

Aid is a big part of the world's development co-operation effort. Most comes from developed countries, but China and countries in the Arab world are also significant contributors, as are multilateral bodies like The World Bank, as well as NGOs and billionaires like Bill Gates.

# What is aid?



## By way of introduction ...

Shortly before 5 o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon in January 2010, an earthquake struck Haiti. The impact was immediate and appalling: "Everything started shaking, people were screaming, houses started collapsing," a Reuters reporter said. "I saw people under the rubble, and people killed. People were screaming 'Jesus, Jesus' and running in all directions."

The quake, one of the most severe in recent memory, claimed more than 300 000 lives, according to Haiti's government, although some other estimates indicate the toll was lower. At the height of the ensuing crisis, estimates of the numbers of homeless reached as high as 1.5 million people. The disaster provoked an immediate response from the international community, and teams of aid workers, soldiers and medical officials began arriving on the island within hours of the earthquakes. "We are working like crazy," wrote one, Emerson Tan. "Everyone very tired and filthy. Racing against the clock. ... UK team had some successes but one agonising failure when an 18-year-old girl died minutes away from rescue. Too busy to be sad ..."

Ask most people to define foreign aid, and they will probably point to scenes such as these. That's probably not too surprising: news about earthquakes and natural disasters can dominate the headlines for days and weeks, producing a flood of stark and disturbing images. But the reality of aid is rather different. In fact, the sort of emergency aid that flowed into Haiti forms only a very small slice of development assistance: it rarely accounts for more than about one in ten dollars provided by governments in aid, and often much less. Unlike emergency aid, which may be provided at very short notice, most aid is planned out over a much longer timeframe, and is aimed at building long-term foundations for development rather than relieving short-term distress.

This chapter introduces some of the key terms used to describe the complex world of aid and assistance. It explores the sorts of aid provided to developing countries, and introduces some of the key players in the aid world, including government and nongovernment agencies.

## Is all aid the same?

So, what is aid? The question is simple, the answer is not. Where aid is discussed in this book, the focus is mainly on what's known as Official Development Assistance, or ODA, which in very basic terms is aid from governments in developed countries to developing countries. This is not the only form of support they provide, but it's by far the biggest single category. We'll examine ODA first, and then look briefly at some other forms of assistance, both from government and non-government sources.

## Understanding Official Development Assistance (ODA)

Twenty-three developed countries – as well as the European Union – sit on the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and they provide the bulk of the world's official assistance. Their aid, as well as aid from 20 other countries and all the main multilateral aid agencies, is monitored by the OECD. While the OECD collects data on all resource flows for development – including private investment and philanthropy – the main emphasis is on ODA. In simple terms, ODA has three key characteristics:

- It comes from governments, either at national or state level, or from their official agencies;
- It's targeted at improving the economic development and welfare of developing countries; and
- It's either a grant, or a loan at a rate less than market interest rates.

Let's look a little more closely at some of these characteristics, as well as at a few terms that turn up regularly in discussions of ODA, some of which we'll look at in greater detail later in this book:

Loan or grant: About 90% of ODA is made up of grants, in other words it's money that the developing country won't have to repay. Much of the rest is made up of loans, but these are not loans charged at bank or money-market rates. Rather, they are "concessional" – or "soft" – loans, charged at below-market rates and often with a longer repayment period. It might seem strange to ask a relatively poor country to repay assistance, but such lending can be seen as a way of introducing greater accountability and responsibility into development financing. And if the investment made with the loan

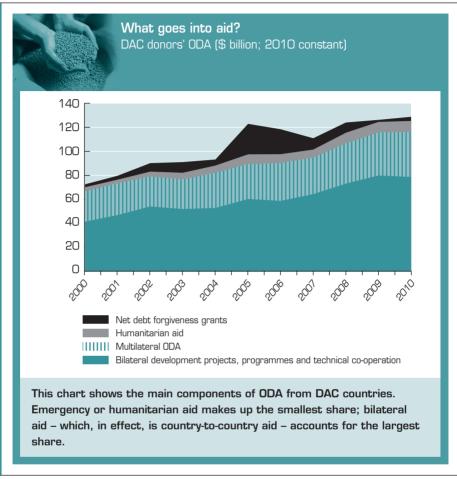
generates higher returns than the interest rate paid, then it's a good deal for the country concerned.

Planned or emergency: Emergency aid gets much of the world's media attention, but in reality most ODA is planned out in advance and is not triggered by emergencies such as the 2004 Asian tsunami or the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Indeed, in 2008 emergency relief accounted for only about 3% of ODA, although the proportion has been much higher in years of cataclysmic events.

**Debt forgiveness:** Donor countries sometimes agree to defer loan repayments or cancel them altogether. Cancellations are recorded as "grants" in ODA, even though, in effect, no new funding is being provided at the time when the loan is forgiven. The chart (p. 51) shows a large spike in debt forgiveness in the mid-2000s, which followed the successful Jubilee 2000 campaign to forgive developing countries' debt. Most of the loans forgiven were not aid in the first place; typically, for example, they may have originally been export credits. But loan forgiveness frees resources for developing countries to use as they wish, and so is counted as ODA.

Bilateral or multilateral: ODA is "bilateral" when it's given directly by the donor country to people or institutions in the recipient country. It's multilateral when it's provided to an international agency, such as the United Nations. From the donors' perspective, about 70% of ODA is bilateral and 30% multilateral. The agencies decide how to spend the multilateral money. But they also receive "earmarked" money. Because the donors to a large extent tell the agencies how to use these earmarked funds, they are counted within bilateral aid. Counting this earmarked or "multi-bi" funding, multilateral agencies actually deliver about 40% of total aid.

Technical co-operation: Technical co-operation takes two main forms: the first involves paying for training for people from developing countries, both at home and abroad, often by providing study scholarships. The second, and perhaps the more widely used form, involves supplying consultants, advisors, teachers and administrators to developing countries. The intervention of such outsiders can provide much-needed expertise and experience, but the practice is also widely criticised — an OECD report referred to it as "perhaps the most controversial type of aid". Foreign experts may be resented by locals, in part because of a



Source: OECD, 6 April 2011; www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/41/47515917.pdf

StatLink (1998): http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932606188

perception – sometimes justified – that they are overpaid: "When Australia posted civil servants from various departments to assist the government of Papua New Guinea in 2004, the total bill for some of them reached over \$500 000 annually – almost 10 times their gross pay at home," the *Development Co-operation Report 2005* noted. They have also at times been accused of introducing technologies and approaches that are inappropriate to developing countries' needs. More broadly, technical co-operation has been

criticised for failing to contribute to the development of local skills and knowledge: for example, students who train oversees may opt to stay there, thus fuelling a "brain drain" of talent.

"...a more serious charge is that technical co-operation often fails in its primary objective, i.e. that it can restrict the supply of national capacity rather than expand it."

Development Co-operation Report 2005

Such criticisms have sparked a great deal of soul-searching in the development community over the years, and a long series of recommendations for better managing technical co-operation. Two main approaches have emerged. The first is to hand the reins to recipient countries. Regarding training, this can mean helping developing countries to improve their own colleges so that they train students at home and not abroad. When it comes to supplying expertise, it can be more effective if recipients – not donors – do the hiring. The second approach is to make better use of existing knowledge. Rather than parachuting in foreign experts, developing countries can be encouraged to make better use of existing skills, institutions and economic structures. As we'll see in Chapter 8, there's also growing interest in encouraging dialogue between developing countries to exchange ideas, experiences and lessons learnt.

Tied or untied: Aid recipients are sometimes required to accept equipment or products from businesses in the donor country, even though cheaper alternatives might be available closer to hand. This sort of "tied" aid raises the cost of many goods and services by between 15% and 30% and food aid by as much as 40%. Even though tying makes aid less effective, it was sometimes defended in the past as necessary to build support for aid programmes in donor countries. The OECD led a long-running campaign to persuade donors to untie aid, and by 2007 about four-fifths of ODA was untied.

Conditionality: In basic terms, this is aid with "strings attached". To receive, or go on receiving aid, developing countries typically have to commit to making certain reforms, for example liberalising the economy, reforming governance, or eliminating corruption. Conditionality is highly controversial and there's a great deal of debate over what it achieves. Advocates say it's a useful incentive for driving reform in developing countries and a way to increase accountability. Opponents say there's limited evidence that it does

actually lead to reforms. They also say that donors often fail to follow up on whether conditions have been met, thereby limiting the impact on accountability.

Project, programme or budget support: In the early days, most aid money went to specified projects, the building of a bridge, for instance, or a road or hospital. Such projects were often high-profile, and appeared to offer visible evidence that aid was working. But there were problems. For one thing, the lengthy planning needed for some of these projects tied up aid commitments for long periods, and reduced flexibility when it came to responding to new needs. For another, one-off projects weren't always well integrated into national systems — as one aid veteran told the author, "we were building schools, not education systems". Lack of follow-up sometimes meant that hospitals were built, but lacked the funds or resources to perform operations. And while it was relatively easy to measure the direct impact of such projects, it was less easy to get a sense of their wider economic effects.

From the 1980s, aid became more programme-based, and better integrated within the recipient government's own spending programmes, ensuring those governments have more say over how to spend it. In basic terms, there are two main approaches. In the first, sometimes called the sector-wide approach, or SWAp, donors — often working as a group — decide to support a sector such as education, health or water supply, and donate funds to help meet the recipient government's own goals in the sector. The second approach, budget support, occurs when donors contribute aid to the recipient government's overall coffers, allowing it to raise spending overall. Today, most substantial projects are better integrated into developing countries' own expenditure programmes. In 2008, a little over half of bilateral ODA was classed as "Country Programmable Aid", or CPA, the portion of aid that each donor can programme for each recipient country.

#### Other forms of aid

ODA from developed countries is not the only form that aid takes. As we'll see in the next section, in broad terms there are two other major sources: the first is private philanthropy, which includes charities, non-governmental and civil society organisations – think of the Gates Foundation, Médecins Sans Frontières ("Doctors without Borders") and Oxfam International. The second

is government, or official, assistance from countries that are not members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), such as countries in the Arab world and emerging economies like China, India and Brazil. Collectively, countries in this latter group are sometimes referred to as the **new development partners**.

ODA represents the largest single component of aid, but exact comparisons between it and other forms are hard to come by: ODA is reliably measured by government statistical agencies and the OECD, but there are gaps in measuring other assistance. Nevertheless, researchers led by development veteran Homi Kharas have come up with some estimates for the scale of each aid flow. Their work suggests – as many people suspect – that although ODA is still the largest slice of the aid cake, its share is falling. In 1995-98, the researchers estimate, ODA accounted for 82% of aid flows, private philanthropy for 17% and the new development partners for just 1%. A decade later, in 2005-08, they estimated that private philanthropy's share had almost doubled to 34% while the new development partners' share was up fivefold to 5%.

It's worth remembering, also, that aid is only one source of funds that can help countries' economies to develop. For example, investment by private firms may have profit as its primary motive, and is not classed as aid, but it can create jobs and contribute to a developing a country's industrial infrastructure. Equally, within developing countries, improving taxation systems can allow governments to spend more on education, healthcare and infrastructure (see Chapter 7).

## Who provides aid?

Most people have heard of NGOs – non-governmental organisations – which encompass everything from religious charities to grassroots human-rights groups. But what about a Quango? That stands for quasi-autonomous NGO, according to a classification from Dutch researcher Sara Kinsbergen. Her list goes further: there is the Bongo, or business-organised NGO; the Engo, or environmental NGO; the Ingo, or international NGO; and, of course, the Gongo, or government-organised NGO – an apparent oxymoron, the term is occasionally used to describe an NGO set up by a government to take advantage of privileges or funding

available to true NGOs. Last, and not least, there's the Mongo, or "my own NGO", a charity set up by an individual.

This list may be a little tongue in cheek, but it helps to make a serious point: the development world is complex, and becoming more so by the year. As well as traditional donor governments, like those of the DAC, there are emerging donors, like China and India, which are becoming important players. In addition, there are also government-supported aid agencies, multilateral organisations like the UN, development banks, any number of NGOs, and much, much more. Listing even a fraction of these would eat up much of the rest of the book. But it is useful to take a broad look at who does what.

#### Governments

The members of the OECD's DAC provide the bulk of the world's aid, but they are not the only government sources. A number of non-DAC members are also significant donors, for example Turkey, which gave \$967 million in ODA in 2010. In recent years, there's also been a growing focus on the role of the emerging economies, especially the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), most of which are themselves also aid recipients (see Chapter 8). Their precise role is difficult to quantify, partly because - unlike DAC members - they don't routinely report data to an international agency and partly because they don't always have an official definition of what counts as aid. Nevertheless, some numbers are available: for example, Brazilian officials estimated their aid activities were worth \$362 million in 2009, while China's aid in the same year was estimated (but not confirmed) at \$1.9 billion by Chinese research institutions. According to official data from China's government, the cumulative total of the country's foreign aid stood at just over 256 billion yuan (about \$39 billion) by 2009. Most of it was bilateral and about four-fifths of it went to Asia and Africa. Like many traditional donors, the new development partners engage with other developing countries at a number of different levels, including technical co-operation. India, for instance, has provided training and education in areas like environmental management and IT to 40 000 people in other developing countries through the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation programme.

#### Multilateral donors

As we've seen, a large slice of aid – around 40% – is channelled through an estimated 200 multilateral donors and agencies, such as The World Bank and United Nations. Multilaterals are "owned" by their member governments – some are regional, such as the European Union's agencies, while others are truly international, such as the United Nations, which has more than 190 member governments. In aid terms, multilaterals fall into four main categories:

Development banks: The best-known internationally is The World Bank, but there are also a number of regional agencies, such as the African and the Asian Development Banks. All focus mainly on lending to developing countries, but they are also a source of expertise and advice. Confusingly, The World Bank is itself made up of two separate institutions: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which focuses on middle-income countries and the stronger lower-income countries, and the International Development Association (IDA), which deals only with the world's poorest countries. The World Bank Group also includes a number of other agencies, such as the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which offers financing, guarantees and advice to privately-owned enterprises in developing countries.

United Nations: The UN is active in many areas of development – indeed, it says of itself that the issue consumes "the vast majority of the Organization's resources". UN efforts range from providing emergency and humanitarian assistance through agencies like the World Food Programme, to pursuing longer-term development goals, like poverty reduction and strengthening governance.

**Europe**: The combined efforts of the 27 members of the European Union make it collectively the world's largest donor. Although there is a high degree of co-operation among EU Member States, much of their aid effort still reflects the development priorities of individual countries.

Global funds: Over the past decade or so, a number of special agencies have been set up to pursue particular development goals, the best known being the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which was created in 2002. Unlike UN agencies such as the World Health Organization, the Global Fund is solely a financing agency.

Multilateral donors have many advantages in development. By pooling funds from multiple donors, they can cut the cost of administration, and save recipients the trouble of liaising with numerous individual donors. Their neutrality can also allow them to provide political "cover" for national governments with contentious aid decisions. And, unlike national governments, they can often have a more global vision, giving them a stronger hand in tackling international issues like climate change.

Against that, multilaterals have sometimes suffered from a perception that they're bureaucratic and expensive; that they lack transparency and are too remote from the people they're supposed to be helping. And even some of the advantages of multilaterals, such as the pooling of resources, can pose a problem for donors. That's because in order to maintain support for aid programmes with domestic voters, donor governments usually want to show that aid money is having an impact. But when money is poured into a multilateral, that can be hard to do. That's part of the reason why donors often "earmark" their funding to multilaterals. It may also be behind the fall in general funding for UN agencies in recent years, and its replacement by funding for specific UN programmes and, especially, the global funds.

"... as the aid given to a multilateral is pooled before being allocated to partner countries, this makes individual donors less visible and gives them less control over specific aid destinations."

Emily Bosch, OECD Journal: General Papers

## Non-governmental organisations

NGOs (also referred to as civil society organisations, or CSOs) have become increasingly active in development in recent decades, in both developed and developing countries. Some are mostly national, like the Irish aid charity Concern, and others are international, like Oxfam. NGOs are important sources of development funding in their own right: according to OECD estimates in 2009, NGOs in developed countries raise between \$20 billion and \$25 billion a year in private contributions to development assistance. Governments also use them as a channel for official aid: about 10% of ODA goes to NGOs, rising to as much as a quarter of ODA in the United States. There are also growing numbers of NGOs in developing countries,

such as the Kenya-based Green Belt Movement, created by the late Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai, which campaigns on environmental issues and supports this with practical action like tree-planting. Governments in developing countries also use NGOs to deliver services on the ground: in the 1990s, for example, India's government quadrupled the amount of money it allocated to NGOs.

The role of NGOs has come to be increasingly recognised in development, especially their power to represent the voice of communities and social groups, such as women, that have in the past been excluded from the development debate. But their proliferation has also contributed to the growing complexity of the development world, making it ever more difficult to co-ordinate aid and development co-operation and avoid unnecessary and wasteful overlaps.

"CSOs are ... often particularly effective at reaching the poor and socially excluded, providing humanitarian assistance, mobilising community efforts, speaking up for human rights and gender equality, and helping to empower particular constituencies."

Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (2009)

## Private philanthropy

It's a remarkable reflection on the scale of his donations that Bill Gates is now perhaps better known as a philanthropist than as the man who gave the world Microsoft Windows. In the 16 years since it was founded in 1994, the Gates Foundation has committed more than \$24 billion in grants for global health and development. In 2009, it contributed \$1.8 billion in health aid alone, making it the world's third largest such contributor to this sector, exceeded only by the United States and The Global Fund.

The Gates Foundation is unusual in the scale of its donations. What's less unusual about it is that it's American: by a large margin, the bulk of the world's private philanthropy comes from the United States. In part, that's a reflection of the scale of America's economy, a tax system that provides strong incentives for giving to charity, and a long tradition that sees it as noble to give to charity. For many people, the example was set by Andrew Carnegie, a selfmade Scottish-American businessman who gave up working at the age of 65 and devoted the rest of his life to giving away his fortune

in order to avoid what he described as the "disgrace" of dying rich. Critics, however, suggest that the scale of American philanthropy is a reflection of enormous wealth inequalities – too many rich people with too much money on their hands – and inadequate government welfare provision.

Private philanthropy takes many different forms: diaspora groups – typically emigrants and their descendents – are one source, as are religious groups, representing most of the world's main faiths, including Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. A substantial amount comes from foundations, some of which are associated with individuals, like the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, which works to raise standards of governance in Africa, and others with businesses or wealthy families. Mo Ibrahim is part of a trend that has seen a big rise in the number of foundations in North America and the European Union, as successful entrepreneurs follow the examples of billionaires like Bill Gates and Warren Buffet. This has also spread to developing countries themselves, with the emergence of donors like telecoms tycoon Carlos Slim in Mexico and property developer Huang Rulun in China.

Many businesses also provide aid, sometimes as a cash donation and sometimes "in kind", which can include acts like providing expertise, scholarships or discounts on goods sold to developing countries. In June 2011, a number of Western drug companies announced big cuts in the price they charge for the rotavirus vaccine, which protects against a major cause of diarrhoea, in developing countries. Typically, the vaccine costs \$50 per shot in a developed country, but this will fall to as little as \$2.50 in poor countries. No area of aid is exempt from controversy, and private philanthropy is no exception: critics say that, unlike governments, private philanthropists are answerable to no one and, in some cases, they may use aid to further their business interests.

## What does it all add up to?

This chapter has explored some of the complexities of the development world, including the major actors and their respective roles. But even a brief glance at all this effort and activity raises an inevitable question: what does it all achieve? That will be the subject of the next chapters. Before that, however, and over the next few pages, we'll look at where ODA comes from, where it goes, and the ways in which it can be measured.

## Aid - some numbers

This section introduces some basic numbers on who gives and gets official development assistance, or ODA, which is the world's largest single form of aid. Such aid can be measured from two different country perspectives – the donor's or the recipient's, and the total sums involved may differ depending on which perspective you choose.

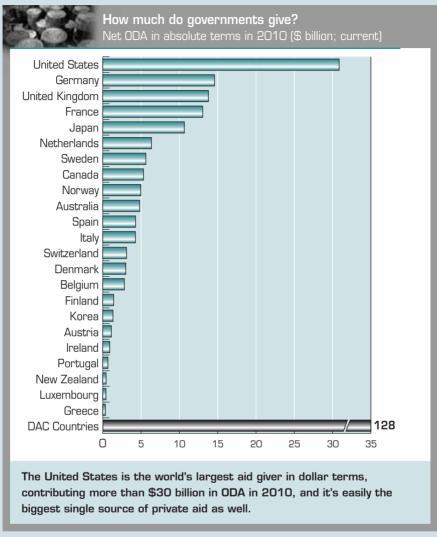
Why? The reasons are often technical, and so beyond the scope of this book. But, to give a relatively simple example, take the case of loans from a multilateral agency like The World Bank. In general, if a donor country is channelling funds through The World Bank, it does so by giving a grant, which means the donor country expects never to see the money again. At that stage, The World Bank can take the money and use it to subsidise the interest on a much larger loan to a developing country borrower. So, from the perspective of the donor country, the money is a grant; but from the perspective of the recipient, it's part of a loan with interest payments that will be reflected on the balance sheet for as long as the loan is outstanding.

From both the donor and recipient perspective, aid volumes can be presented in a number of ways:

**Donor perspective**: From this angle, aid is typically measured either in absolute terms (how many millions or billions of dollars) or as a percentage of the donor country's GNI (see box in Chapter 2).

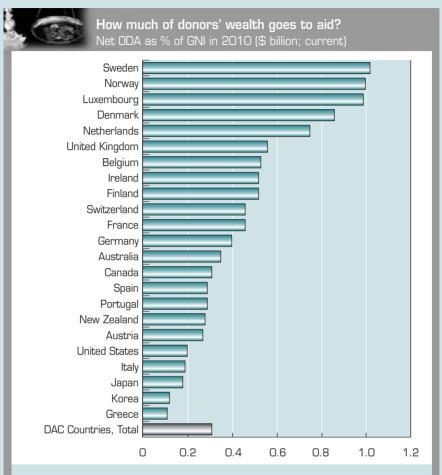
**Recipient perspective**: From this angle, aid is typically measured in three ways: the total amount received in dollars; the total as a percentage of the recipient country's GNI or GDP; and the amount received on average per person (or per capita) in the recipient country.

These different measures can be instructive, as illustrated by the example of two African countries: in 2009, Burkina Faso received \$1.084 billion in ODA, while South Africa received \$1.075 billion – roughly the same. But measure the ODA against the size of their economies, and the difference is much greater. For Burkina Faso, its ODA receipts were equivalent to 13.5% of GNI; for South Africa – a much wealthier country – they were equivalent to just under 0.4% of GNI.



Source: OECD (2011), "Aggregate Aid Statistics: ODA by donor", OECD International Development Statistics (database).

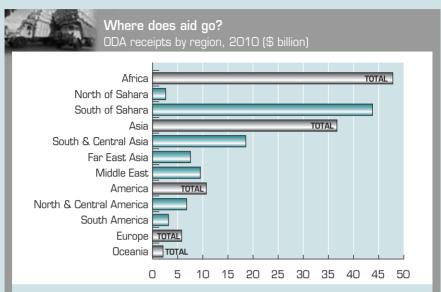
StatLink [35]: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932606207



In 2010, just five countries exceeded the target for aid giving of 0.7% of GNI – Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Denmark and The Netherlands. That target was set in the 1970s and accepted by most – but not all – of the major donors; in the years since only a few countries have ever attained it. In 2010, the DAC members as a group contributed 0.32% of GNI in aid, which matched the figure for 2005 and was the highest level since 1992.

Source: OECD (2011), "Aggregate Aid Statistics: ODA by donor", OECD International Development
Statistics (database).

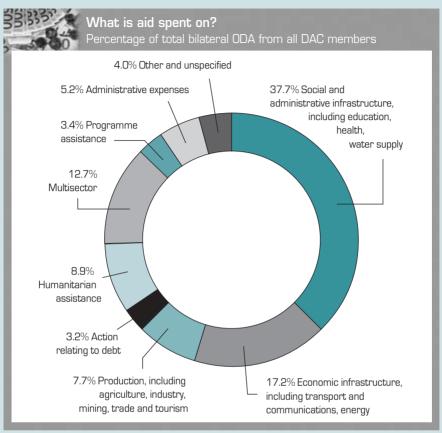
StatLink \*\*\*\* http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932606226



Sub-Saharan Africa is the largest recipient of aid, and the amount has tended to rise in recent years. In 2005, the region received just over \$32 billion in aid; by 2010, the figure stood at almost \$44 billion. By contrast, total aid to Asia – which includes the Middle East – fell substantially, from more than \$46.5 billion to around \$36.7 billion. Much of the decline was due to a big drop in aid to Iraq: its aid receipts stood at over \$22 billion in 2005, due to exceptional debt relief that year, but fell to \$2.2 billion in 2010.

Source: OECD (2011), "Aggregate Aid Statistics: ODA by recipient by country", OECD International Development Statistics (database).

StatLink [37]: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932606245



Source: Development Co-operation Report 2011.

StatLink : http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932606264

#### Find Out More

#### FROM OECD ...

#### On the Internet

Aid data can be accessed at Aidflows (www. aidflows.org), an interactive website created by the OECD, The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

To access the full range of aid data and statistics from the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, go to www.oecd. org/dac/stats. The DAC databases cover bilateral and multilateral donors' aid and other resource flows to developing countries in two separate databases:

- The DAC annual aggregates database provides comprehensive data on the volume, origin and types of aid and other resource flows.
- The Creditor Reporting System provides detailed information on individual aid activities, such as sectors, countries and project descriptions.

Data can be accessed at the user-friendly QWIDS website [http://stats.oecd.org/qwids]; more advanced users may prefer to use the OECD's dot.stat portal [http://stats.oecd.org].

A glossary of key terms and concepts in development co-operation can be found at www.oecd.org/dac/glossary.

#### Publications

#### **Development Co-operation Report**

(series): Published annually, this report is the flagship publication of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee. It's a source of commentary and analysis on key topics in development co-operation and aid effectiveness, and provides an annual summary of the latest data on DAC members' aid activities

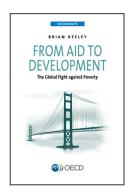
#### ... AND OTHER SOURCES

Does Foreign Aid Really Work, by Roger C. Riddell (Oxford, 2007): An in-depth examination of development co-operation by a British aid specialist. It discusses the history of aid, provides detailed explanations of much of the key terminology and assesses the impact of aid.

A Primer on Foreign Aid (www.cgdev. org/files/8846\_file\_WP92.pdf): This short primer by Steven Radelet of the Centre for Global Development provides a brief and accessible introduction to many of the key terms and ideas in development assistance.

Centre for Global Development (www.cgd. org): This US-based group aims to provide, in its own words, "independent research and practical ideas for global prosperity". It conducts research on a wide range of policy areas that can potentially affect the prospects of developing countries. Research areas include aid effectiveness, globalisation, education, health, trade and migration.

One (www.one.org): Co-founded by Irish rock star Bono, One describes itself as a "non-partisan ... advocacy and campaigning organization that fights extreme poverty and preventable disease". It monitors aid commitments by leading donors, including those on the DAC, with a special focus on support for Africa.



### From:

## From Aid to Development The Global Fight against Poverty

Access the complete publication at:

https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264123571-en

## Please cite this chapter as:

Keeley, Brian (2012), "What is aid?", in *From Aid to Development: The Global Fight against Poverty*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264123571-4-en

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