

AID TO THE DISTANT

Ethics in Foreign Aid

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Abstract

Humanitarian aid and development assistance (foreign aid) are generally considered to be positive actions which help to save people affected by disaster, striving or suffering by diseases. It is done by satisfying basic needs with the help of food, water, sanitation, health care, or in long-term perspective by education, reconstruction of houses, prevention, protection and development projects.

Foreign aid happens in very specific environment: after disasters, in conflict situations, in the midst of epidemics, extreme poverty, drought and floods. It is mainly provided by people who come from quite different environment and culture, from “the wealthy world”. The humanitarian and development workers are just links in the “aid chain” which is quite long and starts with big donors and public subscribers, as well as governments. Due to the cultural differences, distance and many “chain links” the aid causes not always good but sometimes it does not work or does even harm to the intended recipients.

The goal of this work was to identify possible risks of damages, which threatens the help to recipients. Speaking about damages, threats and risks it is necessary to come out from that cultural and value context, which is expressed in international humanitarian as well as refugee law, human rights documents and further documents about development cooperation which resulted from different world summits.

The research was conducted by a qualitative expert method. The respondents of the research were professionals in foreign aid taking different positions in the “aid chain”. It would be difficult to ask the recipients directly especially because of cultural differences and very particular experience of each of them. It was possible to conduct the research by interviewing the “professional helpers” thanks to “parallel processes” which proved the phenomenon of similar perception in rescuers as well as affected people. The research identified ten areas of risks, e.g.: subordination instead of partnership, loss of human dignity, dependency, loss of capacities, ruining local markets, enhancing inequalities and envy, forced influence of foreign values, security risks.

The respondents identified constitution of dependency as the most serious risk that threatens the recipients of aid. It was also very interesting that the respondents working close to

recipients had more similar perception of risk, whereas the opinions of the academic people or the donors from the top of the “aid chain” were rather different.