

Africa and international relations essay sample

[Parts of the World](#), [Africa](#)



Africa is the world's second-largest and second most populated continent (the first being Asia). The African continent is rich in minerals such as Gold, Platinum, Coal and Oil etc. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, European colonization of Africa developed rapidly in the scramble for Africa. In Africa, colonization has led to an increase in the number of allies which is one of the things which lead to foreign aid. The reason being, towards the colonial rule most colonial governments attempted to Africanise their civil services which was what contributed to an increase in the number of allies (Akonor, 2008). Some governments use foreign aid to create relations with other countries, but most of the time that aid can sometimes be a debt to the receiving country especially the third world countries.

In international relations, the perspective of governments about aid (also known as foreign aid, overseas aid, international aid or foreign assistance) is a voluntary transfer of resources from one country to another (). Others view foreign aid as loans and grants aimed at assisting recipients with economic growth, and or welfare (Inteligenteconomist, 2017). This paper will explain what is foreign aid in different perspectives of political thinkers is and how others such as governments view foreign aid, then it will give forms of foreign aid, it will also give reasons for foreign aid assistance in Africa, and then it will give positive and the pitfalls of aid and lastly, it will explain whether foreign aid bring better in the receiving country or it gives worse.

Aid can be any flow of capital to developing countries. Some experts believe foreign aid is one of the keys to reducing underdevelopment. Foreign aid is the money voluntarily transferred by one country to another, it can be taken as a form of a gift, and it can also be a grant or loan. These loans can either

be hard loans or soft loans. If repayment of the aid requires foreign currency, then it is a hard loan but if it is a home currency it is a soft loan. The World Bank lends in hard loans, while the loans of its affiliates are soft loans.

Foreign aid can be economic, military or emergency humanitarian, for example, the aid that is given after a country had suffered from natural disasters (Inteligenteconomist, 2017). Egypt usually suffers from natural disasters so it has received aid (Akonor, 2008). The United States uses the term only as military assistance or economic assistance that the federal government gives to other governments. Aid can also be defined as the international transfer of capital, goods or services from a country or an international organization for the benefit of the receiving country or its population (Inteligenteconomist, 2017).

In Africa, there is evidence that decades of foreign aid have done little in changing the destinies of many African states. Estimates suggest the West has spent about \$600 billion on foreign aid to Africa so far (Akonor, 2008). Yet underdevelopment is wide spread, while at same time some states are considered to have collapsed (eg. Somalia) (Akonor, 2008). Underdevelopment is not the absence of development (Rodney, 1973). It results from the uneven nature of human social, political and economic development.

There are several kinds of foreign aid. Five forms of foreign aid are bilateral aid, multilateral aid, tied aid, project aid and military aid. Bilateral aid is assistance given by a government directly to the government of another country. It is when the capital flows from a developed nation to a developing nation. It is often directed per strategic political considerations as well as

humanitarian ones. These are to assist in long-term projects to promote democracy, economic growth, stability, and development.

Multilateral aid is assistance provided by many governments who pool funds to international organizations like the World Bank, United Nations and International Monetary Fund that are then used to reduce poverty in developing nations. Though this sector constitutes a minority of the US's foreign aid, the nation's contributions make up a significant percentage of the donor funds received by the organization. Tied aid is one of the types of foreign aid that must be spent in the country providing the aid (the donor country) or in a group of selected countries. A developed country will provide a bilateral loan or grant to a developing country, but mandate that the money be spent on goods or services produced in the selected country.

Project aid is one of the types of foreign aid where the funds are used to finance a project, such as a school or a hospital. Military aid (which was about \$15 billion in 2011) is never altruistic and such aid usually requires said nation to either buy arms or defense contracts directly from the USA or in other cases just simplifies the process by having the federal government just buy the arms itself and ship them over on military transport (Inteligenteconomist, 2017).

A country or population may need aid assistance when it is experiencing the contraction period due to several reasons like natural disasters and so forth, other governments or organization intervene and offer some help or aid. Overseas aid may be given as a signal of political approval, or to strengthen a military ally, to reward a government for behavior anticipated by the

donor, to extend the donor's cultural influence, to provide infrastructure needed by the donor for resource withdrawal from the recipient country, or to gain other kinds of commercial access (Inteligenteconomist, 2017). In the case of natural disasters, a country or population needs to have money in order to start over and that is where organizations and foreign governments intervene.

Foreign aid has several positive impacts that it benefits to the poor or recipients. Foreign aid save lives, rebuild livelihoods, provide medicines, aid agriculture, encourages development, top natural resources, promotes sanitation.

Overseas aid save lives, during calamities and disasters foreign aid is there to save lives by helping people of that population to start over. In times of natural disasters, aid help people rebuild and can start over a new life. Aid positivity is that it rebuilds livelihoods, foreign aid help rebuild lives by providing livelihoods and housing right after the disaster so that victims can start over and move on with their lives. Provide machines, health outcomes have generally improved in many LDCs thanks to aid projects (Rodney, 1973). Medical missions are there to offer free medical and health care products and services where they are needed the most. It provides Aids agriculture, aid has also had some successes. Introduction of more advanced agricultural techniques has often increased production, making famines rarer than in the past.

Agricultural support helps farmers and promotes a food production, which leads to better quality of life and higher quality of food. Encourages

development, industrial development support by foreign aid, creates more jobs, improve infrastructure, and overall development of the local community, for example, after the natural disasters the old bridges are rebuilt, old schools and roads are rebuilt and so forth. Top natural resources, most of the underdeveloped countries do not have enough material to maximize their rich natural resources, but with foreign aid that is possible, for example, South Africa has Gold but they cannot produce final product with it instead they sell it to foreign countries and they produce it into final products (Rodney, 1973). Promotes sanitation, foreign aid provides clean water and sanitation facilities, which reduces risk of contracting infections and diseases.

Just like anything else, foreign aid has its pitfalls, such as; it increases dependency, there is risk of corruption, it overlooks small farmers, it brings economic/ political pressure, it benefits employers, there is hidden agenda of foreign owned corporation and there are more expensive commodities. The pitfalls of aid are that it increases dependency, most of the third world countries end up depending on donor countries and become indebted (Rodney, 1973). Leads to high risk of corruption, financial support might not reach the rightful recipients, but go to the wrong hands of corrupted politicians (Tavares, 2001).

Giving help to less developed countries is a noble thing, but nations must properly monitor and manage the flow of foreign aid so that they reach its rightful recipients, and not to go into the pockets of corrupt and greedy entities (Rodney, 1973). It often overlooks small farmers; the aid is generally

focused on the growth of modern sector. Therefore, it increases the gap in living standards between the rich and the poor in third world countries. It may only benefit large scale agricultural projects and not the less privileged, small farmers who needs it the most.

Aid can course Economic/Political pressure, the biggest objection is that donor countries make interference in the economic and political activities of the recipient country (Inteligenteconomist, 2017). Developed countries sometimes put pressure economically or politically to those underdeveloped countries whom they have did a favour by expecting them to give a something in return or expect them to return a favour (Rodney, 1973). Aid benefits employers, most development benefit those who already enjoy economic or political power, such as, large corporation and already-wealth employers and not those people who needs that development the most, those people who do not have jobs or proper livelihoods.

There is a hidden agenda of foreign-owned corporation, aid sometimes given to a country or recipient to benefit foreign-owned corporations and entities. Eventually the help is not actually targeted to the less fortunate, but to its own people (Tavares, 2001). Donor countries may have motives other than the elimination of poverty, donors may continue to give aid they know is not effective at eliminating poverty if it achieves their geopolitical goals (Rodney, 1973). Aid to Zaire is an example where donors knew aid was being taken by a corrupt government, yet continue to fund programs because geopolitical goals overrode development goals (Tavares, 2001). More expensive commodities, If the aid given is concerned with unproductive fields or

obsolete technology, it will have the effect of increasing the inflation in the country (Rodney, 1973). Where there is progress and development, there is inflation, which causes prices of commodities to increase, making the poor more deprived. Influxes of aid can cause inflation and can increase consumption. It tends not to increase investment.

Overseas aid brings more bad than good to the poor. What is good about foreign aid is that it improves the country's international image. Aid can also build positive working relationships with other governments. Foreign aid promotes the conditions for peace and solidity, because many governments honorably believe will be safer and happier when everyone else is safe and happy.

Bretton woods institutions provide aid to countries and course worse to the poor.

The criticisms of the IMF (and World Bank) can be divided between those linked to the conditionality of loans and other criticisms (The World Bank, 1998). A grant is money or services that are given without the expectation of repayment. Soft loans are loan that are given but at less than market conditions related to interest or other terms. Debt relief is forgiveness of some past debt. Both institutions provide concessional loans to countries. By making loans rather than grants, these institutions serve to increase the debt of LDCs. By forcing governments to pay back these loans, even with concessional interest rates, diverts money from government budgets that could have been used on things such as education and health. Further, because these organizations want to collect repayment, they sometimes

offer loans to service these debts, increasing debt and interest payments in the future and offering no tangible benefit to the country at present (other than not defaulting) (Akonor, 2008).

To sum up, this essay explained what is foreign aid in different perspectives of political thinkers and how others such as governments view foreign aid, for example, in international relations, the perspective of governments overseas aid is a voluntary transfer of resources from one country to another, however, others view foreign aid as loans and grants aimed at assisting recipients with economic growth, and or welfare. This paper explained different forms of foreign aid, such as, bilateral aid, multilateral aid, tied aid, project aid, and military aid, then it gave reasons for foreign aid assistance in Africa.

It then gave positivity of foreign aid, such as that foreign aid save lives, it rebuild livelihoods, it provide medicines, it provide aid agriculture, aid encourages development, top natural resources, it promotes sanitation, and it also gave the pitfalls of aid, such as; it increase dependency, there is risk of corruption, it overlook small farmers, it brings economic/ political pressure, it benefits employers, there is hidden agenda of foreign owned corporation and there are more expensive commodities. Lastly, it explained that foreign aid has more of it pitfalls than its good amongst countries.