

KEY PROPOSALS

SECURING THE RIGHTS OF POOR AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE

In the post-9/11 era, the national security interests of some donor countries are dominating international relations, with grave consequences for people living with violence and poverty. The poor and marginalized in so-called “failed and fragile” states are increasingly being viewed as potential threats to the North. With global security concerns and the ‘war on terror’ at the forefront of international relations, the integrity of development assistance for poverty eradication is at stake.

Historically, aid has too often served donors’ foreign policy and strategic interests while ignoring and sometimes undermining the rights and needs of the poor. Progress has been made in recent years by the donor community in acknowledging the need to improve aid effectiveness in order for it to deliver maximum benefits for the poor. However, *the Reality of Aid 2006 Report* reveals that since 2001 aid spending has largely focused on foreign policy priorities of donors in the global war on terror.

Reality of Aid is calling for action to:

1. Give Primacy to Human Rights

Human rights of the poorest citizens must be paramount. International human rights instruments and agreements must guide donors’ development assistance, including actions relating to humanitarian emergencies, conflict prevention, intervention and reconstruction. The universality, indivisibility, interdependence, equality and non-discrimination of human rights standards must not be compromised.

2. Focus on Local Actors for Peace

People affected by conflict and poverty are not pawns in a global game aimed at protecting the powerful from perceived threats to their security. Peace should not and cannot be externally imposed. The role of donors in situations of conflict should be to support democratic, local actions (through citizens, particularly women, and civil society organizations) to build a just peace.

3. Protect the Integrity of Aid for Poverty Eradication

Donors must not be diverted from their already long-overdue aid pledges by a narrow and self-interested approach to the war on terror.

- Aid should never be diverted or allocated for military purposes or on the basis of donors’ perceived national security interests. Aid is a resource held in trust for improving the lives of the poor, no matter where they live.
- Clear timetables are needed to achieve the United Nations target for aid spending of 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2015 in order to meet internationally agreed-to development goals (including the Millennium Development Goals) and for creating conditions for peace.
- Humanitarian assistance should be delivered according to the donor principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (proportionate to needs and based on impartial needs assessments).

4. Strengthen People-Centred Approaches to Security

The post-9/11 focus on security has allowed some political leaders to link complex national conflicts (Colombia, Philippines, etc.) to the war on terror and to seek support to strengthen repressive military and security sectors.

- There must be clear transparency and accountability for the resources, training and equipment provided by Northern donors to the security sectors in conflict-torn countries.
- Foreign aid directed at reform of the security sector must be governed by donor obligations under domestic and international human rights instruments.
- Donors must assess the extent to which their approaches to security sector reform undermine the real security of local populations in zones of conflict.

5. Improving Donor Coherence, Consistent with Human Rights Obligations

International interventions to resolve violent conflict have often been repressive, militaristic and focused on quick impact and short-term fixes. Basic principles of humanitarian action are often ignored and local communities, including humanitarian and development workers on the ground, are put at risk.

- Donors are increasingly using a “whole-of-government” approach in coordinating military, diplomatic and development actions for conflict prevention and peace operations. This approach, however, must be guided by UN authorized norms and should explicitly protect the independent space of humanitarian and civil society actors.
- Under the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, donors should put greater emphasis on the responsibility to prevent conflict and to reconstruct societies.

6. Exhaust All Avenues for the Promotion of Peace

- Donors must invest in early warning and conflict prevention action, thereby reducing costly reconstruction of societies devastated by armed conflict.
- All countries must work towards the establishment of an international arms trade treaty.
- Donor countries should establish clear, comprehensive and legally enforceable guidelines for companies operating in areas at risk of violent conflict.
- Donors must unconditionally cancel 100% of the debt owed by the world’s poorest countries.
- All countries must ratify and implement the 2005 UN Convention Against Corruption.

7. Reform the UN and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

Unaccountable and anti-democratic IFIs are playing central roles in post-conflict societies.

- Until IFIs implement significant reforms, including democratization of the institutions’ governance, their role in post-conflict reconstruction should be resisted.
- The UN must be reformed, strengthened and given the resources needed for it to play the principal role in international engagements in situations of conflict.
- Aid should not be a carrot for imposing conditions to resolve conflict. Imposed conditions are incompatible with democratic governance and local ownership for peace processes. Aid relationships must be fairly and transparently negotiated with the participation of, and accountability to, people living in poverty, and in line with the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law.