

News Release

Embargo: June 19, 2006 1AM

World's Poor Losing Out to Global Security Concerns

According to the *2006 Reality of Aid* Report released today, already scarce aid resources are increasingly subject to the security interests of donor governments, rather than targeted for the benefit of the poor.

Some donor governments have taken unprecedented steps to change the mandate of their aid programs. The United States views development assistance as a strategic resource for US security interests and the war on terror. In Australia, aid now includes several counter-terrorism initiatives in Indonesia and the Philippines. Members of the European Parliament are taking the European Commission (EC) to court arguing that recent counter-terrorism projects in the Philippines and Pakistan exceed EC aid regulations.

Some donors, including the Netherlands and Canada, support expanding the criteria for Official Development Assistance (ODA) to include military and security spending. "Including military assistance in aid spending is opening the door even wider for donor governments to divert scarce aid resources away from ending poverty," says Gerry Barr President and CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation. "Aid must never be used for military purposes."

The integrity of development assistance for the alleviation of poverty is at stake if aid is used to further donors' own security interests rather than the needs and rights of the poor.

Furthermore, some major interventions in developing countries in conflict are based not on humanitarian needs, but rather on rich governments' interest in countries seen to be on the front line of the 'war on terror'.

International humanitarian law requires that the response to a humanitarian emergency in conflict zones should be proportionate to need. "Unfortunately, some conflicts – where the strategic interest of rich countries is evident – get attention and other conflicts are ignored," says Tony Tujan chair of the Reality of Aid Network.

The *Reality of Aid* report is written by Northern and Southern aid experts. The Reality of Aid Network is the only North/South non-government initiative looking at aid policy and practice.

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