

Fact Sheet: Multilateral Humanitarian Assistance

When it comes to providing humanitarian assistance for people or nations in need, the United States devotes a much smaller share of its vast resources than any other donor nation. While the U.S. spent roughly \$11 billion on foreign aid in 2001, this was less than 1% of its total annual budget and about 1/30th of its defense spending. U.S. humanitarian support falls far short of the recommended goal of 0.7% of GNI (Gross National Income) the UN Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) encourages wealthier nations to donate to poorer countries.

Weakest Donation Comes from Strongest Nation:

- The U.S. gives only 0.1% of GNI to support global humanitarian efforts.
- The U.S. ranks number 21 behind the leader, Denmark, at 1.06% of GNI, and Italy, number 20, at 0.13% of GNI.
- Africa, the poorest continent, receives less from the U.S. than from any other rich nation.

U.S. Aid Often Does Not Reach the Needy:

- Much of U.S. aid is funneled through U.S. corporations. Three fourths of this aid comes back to the U.S. and U.S. corporations via equipment purchases and salaries for technical experts. *(The annual wage of one technical advisor could fund the running of a 750 bed hospital in Bangladesh for 3 months.)*
- When it is multilateral, U.S. aid frequently supports the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, or supports policies of the World Trade Organization that represents the interests of U.S.-based and other powerful multinational corporations. Programs of these organizations too often adversely impact living conditions for impoverished populations.
- Much of U.S. international aid is actually military aid. *(Military approaches to complex problems contribute to the vicious cycle of worldwide social breakdown and generate the need for emergency humanitarian aid that the UN and nongovernmental organizations perpetually struggle to meet.)*

Consider the Figures Proposed in the 2004 U.S. Budget:

- \$12 billion for international development and humanitarian assistance, \$7 billion for international security assistance, and \$5 billion for all other international affairs. *(Compare this \$24 billion total to the \$87 billion recently approved by Congress in additional funding of U.S. military operations in Iraq.)*
- An additional \$18 billion for atomic weapons and nuclear stockpile stewardship. *(With thousands of weapons that we cannot risk using, the U.S. now seeks to develop new “usable” nuclear weapons.)*
- \$380 billion for the Department of Defense. *(This is more than the combined defense spending of all other nations.)*

To promote a more secure and peaceful world order, the U.S. should work multilaterally and cooperatively with other nations. Priorities for aid spending need to be based on an analysis of human needs rather than on self-serving economic or political considerations. Working with and supporting the United Nations, the quintessential multilateral agent, and signing and abiding by multilateral treaties that address world problems are essential first steps to a safer more secure world.

Resources: Budget figures are from the National Priorities Project database, www.natprior.org, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <http://www.cbpp.org/6-18-01bud-pr.htm>, and, Newsaic Section on Foreign Aid: www.newsaic.com/ftvww77p.html

- **Kyoto Treaty**, see: <http://unfccc.int/resource/convkp.html> and www.americans-world.org/digest/global_issues/global_warming/gw2.cfm
- **Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty**, see: www.commondreams.org/views/121800-103.htm and www.pnnd.org/un_ga_res_ballisti.htm and www.fas.org/nuke/control/abmt/text/
- **Small Arms issues**, see: www.iansa.org/index.htm
- **State of the World's Children**, see: <http://www.unicef.org/sowc01/> and <http://www.cbpp.org/6-18-01bud-pr.htm> and <http://www.newsaic.com/ftvww77p.html>