World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
Vol:7, No:1, 2013

ODA for Gender Equality in Fragile States

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***Abstract*—**This study starts with the review on the role of external assistance to fragile states where the state lacks the capacity to provide better quality lives for its people. One of the tools being the Official Development Assistance, this paper focuses on the its disbursement patterns to fragile states that targets women's empowerment and gender equality to verify where donors stand on their actions on fragile states. The findings show that whereas donors have increased their aid volume with gender equality objectives in absolute terms, it is still lacking when compared to total amount. Hence, donors need to further strengthen their commitment to promoting gender equality in its aid activities as well as to allocate more assistance with significant and principal objectives on gender.

***Keywords*—**Fragile states, gender equality, Official Development Assistance (ODA), women's empowerment.

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I. Introduction

GENDER equality and women's empowerment is an essential part of securing development goals and achieving sustainable development. For instance, in addition to Millennium Development Goal 3 and 5 that specifically target gender equality and maternal health respectively, gender concerns are relevant to all the other goals as well. Gender equality is also an intrinsic human rights and it contributes to positive development outcomes as an instrument to economic efficiency and political power [1]. Yet, women have not been ensured of equal opportunities and benefits to development. Disparities in equal access to job opportunities, health care, education and resources are still prevalent [2] and different social contexts and dimensions put women in vulnerable positions [1]. The situation in fragile states is more devastating for women where they face widespread violation of human rights including violence against women and lack of access to basic goods and services.

In this context, this paper mainly focuses on how much foreign aid has been targeted towards women's empowerment and gender equality in fragile states where women become the marginalized groups. In times of weak state capacity, external development assistance can become a tool to promote gender equality in recipient countries. Starting with the literature review on the role of foreign aid in fragile states in securing development as well as gender equality, this paper will analyze how gender sensitive donors' aid has been to fragile states.

In addition, this paper will follow the terminology and categorization of International Development Assistance (IDA) eligible individual countries under the Harmonized Fragile States by the World Bank (WB) of fiscal year (FY) 13 without any further dividing them into conflict-affected or failed nor into pre, during or post-conflict states. Yet, Southern Sudan has been omitted due to absence of data by Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD).

As for foreign aid, it will be confined to bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members provided by OECD database. Hence, although this paper will use the term foreign aid, development assistance and ODA interchangeably, data will only be limited to OECD's ODA data. Lastly, the timeframe of the data will be from 2006 to 2010 due to availability of the data as well as application of the Gender Equality Policy Marker (GEPM) of OECD.

By looking into the total and gender focused aid disbursement to fragile states in terms of policy priority, amount, project number and sector, this paper seeks to analyze in what style donors have allocated aid.

II. Literature Review

A. Role of Foreign Aid in Fragile States

The circumstances of state fragility are not unanimous across the world. A country may have become fragile through different factors such as state maturity, big but inefficient government, negative leadership, or conflict as argued by Browne [3]. Hence at times, fragility can concur with conflict or violence. As a result, the main problem of fragile states becomes the matter of weak state capacity to carry out the basic functions of delivering public goods and services to its citizens [4] often times accompanied by lack of political will [3]. In such cases, external assistance in the form of foreign aid can play a vital role in promoting development in these fragile states. Although aid is only one element of many resource flows such as foreign direct investment, remittance or domestic revenues [5], aid can be improve the quality of the fragile state by delivering basic services and building state capacity when it is allocated over multi-year period [3].

In order to eradicate poverty, international community has provided vast amount of development assistance to fragile states as these countries most often face stagnating economic development and severe poverty. What is more, the central and local governments' capacity is weakened which hinders the provision of social infrastructure and services due to limited government budget and system failures [6]. In this sense, aid has become a vital tool in enhancing government capacity and legitimacy, thus having positive impact on fighting poverty. However, there have been debates on whether aid can be effectively utilized in conflict-affected countries where policy setting and government capacity to implement and manage aid is poor.

This research was supported by WCU(World Class University) program through the National Research Foundation of Korea funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Grant Number: R32-20077).

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Certain groups of people argue that aid flow to governments that lack capacity to fully implement policies and restrain corruption is ultimately wasteful. It may even promote corruption and conflicts than to mitigate them. Aid being a sizable additional resource, particularly to countries with high aid dependency, aid cannot but have political impact, be it negative or positive [7].

One argument is that aid works in presence of good policy environment. Burnside and Dollar [8] defined fiscal, monetary and trade policies as their main set of policies and argued economic growth occurs in such settings because it is with good governance that aid fungibility is minimized. However, this paper narrowly defined policy to economic perspective and focused on growth in numerical indicators, thereby omitting sustainable development and human rights protection. Economic policy is only a part and categorization of market liberalization as good policy itself is immensely debatable. More others have argued that wrong aid in wrong policy environment can aggravate the situation and that corruption reduces aid effectiveness. Knack [9] asserted that more aid to countries with poor governance will further erode the negative relationship by advocating rent-seeking behaviors, fungibility and corruption. With good governance, ownership and accountability of the recipient country, aid can be conditionally effective, even if a country is in conflict [9], [10].

However, these literatures are mostly centered on economic indicators at national level and fail to consider the particular historical, geographical and ethnic background that affects each country differently. Moreover, economic growth does not equate improvement in poverty eradication and human rights violation, which these literatures do not mention.

Contrary to these arguments, it can also be claimed that aid can play a positive role in supporting development agendas. For instance, Fukuda-Parr [7] argues that donors can utilize aid as a disincentive to lack of transparency and violence by reducing or cutting off aid. Moreover, donors will intentionally direct aid allocation in alignment with global agendas of sustainable development, human rights and peace forming consensus for good governance between donors and recipient countries. This literature expanded its foci from economic to development and poverty, and governments with inadequate policies to covering the different aspects of conflicts.

Furthermore, aid has positive impact on promoting the well-beings of the marginalized. For example, aid programs have improved access of women to health and educational infrastructure, not to mention restoring peace and order in conflict-affected countries when specifically targeting certain objectives [11]. Even the United Nations [12], [13] have stressed additional political commitment and financial assistance allocation to the marginalized and vulnerable groups in conflict-affected countries to address basic human rights. When the government capacity is fragile, then aid can play a role as investment for peace and sustainable development [14].

In spite of having different viewpoints on aid effectiveness in fragile states that lack transparency and capacity, the literatures seem to agree on the fact that assistance is needed to relieve poverty and secure fundamental human rights. Hence, the literatures provide recommendations to better channel assistance for poverty-relief and systematic capability improvement than to claim abandoning aid.

B. Gender Inequality in Fragile States

In cases where state becomes fragile through conflict, it can have negative impact on all related parties, including destruction of a nation's physical infrastructure to backlash in economic, social development not to mention severe violation as well as deterioration of human rights during and after the conflict [15]. Its impact on government capacity is also significant and countries with high corruption, highly politicized government, and economic poverty are more likely to suffer from reinforcement of weak institutions and corruptions [14]. In such cases, conflict leads to dramatic rise in expenditure and decline in government revenue at the same time. Some countries may go through radical reforms but some relapse into the vicious cycle of weak and corrupt government hindering development and improvements in the well-being of people, not to mention creating backlash of economic growth and sustainable development [7], [15]. As a result, government loses capability to provide infrastructure and services and therefore accountability, transparency and legitimacy which are pivotal to poverty reduction and sustainable development [14]. Then aid has become a vital tool in enhancing government capacity and fighting poverty. It is more so important for women who are victimized in fragile states in a myriad of ways.

The gender dimensions of conflict range from gender-based sexual violence such as rape and sexual exploitation to participation as female combatants, exclusion from reconstruction, peace process and legal framework, unequal market opportunities, and fortification of gendered roles in families and communities. Women are induced to informal sector with highly insecure work environment in order to compensate for financial difficulties caused by loss of male manpower while maintaining their housework and care work. They become more prone to catch diseases such as HIV/AIDS from lack of food, rape, collapse of national health systems, etc [14], [16].

What is more, women are further excluded from the receiving ends of social infrastructure and services. Conflict augments gender disparity in education, health and labor sector [14], [16]. Such vulnerability of women even from national services and policies subsequently translate into negative long-term consequences on human capital, government capacity, democracy, and sustainable development [7], [15], [16].

As women are placed at the very receiving end of social infrastructure and services, supplementary resources targeting women and girls should be disbursed by the state or external actors [12], [13]. This is more valid for health and education sector which are essential to human development. When access to infrastructure and services is difficult, women ultimately lack adequate self-confidence, training, and opportunities that are essential in empowerment, political involvement, social cohesion and escaping poverty. Such services are windows of opportunities for many women and girls in poverty [16].

Thence, it is the responsibility of the domestic government to sustain the system and services during and after the conflict, notably for women who are more likely to lose the opportunity. Also, international community, mainly donors, should put priorities in restoring such social services when the capacity of domestic government is jeopardized [17].

Therefore, the importance of gender-sensitive development policies can be derived from the literature review. Hence the following question arises: what has been the donors' effort in such setting? In addition, what has been the allocation pattern of the donors in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in such fragile countries?

III. Analysis of ODA to Fragile States from Gender Perspective

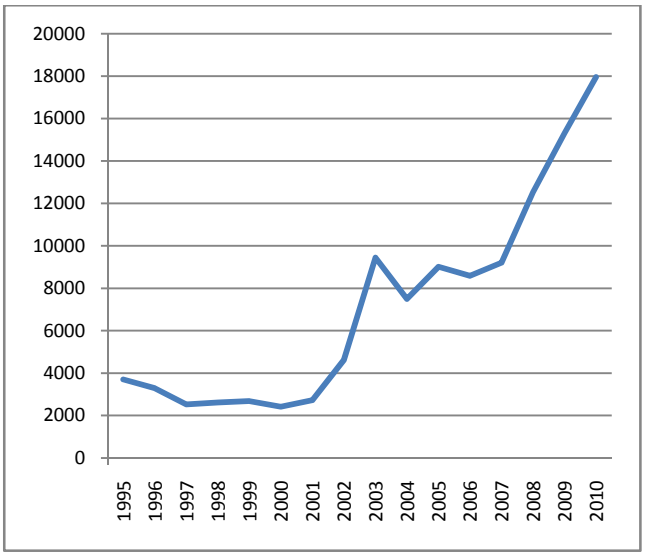


Fig. 1 Disbursement of ODA to Fragile States by DAC Donors (Unit: Current USD Million) Source: OECD International Development Statistics

Fig. 1 shows the disbursement pattern of ODA by DAC donors to fragile states of Harmonized State List of WB for FY13. Ranging from minimum of 2,415 USD Million in 2000 to around 18,000 USD Million in 2010, the trend clearly shows that DAC donors have been gradually allocating more aid to fragile states with abrupt increase from 2008 when the total amount surpassed 12,000 USD Million. Among the donors, the United States has given the largest sum with majority of its aid going to Afghanistan. Other major donors including the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany and Canada also gave most in cumulative terms to Afghanistan followed by Sudan, Nepal, Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti respectively.

Between the period of 2006 and 2010, total aid volume to fragile states increased between 6.7% and up to 26.5%. Except for 2006 when the amount decreased by about 5% from the previous year, DAC donors have shown strong commitments in contributing to fragile states. However, donor's aid commitment with gender equality purposes to these fragile states show mixed results.

The first data on ODA with gender equality objectives can be verified with the OECD Creditor Reporting System as shown in Table I. It shows how much aid with policy objective on gender equality was allocated between 2006 and 2009.

TABLE I
Disbursement of ODA to Fragile States with Policy Objective on Gender by Donor (Unit: USD Million)

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Australia	48.43	55.63	106.84	87.95
Austria	0.39	0.04	0.09	0.45
Belgium	28.10	33.59	55.24	60.73
Canada	1.06	7.20	6.00	150.96
Denmark	0.97	4.39	41.11	34.24
Finland	0.95	0.56	1.14	1.46
France	1.68	4.48	218.09	164.54
Germany	22.94	25.84	30.67	69.81
Greece	0.64	2.30	0.31	0.56
Ireland	0.51	5.72	15.1	26.16
Italy	1.46	5.09	11.60	13.74
Japan	35.90	38.69	62.52	98.89
Korea	0.15	0.77	2.56	1.08
Luxembourg	0.003	0.004	-	1.70
Netherlands	19.69	17.55	11.34	12.96
New Zealand	15.31	-	5.46	16.20
Norway	49.55	81.87	98.90	55.13
Portugal	2.80	1.44	1.13	1.60
Spain	5.79	46.40	26.57	102.14
Sweden	0.70	0.01	15.29	13.97
Switzerland	19.01	8.19	11.62	10.9
United Kingdom	22.14	5.64	64.73	184.30
United States	-	20.46	165.32	299.39
Total	287.17	365.86	951.63	1408.86

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System
Note: This dataset is no longer updated from 2010 and only data between 2006 and 2009 is available. Data last accessed on September 1, 2012

According to Table I, despite most amount of aid to fragile states being allocated by donors such as the United States, United Kingdom, Japan or Germany, aid with policy objectives on gender was allocated more by other donors such as the United States, France, Australia and Norway between 2006 and 2009 in cumulative terms. Although the United States was also the biggest donor in this category, considering its total ODA disbursement to the fragile states being near 5,600 USD Million in 2009, its gender focused aid only accounted for 5% whereas Australia gave 23% in both 2008 and 2009.

Unfortunately, this data also goes on to show that other donor countries have lacked their commitments to promoting gender equality in fragile states with minimal amount being allocated. Not only does the ratio of aid for gender equality not surpass 30%, but donors' commitment has not been consistent throughout the years. Despite the exception of a few countries including Australia, Canada, Japan or Norway who increased the aid between 2006 and 2009, the number are still few and more effort from large donors such as the United States and United Kingdom are required.

Another way to determine donor's effort in gender equality is through the Gender Equality Policy Marker (GEPM) developed

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by OECD. GEPM is an important to that helps ensure that aid targeting gender equality can be implemented and evaluated. It was developed to work as an indicator to advance women's empowerment and gender equality by documenting activities based on objectives. GEPM 0 refers to screened activities that do not target gender equality and GEPM 1 refers to screened activities in which gender equality is a significant objective. GEPM 2 is to principal objectives [18]. This marker was also applied starting from 2006 and only data up to 2010 is available.

Table II shows the disbursement pattern of aid allocation by DAC member countries to the top 5 ODA recipients among fragile states between 2006 and 2010 according to GEPM, sector and size. The countries are therefore Afghanistan, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti and Cote d'Ivoire.

TABLE II
DISBURSEMENT OF ODA BY DAC MEMBERS TO FRAGILE STATES (UNIT: CURRENT USD MILLION)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of total screened projects (%)*	3018 (61%)	3439 (61%)	4553 (66%)	6200 (71%)	6159 (55%)
GEPM 0	2138	2329	2972	2831	3919
GEPM 1	700	857	1135	2457	1512
GEPM 2	180	253	246	912	728
Amount of screened projects (%)**	2182.75 (36.9%)	2810.15 (47.8%)	3972.83 (52.8%)	5640.95 (55.7%)	6341.94 (51.1%)
GEPM 0	1666.67	2126.87	2514.74	3583.68	4597.69
GEPM 1	431.19	563.13	1341.69	1786.16	1268.29
GEPM 2	84.88	120.16	116.4	271.1	475.97
GEPM 1+2 (%)***	516.08 (8.7%)	683.29 (11.6%)	1458.09 (19.4%)	2057.26 (20.3%)	1744.26 (14.1%)
Amount of Total ODA****	5915.53	5881.29	7521.6	10133.77	12404.83

Source: OECD International Development Statistics

Note: * is the percentage of number of total projects screened against GEPM out of total projects including both screened and non-screened. ** is the percentage of amount of total projects screened against GEPM out of total amount of ODA *** is the percentage of the amount of projects with GEPM 1 and 2 combined against amount of total ODA. ****refers to total disbursement, including both screened and non-screened. All values have been rounded to 3 decimal places, therefore there can be a margin of error.

Table II shows the number and amount of screened projects against GEPM. As for the screened projects, the amount only accounted for 37% of total ODA in 2006 but gradually increased to 51% in 2010. However, one thing to note is that aid from the United States, who has been the biggest donor, did not screen their aid activities against GEPM to its recipients, including the five fragile states. Hence, the data in Table II does not take into account aid from the United States that may have targeted gender equality.

However, even when disregarding the United States, donors have not shown either consistent or increasing effort to incorporate gender equality objectives into their aid activities. Although the amount of GEPM 1 and 2 projects jumped since 2008, it had a decrease in 2010. In addition, whereas the absolute amount has increased, the ratio of GEPM 1 and 2 projects out of total ODA is still small with the maximum rate of 20.3% in 2009. For instance, when the total ODA volume increased by more than 2 USD Billion in 2010 from the previous year, both the aid amount of GEPM 1 and 2 projects as well as its ratio out of total ODA decreased by around 310 USD Million and 6% respectively.

As for the number and amount of GEPM 2 projects, both showed steady increase albeit those of GEPM 1 decreased. When considering the fact that GEPM 1 is applied to activities that may have other priorities, its decrease may indicate that gender equality is not mainstreamed to other activities that do not specifically target it as the primary objective.

IV. CONCLUSION

It can be inferred from this research that donors have been making efforts to become more inclusive of women's empowerment and gender equality in giving aid to fragile countries. Albeit inconsistent, it can be said from the fragile state cases that donors have continuously augmented both the number and amount of gender targeted aid.

At the same time, the findings show rooms for improvement. For instance, when compared to total ODA, gender equality is still a marginalized objective. From Table II, only 14% of aid in 2010 had principal and significant objectives on gender which was a decrease from 20% of the previous year. That is, although donors have incorporated gender equality objectives into the aid projects over time, the efforts should be more long-term based and strengthened.

Hence, in order to contribute to gender equality in fragile states, donors should strive to commit more and better mainstream gender in their aid policies and projects.

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