

Public Knowledge and Aid effectiveness

1. Support for aid, as shown by opinion polls and, more recently, public donations for the Tsunami, is very strong. However much of this support is based on *a priori* assumptions about why aid should be provided - and not results and impact.
2. There is a large gap between the assumptions of the *general* public (as well as some in the “aid community”) of what aid does, can and should do, and what aid might be able to achieve in theory and the impact it has in practice.
3. There is a responsibility for those who provide aid - in the public and voluntary sectors - to address this “ignorance gap”.

Ten widely-held myths or partial truths about aid, its allocation and impact.

1. Providing *help* and providing *aid* are one and the same.
2. Most public support is for aid is support for all aid and thus indicative of strong support for official development aid.
3. Aid is allocated on the basis of need.
4. Aid is not only necessary but also sufficient for poverty eradication.
5. Aid should be provided only where it will be used most effectively.
6. Donors should attach strict conditions to aid to ensure it is used effectively. It is donors and donor policies which determine the effectiveness of aid. The greater the number of donors, the greater will be the impact of the aid provided.

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7. To address poverty, aid should only go to poor people or be channelled to those services used by poor people.
8. The aid provided by NGOs is more likely to go to the poorest people and will be used by them in ways that they choose.
9. Perhaps the best way to enhance and deepen public support for aid is to provide evidence of its positive impact and publicise the results.
10. Public support for aid which is based on the strategic interest of donors necessarily detracts from support for poverty-reducing aid.