

HPG research proposal

An analysis of the role of emerging donors in the humanitarian sector

Background and rationale

For some time, a number of emerging official donor governments (non-OECD-DAC donors), have been providing assistance to communities suffering from humanitarian crises. Anecdotal evidence from responses to East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq and the on-going provision of assistance in protracted crises such as North Korea indicates that the engagement of these emerging donors has increased significantly. Despite this, little research or analysis has been undertaken on the subject.

The emergence of a new group of official donors in the provision of humanitarian assistance challenges a number of perceptions. It can no longer be taken as read that OECD-DAC countries are the primary providers of humanitarian assistance to the non-Western world. Twenty-two OECD countries make up the DAC; however OCHA records contributions from the governments of over 60 countries. Evidence suggests that Saudi Arabia, Iran, South Korea, India and China have emerged as significant actors, alongside a number of the new accession states in the European Union. These donors often operate in the same settings as OECD-DAC donors, including in the highly contested environments of Afghanistan and Iraq.

In a global context in which the humanitarian 'enterprise' is increasingly perceived as an instrument of Western governments, it will be important for the international community to understand and engage with this new set of official donors. This includes understanding the policy drivers that trigger and shape their response; the way their finances are managed and allocated; and the way they coordinate with other humanitarian actors in the field. It will also be important to understand how the objectives of these donors are expressed in wider international forums, such as in the General Assembly and in the humanitarian segment of ECOSOC.

HPG has established a body of work and expertise on official donors as strategic actors in the humanitarian sphere, mapping the way in which donors engage and influence the

architecture of global humanitarian response.¹ HPG has also been influential in proposing and developing a set of principles to govern official humanitarian donorship. A good humanitarian donorship framework has now been established. However, at present, these emerging donors remain ‘outside’ the formal international club and the forums in which the principles that govern humanitarian donorship are to be monitored and evaluated.

The proposed research offers an opportunity to ensure that emerging official donors are not marginalised from these processes. At the same time, it provides an important vehicle for differences in approach on issues of both practice and principle, to be understood, shared and supported. It would also serve to provide humanitarian organisations with an improved understanding of new and diverse sources of funding that might be potentially accessible.

The project

The aim of this project is to analyse the nature and volume of humanitarian assistance from emerging donor governments, and to explore the notion of humanitarianism as a universal or Western construct. This project will enable HPG to build upon its established work and expertise on the changing role of donors as humanitarian actors, and map the way in which these emerging donors are engaging with and influencing the architecture of global humanitarian response.

Over the course of a 12-month period, the project would undertake three major pieces of work:

- case studies of three emerging donor governments;
- a review of the relationship between emerging donor activity in the field and their engagement and influence in international diplomatic and military fora; and,
- a review and analysis of financial trends.

Emerging donor government case studies: The nature of humanitarian assistance from three emerging donor governments would be assessed including identifying the

¹ Macrae et al (2002) ‘Uncertain power: the changing role of official donors in humanitarian action’, *HPG Report 12*, Overseas Development Institute, London.

countries and settings they are active in; how they identify, measure and prioritise humanitarian need; how they operate (and cooperate) in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including the type and purpose of aid (including rehabilitation and reconstruction) channels for disbursement and the mechanisms in place for guiding decision-making and formulating policy in selected environments. Analysis will also be undertaken on definitions of humanitarian action, and how the norms and principles of humanitarianism are reflected in decisions regarding resource allocation.

Potential donor government case studies include:

- Saudi Arabia as the largest non OECE-DAC and reportedly one of the largest humanitarian donor governments;
- an EU accession donor government, for example the Czech Republic, Poland or Lithuania; and
- a donor government in Asia, such as India, South Korea or Malaysia.

This would be done through field studies, documentary review and interviews with relevant informants.

Emerging voices in key diplomatic and aid forums: Alongside the donor government case studies, the study will explore the relationship between emerging donor activity in the field and the influence these donors are having in broader debates on humanitarian action in international diplomatic and aid forums, including:

- policy and programming objectives of selected emerging official donors tabled at donor roundtables/donor coordination bodies in crisis country settings;
- on-going monitoring and analysis of debates on issues around humanitarian action in regional fora such as the Arab League and the African Union;
- examining the emerging non OECE-DAC donor voice in the humanitarian segment of ECOSOC and the views of the G77 in the UN General Assembly.

Financial trends and analysis: The final part of the study will involve commissioning an international expert to analyse the financial trends of emerging donors. It is difficult to comment on global humanitarian financing trends without a firm understanding of the size of the global pot. The total contribution of emerging donors may be relatively

modest; however, certain emerging donors may be investing significantly in particular settings. The purpose of this financial analysis would be to assess by how much the pot is increasing, in which particular crisis countries and sectors, as well as an analysis of bilateral and multilateral spending channels.

4.3.3 Communications strategy

The audience for this project would include, but would also extend the traditional humanitarian community, to policymakers in emerging donor governments, as well as a potential audience of local and international NGOs operating alongside or with the assistance of non-traditional donor funding. The research would make an important contribution to the development community, as it is likely that these emerging donors will begin to move ‘upstream’ into more developmental work as their economies and foreign policy objectives develop. Tracing their behaviour in their first point of entry in the ‘aid sector’ will be important for future analysis in the development and diplomatic arena.

The major output of the project would be an HPG Report synthesising the key findings, a series of Background Papers on each of the donor government case studies, a series of Briefing Papers summarising key issues. The research will also be incorporated onto an HPG CD-ROM.

Briefings would be arranged in the donor government countries where the case studies were conducted, as well as in New York, Geneva and Brussels. There will be significant effort to ensure that these briefings provide an opportunity for dialogue within the emerging donor community, and between it and DAC-country official donors.

The options for linking dissemination and discussion of this work with the on-going work of the Implementation Group of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative will also be explored.