

IS EU DEVELOPMENT AID WORKING?

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The EU has launched an aid programme to relocate refugees fleeing conflict in Sudan. [European Commission DG ECHO/Flickr]

EU aid an ineffective tool to end the migration crisis

Member states have deployed their development aid budgets to tackle the root causes of the migration crisis. But the effectiveness of these programmes in stemming the flow of migrants to the EU has yet to be seen.

Since the beginning of the refugee crisis, the EU has announced a host of measures aimed at bringing the situation under control. Europe's development assistance budget, the largest international aid pot in the world, has so far made up a large share of the financial shortfall. But the results of similar action in the past have not always met expectations.

At the migration summit held in Valetta last November, the EU launched an Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, designed to address the root causes of irregular migration and forcible displacement.

Conceived as a faster-acting and more flexible alternative to traditional development assistance,

the fund aims to support job-creating development programmes, like those in the domains of food security and health. But also, and perhaps most importantly, projects aimed at improving migration management in the countries of the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa.

So far, ten projects have been adopted and are in the process of being launched, including a €67 million package to improve the means of subsistence in the regions of Ethiopia where the migration phenomenon is particularly extreme, according to the Commission.

Another project to receive support from the trust fund is a €50 million programme to return displaced Somalis to stable areas of the country.

But this new trust fund, designed to serve as part of the response to the migration crisis by fostering development in the migrants' countries of origin and transit, may run up against the same problems traditionally encountered by European aid.

Critical Court of Auditors

According to a highly critical European Court of Auditors report on the share of European aid allocated

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to the issue of migration published in mid-March, the EU is struggling to draw a clear link between the causes and the effects of the phenomenon.

In the two programmes covered by the audit, both of which come under the EU's "external migration spending in Southern Mediterranean and Eastern Neighbourhood countries until 2014", the limiting effects on migration have been hard to see.

The lack of reliable indicators for illegal immigration statistics in the EU makes the evaluation of these programmes difficult. Neither does the practice of giving a thin dusting of aid money to a large number of small projects help in assessing their results. Despite the large number of initiatives on the ground, they have so far failed to reach the critical number of people needed to influence mass migration movements.

Elizabeth Collett, the director of the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), believes that the similarities between the workings of the Emergency Trust

Fund for Africa and the programmes studied by the EU's auditors could see the trust fund confronted with the very same problems.

Security mission creep

A large proportion of European aid funds are spent on the management of migratory flows, sometimes at the direct expense of development projects.

The Court of Auditors' report found that "security and border protection were the predominant element in European migration spending".

"We are extremely concerned that European development aid is becoming increasingly influenced by the EU's security interests. But strengthening security at the borders in order to contain migration has nothing to do with helping the populations suffering from poverty in developing countries or dealing with extreme inequality," said Sara Tesorieri, Oxfam's EU migration policy advisor.

This leaning towards security is beginning to find its way into the very

fabric of official development assistance. In February this year, the development ministers of the OECD Development Assistance Committee's 29 countries agreed to expand their definition of development assistance to include more spending linked to peace and security operations.

The link between development and migration

But even the conventional logic, which states that the temptation to migrate should fall in line with poverty alleviation and job creation efforts, is itself up for debate.

"Research conducted by Oxford University has shown that increased human development will probably lead to more, not less, mobility," Tesorieri said.

The UN shares this view. "More development means more migration. Because all those people that have for a long time been wanting to leave, but could not afford to do so, can now leave their country," François Crépeau, the UN's special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, said during a visit to Brussels.

INTERVIEW

How do we measure the successes of development cooperation?

The actual impact of development cooperation is coming under increasing scrutiny. EurActiv Germany spoke to Sarah Holzapfel of the German Development Institute (DIE) about her latest report, "Boosting or hindering aid effectiveness? An assessment of systems for measuring donor agency results".

Dr. Sarah Holzapfel is an agricultural economist and a research associate at the German Development Institute's (DIE) bilateral and multilateral development policy department.

Holzapfel spoke to EurActiv Germany's Editor-in-Chief, Ama Lorenz.

Holzapfel investigated standard indicators used by eleven international donor organisations to see whether they actually help to measure the success of development cooperation projects.

You carried out this assessment on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) on whether fixed parameters show the successes achieved by development cooperation. Do those parameters really make sense?

Measuring development cooperation is indeed difficult. The standard indicators, from which one selects maybe 15 or 20 to aggregate data across different time periods, really are always quite superficial. If, for example, the number of teachers being trained is taken into account, the results don't always look so good. It only demonstrates that teachers have been trained and how many have been. But did the students learn anything from them? You can't come to any meaningful conclusions using these indicators.

Given public criticism of insufficient evidence on development cooperation's effectiveness, donor organisations are faced with a difficult task. How did you go about evaluating the issue?

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This is difficult to answer. Aggregated reporting hasn't been around so long. First attempts were made in the early 2000s. Donors are still learning to adapt their systems.

For example, the indicators used by these organisations show that 80% of our projects have achieved 80% of our goals. This can of course be used as an indication as to whether these projects work or not. And of course it is good if you can measure certain aggregated effects and tell the public about these results.

But if we want to evaluate our results within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more in-depth analysis at a national level has to be carried out.

What does that entail exactly?

Donors have to measure the impact of their projects. How many kilometres of road we have built or how much water we have provided should be complemented by the impact these projects have had and are having. How have the lives of our target group actually changed? Has income increased? Is there more food security?

That sounds like something that should just be a matter of course due to donor organisation obligations under the SDGs and the Aid Transparency Initiative (ATI) for more transparency. What should happen now?

A record of these results would satisfy a part of the general obligations for transparency. In my opinion, donors should record all projects and their results in a central database to which everyone has access worldwide. That would be very helpful for the people and governments of developing countries and would give them an overview of what is being financed and what kind of successes are being reaped. Donors could also help by sharing



As more money pours into development cooperation, its use should be made even more transparent. [DFID/Flickr]

and coordinating better with those governments.

So everyone in Germany could then see exactly which projects will be financed with taxpayers' money.

Development cooperation transparency is also a problem in Germany, although not exclusively. We provide relatively little information in comparison with, for example, the French. Multilateral donors such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank or American development banks, such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), operate quite differently to that. There is even more insight provided into project documents, proposals, monitoring reports – something bilateral donors could learn a lot from.

The ATI standard would actually be good for more transparency. However, the presentation of project results is still quite poor. Donors mostly just publish project expenditure and where funding comes from, not the outcomes of the projects themselves.

This is perhaps then tied to public criticism that tax payer money is used unwisely in development projects?

That is one of the factors that repeatedly raises its head and is a reason why perhaps not everything should be made public, as some things can be better solved internally. Of course, development cooperation suffers if the results are not always positive.

But it is also quite clear that not every project can be successful. Nevertheless, as more and more money is spent on development projects, it is important that the public be made aware of where that money is going.

Meaningful indicators on quantity and quality evaluation would not only make their projects more transparent, but donors would become more comparable to each other.

Current measuring systems are indeed incomparable. Each measures factors differently somehow. Therefore, it is difficult to compare different donors with each other. Assessing which projects are useful and which are not is quite limited.

How is your study going to help future efforts to measure development cooperation effectiveness?

In addition to centralised registration and a combination of transparency and evaluation, in my opinion it is very important to involve the relevant partner countries in the analysis. In development cooperation there is, after all, important issues at play such as ownership, alignment and relevant coordination. Each project has its own monitoring system, which runs parallel to the systems of the respective partner governments. There should be more harmonising efforts made by individual donors here. That would help future coordination and transparency a lot.

EU aid in the Horn of Africa

Europe's action in Ethiopia and the wider Horn of Africa region provides a telling example of the challenges international donors face when trying to link emergency assistance with long-term development aid.

Last week, the EU's most senior foreign affairs, development and emergency aid officials travelled to Addis Ababa to pledge a further €122 million in aid to head off the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in the country from heading into a full-blown famine.

It was a mark of the gravity of the El Niño weather phenomenon, a rising of surface sea temperatures, exacerbated by climate change, which has the contradictory effects of increasing both flooding, and – in large parts of East Africa and the Horn of Africa – droughts.

Ethiopia – a country of some 100 million people – has been the worst affected, with more than 10% of its population reliant on food aid for survival.

It is the worst drought in 50 years – even more severe than the famine of 1984-85, which sparked the Live Aid charity concert, and (to the chagrin of Ethiopia's current government, which has put in place extensive emergency measures to identify and react to drought warnings) left the country synonymous with starvation and famine.

The €122.5 million pledged by European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides, and Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, is aimed at relieving the most immediate food needs of some 10 million plus people, with what the EU terms "early recovery assistance [and] initiatives that address the root causes of fragility and vulnerability."



Cattle in Ethiopia killed during the last major drought in 2009. [Oxfam/Flickr]

Four months between donations and food on ground

With a four-month 'lead time' between pledges of cash and actual delivery of food supplies on the ground, it hopes to relieve pressure on the population ahead of the summer – traditionally Ethiopia's rainy season.

Styliandes said, "With over 10 million people [in Ethiopia] currently struggling to find food, the humanitarian situation is very worrying. The EU is taking action – our new support will allow us to step up our efforts to help the most vulnerable in Ethiopia."

Mimica was careful to praise the efforts of the government in Addis Ababa, adding "We can build on the past successes of Ethiopia."

In itself, a €122 million aid package is not enough – as NGOs and the Ethiopian government were quick to point out, and Ethiopia is not the only country in the Horn of Africa (which also includes

Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti) to be suffering.

Indeed, it is a supplementary package of aid, coming on top of the El Niño emergency package announced in December 2015, of some €79 million for the Greater Horn of Africa region, €43 million of which went to Ethiopia.

And Ethiopia is already the largest beneficiary of EU development assistance, receiving €200 million in humanitarian aid since 2011, and a country programme of €745 million for the period 2014-2020 in development assistance.

Nevertheless, the government in Addis Ababa says it is still some \$650 million short of its target of \$1.4 billion donor appeal, with "significant life-saving gaps remaining across sectors", is four weeks into a 90-day awareness-raising campaign about the need for further help.

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“Very little...very late”

Speaking on 17 March – before the most recent EU aid package – Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn warned, “The aid provided to us so far is very little, and it often came very late.”

Without specifying Syria by name, he also pointed to one of the reasons this current drought in East Africa, which has also affected countries such as Malawi and Zimbabwe, has so far attracted little attention in the Western media, namely the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean and North Africa.

“Ethiopia should not be neglected by any means, despite all the other crises that are going on elsewhere in the world,” Desalegn added.

“My country deserves more support because we are also sheltering some 750,000 refugees from neighbouring countries that need food aid.”

That hints at the other problems confronting the European Commission as it tries to allocate aid in the Horn of Africa: whilst Ethiopia is relatively stable and secure, if authoritarian, its neighbours (Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan) comprise a roll-call of failed or failing states, Islamist terrorism and civil war.

Addis Ababa has promised to speed up the opening of its new electrified train line to the port-state of Djibouti, to ease access for food aid

Commissioner Mimica used his trip to the continent to also visit neighbouring Sudan, where he pledged €100 million, under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, set up in 2015 to help “tackle instability and the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement.”

Sudan still has some 3 million internally displaced people within its borders, following the Darfur conflict more than a decade ago.

Whilst NGOs have largely welcomed the extra aid for the El Nino drought, it came with caveats, qualifications

and – at least in one case – downright scepticism.

Women and small-scale farmers

Oxfam pointed to the importance of local, small-scale, agriculture producers in future development initiatives, once the immediate crisis has passed.

Hannah Saarinen, EU policy advisor for investment in agriculture, told EurActiv.com “Food security is a high priority within the EU, but the question is how that turns into policies.

“The wider picture of development should highlight particularly the importance of women-farmers, as this has a multiplier effect in the Horn of Africa where agriculture remains the main means of subsistence and production.

“At a policy level it [the importance of small-scale, and female, farmers] is there, but it is not just a question of development, but also investment and trade policies, and where these are compatible with sustainable agriculture.

“Private sector investment in agriculture is large and growing, but often done largely on their [Western conglomerates] terms and conditions.”

The One Campaign, co-founded by rock star Bono in 2007, hailed “some positive actions” from the EU, but emphasised the need for a focus on nutrition.

Tamira Gunzburg, its Brussels Director at ONE, said “During the drought in 2011, the European Commission pioneered an approach that merged humanitarian relief with long-term development programmes designed to build resilience to such shocks in future.

“Yet as external shocks such as El Niño threaten that progress, donors must remain by these countries’ side.

“The European Commission should continue to invest in programmes aimed to treat and prevent undernutrition both in and beyond the Horn of Africa. Doing so could help prevent the deaths of almost half of all children under 5 that

die each year.”

War on Want, the UK-based charity which boasts it was “unique” during the 1985 famine in working with the liberation fronts of Tigray and Eritrea, rather than than just the Marxist Derg regime in Addis Ababa, was more scathing.

Director John Hilary told EurActiv, “Far too much of European aid is about satisfying interests of European businesses, not countries that desperately need our help.

“The point of aid is not to deal with short-term symptoms, but long-term structural problems countries in East Africa face.

“EU aid needs to build on long-term capacities of Africa, so that they don’t need aid in future. Everything else perpetuates the problem.”

Eritrea – money and aid vs democracy?

And now the Commission also faces new criticism much closer to home, in Brussels itself, over its aid policies to the Horn of Africa.

Last month, the largest party in the European Parliament, the centre-right EPP group, demanded that no EU money be given to authoritarian regimes in the Horn of Africa.

Davo Ivo Stier, spokesman on the Development Committee, pointed to the €200 million pledged to Eritrea over the next five years, saying “People are fleeing Eritrea due to its oppressive regime.

“It is important to ensure that EU aid does not assist authoritarian regimes with our taxpayers’ money.

“[We have] repeatedly emphasised that democratic governance, the building of transparent and inclusive organisations, and the protection of human rights, should be the basis [of future funding for Eritrea.

“We need more transparency in development programming, and better cooperation between the EU institutions,” he complained.

EU looks to confirm aid as a lever on human rights issues

For over 20 years, the EU has used development assistance as a lever to advance the cause of human rights. But with the current cooperation framework soon to expire, the future of aid conditionality looks uncertain.

The use of European aid as a lever of influence on human rights issues in the Global South was put under the microscope as part of a public consultation on the future of the Cotonou Agreement. The conclusion of the European stakeholders was unanimous: European aid must remain conditional upon respect for human rights and the rule of law in recipient countries.

Adopted in 2000, the Cotonou Agreement governs the EU's political, economic and development relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP group). Human rights, the rule of law and the principles of democracy form one of the main pillars of this agreement, which both sides commit to upholding.

Cotonou up for review

When negotiations on the future of the Cotonou Agreement officially open in October 2018, the question of the conditionality of European development assistance is sure to be among the more controversial areas of the discussion. The agreement expires in 2020.

In its response to the public consultation on the post-2020 development cooperation framework, the Commission addressed a number of criticisms raised by NGOs, national parliaments, businesses and think-



The EU suspended its aid programme with Burundi after president Nkurunziza's decision to run for an unconstitutional third mandate. [Dave Proffer/Flickr]

tanks.

"Respondents have been generally critical on the extent to which the Cotonou mechanisms have contributed to improving human rights, democracy, rule of law and good governance," the Commissions stated.

One common criticism expressed in the consultation was that the political dialogue between the EU and the ACP countries was seen as "too EU-driven, technical and formalistic".

But according to the Commission, it was also widely acknowledged that political dialogue should be strengthened and preserved, as "it has helped raise the profile of certain human rights and controversial issues in the development agenda".

The political dialogue enabled by Cotonou on the subjects of human rights and democracy were also welcomed by certain contributors, like the French General Secretariat for European Affairs (SGAE). "It is a particularly valuable tool in countries with limited bilateral exchanges with EU member states, and with which Europe has limited opportunities for dialogue (notably Surinam)," the French contribution stated.

Dialogue with Burundi

Since the Cotonou Agreement came into force, the EU has leaned heavily on its political dialogue capacity. Where this has failed to bring the desired results, Europe has invoked article 96, under which countries can be sanctioned and even suspended from the cooperation programme.

The EU has used this article to apply political pressure in response to coups d'état and human rights violations in Fiji (2000 and 2007), Zimbabwe (2002), the Central African Republic (2003), Guinea-Bissau (2004 and 2011), Togo (2004) and Madagascar (2010).

In mid-March, the European Union also announced the official suspension of development assistance for Burundi, which was plunged into crisis when its president, Pierre Nkurunziza, announced his intention to run for an unconstitutional third mandate in April 2015.

"Projects funded by the EU and aimed at guaranteeing the population's access to basic services, without channelling the money through the Burundi government's bank accounts,

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are being prepared,” the European Commissioner for Development said.

With an aid package worth some €430 million for the period 2015-2020, the EU is Burundi’s biggest donor.

Respect for human rights

If the EU’s cooperation with developing countries is today conditional on the respect of human rights, this has not always been the case.

The concrete connection between aid and the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law was first made in 1995, in an amendment to the Lomé Convention.

“This initially met with strong resistance from the ACP group, based on the principles of non-interference and neutrality that had characterised international cooperation until then,” a report by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) stated.

In practice, the EU is the only actor to use the political dimension of the partnership. The ACP group has “only rarely used the political dialogue clause of the CPA on its own initiative”, the German Development Institute (DIE) stated.

Future clashes over LGBTI rights

Certain subjects still cause deep divisions between the ACP group – notably its African members – and the European Union. Sexual and minority rights are a particularly incendiary area which have been glossed over in the current Cotonou Agreement.

The proliferation of laws against LGBTI people in certain African countries, and the EU’s own strong anti-discrimination position promise a tense series of negotiations over the post-Cotonou aid framework.

“Some member states believe [this question] could spell the end for the agreement, or at least pose a significant threat to the success of the post-Cotonou debate,” the DIE stated.

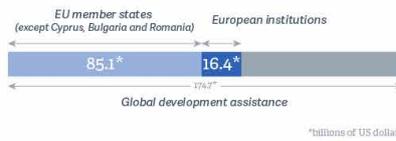
INFOGRAPHIC

Refugee crisis leads to boost in European aid spending

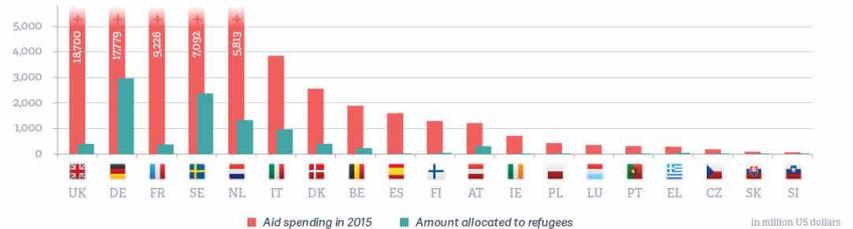
Europe is still the world’s leading provider of official development assistance (ODA). In 2015, its international solidarity budget increased sharply to cover the costs of the refugee crisis.

EU countries and institutions contributed more than half of the world’s development aid in 2015.

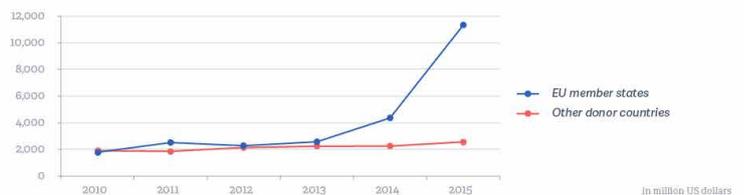
In 2015, European development assistance budgets rose by 16%, twice as fast as the global average.



Many European countries used a large proportion of their official development assistance budgets to finance the reception of refugees in 2015.



The proportion of European aid spent on the reception of refugees was also far higher than the global average.



Source: OECD

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