Resolving the Great Aid Debate: power and politics in the pursuit of more effective aid

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February 2016

In the contemporary world, where meeting the basic annual needs of the world's poorest would cost the equivalent of Europe's consumption of perfume it is difficult to argue that humanity does not possess the means to challenge global inequality

Ramonet, 2004: 127, Greig, 2007: 258

The Great Aid Debate

Aid Opposers

- On principle
- In practice

Aid Supporters

How is aid effectiveness measured?

1. By whether aid is working
2. By how well aid is managed
3. By evaluating individual aid projects

1. By whether aid is working

A short history of development theory

- Goals differ
- Modalities differ
- Measurement: $ in aid supplied versus economic growth

1. By whether aid is working

Conclusions

- Does not deal with complexity or all the players
- Only gives an economic view
- Neglects power and politics
- Insufficiently disaggregated to be helpful

Measuring aid effectiveness
2. By how well aid is managed

1. Ownership
2. Alignment
3. Harmonisation
4. Results
5. Mutual accountability

2. By how well aid is managed

- Development cooperation rather than aid
- Development effectiveness versus aid effectiveness

2. By how well aid is managed

CSOs and NGOs

2. By how well aid is managed

Conclusions

- Measures management not effectiveness
- Power and politics are missing
- Theory of how aid works is missing

Measuring aid effectiveness
3. By evaluating individual aid projects

- proliferation
- ‘beyond the project’

"Dear Mr. Gandhi, We regret we cannot fund your proposal because the link between spinning cloth and the fall of the British Empire was not clear to us."

Written by *M. M. Rogers* and illustrated by *Ariv R. Faizal, Wahyu S., Ary W.S.*
Creative team for Search for Common Ground in Indonesia

3. By evaluating individual aid projects

Conclusions

- Too ‘micro’

- Need to measure ‘beyond the project’

The impasse in the Great Aid Debate

Aid Opposers – tend to measure aid effectiveness by whether it is working

Aid Supporters – tend to measure aid effectiveness by how well it is managed

Project Evaluators – only get a tiny piece of the picture

Resolving the Great Aid Debate

Measuring aid effectiveness needs to:

- Move towards what type of aid works in what situations
- Be neither too micro nor too macro
- Measure power relations