

their humanitarian activities, unlike governance which is on the mainstream development cooperation agenda. Strong linkages between governance and conflict prevention/peace-building were advocated as part of the *DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation*.

### **Participation and technocracy in humanitarian response**

One criticism made of *Shaping the 21st Century* is that developing countries were not involved enough in its formulation. Recently, the OECD has taken concrete steps to engage Southern governments more in development issues. One initiative is the ongoing Mali Aid Review, launched in Bamako in April 1997, which is critically analysing donor efforts to deliver appropriate development assistance that reinforces local capacity, ownership and control. The review suggests the decision-making process is donor-led, and both civil society and government officials need to be more closely and strategically involved in the management and direction of ODA. Several people interviewed for the study commented that trends of humanitarian assistance had strengthened convictions that aid is not fundamentally development-led, but guided by the promotion of Western values.

Yet donors are increasingly emphasizing the participation of civil society in development cooperation, both in developing countries and at home. Participation is seen by many donors as the key to progress. It is perceived to strengthen democracy; to increase pressure on governments to be accountable; to help marshal local resources for development, both human and financial; and to build on communities' capacity to prepare for and cope with emergencies.

In the North, initial interest in stimulating public involvement was largely seen in terms of promoting development awareness and reinforcing public support for aid. But, increasingly, civil society is seen as having an important contribution to make to aid efforts. In a number of European countries (e.g. Austria, Belgium, France, Italy and Switzerland), there are solidarity-based organizations which not only offer resources but also long-term commitment to communities and organizations. Crises and humanitarian emergencies often activate this commitment. Towns twinned with sister-communities in Central America, for instance, were swift and substantial in their responses to Hurricane Mitch.

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) undertook a major review in 1998 of ways in which civil society could contribute more to poverty elimination. A key point to emerge was the widespread and varied involvement of the public in development cooperation activities, from business links to local community-aid initiatives. One dilemma related to public participation is how best to maximize public involvement while maintaining an efficient focus on poverty.

**Figure 7.2**  
**ODA from the G7**  
**from 1994 to**  
**1997. However**  
**one reads the**  
**figures, the**  
**swings and**  
**roundabouts of**  
**individual**  
**donors add up to**  
**a net decrease in**  
**total aid**  
**available.**  
Source: OECD  
DAC.  
US\$ millions.  
Current prices and  
exchange rates.

	1994	1995	1996	1997
Canada	2,249.61	2,066.67	1,795.47	2,044.61
France	8,466.04	8,443.37	7,451.27	6,306.61
Germany	6,817.96	7,523.58	7,600.89	5,856.78
Italy	2,704.63	1,622.66	2,415.52	1,265.55
Japan	13,238.53	14,489.27	9,439.30	9,358.00
UK	3,196.98	3,202.21	3,198.65	3,433.10
USA	9,927.00	7,367.00	9,377.00	6,878.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46,600.75</b>	<b>44,714.76</b>	<b>41,278.10</b>	<b>35,142.65</b>
Annual percentage 'fall'		-4.05%	-7.69%	-14.86%

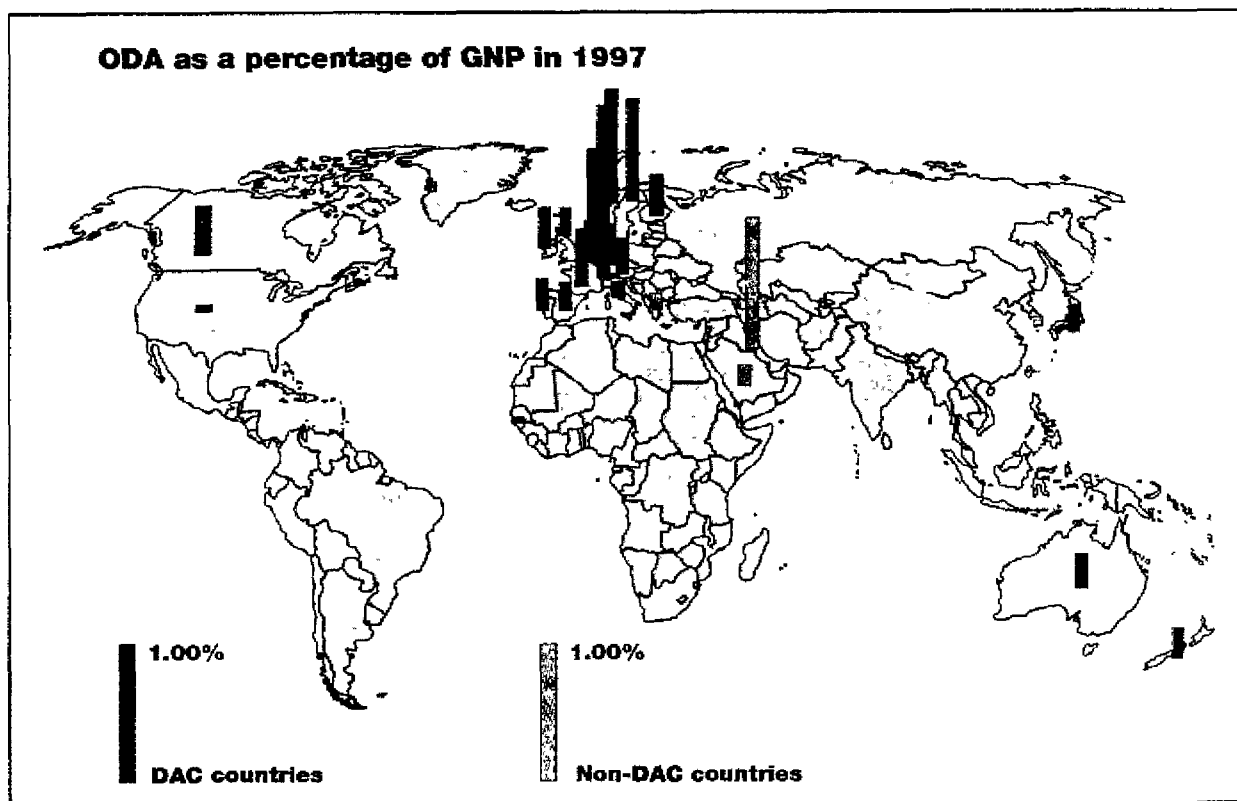
The many local relief initiatives that have sprung up in response to the suffering in former Yugoslavia illustrate the issues involved. In many European countries, local communities have decided to take direct action, filling trucks with everyday items and simply driving the supplies to where people are in need. NGOs and official aid agencies have often criticized this approach as ad hoc, inefficient, dangerous, patronizing and unsustainable. But whether we like it or not, it represents authentic participation by ordinary members of civil society. Not only a direct expression of humanitarian commitment, but a demonstration of a wish for involvement and solidarity in the development process.

It is tidier if the public restricts its level of commitment to that of a taxpayer or donor, but, as box 7.2 illustrates, even public donations and concern can be unwelcome. In these circumstances, there is an onus on aid agencies to promote positive actions open to ordinary people. Public response to humanitarian emergencies is a well-documented route to building a long-term constituency of people committed to development cooperation.

It is interesting to juxtapose the decline in aid during the 1990s with the increasing emphasis within the aid and development community on professionalism, accountability and learning from experience. While these are self-evidently desirable objectives – aid agencies, non-governmental and official, are spending other people's money and intervening in other people's lives – the question arises: Does an increasingly technocratic culture make it more difficult for officials to respond quickly and flexibly to urgent situations? As the Overseas Development Institute has asked, is the freedom previously available to exercise humanitarian values in the allocation of funds now being curtailed?

In practical terms, the decline in aid volume linked to stronger accountability procedures is having a knock-on effect on multilateral agencies and NGOs. Advance funding is less widely available and more tortuous procedures are delaying donor payments. Humanitarian agencies cannot ignore emergency needs while waiting for donor money to arrive, so

*The UN target for ODA is 0.70 per cent of GNP. The global average in 1997 was 0.22 per cent, the lowest level ever since records began. Only four countries in the world regularly allocate more than the UN target to ODA.*



increasingly they must pre-finance relief operations. But humanitarian agencies should not have to stockpile large floats of cash to compensate for reluctant donor response.

Some broader questions also arise. Has the humanitarian imperative been buried by bureaucracy? Are aid agencies, dominated by logical frameworks, jargon and quasi-scientific approaches, in danger of excluding ordinary people in the North and South from active involvement? Has an obsession with the obvious need to be accountable and effective led to a perception that if impact cannot be proved beyond reasonable doubt then nothing has been achieved? Overall the climate of self-doubt in the aid industry may have given sceptics more scope in their campaigns for reduced development cooperation budgets.

### **Aid spending on emergency assistance**

The share of emergency assistance has fallen back steadily since 1994 when, at US\$ 3.5 billion, it accounted for 8.4 per cent of DAC donors' bilateral ODA. In 1997, it shrank to just US\$ 2.1 billion (6.7 per cent of bilateral aid) – a slimmer slice of a smaller cake. But even at this level, emergency spending is substantially higher as a share of aid than it was in the mid-1980s. It rose slowly between 1985 and 1990 from US\$ 600 million in 1985 to just over a billion dollars in 1990, but did not climb above three per cent of bilateral ODA until 1991.

### **Box 7.2 NGOs, governance and humanitarian response**

In May 1998, a dispute occurred between NGOs and Britain's Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, over public appeals for emergency funds to aid countries such as Sudan.

At a major conference on disasters and the media, Short argued that the "mutual parasitism of the media and the fund-raiser" resulted in a superficial or misleading impression of the causes of poverty, which insulted the intelligence of the public. It also resulted in a feeling of helplessness and compassion fatigue – quite the opposite of what was needed to mobilize public and political opinion in support of the poverty reduction goals embodied in the DAC's international development targets.

Short challenged the UK's Disasters Emergency Committee (comprising leading relief NGOs), saying it was launching an unnecessary appeal for Sudan, because money was not the problem – access and lack of political action were. She was quoted as describing NGO appeals as "unbearable" and making the public "flinch and turn away" NGOs reacted with concern to the secretary of state's remarks. For the International Federation, Peter Walker said: "It is a little bit like blaming emergency crews because we have a lot of road accidents... good analysis, wrong conclusions"

Underlying the dispute were concerns about public perceptions of aid, emergencies and long-term development and, on both sides, a desire to find a better way of funding humanitarian assistance. Within aid circles, there has always been talk about compassion fatigue. As long ago as 1969, the Pearson

Commission Report commented: "Public support for development is now flagging...The climate surrounding foreign aid programmes is heavy with disillusion and distrust...We have reached a point of crisis." But many commentators argue that careful analysis of both polling evidence and voluntary giving shows that the humanitarian instincts of the public in OECD countries have remained remarkably stable.

Analysis by UNDP of over 30 opinion surveys in DAC countries showed public support for aid averaging 80 per cent in 1995 – a slight increase over similar figures from 1983. The study also noted that disaster relief, along with basic needs, health care and environmental protection were what the public wanted aid money spent on.

Many NGOs recognize quite explicitly the dilemmas involved in presenting a balanced view of developing countries. Coverage of emergencies does not jeopardize long-term support – the public's response to urgent need provides NGOs with a hook to capture awareness of more complex development issues. And opinion polls consistently demonstrate that most of the public are sophisticated enough to know that vital short-term needs must be covered whilst also addressing the fundamental causes of poverty.

Leaving aside the issue of whether more money was or was not needed for Sudan, if NGOs had not launched a fund-raising appeal, how else could they realistically have marshalled enough support and resources to assist Sudan? And if there is no clear answer to this, does it imply there is nothing the public could do to help?

Three-quarters of bilateral aid for emergencies in 1997 was given by just seven of the DAC's 21 donors: Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK and USA. But the single largest donor of emergency aid is the European Commission, which provided assistance worth US\$ 784 million in 1997.

Emergency aid in 1996 was provided for over 130 countries, but only 23 of those received more than US\$ 10 million. The largest individual recipients were Bosnia and Herzegovina at US\$ 300 million; Iraq, US\$ 279 million; Israel, US\$ 145 million; and Rwanda US\$ 135 million. Afghanistan and Angola both received US\$ 50 million (although UN figures claim Afghanistan received US\$ 188 million in 1997). One donor to have calculated its spending in relation to different types of emergency is New Zealand, which estimates that 48 per cent of its emergency spending is allocated to natural disaster relief and preparedness and 46 per cent to relieving the effects of conflict.

Looking at emergency assistance in the context of the broad picture of aid spending, almost a third of world aid (30 per cent) in 1996 was allocated to social and administrative infrastructure, particularly education. Nearly a quarter (23.1 per cent) was allocated to economic infrastructure, mainly transport and energy. Support for production, particularly agriculture, took 13.1 per cent of aid, and debt relief 5.7 per cent. The 5.1 per cent of total ODA spent on emergencies was just under the shares for health and population, or water and sanitation (6 per cent and 6.6 per cent respectively within the social infrastructure allocation).

A number of donors have been progressing towards greater integration of their emergency and development responses. In Germany, humanitarian assistance is provided within a framework established by a coordination committee chaired by the federal Foreign Office and comprising representatives from the Ministry of Economic and Development Cooperation (BMZ), other relevant ministries (e.g., defence), NGOs and governments of the *Länder* (federal states). The committee, established in the first half of the 1990s in response to perceived lack of coordination in Iraq, aims to agree upon a broad approach and to match the capacities of different German organizations to particular emergency situations. More recently, the BMZ has instigated a new policy instrument for development-oriented emergency aid, which has been operationalized by the GTZ – the German agency for technical cooperation. This effort has produced some impressive thinking and programmes, including the reintegration of soldiers through employment creation in micro-enterprises.

This recognition of the blurring of emergency and development approaches is evident in the wide variety of spending that is included under an emergency umbrella. Australia, for instance, is anticipating expenditure on the social impact of the east Asian financial crisis under its emergency relief programme.

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### ***Natural disasters, El Niño and disaster preparedness***

The upsurge in demand for emergency relief over the last decade has mainly been as a result of so-called 'complex emergencies' such as Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. But major natural disasters have tripled in the 1990s compared to the 1960s, according to recent figures released by Munich Re. They claim that in 1998 alone, over 700 'large-loss' natural catastrophes caused more than US\$ 90 billion in economic losses worldwide.

How are donors responding to this shift in priorities? Major natural disasters still spark big appeals – in late 1998, the UN appealed for US\$ 153 million in response to Hurricane Mitch. But some of these disasters could be averted or mitigated if more cash were spent on disaster preparedness. Until now, natural disasters were considered too unpredictable to warrant preventive-style spending. Who knows where a hurricane may strike or when an earthquake could hit? But many natural disasters are becoming annual events – such as floods in Bangladesh and China, typhoons and tropical storms in the Caribbean. And Swiss Re, another reinsurance giant, said of the 1997-98 El Niño: "For the first time, climatologists were able not only to make predictions about El Niño, but also to calculate

the probabilities of occurrence of above- or below-average rainfall and temperatures (climatic anomalies) in tropical and subtropical areas." These predictions were made up to six months in advance of the disaster striking.

Governments of threatened countries are beginning to act on these predictions, with Peru spending about US\$ 300 million on strengthening dam and sanitation infrastructure in anticipation of the latest El Niño. Donors and aid agencies are slower to catch up, often because relief and development mandates and budgets conflict. The UN, for example, has designated responsibility for natural disaster relief to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, but disaster preparedness and mitigation remain the job of the UN Development Programme. The European Union (EU) has tried to address this problem by establishing an El Niño Response Team, which spans the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), and the development and external relations directorates. The team plans a three-stage approach to El Niño – disaster preparedness, rapid response, rehabilitation and development. By mid-April 1998, the EU had allocated ECU 4.1 million (US\$ 4.6 million) to Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. But is it enough, and how can disaster preparedness reduce the cost of natural disasters in both human and economic terms?

*Development at Risk*, a recent analysis of the costs and benefits of disaster preparedness, showed that the US\$ 3.15 billion invested in China over the last 40 years to control floods has averted potential losses of US\$ 12 billion to the Chinese economy. The World Bank and US Geological Survey have calculated that economic losses worldwide from natural disasters could be reduced by as much as US\$ 280 billion by investing around one-seventh of that sum in preparedness, mitigation and prevention strategies.

Some donors and humanitarian agencies are taking preparedness and prevention increasingly seriously. Bangladesh's typhoon and flood early warning system, supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and ECHO's Disaster Preparedness Programme, provides a successful model of how technology and community-based action can combine to save lives. Satellites track typhoon movements in the Bay of Bengal, warning messages are relayed into threatened areas through dozens of dedicated radio stations and up to 30,000 Red Crescent-trained volunteers with loud hollers encourage people to use concrete typhoon shelters. In Jamaica, ECHO is funding house-building with materials which, unlike tin roof-sheets, do not kill if torn off by high-speed winds. Even so, ECHO funding for disaster preparedness amounted to just ECU 7 million in 1997 (US\$ 7.9 million) – 1.6 per cent of total humanitarian aid expenditure.

Australia is undertaking a review of disaster preparedness and has trebled allocations for emergency use as a whole to A\$ 34 million (about US\$ 25 million) in its 1998-99 aid budget, in response to recent crises in the region. The UN's Food and Agriculture

### Box 7.3 Official development assistance and official aid

Occasionally, the OECD's DAC changes the way aid data is collected and analysed. Some of these changes can make a significant difference to the picture of how aid is used over time.

Official development assistance (ODA), often referred to simply as 'aid', must go to a developing country (as defined by the DAC), and at least 25 per cent must be as a grant. ODA's main objective is the promotion of economic development or welfare.

From 1996, the DAC split the list of aid recipients into 'part one' and 'part two'. Part-one countries are eligible to receive ODA which counts towards the UN target of 0.7 per cent of donor GNP. Part-two countries are only

eligible, however, for official aid (OA) which does not count towards the UN target.

Official aid is still government assistance, with the same terms and conditions as ODA, but it goes to 'countries and territories in transition' – including former aid recipients, central and eastern European countries and newly independent states of the former Soviet Union.

Russia and Poland received large amounts of aid in 1996 (US\$ 2 billion and US\$ 1.3 billion respectively) but this was official aid, not ODA. Israel received almost US\$ 1.5 billion of ODA in 1996, but received US\$ 1.89 billion in 1997 after becoming eligible for official aid.

Organization's Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) monitors areas of high-risk countries where populations are particularly vulnerable to food shortages which may lead to famine. The DAC *Aid Review* reports that "FEWS costs about US\$ 5 million a year to operate. This is around five per cent of the average amount the US government alone spends on famine prevention, mitigation and relief each year in Africa. By enhancing the ability of the US government and others to anticipate, to target more precisely and to assure timely arrival of humanitarian aid, this project more than pays for itself in terms of budgetary savings alone. If account is taken of the economic benefits of reducing the negative impact that can occur from the poorly-planned provision of food aid, the benefits in development terms are also impressive."

### Macro-economic impact of natural disasters

It is easy to see how natural disasters have their severest human impact on the poorest communities. Better-off families live in less vulnerable situations. But the poor in countries such as Bangladesh and Honduras often live on marginal and flood-prone land. And when a disaster occurs, the richer are more likely to have savings, insurance or other assets to help them rebuild their lives.

But in contrast, the countrywide economic impact of natural disasters such as drought may be worse on relatively more-developed countries in regions like sub-Saharan Africa. In very arid countries such as Burkina Faso, where drought is common, rain-fed agriculture is often limited and communities are used to coping with water shortages. However, in semi-

	1994	1995	1996	1997
Australia	25.49	35.80	32.44	31.91
Austria	127.04	114.72	92.17	37.15
Belgium	14.02	15.75	23.99	37.15
Canada	228.45	164.72	174.38	159.15
Denmark	78.62	71.38	54.15	94.56
Finland	27.48	22.64	38.85	28.61
France	122.23	138.43	96.38	70.74
Germany	392.53	438.71	294.20	191.40
Ireland	8.53	8.34	16.35	11.20
Italy	105.40	87.89	96.68	50.25
Japan	31.08	60.08	71.94	73.66
Luxembourg	5.09	7.03	9.05	8.13
Netherlands	302.37	350.42	340.88	278.89
New Zealand	2.68	1.84	3.86	5.98
Norway	180.75	183.78	198.76	192.08
Portugal	3.70	3.52	5.56	0.43
Spain	5.04	19.53	12.91	17.97
Sweden	334.17	269.75	268.61	233.81
Switzerland	80.98	97.20	81.34	122.18
United Kingdom	260.52	181.76	194.73	164.32
United States	1,132.00	789.00	585.00	340.00
TOTAL	3,468.17	3,062.29	2,692.23	2,149.57

**Figure 7.3**  
**Humanitarian spending is waning. From its peak in 1994, it has dropped back by more than 35 per cent, yet there is no evidence of a similar drop in the needs of disaster victims.**  
Source: OECD  
DAC. US\$ millions  
Current prices and exchange rates.

arid countries which are less likely to suffer from water shortages, local systems may be less able to cope when severe droughts do occur. Consequently, the dislocation and economic impact may be greater.

A recent World Bank study notes that in economies heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture – with weak intersectoral linkages, poor transport systems and small non-agriculture sectors – there are limited 'multiplier effects'. Such countries will probably rely on aid donors to meet most emergency relief costs. But in intermediate economies, where linkages between agriculture and other sectors of the economy are more developed, the impact of drought may have greater knock-on effects through the economy. Here the government itself is likely to meet a larger share of relief costs, rather than relying on international assistance. But as economies become further diversified and complex, so the impacts of drought shocks will be more easily absorbed. The implication of this research is that countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe and Senegal may be more economically vulnerable to drought than countries such as Burkina Faso.

Drought mitigation and response policies need to take account of a country's economy. In particular, structural adjustment policies and other medium-term economic strategies should be sensitive to drought shocks. Evidence suggests this is happening in southern Africa since the 1991-92 drought. Case studies show that rephrasing of policy objectives, redirection of committed resources (under-utilized because of the drought shock), and rapid commitment and disbursement of new resources would all be helpful, along with recognition that sustaining a structural adjustment programme should not oblige a government to finance its response to the drought in ways that intensify the recessionary effects on the domestic economy.

### Box 7.4 Making sense of the jargon

#### **DAC (OECD's Development Assistance Committee)**

A group of 21 donor countries plus the EU which monitors aid flows and consults on ways of improving the quality and effectiveness of aid.

#### **Developing country**

The DAC defines a list of developing countries eligible to receive official development assistance (ODA). In 1996, a number of countries, including Israel, ceased to be eligible for ODA. A second group, 'countries and territories in transition', is eligible for 'official aid' (OA) – not to be confused with ODA. OA has the same terms and conditions as ODA, but it does not count towards the UN's target of 0.7 per cent of donor GNP, because it is not going to developing countries.

#### **G7**

Group of seven main industrialized countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, USA). In 1998, Russia briefly joined the group, creating the G8.

#### **GNP (gross national product)**

The total value of a country's output.

#### **HIPC (heavily-indebted poor countries)**

Low-income countries defined as eligible for debt relief under the HIPC initiative.

#### **IDT (international development targets)**

As outlined in the DAC document *Shaping the 21st Century*.

#### **LDC (least developed countries)**

In 1995, 48 countries defined by the UN as especially poor and vulnerable. Most LDCs are low-income countries with an annual per capita income of less than US\$ 765 in 1995.

#### **LIC (low-income countries)**

All countries with an annual per capita income of less than US\$ 765 in 1995, including China, India and Bangladesh (which represent half the population of developing countries and receive 13 per cent of global aid).

#### **LMIC (lower middle-income countries)**

Countries with an annual per capita income of between US\$ 766 and US\$ 3,035 in 1995.

#### **OA (official aid)**

Aid that goes to DAC-defined 'countries and territories in transition'.

#### **ODA (official development assistance)**

Assistance to DAC-defined developing countries.

The need for a much more coherent policy incorporating debt and aid for post-conflict countries was recognized at the October 1998 annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), continuing the discussion of post-conflict assistance which took place at the G7/G8 Summit and earlier Bank and IMF meetings in 1998.

The Canadian minister of finance suggested IMF members set up an international system for debt restructuring in times of crisis. Because the financial policies of multilateral institutions do not let them lend to countries in arrears, they often cannot provide funds for reconstruction and recovery. As the *Financial Times* pointed out, "Countries often emerge from conflict paying more to the institutions than they received in assistance, until the arrears are cleared." An analysis for the boards of the Bank and IMF of external arrears in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia and Sudan found that in mid-1998 their collective arrears totalled US\$ 4.3 billion to the multilateral institutions.

This issue was brought into sharp focus when Hurricane Mitch struck Central America. While debt relief was clearly not an appropriate response in the two weeks after the disaster, the serious limits which debt servicing imposed on the ability of affected countries to start rebuilding came to the top of the public agenda. Media-generated attention to the scale of debt repayments compared to levels of emergency aid has sparked a public debate on appropriate times, scale and modalities for conditional debt relief as part of a coherent humanitarian response.

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**Politicization of aid**

Aid spending by DAC donors now bears little relation to need or even to what most countries can afford to give. On several occasions since 1990, including the 1992 Earth Summit and the 1995 Social Summit, donors have noted the need for additional resources and pledged to provide them. But it is clear that what actually shapes the level of aid is neither need, nor affordability, but politics. In December 1997, for example, donors pledged US\$ 57 billion in one week to bail out South Korea, but they appear unable to find the US\$ 20 billion a year needed to lift more than a billion people worldwide out of poverty. At one level, this apparent divorce of official aid from humanitarian impulse is out of line with public thinking, which still seems firmly rooted in the idea of responding directly to both emergencies and the day-to-day basic needs of poor people.

But this can be looked at in a different way. The increasing inclusion of aid into the political and economic mainstream, though perhaps reducing the extent to which aid represents what has been termed "moral vision in international politics", may mean that more progress is made in terms of the coherence of aid with other policies. As illustrated in the case of Sudan (see box 7.2), donors seem to be increasingly arguing that aid alone cannot solve problems, many of which require political solutions matched to the limited provision of financial assistance. But this cannot be an excuse to let aid decline. Only a more muscular combination of increased aid flows and greater political will can make the world a safer and fairer place in which to live.



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### Web sites

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- Humanitarianism and War Project [http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson\\_Institute/H\\_W/](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson_Institute/H_W/)
- OECD Development Assistance Committee <http://www.oecd.org/dac>
- Relief and Rehabilitation network <http://www.oneworld.org/odi/rnn/index/html>
- Reliefweb: <http://www.reliefweb.int/fts/index.html>