

EFFECTIVE AID: PRINCIPLES AND PITFALLS

MANUS CHURCHILL

Abstract

This study considers the impact of foreign aid on recipient localities, taking into account the various forms and sources of foreign aid and the impact that these differences have on the effectiveness of the aid administered. This study attempts to discover factors that make foreign aid more or less helpful by exploring what both the givers and the receivers can do to maximize the benefit of foreign aid. These considerations support the study's finding that helpful and sustainable aid must focus on long-term effects, discover the assets and needs of the recipient before reaching a solution, and enable the recipient to be self-sustaining rather than dependent.

Introduction

A story is told of a man who, growing concerned about the rapid decline in his wife's hearing, decided to do something about it. After discussing the matter with his doctor, he decided to find out just how bad her hearing was before bringing her in for treatment. That night, while his wife was cooking dinner, the man called out from the living room and asked, "What's for dinner?" Hearing no response, the man moved to the dining room and repeated his question, but he received no reply. He asked once more, this time from the kitchen door, but still, only silence. Shocked and upset at her apparent deafness, he stood directly behind her and asked the same question a fourth time. His wife turned around and replied, "Honey—for the fourth time now, I said we are having chicken!"

While the story of the deaf man may be apocryphal, its moral is sadly applicable to many real-life attempts at poverty alleviation. Misdiagnosis and a lack of self-awareness consistently derail poverty alleviation endeavors all over the world, and these counterproductive efforts come at a very real cost to both the givers and the recipients of the aid. Hundreds of billions of dollars of aid flow over international borders every year, but much of it is later found to have ultimately hurt its recipients (Adleman, Schwartz, & Riskin, 2016).

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is a group of countries that gather over the common purpose of facilitating the efficient distribution of international aid. OECD member countries allocate approximately \$150 billion in aid every year (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee, 2016). According to official Congressional Research Service numbers, the United States alone annually spends in the range of \$50 billion (Tarnoff & Lawson, 2018). This money goes to foreign assistance programs and initiatives designed to support "myriad objectives, including promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, improving governance, expanding access to health care and education, promoting stability in conflictive regions, countering terrorism, promoting human rights, strengthening allies, and curbing illicit drug production and trafficking" (Tarnoff & Lawson, 2018).

Here, the Congressional Research Service includes counter-terror military spending in its definition of foreign aid without explanation, but this inclusion is a contentious one. An organization dedicated to encouraging cooperation among its member countries, the OECD has created certain standards to facilitate efficiency, including an official definition of foreign aid that specifically excludes military spending (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018). The United States passed the Mutual Security Act of 1957 the same year OECD was founded, similarly excluding military spending from the United States' own definition of foreign aid. However, certain pockets of the U.S. government

persist in including such spending in their calculations of foreign aid. In the latest Congressional Research Service (CRS) report, military spending amounts to over \$16 billion of the purported \$49.46 billion spent on foreign aid (Tarnoff & Lawson, 2018).

While the CRS's inclusion of military spending as a form of foreign aid may be contentious, research indicates that—regardless of how it is defined—official government aid constitutes only a tiny portion of total global poverty alleviation efforts. According to the Hudson Institute, private aid dwarfs official governmental aid at a ratio of more than five to one worldwide, bringing aid from the \$150 billion range to the \$800 billion to \$1 trillion range (Adleman et al., 2016).

Regardless of the source, attention must be paid to the manner in which aid is distributed. Fortunately, much research has been done in recent years on the characteristics of productive aid. The last two decades especially have produced a significant body of research on how to avoid repeating common mistakes in aid administration. It is largely from this body of research that this study attempts to discover the principles behind helpful and sustainable foreign aid.

Data and Methods

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods as it searches for the principles behind helpful and sustainable aid. Discovering these principles and applying them thoughtfully and thoroughly is an important endeavor given the vast and increasingly large amounts of money being invested by prosperous countries into aid efforts all around the world.

Aid is considered by many to be an action intended to improve the economic condition of the recipient, and economic actions are to some degree inherently

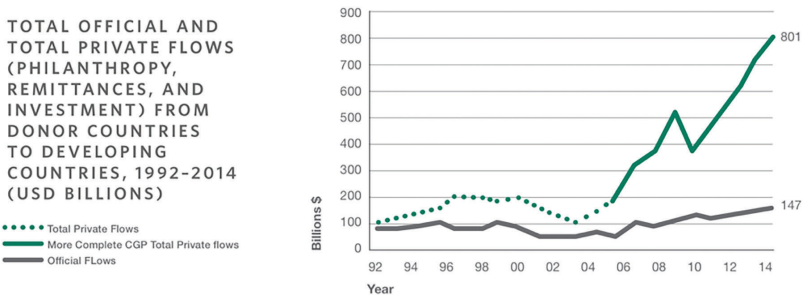


Figure 1. Graph illustrating worldwide spending on aid, broken down between private and official aid (Adleman et al., 2016).

quantitative in nature. While there is disagreement about how best to distribute and receive aid, it is generally accepted that the successful administration of aid quantitatively lifts the economic condition of recipients whereas unsuccessful aid fails to do so. Thus, quantitative economic analysis is important in the search for the principles behind effective aid.

Because aid is a historical and personal matter as well as an economic one, it is also necessary to utilize qualitative analysis. Improving the quality of life of those receiving aid is probably the strongest personal appeal behind aid efforts, especially with private aid; qualitative factors of this sort cannot be ignored. This study will emphasize the theoretical and qualitative side in an attempt to provide balance to the heavily quantitative-leaning perspective offered by most current research.

This study begins its search by discussing the problem of poverty itself. Before examining specific efforts to alleviate poverty, it is necessary to discuss the nature of poverty. Poverty is an economic reality—but it is also intensely personal. Poverty cannot be holistically understood by the mere acknowledgment of low incomes or economically subpar standards of living. Thus, understanding poverty requires a mixed approach that incorporates a measure of both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The study then attempts to identify common mistakes in the administration of aid. As the initial story of the deaf man illustrates, nothing can compensate for a lack of self-awareness when it comes to helping others effectively. This is very often the source of the problem, as the givers of aid have an undeniably vital role in determining the outcome of the aid that they administer. On the other hand, the recipient cannot escape scrutiny either. Recipients, likewise, play a very significant role in determining whether the aid they receive is ultimately helpful or harmful. These factors will again be considered from a mixed quantitative and qualitative standpoint.

Finally, this study considers what ought to be done given the problem of poverty itself and the common issues in addressing it. It identifies viable models for aid reform, explores how they operate and function, and proposes that certain elements be emphasized in aid, both personal and organizational, going forward.

The Problem of Poverty

Before poverty can be addressed, it must first be defined. Defining poverty is not as simple as it may initially seem. The World Bank officially defines the poverty line as resting at \$1.90 USD per day; however, this statistic is not sufficient to define poverty. A multitude of other factors must be taken into consideration as well—the cost of rent, the cost of access to clean water, and the cost of saving and borrowing money in a locality, among others (World Bank Group, 2018).

Attempts have been made to create an official definition of poverty accounting for these factors. One such approach, advocated by David Gordon writing for the United Nations, takes many factors into account, including access to food, water, healthcare, shelter, education, information, and other social services (Gordon, 2005). The United Nations Development Program itself takes a different approach, defining poverty as any income that rests below 60% of the median income in the country. This effectively makes poverty a product of income inequality within a given political jurisdiction rather than a measurement of the actual living conditions or incomes of those being classified as poor (Bradshaw et al., 2012).

In an informal study, the vast majority of middle to upper-class Americans defined poverty in terms of a lack of material goods such as food, water, housing, medicine, etc. (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). This makes sense, as the prosperity that many Americans enjoy is marked by the presence of such amenities in abundance. Americans—and those in the Western world in general—enjoy the benefits of staggeringly high personal incomes and prosperous national gross domestic products and thus tend to have superior access to food, water, medicine, and education when compared to the developing world.

An economically-centered approach to understanding poverty is not without merit. Each definition of poverty referenced above is essentially economic in nature and reflects a crucial aspect of poverty. An individual or a family unit that does not earn enough money to pay for the basic necessities of life can reasonably be considered poor. Indeed, it is hard to imagine defining an individual who is earning less than a dollar per day without access to clean water or proper sanitation as living above the poverty line; however, that reality does not simplify the task of creating a single economic definition of poverty.

In contrast to the middle and upper-class Americans who tend to define poverty in almost exclusively economic terms, the poor themselves tend to define poverty in intensely personal terms (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). The World Bank once conducted an extensive study of 30,000 poor individuals from 30 countries asking them to define poverty. It found that the poor have a strong tendency to describe their poverty in social and psychological terms rather than the economic terms that wealthier Americans use (Narayan & Walton, 2000). Respondents used terms such as “ill,” “humiliated,” “shamed,” “fearful,” “depressed,” “unhappy,” “inferior,” “unsatisfied,” and “stuck” to describe their situations (Narayan & Walton, 2000). Though these people were themselves suffering from hunger, thirst, lack of medical care, and insufficient income, such characteristics did not immediately come to mind when they were asked to define their state. This is an important reality to consider for those attempting to offer aid.

An influx of money and other resources can certainly help to alleviate the economic side of poverty; however, such a tactic may not alleviate the personal

realities of poverty. This study thus proceeds with an understanding of poverty that includes the economic reality of poverty while at the same time considering the equally real psychological and social realities of poverty by which the poor themselves define poverty. The insufficient incomes, limited access to food and water, and inferior education experienced by the world's poor are important aspects of poverty that the Western world is relatively well equipped to combat. At the same time, while not as easily addressed, the fear, helplessness, and humiliation experienced by the world's poor must be recognized as equally integral parts of the experience of poverty (Büthe, Major, & Souza, 2012).

The difficulty with precisely defining poverty suggests that there may be different types of need being studied. Rather than argue in support of a single definition of poverty, some researchers propose that the need that exists in poverty comes in very different forms and that the differences between these forms are substantial enough to warrant very different approaches. While different categorizations are possible, poverty can be meaningfully divided into two large categories based on how directly it threatens the lives of those experiencing it.

The first of these large categories is urgent need—the type that immediately threatens the lives of those subjected to it. This acute kind of need is often seen after a natural disaster such as a tsunami or an earthquake or a flood. Real, acute poverty is a hallmark of the immediate aftermath of these types of emergencies. Resources are needed urgently for the survival of those impacted: clean water may need to be shipped in, medical attention given, food distributed, and temporary shelter provided. Those needing this emergency aid are experiencing a unique and acute type of poverty and have little to no ability to assist themselves. Economists are fond of repeating the maxim that there are no needs, only necessary means to desired ends; in these types of situations, outside aid is the necessary means to the desired end of survival (Sowell, 2015).

Aid in response to urgent need often comes in the form of dumping resources on the impacted area. Whether that translates to convoys of food trucks, medical supplies, and doctors being sent to help the ailing, or cash money to local authorities responding to the crisis, this type of aid is the most practical and aims to address very tangible and short-term needs. This type of aid must be delivered quickly, given the urgency of the situation. There is no time to worry about supporting local tent-makers when people will rapidly begin to die of exposure if they are not provided with some sort of shelter.

Though highly impactful, genuinely urgent need accounts for only a small portion of the need addressed by aid efforts. By far the larger of the two categories of need is non-urgent need. This second category includes needs that arise from the lack of certain standards of sanitation, poor education, long distances to potable water, relatively low incomes, and other genuinely important but non-life-

threatening matters. Poor people around the world experience heartbreaking need in all of these areas and more, and outside help in these areas may not only be helpful but necessary.

In contrast to the speedy, eminently practical type of aid that urgent need calls for, non-urgent need calls for a relatively measured approach. It is not enough to pour resources into an area suffering from systemic poverty, crippling corruption, or a stifling sense of inferiority and helplessness. In fact, it is very often actively harmful to simply dump resources on these areas. A single dump of resources, or even a string of dumps, does not fix the roots of systemic poverty. Resources can encourage rather than eradicate corruption, and the inferiority and helplessness of those who feel stuck in poverty is likely to be deepened rather than alleviated by that type of outside help (Corbett & Fickert, 2012). This study aims to distinguish between urgent and non-urgent need, especially with regards to non-urgent need being falsely classified as urgent need to the detriment of both the giver and the recipient.

Common Pitfalls in Aid

This study aims to discover the principles behind the delivery of effective aid. Prior to embarking on this task, it is important to consider some of the most common pitfalls in aid. These pitfalls are seen in all sorts of aid, from the person-to-person aid that might be offered to a homeless man by a commuter all the way up to the large-scale donations of international aid organizations and the most prosperous governments in the world. It is not a simple matter of reforming the way that aid is given or working harder to find the ideal recipient—pitfalls lie at every corner. The effectiveness of aid can be hampered on both sides of the equation, and both the giver and the receiver must look to themselves first if aid is going to be delivered effectively.

Beginning with an exploration of the negative principles of aid will ease the search for the positive principles. Given the limited nature of this study, this exploration is not exhaustive by any means. However, this section does consider large categories of commonly-made mistakes and attempts to tie them back to a framework that will prove helpful for the discovery of principles of effective aid. This section is divided into three subsections: the first deals with the problem of improperly matching solutions to problems, the second with problems in the givers of aid, and the third with problems in the recipients.

Misdiagnosing and Improperly Treating the Problem

The wrong remedy to a conflict is often applied when a non-urgent need is misidentified as an urgent need. Because both urgent and non-urgent situations

deal with important needs, it is easy to falsely attribute an equal sense of urgency to both types of situations and to then treat them identically. This can have devastating consequences for the communities receiving the unnecessarily urgent aid as researchers Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert (2014) explored in their book, *When Helping Hurts*.

Corbett and Fikkert (2014) built off the concept of urgent and non-urgent needs and divided aid into three categories: relief, rehabilitation, and development. Relief is aid given in response to urgent needs—convoys of food trucks, medical supplies and doctors, and one-off cash assistance to impacted jurisdictions. This type of aid is usually the most appropriate immediate response to devastating natural events. Relief inherently focuses on the short-term.

Rehabilitation and development both focus on the long-term good of the communities receiving the assistance. Rehabilitation focuses on helping individuals and communities return to their pre-crisis state, whether economically, socially, or otherwise. The timeline of rehabilitation is flexible, as the goal of restoration is not contingent on a particular time-frame. Development focuses on helping individuals and communities move closer to the ideal economic or social state, regardless of their current or previous state. Development requires the active participation of the recipient, as it aims to work *with* rather than *for* the people and communities.

Applying relief tactics when rehabilitation or development would have been more appropriate is destructive because it removes the recipient from the aid process. Relief is a giver-centric model and is thus designed to achieve goals determined by the giver rather than by the recipient.

Outsiders are under-equipped to accurately identify the most important problems in communities that they do not themselves live in. Even if they were to correctly identify the main problems facing the recipient, the tackling of a local problem by an outsider can further ingrain local senses of inferiority and helplessness. Locals may feel that they have been labeled incapable of solving their own problems. Given that the poor understand their own poverty as a sense of humiliation and helplessness, actions performed on the poor that end up adding another layer of helplessness on top of preexisting feelings are counterproductive at best and genuinely harmful at worst.

Though harmful when misapplied, relief is by far the easiest method of aid to administer. The results are immediate, easily recognizable, and easy to report to those funding the program. Relief is also very often the form of aid requested by the locals. In addition, much aid comes in the form of short-term humanitarian aid trips. Given the long-term investment in time and resources required to perform rehabilitation and development, it is nearly impossible for a short-term trip to meaningfully administer either of these types of aid. Locals are generally

equipped to build latrines for themselves; yet outsiders regularly appear on short-term trips and build these things for the locals. This furthers paternalistic attitudes in the givers and helplessness in the recipients, deepening the poverty of the poor by their own attitudinal definition.

Giver-Originated Pitfalls

Failed attempts at assisting an individual or community are often traceable to the givers themselves. Those administering aid have a responsibility to do everything in their power to give aid in a responsible, helpful, and sustainable manner. Aid that fails to help the recipient in the long-term is simply failed aid, except in the occasional situation where short-term relief is genuinely required to keep the recipients alive or free from some extraordinary consequence. Though the recipient indisputably bears much responsibility in ensuring the effective distribution of aid, the majority of research on the topic of maximizing the effectiveness of aid focuses on the giver's responsibility. This study explores three of these pitfalls: cookie-cutter giving, short-term focuses, and savior complexes.

Hundreds of billions of U.S. dollars are given in aid every single year (Adleman et al., 2016). Considering the scale of the aid given worldwide annually, it is impossible to completely personalize every act of aid to the needs of the individual recipient, the nuances of their culture, and their particular goals. Even within a given community, there will never be complete agreement as to the source of or solution to a problem. The difficulty of personalizing aid and including recipients in the solutions to their own problems does not in any way negate the harm of applying cookie-cutter solutions to problems. It is certainly easier to treat all similar crises the same; however, applying farming solutions that work in Nebraska to the problems faced by farmers in Thailand is an inefficient use of resources and runs the same risk of furthering the poverty mindset of the poor without necessarily delivering the benefit of improved crop yields.

Stories abound of cookie-cutter approaches and the havoc that they bring. Homes lie empty in areas desperately in need of shelter because the bathroom is built in a culturally inappropriate part of the house; perfectly good tractors rust away in parts of the world that have no use for them while fields lay fallow in other parts of the world that need tractors badly; food rots away while people starve nearby because the corruption in the area was not considered when the food was donated (Chang, 2007). Each scenario reveals the potential for harm and waste when a cookie-cutter approach to aid is used. The cookie-cutter approach has been dubbed "McDevelopment" to reflect its cheap, chintzy nature and the lack of lasting satisfaction that comes from its practice. Careless McDevelopment has wasted countless billions of dollars over the years and has harmed local communities in the process.

A focus on short-term results is another common pitfall. Short-term results bring in donations quickly. Such a focus gives the appearance of efficiency, allowing an organization to move from community to community delivering goods and making great photo shoots without giving thought to the impact of their actions on the local people after they leave. Focus on the short term essentially limits efforts to relief, making it impossible to rehabilitate or develop an individual or community. A shortened time frame also cuts the discovery process short, making it difficult for the giving individual or organization to identify the real root of the problem or the best long-term solution to the issue at hand.

A community may reach out and make it known that they lack water. If an organization immediately steps in to dig a deep well with a state-of-the-art solar-powered pump, it may spend all these resources without realizing that wells already abound in the area and that the real need is for political stability to enforce the rules surrounding water rights. In addition, a deep well with a fancy solar-powered pump may not be the best solution, especially if no local expertise exists to maintain that pump. Effective aid requires a long-term view and thoughtful exploration of the root of the problem, not just raw resources or responsiveness to apparent needs (Hazlitt, 2014).

Corbett and Fikkert (2014) emphasized that aid that stems from a “savior complex” hurts both the giver and recipient. Savior complex driven giving leads to inferiority complexes on the part of recipients. This deepens the recipient’s poverty, as he is told through the actions of a wealthier individual with a savior complex that he is incapable of helping himself and must instead rely on outside help.

Paternalism leads people and organizations to do for the impoverished what they could have done for themselves. Paternalism is stepping in to help others in a way that actually impedes their own efforts to help themselves. It is a destructive and self-perpetuating cycle in which the paternalistic giver continually intervenes to help the poor person, furthering the poor person’s perception that he cannot help himself. This in turn furthers the giver’s perception that he is the poor person’s savior and the source of any eventual success. To escape the cycle, the giver should instead search for ways the poor can help themselves rather than distributing handouts as if the poor are somehow incapable of helping themselves.

Recipient-Originated Pitfalls

While much of the existing research on the topic of effectiveness in aid centers around the giver of aid, some research has also been conducted on the recipient’s role. It makes sense that the recipient would play a significant role, especially in ensuring the long-term effectiveness of aid. One’s well-being is not entirely dictated by one’s environment or the actions of others, and the poor are

no exception to this rule. Their well-being—both economically and otherwise—is deeply impacted by their own decisions.

Even the most carefully planned attempt at long-term aid will fail in its execution if the intended recipients are unwilling to participate in its administration. Corbett (2014) illustrated this point through personal stories of short-term trips he took to build and rebuild houses in impoverished regions of North America. On two of these trips, he looked down from his ladder to see young, able-bodied men watching him work to help them while they sat about drinking or smoking (Corbett & Fikkert, 2014). His efforts to help rebuild their houses, even if well-intentioned, were ultimately harmful to both himself and those young men because of their unwillingness to participate in the process.

Part of responsible planning is identifying and avoiding the types of situations where the administration of aid further deepens the psychological and social poverty of those being “helped.” At the same time, a large degree of responsibility lies with the recipient to do his own part, whether that means actively participating in the planning or distribution of the aid or simply refusing to see the aid as an indictment of his ability to help himself.

It is impossible for givers of aid to control the attitudes of those that they help. They can monitor their own attitudes for hints of paternalism that could further the psychological and social poverty of the poor, but it is ultimately the duty of the recipient to have a healthy perspective on the aid that they receive. Without that healthy perspective, it is almost impossible for even the most informed and well-intentioned of givers to administer aid without doing harm.

As applied to this discussion, an inferiority complex refers to a sense of helplessness and powerlessness combined with a belief that any good outcome requires external intervention. The inferiority mindset of the poor is a crippling perspective on life. It leads the poor to believe that they cannot escape the cycle of dependency and that the best they can do is welcome the rich who come to improve their living conditions.

When an individual or a community is caught in this cycle of inferiority, it is difficult to help them without furthering this attitude. While it is necessary to tailor the administration of aid in a way that minimizes this cycle—by avoiding the administration of unnecessary relief, for example—any type of aid has the potential to be understood by the poor as an indictment of their ability to help themselves. Developing a healthy mindset on aid is ultimately the responsibility of the recipient.

A more common avenue of research into the role of the recipient is the matter of corruption, misuse, and underutilization of donated resources (Schudel, 2008). Some of the responsibility for misused and underutilized resources certainly does fall to the giver, who should aim to give aid in a useful and practical form. The

useless tractors rusting away in a part of the world that has no use for tractors illustrates this point. It is equally true, however, that the recipients ought to make every effort to fully and responsibly utilize the resources donated to them.

Corruption eats away at the effective delivery of aid by taking resources intended for the public good and using them instead for an individual's corrupted private end. Corruption can happen at any level along the chain. Research shows that corruption often begins with the giver but is frequently visible at lower levels as well. The same research indicates that corrupt givers tend to turn a blind eye to corruption in the recipient: corruption enables further corruption (Schudel, 2008). Resources are then misused, with private parties redirecting resources flowing into a certain area for their personal gain. Misuse of resources in the form of corruption leads to huge amounts of wasted resources every year.

Though it often goes undetected, corruption and misuse of resources is relatively easy to define and understand at a theoretical level. Corruption and misuse occur when there is a deviation from the intended purpose for which a resource is given. Food is sent into an area to help flood victims survive until they can plant and harvest more crops, but the food gets intercepted by a local government official and sold to another region. This is an example of both corruption and misuse: the resource was intercepted and then misused for the private gain of the government official who sold the food elsewhere.

The recipient of a resource also bears the duty to responsibly use the resources given him. A responsible giver trying to avoid paternalism cannot micromanage the recipient. In the best giving models, the giver cannot completely control the helpfulness of his gift. Recipients must be given a degree of freedom, which inevitably means that resources may at times be underutilized, at least compared to the expectations of the giver. Whether due to a lack of proper education or a personal or cultural inhibition, the recipient bears significant responsibility for the ineffective implementation of aid.

However, underutilization is not always the fault of the recipient. It also occurs when the giver fails to understand the need or recognize the proper solution and ultimately gives the recipient an unhelpful resource. Underutilization is thus a somewhat subjective concept, as an objective standard by which the use of aid can be assessed is often elusive. Unlike corruption, where resources are used for an unintended private purpose, a resource may be underutilized simply because the resources are not needed and attempting to use them would harm rather than help the locals.

The example of the useless tractor is illustrative. If the terrain is such that a tractor is not helpful or if fuel for the tractor is unavailable or if performing maintenance on the tractor is prohibitively expensive, it may very well be

irresponsible for the locals to use their own resources to keep the tractor running when they could be using their time and money more efficiently.

Effective Aid

Having examined a few of the most glaring mistakes that lead to ineffective aid, it is now time to begin in earnest a search for the principles that contribute to effective aid. At a simplistic level, it could be accurately said that effective aid is that which avoids the aforementioned principles of ineffective aid. Beyond the mere avoidance of harm, there are also positive principles that one should seek. However, it is important to remember that there is no single foolproof approach to effective aid. Given the inconsistent nature and competing values of the people involved, it is impossible to create a sure recipe for success. That being said, here are several major principles for the successful administration and reception of aid.

Aid with a Long-term Focus

One of the main qualities of helpful and sustainable aid is that it is administered with an eye to its long-term effects. Attending to long-term implications is a tedious and expensive task compared to the relative ease of simply inserting resources into an area and moving on to the next project. This concept touches on several areas discussed above, such as the difference between relief, rehabilitation, and development. Relief necessarily has a short-term focus because it deals with provision for immediate needs—shelter, water, food, and medical attention. Relief seeks to fill urgent needs that cannot be filled in more organic ways, and as organic means of filling those needs grow back, the relief scales back to allow the local source to grow and flourish.

Rehabilitation takes a longer-term perspective because it is concerned not with addressing temporary emergency situations but with individual and community restoration. Rehabilitation seeks to restore the community to their pre-crisis state of wellness, not only in the economic sense but also with regards to their self-sufficiency and their psychological and social wellness. While relief is mostly performed by the giver of the aid, rehabilitation relies on the participation of the recipient. It also requires the recipient to be willing to move past the relief stage and take ownership of their condition; this necessarily takes time and requires a longer time-frame than relief does.

Development tries to help the individuals and communities receiving aid to surpass their previous levels of wellness, both economically and personally. It comes alongside those who are struggling and seeks to work with them to facilitate growth. Of all three types of aid, development calls for the greatest amount of recipient participation. An individual or community cannot be truly developed

without participation and ownership on the part of the recipients. Givers of aid cannot force or control the process of taking ownership. Development simply takes time and consequently must be approached with a long-term perspective.

Relief is the only type of aid that has a significant short-term focus; even then, the giver should consider the long-term effects of the relief and should aim to minimize the potential psychological and social harm of dumping outside assistance into an area of need. Rehabilitation and development are longer term by nature and require an ongoing commitment of time and resources in order to be performed successfully. Sustainable aid requires long-term focus and commitment from both the giver and the recipient.

Aid that Discovers

Another principle of helpful and sustainable aid is that it seeks to discover before it seeks to fix. The discovery process is slow and multi-dimensional, adding to the need for a long-term perspective; however, it plays an essential role in the development of effective aid. Aid that seeks to provide solutions before the problems are properly identified or before the solutions are adequately considered is severely limited in its effectiveness.

Discovering the nature of the need at hand is the essential first step in administering any type of aid. Thoughtful discovery takes time and cannot be done entirely from the outside. While an outside perspective may be helpful, a robust understanding of the problem can only be reached with the help of the individual or community in need. Otherwise westerners may be hampered by their tendency to define poverty in different terms than the poor themselves define it.

Once the problem is identified, an appropriate solution must still be discovered. This can be a difficult step in the process and can be just as time consuming as problem discovery. Previous experience in distributing aid can be an asset, but a solution that worked in one area may not be equally effective in another. Even striking similarities in the economic condition of two recipients does not guarantee that the same economic solution will be effective, as the World Bank and many other organizations have illustrated (Corbett & Fikkert, 2014). In the wake of World War II, the World Bank discovered lending money to struggling economies for cheap to be remarkably effective. When it went into struggling European countries and began to lend money at low interest rates, the World Bank found that the recipients responded extremely well. In light of this success in Europe, the World Bank later tried implementing the lending strategy outside of Europe. However, they quickly discovered that this type of lending had very little positive effect on the economies of non-European places, such as India (Narayan, 2000).

Prior to the determination of solutions and perhaps even the realization of needs, there is a more foundational area of discovery. This step is the discovery of an individual or community's assets—their skills, abilities, and inherent resources. Corbett and Fikkert (2014) suggested that it is better to start by discovering a recipient's existing assets rather than simply their needs. They called this approach the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model.

Corbett and Fikkert (2014) are proponents of this model because it avoids deepening the psychological and social poverty of inferiority and helplessness among the poor. When the initial and primary focus of a giver is to discover and facilitate the recipient's own gifts and talents, it changes the dynamic of the aid entirely. Rather than the giver sending a message of inferiority or helplessness, ABCD begins with the abecedarian principle that every individual and community has some abilities and resources with which they can help themselves. From there, givers can craft a solution that incorporates the recipient's existing assets into the solution.

Aid that Enables

While aid should have a long-term focus and should be based on a full knowledge of the situation, it is important to recognize that aid is not intended to be permanent. Within a specific area of need the goal of aid is, ironically, to put itself out of business. Aid efforts will never be rendered wholly unnecessary, as needs will always exist worldwide. However, a particular community or individual can certainly become independent of the need for aid (Adleman et al., 2016). Effective aid will be given with the ultimate goal of independence in mind.

The long-term health and sustainability of a community is far greater when that health is based on their own actions rather than dependent on the generosity of an outside entity. A prosperous, thriving community does not depend on outsiders for its continued existence. That is not to say that outside assistance should never be given—such assistance is a helpful and often vital tool in the long-term recovery and development of a struggling individual or community. However, a community should not be considered stable if it is still dependent on outside help for its survival or wellbeing. Even if such a community is deemed a success story by the wealthy westerners who view poverty in purely economic terms, it could still be considered impoverished by its own residents, who may view poverty as the state of fear, dependence, and inferiority.

Empowering recipients to stand on their own feet is not just a nice goal to which the giver should tip his hat. Enabling self-sustainability is integrally fundamental to the successful administration of truly helpful aid. Effective aid must always be directed towards this goal—it must aim to relieve not only dire economic conditions but also the poverty of heart and mind.

Conclusion

It is not enough to merely administer aid. Much harm can be done by the careless use of resources, beyond the mere loss of resources to the giver. Whether through misdiagnosis, arrogance, lack of self-awareness, short-term focus, corruption, or a host of other pitfalls, it is all too easy for both the givers and the recipients to hurt rather than help. Since aid has such potential to be harmful, those involved in the distribution of aid must proceed thoughtfully and judiciously. Aid is given at the rate of over \$800 billion a year and has the potential to cause a great deal of harm if caution is not taken (Adleman et al., 2016).

Responsible giving does not focus solely on the potential benefit of an action but also considers the potential harm. Aid is usually given with the best of intentions; however, it is often plagued by a lack of information, a failure to attend to side-effects, and an inadequate understanding of the problem from both sides of the equation.

In order to avoid the embarrassing mistake of the proverbial deaf man, givers must intentionally invest time and resources into determining the best approach. One does not simply stumble upon the proper approach to aid, and aid given without intentionality may harm rather than help. An effective approach to aid understands poverty as a multi-dimensional problem, not just an economic one, and acts accordingly. It seeks to enable rather than take over. Helpful and sustainable aid considers the long-term rather than just the immediate. Effective givers administer aid *with* the recipients, not *to* them.

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