroeconomics and growth, trade, industrial and competition policy, science and innovation, relationships with business, modernizing government (including the office of the e-envoy), statistics, the information society and knowledge economy, the environment, education, employment, transport, culture, regional policy, and deregulation.</p>
1997 - 1999	South African Treasury Pretoria, South Africa Advisor to the Finance Minister on Medium Term Reform	<p>Seconded to the South African Treasury to support the government of President Nelson Mandela. Developed the Treasury's strategy on budget reform, medium-term fiscal policy, and public sector management. Made a significant personal contribution to the reform of the Department's structures and policies, introduction of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, and a new system of local and provincial government finance. An independent evaluation of technical assistance in Africa in 2006 concluded that my individual work had "<i>made a significant contribution to South Africa's impressive macro-economic performance in recent years.</i>"</p>
1988 - 1996	UK Treasury London, UK Private Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer Public Expenditure Policy Macroeconomic forecasting and modelling Fiscal policy Global economic forecasting and analysis	<p>I had various roles in H M Treasury, including private secretary to two Chancellors of the Exchequer (Norman Lamont then Kenneth Clarke). I led the team coordinating public spending policy (GEP); including designing and implementing a new framework for public expenditure management, and secretary to the Cabinet Committee on public spending (EDX).</p> <p>In various roles as a Treasury economist, I managed the global economic forecast; contributed to the domestic forecast; led on UK labour market analysis; modelled macroeconomic policy and medium term prospects. I developed the Treasury's first quantitative framework for fiscal rules in the UK, and wrote the first Treasury analysis of non-linear macroeconomic forecasting.</p> <p>At the same time, beyond my normal job, I set up, hand-coded and published the UK Government's first ever website, as a result of which the UK was the first country in the world to publish its budget online.</p>

Selected Publications

- **Making Markets for Vaccines**
with Ruth Levine and Michael Kremer, Center for Global Development (2004).
- **The Implications Of Complexity Of Development**
The Kapuściński Lecture (May 2012)
- **Government Cathedrals, Government Bazaars**
in *Capability, Capacity and Reform*, IBM (2006)
- **Investing in Social Outcomes: Development Impact Bonds**
with Development Impact Bond Working Group, chaired by Owen Barder & Toby Eccles (2013)
- **Payouts for Perils: Why Disaster Aid is Broken, And How Catastrophe Insurance Can Help To Fix It** with Theo Talbot (CGD Policy Paper 087) (2016)
- **Is Aid A Waste Of Money?**
Significance (the journal of the Royal Statistical Society), Vol 11, Issue 1, February 2014
- **Guarantees, Subsidies, Or Paying for Success? Choosing The Right Instrument To Catalyze Private Investment in Developing Countries**
with Theo Talbot (CGD Working Paper 402) (2015)
- **Advance Market Commitments: A Policy to Stimulate Investment in Vaccines for Neglected Diseases**
with Michael Kremer and Heidi Williams
The Economists' Voice: Vol. 3: Issue 3, Article 1.
- **Reforming Development Assistance: Lessons From The UK Experience**
in *Security by Other Means*, Lael Brainard, (ed)., Brookings Institution Press and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (2006)
- **Doing Cash Differently: How Cash Transfers Can Transform Humanitarian Aid**
with the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, chaired by Owen Barder (CGD & ODI report) (2015)
- **Beyond Planning: Markets and Networks for Better Aid**
CGD Working Paper 185 (2009)
- **SkyShares: Modelling the Economic Implications of a Future Global Emissions Budget** with Alex Evans and Alice Lépissier (CGD Policy Paper 067) (2015)
- **Promoting the Development Power of Economic Transparency** (Part of CGD's White House and the World series) (2015)
- **Technology, Development, and the Post-2015 Settlement**
with Charles Kenny (CGD Policy Paper 063)
- **The Costs And Benefits Of Front-loading And Predictability In Aid: The Case Of Immunization**
with Ethan Yeh. CGD Working Paper No. 80, (2005).

Other Experience and Roles

- **Schmidt Futures Innovation Fellow** (2022 - 2024)
- Visiting Professor of Practice, London School of Economics (2015 - 2021)
- Non-Executive Director, **Social Finance** (2019 - 2022)
- House of Commons International Development Committee Specialist Adviser (2016 - 2019)
- Senior Associate, **Institute for Government** (2011-2014)
- **One World** - Non-executive Director (2000 - 2004)
- **Twaweza** - Advisory Group (2009 - 2012)
- **One Campaign** - Africa Policy Advisory Board (2009 - 2019)
- **Publish What You Fund** - Board Member & Trustee (2012 - 2016)

Educational Qualifications

- MSc (Economics) - London School of Economics (Distinction; highest overall marks in the year).
- BA in Politics, Philosophy and Economics – New College, Oxford (First Class Honours).