

Uncertain power: the changing role of official donors in humanitarian action

Humanitarian Policy Group



Why examine official humanitarian policy?

- Constitutes a major source of finance
- Way in which funds are disbursed and managed matters
- Despite its significance, limited independent assessment of donors as humanitarian actors

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Overview

- Defining the trend
- Checks and balances
- From bilateralisation to good donorship

Bilateralisation: what is driving it?

- The search for coherence

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'Bilateralisation': What is it?

- Increasing proximity of official donors to humanitarian decision-making and operations

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- Procedural: More defined policy and contracts

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- Operational: enhanced capacity at HQ and field levels

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Bilateralisation of spending

- Heavy concentration of donors -The US and ECHO are particularly dominant

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- Bilaterally-managed expenditure has increased

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- NGOs increasing share and volume

'Bilateralisation': procedural dimensions

- From grants to contracts?

Trends in donor management of contracts

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- Managerialism or enhanced performance monitoring?

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Donor field presence

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- Operationality and the role of the military

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Checks and balances

- Parliamentary scrutiny limited

Accountable donorship

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- NAO's limited investigation
- Results-based management

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- voice of the beneficiary?

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- Monitoring of resource allocation against need
- Agreement on performance monitoring

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- Politicised humanitarianism or politically informed decision-making?

Principles of good donorship

- Commitment to international humanitarian law and principles
- needs-based approach to resource allocation
- predictable, adequate and flexible funding

Respect for Int'l law and principles

- Clarification of the purpose of OHA, in law
- Commitment to impartial allocation of resources
- Positioning of OHA in relation to foreign policy
- Commitment to independent humanitarian action in definition of contracts and operating procedures

Needs-based programming

- Practical manifestation of commitment to impartial humanitarian action

Predictable, adequate and flexible funding

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Monitoring good donorship

- National - parliament, NAO, evaluations
- Internationally - DAC, peer review
- Civil society and international organisations
Investing in critical dialogue

Taking forward the debate

- Good donorship initiative
- Humanitarian Financing Working Group