

# Winning the Virtuous Battle, but Losing the War?

The tradeoffs of humanitarian aid and its impact on human development

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## Abstract

This paper addresses the question of what conditions best enable recipient countries to harness humanitarian aid to create long term human development. In an examination of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Sri Lanka, it becomes clear that the conditions that limit humanitarian aid's potential for human development are more apparent than those that enable it. Political conflict, instability, inequalities, and social divisions in the recipient countries contribute to the limited effect of humanitarian aid on development, but institutional weakness, inconsistency, and competition within the international humanitarian aid community have a larger impact on development potential. These limitations are difficult for recipient states to overcome due to the structures of inequality between recipients and donors, which undermine recipient capacity and voice, creating cycles of dependence. The international humanitarian aid community promotes the importance of development in humanitarian aid. While it sets forth nonbinding agreements and procedures to promote development, those steps are rarely followed because of the underlying structures they would challenge. This is the tradeoff of contemporary humanitarian aid, while it provides important relief that saves many, through issues of political influence, it also preserves conditions of dependence, inequality, and vulnerability which can limit human development and thereby increase future humanitarian crises.

## Introduction

The humanitarian aid community has become more aware of the intrinsic link between human development and the need for humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid provides an opportunity for countries to not only recover to pre-crisis conditions, but also improve quality of life. How to achieve improvement is a difficult question, and the humanitarian community has always grappled with its role in the political, economic, and social structures and trajectories of the countries within which it operates. There are few concrete examples of how humanitarian aid has succeeded in laying the groundwork for human development while providing necessary relief, but there are patterns in why has not. Weak institutions, political conflict and inequality within the recipient communities are common factors that have limited the potential of humanitarian aid to foster long term development. The political interests, competition, and weak regulations within the international aid community combined with the power asymmetry between recipients and donors, place greater limitations on recipient countries' ability to use humanitarian aid to create human development. The international aid community has competing and inconsistent visions that prioritize their own interests over those of the recipients. The recipients are frequently unable to redirect the aid agenda because of the inequality between donor and recipient. Issues that limit human development at the local level are then exacerbated by poor interactions with the international community, further undermining the recipients and creating cycles of dependence.

The 1990 UN Human Development Report defines human development as “a process of enlarging people’s choices,” by “the formation of human capabilities- such as improved health, knowledge skills- and the use people make of their acquired capabilities” (United Nations 1990, 10). Human development refers to not only economic improvement, though economic growth is

an important component because it creates resources and opportunity, but also an increase in quality of life and human capital (Kosack & Tobin 2006). The design and implementation of recovery programs can improve human life during relief, and create new expectations and frameworks to continue improving capabilities long after. It is important to examine the impact of various humanitarian aid programs on human development to ensure that these opportunities and resources are not being squandered.

Humanitarian crises fall into a diverse category of conflicts and natural disasters. The two cases of Sri Lanka's 2004 tsunami, and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti demonstrate this geographical, political, social, and economic variety. Both disasters set records for international humanitarian response. Governments alone pledged just over \$12 billion to Haiti, with another \$146.8 million donated by US companies (Ramachandran & Walz 2015, 32; Pisano 2013, 609). In Sri Lanka, \$13.5 billion was raised immediately following the tsunami, which was much higher than previous highest effort of \$9 billion pledged for 1998's Hurricane Mitch hit Central America (Hilhorst & Jansen 2010, 1128; Christopolos et al. 2010, S202). Both cases also featured a 'Build Back Better' discourse of aid as an opportunity to develop. The two cases differ, but had similar challenges when interacting with the humanitarian aid system, demonstrating the systemic nature of these issues.

On December 26, 2004, a massive earthquake occurred off the Sumatran coast. The resulting Indian Ocean tsunami impacted 14 countries, leaving 38,195 dead and 834,000 homeless in Sri Lanka alone (Lee 2008, 1410). The tsunami struck a country mired in a long civil war between the Sinhalese majority government, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which sought the autonomy of Eelam, the sacred Tamil homeland in the north of Sri Lanka (Khasalamwa 2009). The areas hardest hit by the tsunami were the North and East

provinces, which were also the most impacted by the civil war. Many of the victims' lives had already been disrupted and displaced by the ethnic conflict. There was false hope that the tsunami would unify the country. The humanitarian response to the tsunami faced the challenge of navigating this complicated and divided political and social environment, and from the outset, successful humanitarian action was tied to the goals of peace and more equal development and representation for the people of Sri Lanka.

On January 12, 2010, an earthquake struck Haiti 25km west of Port-au Prince, and left the country trembling with over 52 aftershocks registering a 4.5 or higher on the Richter scale (Vitoriano et al. 2010, 201). The destruction was massive, leaving approximately 220,000 people dead and 300,000 buildings destroyed (Van Rooyen 2013, 12). Haiti has a long history of political corruption and instability, natural disasters, and foreign intervention. Haiti's birth as a slave rebellion nation led to an early rejection of industrial agriculture for a subsistence agricultural economy. It also created a fear that the neighboring Dominican Republic would function as an entry point for invasion by nations angered by Haitian independence (Frankema & Masé. 2014). This economic and political isolation made Haiti vulnerable and underdeveloped with weak institutions. Its political instability is matched by its economic difficulties. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, despite being the recipient of \$38 billion from the US in aid in past 60 years, to little positive change (Buss 2015, 319). While aid has not significantly improved the situation in Haiti, and has no doubt helped to maintain the status quo, it very possible things would be much worse without aid.

#### The Debates Surrounding Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian response and relief have existed for centuries as the general practice of alleviating others' suffering. It evolved into today's institution-based humanitarian aid in the 19<sup>th</sup>

Century with the formation of formal organizations (Barnett 2009). The first such organization was the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), founded in 1863 by Henri Dunant in Geneva (Polman 2010). The ICRC's founding principles of independence, impartiality, and neutrality still guide humanitarian aid. Since its official inception, humanitarian aid has been divided by questions of conditionality, and whether aid does more long term harm to the overall quality of life of the recipients.

The three principles of independence, impartiality, and neutrality are assumed to create a humanitarian space separate from the political context in which the disaster occurred. This idea of humanitarian space has long been negated by scholars. Usually, this 'humanitarian space' is described as a specifically designated physical area, but politics cannot be bounded physically. Kleinfeld (2007) points to the 1997 work by Natter and Jones which states that the presence of discourse and materials within a space make it inherently political. Following this logic, Collinson (2014) posits that the designation of humanitarian space is arbitrary. This then raises questions of the possible arbitrariness of all humanitarian aid decisions, such as interpretations and applications of the three principles themselves. Hilhorst and Jansen (2010) criticize the debate of humanitarian space because any discussion of an apolitical possibility supports the false assumption that space can be depoliticized. Despite this academic consensus, humanitarian aid actors continue to use the discourse of humanitarian space because it allows them to achieve their goals.

*The three principles: bringers of humanity or destruction?*

The three principles of independence, impartiality, and neutrality ensure that humanitarian aid will be offered unconditionally. The myth of the apolitical three principles has the important role of easing access to divided and controversial spaces such as war zones. These

seemingly uncontroversial principles have been the subject of debate within both the academic and aid communities. The conflict originated between Henri Dunant, and his inspiration to form the ICRC, Florence Nightingale. Nightingale was disgusted by the three principles Dunant proposed. She argued that without conditionality conflicts would be prolonged, unhindered by financial and human costs. Volunteers, rather than governments, provide aid to the affected, thereby diminishing the literal cost. The wounded are healed, thereby minimizing the damaging effect of war on human capital (Polman 2010). Nightingale also raises the concern that without conditionality recipient governments have no incentive to address the underlying structures and conditions that create human suffering. If that is true, it logically follows that a lack of conditionality also limits the possibility of aid assisting human development. Unconditional humanitarian aid does not hinder human development, as it brings important supplies to save lives, but, by not challenging the circumstances which created a need for aid in the first place, the opportunities to increase human capabilities and their use may stay the same or decrease. The question becomes how to alleviate the suffering of all, as humanitarian aid intends, while also fostering human development to minimize conditions that create and intensify human suffering.

Dunant, and most humanitarian aid actors, believed in the three principles until 1968, when Biafra was mid-civil war and faced a food shortage. It was determined that emergency food aid would be withheld from the rebel side to force them to negotiate. Without the food aid, an estimated 3,000 babies died each day, leading Oxfam and other NGOs to rescind conditionality and feed the innocent victims. While reducing starvation, they also arguably enabled the conflict to continue for an additional 18 months without the pressure of starvation on the rebels (Allen & Styan 2000, 829-830). After Biafra, the humanitarian aid community became more divided on conditionality. New humanitarianism split off from classic emergency based

humanitarian aid to include “right of intervention” and “freedom of denunciation” as tools for aid organizations during crises (Chandler 2001, 685).

Even if there is no greater conflict context around the natural disaster, conditionality remains a contentious issue. Since those most vulnerable to natural disasters are the poorest, least developed, and least equal societies, actors in the humanitarian aid community argue that certain social, economic, and political structures need to be addressed to reduce vulnerability, and increase quality of life (Lyons 2009). Depending on whether this relationship between development and vulnerability is perceived as causation or just correlation, determines whether one promotes conditionality.

Khasalamwa (2009) identifies three major theoretical interpretations of the relationship between natural and manmade systems in determining the severity of a disaster. First, neomarxists may be more supportive of good governance, as they identify “deeply embedded social structures” as the main determinant of development, and vulnerability (Khasalamwa 2009, 76). However, it is important to also note, that they may be hesitant and view humanitarian aid as continuing and recreating structures of inequality. Behavioralists on the other hand, would be more uncomfortable with manipulations of the three principles as they argue that people have little impact on the disaster (Khasalamwa 2009). Therefore, efforts should be focused on recovery and relief. Thirdly, the entitlements perspective, which represents the attitudes of most organizations, sees disaster severity as an articulation of the interaction between natural and social systems, and thus seeks to address both (Khasalamwa 2009). These three theoretical perspectives represent how the three principles debate informs if human development concerns relate to humanitarian aid.

The debate as to how to best address recovery plays out in the organization of NGOs as well through the two pure types of organizations; Alchemical and emergency organizations. Alchemical organizations are those that subscribe to the theory that aid should also look at the causes and effects of suffering. Emergency organizations operate under the belief that aid should only be relief based (Barnett 2009). Barnett (2009) argues that organizations adapt relative to the interactions between the different environments in which they operate, such as international normative structures, domestic politics, and the nature of conflicts. Organizations are designed to follow either an alchemical approach, or an emergency approach. However, if necessary, they will adapt to take on characteristics of either approach if required by the circumstances created by the interactions between these environments. This theorization of the relationship between the two approaches to aid (cause and effects versus simple relief) adds a more pragmatic dimension about organization survival to the usual moral discussion of what lives are worth saving.

A modern articulation of the discussion between Dunant and Nightingale is that between humanitarian scholars David Rieff and Hugo Slim. Slim argues for the ‘proper politicization’ of humanitarian aid, and postulates that by turning a blind eye to the political dimensions of a situation, inequalities become “naturalized” (Bridges 2010, 1253). This is further defended as a false politicization because it is based in ‘natural human rights.’ While it is valid to argue that issues of basic human rights such as water, food, security should not be politically controversial, that perspective in itself does not depoliticize them nor remove the controversy of their imposition in some cases. Additionally, while not trying to delve too deeply into cultural relativism, determining and prioritizing natural rights for others can become a slippery slope. This is particularly relevant within the structures of inequality that often exist between donor and beneficiary countries. Rieff, on the other hand, takes the stance that humanitarian actors may

motivate other actors, who are not bound to the three principles of independence, impartiality, and neutrality, to advocate for the change and human rights which fall outside of humanitarian aid's jurisdiction (Bridges 2010). Conditionality can prevent humanitarian aid from reaching suffering people who need emergency relief, as happened initially in the case of Biafra.

However, conditionality also has a role to play after immediate relief in the design of programs to ensure that quality as well as quantity of life is improving.

### *Aid as a neocolonial tool*

Through the maintenance of the three principles, humanitarian space is portrayed as isolated and depoliticized, but as critical theory puts forth, whenever politics are claimed to be neutralized, real power dynamics are simply hidden for a purpose (Kleinfeld 2007). This point can be applied to the veiled power dynamics between the traditionally wealthier and more powerful donor government and aid actors, and the poorer recipients. Hilhorst and Jansen (2010) subscribe to the Foucauldian logic that dominant discourses (like that of the UN agencies, OECD, and other humanitarian aid elites) marginalize certain life styles and structures within the context of the encounter between donor and recipient. The humanitarian system's weak structure and leadership mechanisms allow for its manipulation and inconsistent interpretation by an oligopoly of donor governments which is usually driven by the EU, the US, and the UK, and UN associated organizations (Collinson 2014; Barnett & Walker 2015). Collinson (2014) points out that although the humanitarian system is weakly regulated, it is not lacking resources or influence. The huge power imbalance between the donor and recipient raises concerns about neocolonialism, as donors will create aid structures as they see fit, which often undermine local structures and marginalize local voices and actors.

Generally, the potential for humanitarian aid to impose ideas and structures from dominant wealthier donors, designers, and distributors of aid onto poorer aid recipients is criticized. That view is contradicted by Hans Morgenthau (1962) who argues that while the neocolonial appearance of aid may make recipients more hesitant, including politics is necessary for aid to be effective. Also, it is an important foreign policy tool for the US and other donors. Morgenthau's perspective is not particularly supportive of neocolonial opportunities, but rather recognizes that for aid to be successful for recipients, there must be underlying political change. The issue with Morgenthau's interpretation is that it combines foreign policy *with* conditionality, thereby contaminating the original intentions of conditionality as a way to improve quality of life. Furthermore, his emphasis on the benefits for the donor creates tension as to whose benefit is more important: the donor or the recipient. Kosack and Tobin (2006), among others, agree with Morgenthau that good governance is necessary for effective aid and development, but they argue that the Washington Consensus, which calls for deregulation and economic opening, does not have to be used. Rather, democratic accountability should be applied, thereby limiting the neocolonial imposition of external elite structures which further marginalize the aid recipients.

The discourse of humanitarian aid revolves around the three principles of independence, impartiality, and neutrality and their creation of 'humanitarian space.' Humanitarian space cannot exist because a space can never be fully depoliticized. Instead, the principles are used to gain access, and possibly disguise the power inequalities between donors and recipients. Despite this emphasis on the three principles, there is great debate as to their interpretation and value in saving human lives. The humanitarian aid community is divided on issues of conditionality and the role and scope of humanitarian aid, which in turn informs discussions of using aid to enable human development.

## The Components of the Humanitarian Aid Industry

Humanitarian aid is made up of a complex web of actors that donate, receive, design, implement, and coordinate aid. These behaviors are shaped by actor and case specific political, economic, and social dynamics that will be discussed in greater detail later. To understand the different levels at which each dynamic occurs and is manipulated or ignored, it is important to ground the dynamics in the foundational mechanisms of the humanitarian aid industry.

### *Humanitarian actors on the international scale*

One of the main groups of actors associated with humanitarian aid is nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These nonprofit organizations can be local or international, though international NGOs are more likely to receive donations. In Haiti, only 10 local NGOs received US funding for the earthquake relief effort (Ramachandran & Walz 2015, 36). International NGOs appear on the scene directly after a humanitarian crisis, and frequently, but not always, choose to not work with local NGOs. It is important to note two main characteristics of NGOs or ‘the third sector.’ First, there is heavy competition between NGOs, and second, they exist essentially unregulated (Edwards & Hulme 1996). NGOs are not motivated by profit, but they need donations to survive. Donors are fickle, often directing their funds based on factors other than extent of need. To survive as organizations, as well as fulfill their mission, NGOs must follow the donations. Many NGOs are dependent on governments and official development agencies for donations, giving donor governments influence over NGO programs and agendas (Edwards & Hulme 1996). Some argue that the push for donations has become a race to the bottom, as NGOs may prioritize attracting donations and appealing to donors over their mission and responsibility to beneficiaries (Buthe et al. 2012). This competition drew a veritable explosion of NGOs attracted by the large amounts of donations to Sri Lanka and Haiti.

International bodies such as the UN have attempted to regulate NGOs. One such regulatory mechanism is the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which is designated to coordinate humanitarian policy, advocacy, and response (Morsut & Iturre 2012). OCHA attempts to register the organizations acting at each crisis and coordinate who will lead and pursue each relief and recovery aspect. Each aspect has a designated cluster of organizations and agencies to insure nothing is ignored, or over-prioritized. This cluster approach hopes to more effectively and efficiently deliver aid by eliminating overlap. Although OCHA has no official authority, it has had success, such as in Kosovo when the method allowed the IHRC to spearhead relief efforts (Stephenson 2005). For the cluster effect to be successful, all organizations must register with OCHA, and actively attempt coordination and sharing of information. Sharing and coordination can be limited by the competition between NGOs, contractors, and agencies. The OCHA model clearly did not work in Haiti, most likely due to the extreme competition generated by high donations. One month into the humanitarian effort, there was still a clear lack of information management and coordination between clusters which meant that gaps in aid provision still had not been identified (Altay & Labonte 2014).

Van Rooyen (2013) argues that the pursuit of increased coordination and effectiveness of humanitarian aid could be achieved if OCHA was enhanced via incentives to increase participation, and more formal mechanisms and definitions. While this may increase coordination efforts and improve both the equity and efficiency of humanitarian aid, it may not increase the long-term viability of recovery and development efforts as OCHA does not necessarily increase accountability to local populations. In both Sri Lanka and Haiti there were concerns that decisions about aid design and coordination were made separate from the communities they affected. In both cases, decisions were made in English, and with limited

physical building access for locals (Altay & Labonte 2014). In Sri Lanka, one resident remarked, “We are not important for them . . . we do not take part in this group” (de Silva 2009, 258). The competition between the aid actors limited coordination of aid distribution and design, thereby creating gaps and inefficient aid distribution (Stephenson 2005). Since the recipients are prevented from participating, there is no accountability, resulting in uneven resource allocation.

Donor governments determine the targets of aid and development resources, particularly if there is an economic inequality between the recipient and donor states. These conversations are dominated by the oligopoly of donor governments which form the unofficial ‘Humanitarian Club.’ As this group sets the rules, their patterns of behavior permeate the agenda of NGOs who are dependent on their donations to function.

#### *Interactions between locals and the humanitarian aid industry*

Participation is often preached as a clear strategy to fix the issues of poor aid allocation in humanitarian aid, such as the mismatch of supply and demand. This mismatch occurs when donors ignore the recipients’ desires for aid and donation priorities, and instead give in accordance with their own relief and/or development agenda. In Sri Lanka, NGOs focused on sanitation and the building of latrines, despite the lack of interest in those projects among beneficiaries because those services did not exist prior to the tsunami (Lee 2008). Likewise, in Haiti the US government donated 510% the requested amount for transportation, but only 20% of the requested amount for strengthening democratic institutions (Ramachandran & Walz 2015, 32). One perspective, as argued by Ramachandran & Walz (2015), is that this aid mismatch occurred because the ‘humanitarian club’ prefers to work within their own framework, and ignore that of the beneficiaries. Recipient priorities are marginalized just as recipients are physically blocked from access to decisions.

Spending decisions for humanitarian aid greatly impact human development potential. Each country's development plan and goals are different, relative to their distinct political, economic conditions, and social foundations and dynamics. When donors highly influence the direction of humanitarian aid and development without the participation of the recipients, important aspects of the country's recovery will be neglected, to the detriment of increasing capabilities and quality of human life. While donors have experience in humanitarian aid and development in general, needs, and desired choices and opportunities will always vary by context, a context which is can be misinterpreted or ignored without recipient participation.

The humanitarian aid community knows the importance of participation, and frequently stresses it in reforms such as the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness (Dabelstein & Patton 2012). Rarely does participation occur in practice, most likely due to preexisting habits, structures, and political considerations (Nunnenkamp et al. 2013). In the case of Haiti, the government no doubt requested the funds for strengthening of democratic institutions to combat its corruption problems, as well as to address the high number of civil servants and government infrastructure destroyed in the earthquake, both important issues to address for relief and capabilities development (Morsut & Iturre 2012). Providing such resources would improve government capacity to coordinate the humanitarian effort, as well as be strong into the future. Instead, they were cut off from resources, and decisions, generating dependence and are more likely to remain crippled long after the earthquake recovery is completed. While it is understandable that the Haitian government was not given all the resources due to its legacy of corruption, there are tradeoffs to be made. Relief was given which was essential to the survival of many people, yet continuing to do things without Haitian participation keeps the government

and people vulnerable to future disasters and dependent on outsiders, instead of gaining the capacity to increase their capabilities and opportunities more independently.

NGOs, international bodies, governments, and private contractors represent some of the bodies at work within the humanitarian aid industry. The structures of humanitarian aid are generally dictated by the 'Humanitarian Club,' which often creates discord between what disaster struck states want, and what they receive. Furthermore, an environment of heavy competition exists between NGOs due to dependence on donations. This competition leads NGOs to be more accountable to donors than to the actual recipients, leading to a potential priority shift from mission to revenue. The top down nature of aid without the participation of the recipients creates dependence on aid and limits improvements in capabilities (Lee 2008). The additional lack of official structures for regulation of NGO activity prevents recipients from holding humanitarian agents accountable for their work. These conditions create an environment whereby aid is easily manipulated and inefficiently distributed, making full recovery difficult.

#### Negotiations of Power in the Humanitarian Aid Context

Most scholars now acknowledge that humanitarian space is political. Most actors in the humanitarian system also recognize its political nature, but use the guise of separation to gain legitimacy and access through the three principles (independence, impartiality, and neutrality). The three principles are manipulated to meet the political goals of the different actors involved, as well as hide political actions as a moral imperative through false conditionality (Hilhorst & Jansen 2010). Politics transpire internationally and domestically in each disaster context thereby corrupting the humanitarian aid and its potential to create human development through increasing capacity and opportunity.

*Humanitarianism as an expression of foreign policy*

Hans Morgenthau (1962) argues that humanitarian aid is not *necessarily* political, though it always occurs in a political context, and can be a political tool. Since the end of the Cold War, it has become increasingly apparent that humanitarian aid is a type of foreign policy. After all USAID, which determines the path of most US aid, is situated within the US State Department (Moore 2012). Narang (2016) found that despite the promise that humanitarian aid will be allocated to anyone and everyone according to their need, if there is not a greater foreign policy rationale for providing aid, the country will receive significantly less aid. Countries are more likely to be influenced by the geographical proximity, political affinity, and colonial ties to recipient country than by altruistic motivations (Fink & Redaelli 2011).

A famous study by Alesina and Dollar (2000) explores the political determinants of aid. They found that in direct opposition to both the unconditional three principles that imply no political motivation, and conditionality discourse, which indicates that political motivation based in domestic ‘good governance,’ aid is driven most consistently by *international* political conditions. The term ‘conditionality’ is being hijacked from its initial purpose of insuring that aid is not diminishing the quality of life of its recipients, to instead impose the agenda of the donor on the recipients. For example, the presence of democracy which, while political, is often tied to improved capabilities and quality of life, is less indicative of aid than expected; only increasing it by an average of 50% (Alesina & Dollar 2000, 51). This pattern is additionally corrupted by the inconsistency of the prioritization of democracy among donors. Nordic countries tend to be the most insistent, whereas the US, France, and other top contributors prioritize previous colonial ties, general political friendliness, and UN votes ahead of democracy.

In comparison, other factors which are much less relevant to the quality of life of recipients, but much more relevant to the agenda of the donating country have a larger impact on conditions of aid allocation. A country without colonial ties must have 50 times more casualties in the disaster than one with colonial ties to receive the same amount of aid (Stromberg 2007, 221). Not only is there an apparent correlation between political factors and aid allocation, but there are weak or insignificant correlations between aid and indicators of the severity of the humanitarian crisis like death toll, income per capita, infant mortality rates, and the number of refugees (Narang 2016, 194). Clearly, the donor country's political wishes are prioritized over the needs of the disaster struck recipients.

Conditionality has become a cover for foreign policy driven decisions in humanitarian aid, as well as other forms of aid. Conditionality regained prominence at the end of the Cold War under the premise that aid be given on the condition of adherence to democratic and/or human rights principles, however it has not maintained its non-foreign policy purity (de Felice 2015). If decisions of conditionality are not formed by irrelevant international political factors, it may be assumed that conditional aid is the most effective for relief and development. However, the baseline presumption that a good government will be better equipped to apply aid resources, has little statistical support (Winters 2010). This may be because non-foreign policy based conditionality rarely occurs, or because of the lack of monitoring and accountability, which results in aid to noncompliant governments. Additionally, the presence of a democratic government does not mean that other factors such as the competition between NGOs, elites, or the level of international intervention will not prevent aid from reaching those who need it (Ehrenfeld et al. 2003).

The New Humanitarian Agenda frames conditionality as the ethical or moral policy it was originally, rather than as a political policy. The problem is that decisions of conditionality are generally set by governments or international bodies, which are tainted by political agendas, such as votes in the UN. In the case of private aid, and aid from NGOs, the political aspect still clouds much conditionality as NGOs rely on governments for funding, and individuals will often be formed by their government's rhetoric. The inconsistency with which conditionality is applied limits its effectiveness, and the fact that these structures and ideas are imposed from an external international elite according to foreign policy goals limits its potential to the serve purely the purpose of increasing quality of life. Conditionality has potential to incentivize valid reforms, but because it is inherently one-sided and imposed externally, its credibility and effectiveness are limited. Conditionality is sold as an ethical issue, focused on quality of life, but in practice is a guise for foreign policy related motivations for aid decisions which further reduce recipient focus, and potentially recipient recovery, and development.

*Humanitarian aid's relationship with recipient domestic political systems*

The politics of aid allocation that occur at the international level interact with, and shape the recipient country's domestic politics. Foreign policy based conditionality and exclusion can undermine domestic political capacity and create cycles of dependence. Additionally, the paternal mindset that international actors automatically know what conditions are best for a country can make preexisting political divisions worse, especially when the local political context is ignored.

Despite the 2000 Millennium Summit and the 2002 Monterrey Conference which emphasized (beneficiary) country ownership of humanitarian aid and development by calling for donor harmonization, coordination, and working with recipients, donor countries often stick to

their own ideas of correct development and ignore local context (Bourguignon & Sundberg, 2007). Barnett (2012) argues that such behavior brings up issues of sovereignty and paternalism, as donors and other international actors presume they know and can do better than the state itself. To what extent can other states intervene without threatening the sovereignty of the beneficiary? Humanitarian aid often paternalizes either the state, or the people, if the state is not seen as having legitimate sovereignty in the eyes of its public. This goes beyond the debates of the effectiveness or role of conditionality, to show that the assumption at the base of conditionality that the donor knows best, permeate other types of aid decisions.

This phenomenon can be seen in the common choice to channel most humanitarian aid through international NGOs or private contractors rather than through the government itself. This increases the size and influence of external actors while limiting the voice and capacity of local government. In Haiti, of the total aid, 99% went to NGOs and contractors, and only 1% went to the Haitian government. None of the US government donated aid went to the Haitian government (Ramachandran & Walz 2015, 33). Simultaneously, drawn to the money, a ‘State of NGOs,’ exploded as the number of NGOs registered in Haiti grew from 400 to 2,000 within a few months of the earthquake (Altay & Labonte 2014, S50). Haiti’s previous natural disasters and political instabilities generated a legacy of NGO humanitarian aid responses. By 2010, NGOs provided 70% of healthcare and 85% of education (Ramachandran & Walz 2015, 40-41). It is more important that such services are provided, than who they are provided by. Nonetheless it raises the question of the sustainability of said services. It is established that NGOs must follow donations, what will happen when the donations dry up? Important services are being provided to increase the capabilities and development of the Haitian people, but their permanence is questionable. The provision of said services presents a tradeoff, it is better that

they are provided than not, but not all are set up to survive without foreign donations and international organizations.

Clearly, the government was not providing most social services, but this lack of government authority and capacity is only amplified by the rapid increase in NGOs, which undermines the government's incentive and capability to step up. Not only is the government no longer expected to provide services, but the resources designated for the provision and expansion of such services are diverted from the state to NGOs, which are often international. Humanitarian NGOs move disaster to disaster, following the flows of donations (Silva 2009). When donation flows dry up in Haiti, the NGOs will leave or significantly reduce their programs. How can Haiti move from relief to development, if the process of humanitarian aid only continues to undermine and limit government capacity? Additionally, sudden disasters can divert resources from development programs already underway to relief efforts by the same NGO (Barnett 2009). This aid pattern inevitably results in dependence and continued political, economic, and social vulnerability. While the corruption and historic weakness of the Haitian government needs to be taken into consideration, to create conditions for increased capabilities, humanitarian aid cannot only be channeled through international actors which are not accountable to the government nor, more importantly, the Haitian people.

This potentially paternalistic attitude is amplified by a lack of accountability which further undermines the recipient country. There are multiple dimensions of accountability, which are often in tension. The underlying debate asks whether aid should be more accountable to donor or recipient. International rhetoric focuses on accountability to recipients, but the combination of economic realities and asymmetries between donors and recipients shifts accountability away from beneficiaries. Accountability is inevitably focused on donors, though

even this is lacking. In Haiti, it is still not known where most of USAID's donations ended up (Ramachandran & Walz 2015). Many NGOs and other actors are unable to account for where the billions of donated dollars went. While accountability to beneficiaries rather than donors is more likely to increase the effectiveness in the long term, an improvement in accountability to either would increase coordination and awareness of impact among providers of aid. Increased awareness and coordination would theoretically result in more mindful aid design, which would improve choice and opportunity for beneficiaries, and thus their quality of life.

Even if they are held accountable to, and designed with the input of, recipients, *whom* is specifically given the legitimacy of accountability can also be an issue. In Sri Lanka, it was hoped that the crisis would create an extended depoliticized humanitarian space which could then act to defuse and resolve the ongoing civil war (Kleinfeld 2007). This ignores the well-established fact that humanitarian aid does not exist in its own apolitical bubble, and the political history of NGOs in the region. Humanitarian groups have been present on the island since the start of the civil war in the 1980s. Both sides have been guilty of violence and human rights violations, causing NGOs to become increasingly politically involved, resulting in their distrust in the region (Kleinfeld 2007). A lack of trust between aid deliverers and recipients blocks communication and participation, limiting overall effectiveness of aid.

The civil war made it difficult to determine which group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), or the Government of Sri Lanka should coordinate aid efforts. Whomever was in charge would implicitly receive international approval and legitimacy. The LTTE and Sri Lankan government, as well as international actors were aware of this. Initial efforts to share authority via the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS) failed. The respective leaders agreed to the mechanism, but the people they represented did not. The

Sinhalese believed that any concession of power went against the principles of Sri Lanka, and rejected the agreement. Another mechanism for joint management was created instead, but without the voice of civil society, leading to the bitter exclusion of other minorities such as the Muslim population (de Silva 2009). Manipulations of media narrative and aid distribution by both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE followed, each trying to limit the other's effectiveness and thereby increase their own relative legitimacy. The result was ineffective and uneven aid distribution among ethnic and political lines which only aggravated inequality and political and ethnic division. Sri Lanka is a case where more international guidance may have made aid more effective because of its corrosion by local politics. On the other hand, the international community was unable or unwilling to act due to Sri Lanka's higher economic and political development. This highlights the international political factors that allowed the manipulation of Haiti, and the lack of foresight of the political consequences of aid deployment.

Silva (2009) compares the 2004 tsunami to a massive malaria outbreak that occurred in Sri Lanka in the 1930s, during the transition from colonial government to a democracy. It resulted in human development by the strengthening of the welfare state with universal health care and free education (Silva 2009). In 2004, the amount of international attention and resources should have led to development like in the 1930s, so why did it not? She argues that the malaria outbreak was more widespread and got the attention of the government by affecting the Sinhalese majority. It simultaneously created ethnic solidarity, whereas 2004 Sri Lanka was already ethnically divided. The sudden increase of uncoordinated resources, distributed without full awareness of the context of tensions and inequalities of power and resources was abused. It became a political pawn used to garner support, rather than to help people recover and move forward. Additionally, like Haiti, humanitarian organizations eventually shifted to other

disasters, and left, creating what Silva (2009, 61), describes as a 'Third Wave' as detrimental to the society as the tsunami itself. NGO departure meant that there was a sudden gap in provision of social services and actors that could potentially mitigate the politicking between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government, further limiting local capacity and creating dependence.

The basis of humanitarian aid as apolitical is completely unfounded. Political factors determine which disasters and communities within disaster struck regions receive aid, as well as their quantity, design, and distribution. Wealthy foreign governments and international NGOs which depend on said governments have political power over the recipients, and often use aid programs to supplement political goals. More relevant to the issue of development, local governments and structures are undermined by a more influential foreign presence. This creates further dependence on foreign aid and limits local political and infrastructure capacity.

Due to external political goals of donors (such as locking in UN votes), the political contexts and needs of the recipient country are often ignored. This ignorance can lead to the exacerbation of political conflict, rather than its necessary resolution for recovery and human development. Additionally, concepts such as conditionality, which have the potential to lay the groundwork for strong political institutions conducive to sustainable development, are inappropriately and inconsistently applied to serve foreign policy goals. The delivery of international aid legitimizes and emphasizes certain practices and actors, but the international community is distracted by its own political goals.

#### How Economic Vulnerability Accentuates Disaster

Humanitarian aid is a category of money or capital flowing between countries, frequently from rich to poor (Milner & Tingley 2010, 205). Just as these flows do not occur in a political vacuum, nor do they act independently of preexisting economic conditions. Humanitarian aid,

particularly in the transition from relief to recovery has the potential to lay important foundations for economic growth and development. Humanitarian aid can begin investment in the necessary human capital for human development by improving access to resources and services, and addressing inequality in the design of relief projects (Kosack & Tobin 2006). Especially in cases such as Haiti and Sri Lanka where such massive funds were available, humanitarian aid provides an important opportunity to (re)build better, rather than just recovering to the status quo.

*Global economic position as a determinant of disaster*

As Stromberg (2007) notes, the severity of a disaster is determined by the strength of the disaster event itself, how much of the population is directly affected, and the vulnerability of the population. Low-income countries, as defined by the World Bank, represent one-third of global population, yet two-thirds of global natural disaster fatalities (Stromberg 2007, 206). This extreme statistic has little to do with the number of natural disaster events in low-income countries, but instead speaks to their socioeconomic vulnerability. The risk of death due to a natural disaster is much higher in undeveloped countries. This is not the case in developed nations, as one-third of the US population lives in areas with high natural disaster frequency, yet only 1% of the land area has a high death risk (Stromberg 2007, 204). Khasalamwa (2009) argues that disaster vulnerabilities are socially constructed because they reflect development patterns that must be understood to properly address both relief and recovery efforts. While certain locations are inherently more susceptible to natural phenomena, their ability to respond, which corresponds to capabilities, determines the severity of natural disaster impact.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with 67% of the population living on less than \$2 a day (Fan 2013, 19). Haiti lacks infrastructure with only 58% having access to clean water and sanitation, and various international bodies such as the World Bank, the Inter-

American Development Bank, and the IMF have reported that the Haitian government is unable to provide basic infrastructure (Fan 2013, 19; Buss 2015). Constant natural disasters increase vulnerability. Haiti has been identified by Maplecroft, a British risk and strategy consulting firm, as the nation that has experienced the most economic loss due to natural disasters. Each time the country starts to achieve better economic development, another disaster strikes (Buss 2015, 326). The current system of humanitarian aid is clearly not working well, because while basic relief is provided, Haiti is never able to recover, and or able to develop infrastructure and resources necessary to minimize vulnerability and improve future disaster response.

The nation's extreme poverty has made it incredibly dependent on international financial measures. International financial assistance has created tradeoffs, such as food dependence caused by a 1994 IMF measure that required a reduction on rice tariffs from 35% to 3%, which flooded the market and wiped out local production (Fan 2013, 19). In 2010, Haiti was the 4<sup>th</sup> largest recipient of development assistance separate from humanitarian assistance (Buss 2015, 327). Despite all the assistance that Haiti has received, the aid is highly inconsistent. In 2010, aid went from \$93.6 million to \$225 million, but dropped to near half of pre-earthquake 2010 levels at \$48.8 million in 2011 (Ramachandran & Walz 2015, 26). The aid inconsistency limits the government's ability to budget, plan, and develop. Simultaneously, its frequency acts as a disincentive to improve issues of corruption and reliability of government services.

Poor states have significantly limited voices in international affairs, including in humanitarian aid. Wealthier Western states control international financial institutions such as the IMF and WTO, thereby limiting the political influence and acceptable economic options for poorer states. The 'Humanitarian Club' controls the humanitarian system because they donate the most money and therefore have the influence to determine how humanitarian aid should be

triggered, distributed, and monitored (Collinson 2014). They have created a hierarchal aid system with the goal of maintaining control of the humanitarian aid agenda and resources (Barnett and Walker 2015).

Inequalities in the international system make poor states vulnerable to, and dependent on, wealthier and more powerful states, especially when disaster strikes. These unequal power balances mean that the voice of Haiti gets drowned out, forcing Haiti to follow others' economic agendas. The economic policies are often politically driven and designed to serve wealthy countries' interests. This is to the detriment of poorer states, such as in the case of the Haitian structural adjustments and its associated food dependence previously mentioned. Additionally, donor economies are served by the fact that most of the aid money is channeled through NGOs and private contractors from wealthier countries. In Haiti, 75% of USAID funds went to contractors in Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC (Ramachandran & Walz 2015, 37). In 2010, only \$19 million of \$95 billion of global humanitarian aid was donated to national NGOs in the disaster areas (Barnett & Walker 2015, 136). The result is resources, which could help with development, skipping the recipient's economy to be channeled to the donor economies.

*Aid as a perpetuator of local economic cycles and conditions*

The economic conditions prior to the natural disaster event greatly impact the severity of the disaster. This ties into the previously discussed debate at the heart of modern humanitarianism of whether to treat just the symptoms or the causes as well. Humanitarian aid has generally come to recognize that poverty increases vulnerability. To ensure that the next crisis is less severe, rebuild efforts should be focused on mitigating the socioeconomic dimensions, as well as the environmental dimensions of natural disasters (Khasalamwa 2009). Khasalamwa (2009, 76). points to the 1977 article by Haas et. al that identifies four parts to

humanitarian response: (1) emergency responses, (2) return of basic public services such as water, electricity (3) return of capital stocks to prior levels, (4) improvement and reconstruction for better/increased development. Parts one through three refer to recovery, but the fourth points to the role of human development within humanitarian aid. The implication is that to fight socioeconomic vulnerabilities there must be a hand off between the acts of relief and response that clearly fit into humanitarian aid. For humanitarian aid to foster successful development, there needs to be a transition from basic recovery and relief to more intensive development, as well as a period of overlap between the two. The possibility for overlap of program types, knowledge, and resources between development and relief efforts is limited by economic competition between NGOs. When crisis strikes, resources are often redistributed to more lucrative emergency rather than alchemical efforts (Barnett 2009).

One of the efforts to do this is the “Build Back Better” movement. This rhetoric began with Bill Clinton in 2004 after the Indian Ocean tsunami, and has since been applied to Hurricane Katrina and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti (Fan 2013). Build Back Better hopes to address the economic inequalities that increase vulnerabilities and cycles of increasingly worse disasters, but often exacerbates preexisting structures of inequality. Build Back Better and similar ideas attract large amounts of resources. The high influx of money is perceived as an opportunity to go beyond recovery and build back socially, economically, and politically better.

In the case of Sri Lanka, the goal of Build Back Better was to address the inequalities between ethnic groups and rebuild the community to hopefully end the 30-year civil conflict. In the initial days following the tsunami high levels of solidarity were present across community lines. However, it soon became clear that the lack of coordination between NGOs, INGOs, and government organizations, and the political posturing between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan

government meant that resources were not being distributed evenly. This reignited tensions of inequality between groups causing high competition and resentment between the communities (Silva 2009).

Housing is a frequent example of economic inequalities and special interests being increased by humanitarian efforts. In Sri Lanka, the hardest hit communities were in the North and East provinces, which also happened to have a mainly Tamil population, which was worse off economically due to the civil war that raged in provinces and lack of connections. Nonetheless, *more* housing projects were completed in the *less* impacted South and West provinces. The President's hometown and surrounding area had a completion rate of housing projects of 173%, whereas in Ampara area, one of the hardest hit zones, there was only a completion rate of 39% (Khasalamwa 2009, 185). The housing example reflects political dynamics, as the majority group associated with the ruling power received an extremely high proportion of the aid. However, it also demonstrates that the economic inequalities between the groups were maintained or increased because aid provided more unregulated resources to be coopted and manipulated. Rather than trying to use the resources to encourage the most stricken areas to catch up to rest of the country, the disparities only grew.

#### Social Dynamics as Determinants of Aid Allocation

Social dynamics impact how humanitarian aid is distributed and designed, as well as its long-term impact on recipients. The social aspects are much less tangible and unregulated, and actors in the humanitarian system tend to be more blind to them. Social factors that greatly impact aid in often unexpected and unique ways include the role of the media, cultural and ethnic divisions, and gender roles. Aid is often studied as an economic transaction for growth and development, or a foreign policy tool, but its social dynamics are less frequently addressed.

*The power of the Haitian narrative*

Chandler (2001) traces the current role of media in aid to the 1990s when non-Western countries were portrayed as corrupt, a threat to themselves, and incapable of determining their own development plans. Media outlets quickly globalize disasters while removing them and their victims from the geopolitical context, creating a “diminished view of non-Western subject” (Chandler 2001, 694). Media attention is positive in that it draws the public’s eye, and thus their wallet to provide much needed aid. Yet media is also fickle, and portrays a narrative that can be sensationalized for viewers, rather than the objective presentation that we often assume (Sorenson 1991). Schuller (2014) refers to this narrative formation as ‘mirrors’ and ‘spotlights’ which spin and reflect a specific frame of the events, while blinding and deflecting any criticism. Even if some, like Buthe et al. (2012), do not find that the media has a significant impact on how private donations are targeted, the media impacts the narrative of the crisis, and therefore how NGOs target and distribute aid to reflects the media.

Haiti faces undeniable political and economic problems that severely limit its state capacity. Buss (2015, 327) finds that Haiti’s state consistently receives low rankings in transparency, state identity, free and fair elections, separation of power, democratic institutions, political parties, social capital, basic public administration. Additionally, Haiti boasts a GINI index score of 0.59 and a GDP per capita of \$776 in 2012, marking it as one of the poorest states outside of sub-Saharan Africa (Frankema & Masé 2014, 129). By most economic and political measures, Haiti is a borderline failed state. The facts are clearly not on Haiti’s side, but the international focus on the image of Haiti as a corrupt, failed state does not help. As Buss (2015) rightly asks, how can the Haitian government build capacity and improve if not given the space

and resources to do so? At the same time, it is important to note that the situation would have been much worse without humanitarian aid.

Donor governments and funders have merely scratched their heads and pronounced failure over the apparent lack of development despite the nearly \$38 billion donated over 60 years to Haiti (Buss 2015, 319). Rather than engaging with Haitians to make the aid process better, donor governments stuck with the narrative of a failing Haiti and simply removed Haiti from its own picture. The disillusionment with the Haitian state was apparent in the fact only 1% of humanitarian aid went to the Haitian government (Ramachandran & Walz 2015, 27). The numbers are daunting, but the continued presentation of Haiti as only those numbers furthers a cycle of limited resources and trust, which obscures opportunities for improvement.

In Haiti, the earthquake and its aftermath were presented through a racialized narrative of a failing and corrupt state (Schuller 2014). This narrative greatly resembled how poverty and crises in 'Africa' are construed, as a failing of the African, or in this case Haitian, essence, rather than as a product of local and international political and economic structures (Sorenson 1991). Moore (2012) notes that Haiti was framed as wiped out, destitute, unmodern, and dangerous to justify US management of the crisis. She argues that to further justify the US military presence on the scene, Secretary of State Clinton mentioned in a public statement that aid could not be parachuted into urban areas for fear of riots. While it is important to note that riots and violence did occur, the overt public militarization made security the top priority and separated the aid effort from its recipients. The separation of the aid process from the locals via this narrative is that only 10 Haitian NGOs received international donations (just \$0.8 million) exemplifies this separation, as does that most decisions were conducted in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), a space with barriers related to security clearance, connections, and language

(Ramachandran & Walz 2015, 36; Altay & Labonte 2014). This narrative of destruction and violence being committed by a failing state and society allowed the US to maintain dominance, control, and contain the suffering in Haiti, rather than letting refugees immigrate (Moore 2014).

The media twisted the situation to present the narrative that the US wanted, instead of presenting why humanitarian efforts were failing. Consequently, it diminished necessary resources for, and accountability to the Haitian people. Schuller (2014) points to the media's manipulation of the statistic that '30% fewer people were living in refugee camps' as a sign of progress a year later. The media highlighted this number, but failed to present the context of cholera outbreaks that had led to people fleeing camps, rather than leaving them for permanent houses. At the one year mark after the earthquake, a lot of energy and resources went into generating an image of successful recovery, rather than to the cause itself. One Haitian commented, "Instead of spending thousands driving people here, renting the equipment and all this, they could just give us food. We're starving" (Schuller 2014, 102). This demonstrates accountability to donors (the media's audience in the Western world), over the recipients which are not even receiving basic food aid. Basic needs should be attended to in humanitarian aid, even if they are done so in a way that does not improve capabilities (i.e. food provision). How can issues of ineffective aid efforts be addressed if the media simplifies the problem and shifts blame to victims rather than addressing relief?

The Haitians were aware of the media's impact on aid distribution, and the importance of matching a specific image of neediness and suffering to receive. James (2010) observed that local women's groups associated with wealthier and literate Haitians attracted more international attention and donations. She recounts a scene in which the wealthier group brought in poorer, more traditional victims to perform their suffering via testimony to increase donations. The

group did not share the proceeds with the ‘performers.’ The media’s portrayal of the ideal victim only served to widen the gap between poor and better off Haitians.

Suffering has become commoditized, manipulated, and performed to receive necessary resources and attention. These ‘trauma portfolios’ have become a prominent way to legitimize and authenticate humanitarian actions. The manipulation of trauma and suffering by Haitians themselves reflects the expectations generated by the media. It demonstrates agency being taken by some Haitians to obtain necessary resources to survive, as well as the failings of humanitarian aid to connect with the issues plaguing Haitians due to the disaster event itself, as well as their underlying vulnerabilities. Media distracts from these more meaningful evaluations, and shifts local efforts to social performances and interactions to receive resources, instead of on building up capabilities.

#### *Going in blind to ethnicity in Sri Lanka*

In the case of Haiti, the media narrative created social dynamics between the humanitarian system and the beneficiaries, as well as among the beneficiaries which distracted from both the relief and rebuild efforts in Haiti. In Sri Lanka, the media created a similar competition for resources between groups along preexisting lines of inequality, though ethnic rather than class based. Humanitarian aid also aggravated preexisting negative social relations in the community through its ignorance of important ethnic divisions and social structures.

In their competition for funds and projects, NGOs did not take into consideration the greater social impacts of said projects. When disaster struck, the number of NGOs in Sri Lanka increased by approximately 80 new organizations (Khasalamwa 2009, 80). These new groups came in with little to no knowledge of the area, local dynamics, or previous NGO projects (Khasalamwa 2009). Vital social dynamics, which determine the everyday interactions of daily

life, were ignored. For example, it has been recognized that emergency housing projects will become the base of future communities, yet, when these houses were constructed they did not consider social practices (Mulligan and Nadarajah 2012). Housing projects did not accommodate how people cook, nor that husbands move in with the wife's family after marriage. Suddenly, people were faced with concerns such as if their daughters would ever marry since they were relocated in separate villages, or with inappropriate amounts of space. Major social and cultural rites were interrupted. The lack of knowledge of basic significant social practices of everyday life and family formations limited the long-term viability of recovery efforts.

While it was well known that Sri Lanka was in the midst of a civil war between the Tamil LTTE and the Sri Lankan government, those lived complexities were ignored. Sri Lankan communities generally follow ethnic lines: Sinhalese, Tamil Muslims, non-Muslim Tamils, and Malays (Khasalamwa 2009). Yet, the main organizational factor is kinship groups. Most NGOs were unaware of this and assumed all divisions and groupings were along ethnic lines. The competition between communities for resources combined with the organization of aid efforts along ethnic rather than kin community structures accentuated ethnic divides (de Silva 2009).

While on different levels and in different ways, the humanitarian system is unaware of important social dynamics occurring at the local level, as well as between locals and the humanitarian system itself. These tensions distract from the initial solidarity of humanitarian disasters that have the potential to lay the groundwork for new opportunities. Instead of taking the time to familiarize themselves with the dynamics, nonprofits and other humanitarian actors allow the competition for resources to dictate project design. In place of creating viable long term recovery projects, actors focus on following the narrative of suffering and success.

## Conclusion

Initially, the scope of humanitarian aid was limited to basic and immediate relief in response to disasters, but has since expanded. Whether this is the jurisdiction of the humanitarian system drives a debate at the center of humanitarian aid. Much of the humanitarian aid community has realized that to truly reduce suffering, the underlying causes that increase the vulnerability to, and the severity of, disasters may need to be addressed. In this sense, using relief and recovery efforts to create opportunities and capabilities is an important aspect and potential of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid actors recognize this, and advocate for it in their rhetoric and reforms such as Build Back Better and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Despite laying out principles and goals to guide humanitarian aid towards development, the humanitarian community does not hold itself accountable to serving the interests of the recipients and instead maintains the international structures of inequality.

Ulterior foreign policy goals guide aid decisions, and corrupt both the purity and potential of both conditionality and the three principles of independence, partiality, and neutrality to save lives. Due to external political goals of donors, the political contexts and needs of the recipient country are often ignored, aggravating domestic political conditions that prevent human development. Additionally, concepts such as conditionality, which have the potential to lay the groundwork for strong political institutions conducive to sustainable development, are inappropriately and inconsistently applied to serve foreign policy goals.

The international order reduces the influence, voice, and options of poorer states. Their economic vulnerability not only leaves them vulnerable to the Humanitarian club's interests, but also to disaster. Unfortunately, the competition for resources between humanitarian actors, as well as between recipients, distracts from larger economic issues and maintains local and

international scales of inequality. Without the economic growth and capabilities to boost human development, vulnerability to disaster remains, leading to cycles of dependence. Furthermore, instead of taking the time to familiarize themselves with social dynamics, humanitarian actors focus on the competition for resources to dictate project design. In place of focusing on creating viable long term recovery projects, they are distracted by portraying and following the narrative of suffering and success for further funding. Again, the quality of life, perspectives, and priorities of recipients are sacrificed to meet the goals of donors through humanitarian aid

Future research should examine more of these issues from the perspective of the recipients in the disaster struck countries, which would then open more doors and pressure for their perspective to be included in humanitarian aid decisions. Furthermore, a comparative study of the relationship between humanitarian aid and development outcomes in developed and developing country contexts would provide important insight. It would allow the examination of to what degree the problems that do not allow the fostering of human development in humanitarian relief occur, and how are they handled, among members of the ‘humanitarian club’ itself. This would help to determine to what extent these are the issues of the humanitarian system, or the structures of the underlying international system. There needs to be a deeper assessment, both from academics and humanitarian actors, as to the goals of humanitarian action. As it stands, humanitarian aid saves important lives, but it frequently does not consider how it can prevent future lives from being lost. The patterns of humanitarian relief leaving countries as, or more, vulnerable than before makes these development concerns an issue for humanitarian actors to consider more seriously in the tradeoffs and implications of their actions.

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