

U.S. Aided Disasters in Africa from 2000-2005

What factors historically influence how the U.S. provides foreign aid?

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Abstract

The six maps offer a greater understanding of why some crises are well-funded by the U.S. while other disasters, which affect the same number of people, are ignored and receive little to no funding. If there is an opportunity to save the number of lives, this research will show what factors have a greater weight in decision making for award assistance.

Methodology

Annual Reports of the USAID disaster summaries was converted into excel files with CIA World Fact information regarding military expenditures of GDP and percentile rankings of trade with U.S. Every disaster and factor was assigned a code. This data was then brought into Arc Map for spatial analysis purposes.

Graduated color maps were used to define no disaster, natural, and made; it was also used to clarify the specific disaster type. Dot Density, a tool to understand a value pattern of the mean with random placement throughout the selected boundary, was used to define amount of people affected and dead as well as national interest factors. Lastly, a graduated symbol map was used for the amount of U.S. aid awarded to the country; this type of classification was chosen to clearly identify the dollar range.

Results

Over the past six years, the U.S. has given aid in large amount based on confirmed reports of the total number affected and dead. In cases where little to information was available regarding confirmation of lives at risk, countries with a high level of national interest received more aid on average than those with little interest to the U.S. Consistently, earthquakes, floods, epidemics, and refugee emergencies received less aid than complex emergencies and food insecurities. There was not enough data to analyze the importance of natural vs. man-made in award assistance.

This map and research show that a country's role in the marketplace does matter in crises situations; however, it is pleasing to know that on average larger sums of aid are given to the most affected—the people who need it most.

Discussion

The objective of my research was to begin to answer the question: Why do we give aid; is it to protect ourselves or to have the opportunity to save lives? Historically, foreign aid, since the Cold War, has been used as a way to reward countries for being democratic. With the collapse of the Berlin Wall, U.S. aid shifted to economic development to help bring a country out of poverty, so the U.S. could begin to end aid altogether. Since September 11th attacks, the bulk of foreign aid is now used for national security interests to add more schools, develop rights of women in places like Afghanistan, and construction of a constitution in Iraq so terrorism can be prevented. In theory, most relief aid workers and researchers believe foreign aid in its truest form should be blind to external factors; however, history has proven one single thing: containment and national interest are at the core of why the U.S. historically gives aid to developing countries. The maps are a six-year analysis of one region: Africa. The importance of this type of study can answer what type of aid the U.S. is giving and the future of aid programs. The maps highlight the strengths and weaknesses of aid and areas which consistently lack U.S. attention. With a greater understanding of why some crises are well-funded, this information can help NGOs and non-profits help coordinate their efforts to aid ignored, high-need countries. It can also help lobbyists better coordinate their cases to policymakers for the need of USAID to efficiently restructure how they award assistance.

Data Sources

- CIA World Fact Book Data
- Annual Reports (2000-2005) USAID/OFDA
- Packenham, Robert A. "Foreign Aid and the National Interest" *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 10, No. 2. (May, 1966), pp. 214-221.

