Survey on Development Aid
Knowledge, Awareness and Perception of Ghanaian Citizens

Authors: Kocra L. Assoua, Peter Nahr, Kofi Evam Glover, Verena Porsch

Farafina Institute 2014: All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publishers.
List of Contents

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................................................... 2

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 4
1.1. Relevance .................................................................................................................................................. 5
1.2. Methodology .............................................................................................................................................. 6
1.3. Limitations ............................................................................................................................................... 7

2. Findings ..................................................................................................................................................... 8
2.1. Meaning of development ......................................................................................................................... 8
2.2. Opinion on effectiveness and efficiency of development aid .............................................................. 9
2.3. Opinions on priority sectors of development aid .................................................................................. 11
2.4. Major country providers of development aid ......................................................................................... 13
2.5. Perceived benefits from development aid ............................................................................................ 17
2.6. Questioning Ghana’s dependency on development aid ....................................................................... 18
2.7. Development aid as a moral obligation to poor countries .................................................................. 22

References ...................................................................................................................................................... 26
Executive Summary

The necessity and effectiveness of development aid has been widely discussed in the past decades. Although some scholars approve development aid as a necessity for economic growth in developing countries, others argue that steady economies could compete with western countries without development aid. Nevertheless, development aid efforts continue to be prominent in international policies.

The discussion about development aid involves public and private stakeholders, governments, international and academic institutions. Despite this, few studies have targeted the general population revealing opinions and concerns about development aid particularly in developing countries. Perceptions of people in developing countries have been completely sidelined. In Western countries, however, such efforts have been made with different research methods.

The problem here defined is a lack of concrete data on opinion and awareness about development aid in recipient countries. General awareness of the public about salient development issues and the attitude people have towards such efforts is an important step in building a viable governance system - an important step towards inclusion and transparency.

Farafina Institute therefore undertook a survey to ascertain public perceptions of development aid in Ghana. We wanted to know what a section of the population of Ghana thinks about development aid and what it means to them, to detect the publics’ knowledge on the topic and possible gaps on awareness and effectiveness. To do this, Farafina Institute reached 600 respondents (though 555 eventually returned questionnaires). These include lecturers and students of tertiary institutions, and planning officers in local governments. Questionnaires were handed out to the respondents, aged between 18 and 55 years. A few preliminary interviews were held before the survey to carry out the questionnaire design.
Findings
The study revealed that a significant proportion of respondents say that development aid has positive impacts in Ghana. A major finding is that opinions on development aid between European and Ghanaian citizens differ in their recipient-donor perspectives. Compared with survey results from Europe the findings here indicate that there are differences in perceptions of development aid between European countries and Ghana. The perceived European opinion of corruption in the development aid sector is not shared by respondents. The issue of corruption did not emerge as the central complaint of international aid effectiveness. Most respondents say they have personally profited from development aid and prioritize education as the most important official development assistance sector.

Further, the majority perceives development aid as a means of improving life condition. Other findings however show that almost half of the respondents believe that Ghana could sustain its development efforts without recourse to development aid. The survey therefore points to the ongoing controversial discussion of development aid assistance and its necessity of involving the lay public of developing countries.

Our findings show that the far majority of respondents are aware about development aid. Further, they identified popular donor countries, various types of aid, as well as the role and challenges of development aid in Ghana. The findings however show that people lack information on official development assistance sources. The majority of our target population was not aware of the main donors for Ghana.

To conclude, the findings prove the need for further investigation about opinions on development aid in developing countries. Surveys on specific topics on development aid reveal gaps in effective and efficient development aid approaches. We hope that this survey will contribute immensely towards improving development aid policies and monitoring development aid practices in developing countries.
1. Introduction

Development aid has been a controversial issue over the years. Numerous scholars have elaborated on effectiveness and efficiency of development aid. Some call for an African development process that relies less on development aid, but more on African ownership in shaping the process (Kanbur, 2000; Birdsall 2007; Wiedemann et al. 2005). Others argue that stopping aid completely to Africa and creating balanced economic trade systems, which facilitate developing countries to compete favourably with developed countries, would be more effective than development aid per se (Moyo 2009; Addison 2005). The growing scepticism about the effectiveness of development aid to developing countries as well as the negative effects of development aid on achieving long term fiscal, institutional and political reforms and the discussion about recipient’s dependency are highly has become increasingly prominent. On the other hand research has shown that development aid is still relevant (Burnside et al. 2000; Kosack 2003). Burnside et al. 2000 for example have empirical demonstrated that foreign aid has a positive effect on growth when it is applied within a good policy environment (Burnside et al. 2000, p. 847).

Against this background Farafina Institute undertakes a survey with the objective to gauge public opinions about the relevance and effectiveness of international development aid in recipient countries. We hold the conviction that public perceptions about development aid has an important impact on attitude towards resource allocation ensuring that political leaders are made accountable for the management of resources, which strengthens capacity of innovative and self-dependent societies.

Public opinion polls are integral part of Farafina Institute’s research activities and serve as a way of informing and influencing political, social and economic debates in African countries and their contribution towards evidence-based policy-making. Simply put, Farafina Institute seeks to explore what people at different levels of society think about issues that have some
bearings on their well being generally. Issues picked from the general social currents are used to formulate questions for interviews and surveys among African people. The findings are shared through publications on the homepage of Farafina Institute and at conferences or workshops.

1.1. Relevance

It is generally acknowledged that even though given for many different purposes and in many different forms, international development aid is basically assumed to be meant for addressing development challenges in recipient countries. Even in this regards, critics point to the fact that the majority of people in recipient countries hardly have any voice in such decisions and transactions. As argued by Traore Aminata (2013) – former minister of Mali – people generally considered as the end beneficiaries are neither involved in macroeconomic decision making nor do their views on development aid count as crucial feature in such decisions. Thus, the opinion of the major beneficiaries of the reforms and development efforts seem to be ignored completely. Despite the common concern as voiced by Traore Aminata, studies that seek to explore the views of the lay public on the issue are scarce (ODI 2012; Eurobarometer 2007), have generally been limited to exploring the opinion of European citizens on international development aid. What is obviously lacking is the awareness about views and perceptions of people from recipient countries, particularly from Africa. The problem here defined is the rather biased presentation of opinions about development aid, which registers the need for further research efforts.

The relevance of collating the opinion of people on development aid is an important step towards inclusion and transparency. In this manner, different perspectives need to be considered. Good governance principles demand that opinions and perceptions in developing countries be sought in contributing towards ensuring effective and efficient use of foreign aid.

The purpose of the series of opinion polls undertaken by Farafina Institute is therefore to fill in the gap in knowledge relating to the perceptions of people in Africa – the target beneficiaries of such development aid. The Ghana opinion poll is the first of
the series of its kind to be done in West Africa. The opinion polls promise a better-informed understanding of the views of beneficiaries of development aid in Africa and to a large extent, development aid projects can be better adjusted and monitored. Two questions become crucial in this analysis:

- What are the views of the lay public on aid to developing countries?
- What does development aid mean to people?

Finding answers to these questions will contribute to bridging the yawning gap between policymakers and the aspiration of the public in relation to the use and relevance of development aid. Ghana is selected for the pilot survey because it is considered as one of the fastest growing economies. Ghana’s growth rate on the continent was estimated at 13.4% in 2011 and 10.4% in 2012. (World Bank Global Economic Prospects 2011) Considering the opinion of Moyo (2009) and Addison (2005) that stopping development aid to African countries may even act as impetus for a better approach to development, it is of interest to explore what the Ghanaian public may think of this assertion.

As a pilot project, the results provide important insights into the perceptions Ghanaians hold about development aid and its execution. We believe that the findings from the poll are useful to government, donor countries and development partners generally.

1.2. Methodology

With a view to reaching respondents who help shape development discourse, and those who implement actual development aid in communities, we targeted students and lecturers in tertiary institutions, and planning officers in local governments (in district, municipal, and metropolitan assemblies). These respondents were between the ages of 18 and 55 years. In all, 600 people were sampled and given the questionnaire but only a total of 555 filled questionnaires were returned or completed fully. To reach our respondents, we stratified Ghana into three main geographic zones: the southern zone, the middle zone,
and the northern zone. The study communities designated in these respective zones include: Accra (in the South), Kumasi, Ejisu, Sunyani, Dormaa Ahenkro, and Nkawie (representing the middle zone): Tamale and Yendi (northern zone). Subsequent to this stratification, we purposively identified universities and local government offices within each zone that were accessible to the research team. We designed a semi-structured interview, which we applied in advance to retrieve main answers for our survey design. The poll was conducted between April and July 2012.

1.3. Limitations

Our major limitations in this study are related to the common challenges and characteristics of opinion polls. The issue of missing values due to non-response, incomplete and inconsistent responses, has been the major confront. Questionnaires that were not complete were not considered for analysis. The other challenge is the simultaneous interviewing and note-taking during phone-interviews, which sometimes created problems in completing questionnaires. Further, the survey population limited our findings. Collecting only the opinion of targeted students and lecturers in tertiary institutions, and planning officers in local governments means that we cannot claim the findings are representative of the whole population of Ghana. However, we believe this gives insights about opinions and perceptions of a selected part of the Ghanaian middleclass.

Another important issue is the ongoing discussion about the definition of development and aid itself. The elusive nature of the development aid concept presented a challenge during the interviews. Because most of the questions were close-ended, such questions may seem to be linked with particular perceptions of development aid. Thus the questionnaire did not give sufficient space to the respondents to interpret “development” and “aid” in general terms. However, the discussion of the term development aid contributes to the discourse and will be further investigated. These shortcomings however have no direct adverse impact on the findings of this study.
2. Findings

2.1. Meaning of development

The first question of the survey sought to explore the meaning of development aid (graph 1). Of the 555 respondents, an overwhelming proportion (80%) indicates that the term development aid means assistance from one country to improve life conditions in another country. In this regard, the response agrees with the dominant public opinion of the international donor communities that development aid is designed to improve life conditions (ODI 2012, Eurobarometer 2007). While a small proportion of respondents (2%) believe however that development aid is philanthropic and humanitarian support, 12 percent see it as a technological transfer from one country to another. The findings show that under “others” answers include interest-driven policies of donor countries, neo-colonialism, or budget support. It reveals that 6 percent of respondents connote the term development aid with self-interests and less with the dominant understanding of development aid.

Graph 1: Meaning of development aid
2.2. Opinion on effectiveness and efficiency of development aid

Even though quantitative research inherently has limited ability to explore exhaustively the factors that induce respondents to think about development aid in the way they do, it is important that the given responses shed some light on experiences of the population under study. The majority of respondents (72%) are certain that development aid is useful for Ghana and for Africa as a whole, while 21 percent believe it is only fairly useful (graph 2). The expressed dominant meaning of development aid in graph 1 supports this statement. The majority of respondents answered that living conditions in Ghana would be improved with external support. Clearly, the respondents are optimistic of the contribution aid could make to development. But equally important is the fact that a considerable proportion (about 28%) expressed reservations about the significance of aid to developing countries.

Graph 2: Opinion on the usefulness of development aid
Probing further, a number of reasons were given by respondents for the various positions on the usefulness of development aid (graph 3). Slightly more than half of all respondents (53%) are of the opinion that development aid is useful because it improves social and economic well being. A relatively smaller proportion of respondents saw development aid to be virtually unnecessarily, because of reasons including its tendency to retard indigenous initiative, its tendency to breed inefficiency, and to foster bribery and corruption in public institutions.

**Graph 3: Reason why development aid is useful**

In spite of the response that development aid is a necessary support for a country to grow, graph 4 shows that 49 percent of respondents rate the contribution of development aid to Ghana’s growth as fairly satisfactory. A third of respondents think foreign aid to Ghana is very satisfactory, while 14 percent believe it is not satisfactory at all.
2.3. Opinions on priority sectors of development aid

Notwithstanding the positive attributes associated with development aid in graph 5, a look at graph 6 shows that slightly more than a half of all respondents (51%) would rather expect a different type of development aid to Ghana, other than direct financial support to the social sector. A relatively smaller proportion of 25 percent of respondents say, they fairly expect a different type of development aid, while only 17 percent indicate they do not expect any different type of aid. These responses are quite consistent with results in the next graph.
The deeper quest on priority sectors presents sectors in which development aid is most desired. This question was asked to identify major gaps of the current development aid sector in Ghana. Slightly more than a half of respondents (about 51%) believe education and research deserve more development aid than any other sector. The respondents are of the opinion that education and research are crucial for enhancing human capacities for development.

**Graph 6**: Expectation of different type of development aid to your country

This statement however has to be interpreted with some caution especially considering the background of the survey population. The respondents were clearly more related to the education and research sector and this is a possible influencing factor to the answer. That is probably due to the challenges they observe in the sector. Even then, the fact that
respondents were almost equally divided on the issue of more investment of foreign aid into the educational and research sector strongly registers the impression that there are other sectors outside the educational and research sector, which are equally deemed crucial for support. However, it is interesting to see, that the respondents give limited attention to the general production sector, such as industry and agriculture, which are supposed to provide employment for skilled labour.

It is also important to comment on the fact that the public health sector (including waste management) is of another higher concern to the respondents (about 18%). This may be correlated to the high incidence rates in the sector of sexual/reproductive health, communicable diseases and environmental health hazards, including poor waste management.

**Graph 7: Sectors to which development aid should mostly be applied**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potable water</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public health care</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-corruption</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste management and public health care</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and research</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this section, the survey sought to ascertain the perception and level of knowledge of respondents on major country providers of development aid to Ghana. The data point to United States of America as the most popular provider of development aid to Ghana. About 53 percent mention USA, followed by China (14.7%), and Britain (12.9%) as major providers (graph 8).

The results of the finding presented in graph 8 however contradict data provided by the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) as shown in graph 9. Contrary to what respondents know or perceived as the biggest donor to Ghana, the OECD Creditor Reporting System data show UK is the official major provider of development aid, followed by Japan, USA, EU, and the Netherlands, Canada, Germany and Denmark.¹ It is quite interesting to note that while UK, Japan, Canada and Germany were ranked higher than China in the CRS (see table 9), respondents perceived China as the second biggest donor after the USA. It is interesting that contrary to the facts, China is projected as a more conspicuous donor by respondents.

¹ Even though we focused in the question on bilateral donors, the International Development Agency, as a multilateral agency, however, is the biggest development aid provider to Ghana (OECD CRS)
How do we explain that gap in the perception of donor countries’ contribution to Ghana? A possible explanation for the positive perception of China’s contribution may be its dynamic foreign policy towards Africa in the last 10 years. Another possible explanation may be the growing interest as well as expanding and physical presence of Chinese’s workers in Ghana. This may also show that the foreign policy of UK, Japan, Canada and Germany towards Ghana may appear to be inconspicuous and less visible to the respondents.
When asked which other kinds of relationship Ghana should have with donor countries, in general the majority wants to see other kinds of relationships than development aid evolving. Results in graph 10 show that slightly more than a third of respondents suggest more cultural and technical exchange should go along with other forms of aid. For 19 percent of respondents, the fact that development aid is largely unilateral support given directly to the government creates the notion that much of such aid do not trickle down. In this regard, less aid and more mutually beneficial exchanges are seen as desirable. A proportion of 18 percent of respondents also believe trade on fair terms rather than development aid should define the relationship between countries. Further 17 percent of respondents believe that development aid flows should be reduced and replaced with partnerships between local and foreign entrepreneurs and investors.

**Graph 10:** Other kinds of relationship respondents expect between Ghana and donor countries.
When asked whether they have other expectations regarding development aid (graph 11), 12 percent of respondents would like to be part of the decision making process on development aid in their country. Another 12 percent would like to see Ghanaians investing more in their own economy. But a small proportion of 8 percent also believes aid is necessary and should be increased to address growing poverty issues. A high percentage (41%) feels that donor countries anyway dictate the direction. In this wise, respondents seem to suggest that their opinions do not matter in directing development aid policies.

2.5. Perceived benefits from development aid

In order to ascertain the perception of people on the relevance of development aid, respondents were asked whether they personally benefitted from any development aid. The question is meant as an indicator for perceived personal benefits of aid. More than a half of respondents (53%) indicate they have personally benefitted from development aid (graph 12). The graph shows that the overwhelming majority of respondents (89%) either agree ‘absolutely’ that they personally benefitted directly from development aid (53%) or feel that they have ‘more or less’ benefitted (36%). It is equally interesting that only a comparatively small proportion of respondents (7%) either say they did not benefit at all or that they ‘don’t know’ (4%).

**Graph 12: Personal benefit from development aid**
2.6. Questioning Ghana’s dependency on development aid

In this section, the survey sought opinions of respondents on whether Ghana could survive without foreign aid in its development efforts. In line with this, respondents were first asked whether they perceive respective families as capable of surviving without development aid inflows. It is interesting that a sizeable proportion (45%) of respondents deem development aid from donor countries as crucial in this regard. However it is equally interesting that respondents seem to express reservations of the ultimate usefulness of development aid generally (graph 14). This may point out the differential

Graph 13 provides further elaboration on personal benefits from development aid. A comparatively small proportion (about 6%) of respondents thinks that corrupt governments and mismanagement of aid is a concern. It makes it difficult for the ordinary person to directly benefit from development aid. This is also a major disquiet in the general perception of the donor community. Indeed, a major concern featuring prominently in the debate on development aid in Europe is corruption in recipient countries (ODI 2012). The overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) however are agreed that development aid is generally beneficial to Ghana. They point to social and economic amenities provided as well as public infrastructure supported through development aid.
meaning of perceived benefits of foreign aid to respondents. Half of all respondents are either convinced that families could sustain themselves completely without foreign aid in Ghana (37%) or think that it is “more or less” possible for families to manage without foreign aid (13%).

**Graph 14: Can your family provide without development aid?**

Clearly whiles a half of respondents seem to be pushing for self-reliance and therefore avoidance of foreign aid, a sizeable proportion (48%) feel otherwise. From what follows, it is obviously a contested issue.

Graph 15 gives further explanations related to the reasons given, whether families can self-sustain or not. The question gives 5 answers on why families can provide or cannot provide for themselves. The large proportion of respondents (47%) explains that ‘aid provides complementary resources’ for their families. The analysis further indicates that 13 percent of respondents doubt whether development aid has direct influence on their incomes. Indeed more than a third (about 34%) indicates that their families can actually do well without development aid because they earn enough income for their sustenance. However this statement raises a critical issue how to correlate income improvement and development aid in developing countries. This is a question, which needs further empirical investigation. With regards to what respondents answered in question 1 (graph 1) about their understanding of development aid, one may deduce from this, that development aid is not perceived as a major contributing factor to respondents' living conditions.
Quite consistent with the already expressed general opinion about development aid being important but not necessarily indispensable, graph 16 gives quite a strong inclination towards support for self-reliance in Ghana. More than half (54%) of all respondents indicate either that they ‘absolutely’ (33%) think that Ghana as a country can reduce poverty without development aid or are positively (21%) agreeable but on the margin (more or less). Graph 16 suggests that development aid per se is not perceived by the majority of the respondents as a crucial requirement to reduce poverty. This response is also variously discussed in the literature. Indeed, while the literature raises concerns about ‘dependency syndrome’ of development aid to recipient countries (Moyo 2009; Addison 2005), the findings of the survey show that the issue is a contested. Only a slim majority of respondents in this study argue that Ghana could be self-reliant without donor support.
However it is also important to consider that quite a large proportion of respondents (44%) are definitely of the opinion that Ghana cannot reduce poverty without development aid. This is consistent with graph 15 where 45 percent of respondents think their family cannot do well without development aid. Even though it could be said that majority of respondents (54%) believe in self-reliance, a sizeable proportion seem to confirm the ‘dependency syndrome’ as argued by some scholars.

**Graph 16:** Can your country reduce poverty without development aid?

![Graph 16: Can your country reduce poverty without development aid?](image)

Graph 17 further elaborates on the necessity of development aid to reduce poverty. Some respondents (28%) are of the opinion that development aid is a vital complement for local resources to facilitate development. Yet, this opinion is sharply counteracted by an equal proportion of respondents (28%), who believes that development aid is not necessary because Ghana has enough resources to develop by itself. In this sense therefore, critics of development aid see aid to Ghana as completely indispensable.
2.7. Development aid as a moral obligation to poor countries

Consistent with the responses above that development aid supplements domestic sources of finance to families and local business, graph 18 shows that the majority of respondents (59%) are ‘absolutely’ convinced that donor countries should provide poor countries with aid. For about 28 percent of respondents, donor countries may, ‘more or less’, provide aid as support to poorer countries. Thus, it is clear from these responses that for most respondents (87%), development aid is a moral obligation for donor countries. When asked about reasons for donor countries to provide aid, majority of respondents pointed to two majors concerns: the colonial legacy and growing poverty as a global moral concern.
Graph 18: Perception of development aid as a moral obligation?

3. Conclusion

Our findings expressed views, awareness as well as level of knowledge of respondents on development aid. The results suggest that the usefulness of development aid to Ghana is a contested issue among respondents. On the one hand, there are indications that development aid is perceived by a majority (72%) to be useful for Ghana. These respondents maintain that development aid is a useful support to developing countries as assistance towards enhancing the well-being of the people. On the other hand, a major finding of the study proves that there are also discordance about development aid and its
assumed correlated dependency. A sizeable proportion (about 28%) expressed reservations about the significance of aid to Ghana.

In contrast, however, those who say development aid is not necessarily crucial for Ghana argue that Ghana should become self-reliant and therefore weaned off external aid support. Those who say that development aid is important and a necessity for Ghana, argue that Ghana cannot maintain itself without support. This is in consonance with the arguments of some African scholars that aid is rather designed to undermine development in Africa (Prah 2002; Bauer 2000; Easterly 2005; Kanbur 2000). Even though none of the respondents in this study share this view directly, it is important to note that quite a good proportion think aid to Ghana is dispensable.

While the majority of the respondents in our findings believe that development aid is designed to improve local living conditions, findings of two surveys conducted in Europe (Eurobarometer 2007; ODI 2012) indicate other motivations of aid from EU countries. When in 2007 EU citizens were asked what they thought was the main incentive for providing development aid to poor countries, the following responses were given: 28 percent of respondents said aid is provided for self-interest of donors (Graph 3): another 28 percent believes that aid is provided to contribute to global stability: Only 11 percent of respondents say that aid is provided to help people in need.²

² Possible reason for the different outcomes of the survey may also be related to how the specific questions were phrased. For example, the question formulated by Farafina Institute asked for a broader meaning of development aid, which includes motivation of donor nations for giving aid as well as motivation for the recipient country to accept the aid given by a specific donor. The survey of the European Commission (Eurobarometer 2007) on the other hand explicitly focused on the motivations for richer countries to provide development aid to poor countries. The ODI report from 2012 shows big concerns (57%) about the effectiveness of development aid.
In this sense, the divided opinion on the usefulness of development aid in this study is an invitation for further empirical studies. It would be important to explore further empirically the linkage between donor contribution and development outcomes in developing countries like Ghana.

To conclude, our findings suggest that there is a different perception of the essence of development aid between citizens in beneficiary countries (for instance Ghana) and those in donor countries. However what is common in both studies is the need for a broader discussion about development aid. Indeed the findings suggest poor knowledge of respondents on the contributions of major donor countries to Ghana. The fact that China is perceived by respondents as the second major donor after USA to Ghana is an illustration of this. This may suggest that the foreign policy of UK, Japan, Canada and Germany towards Ghana may appear to be inconspicuous and less visible to the respondents.
References


Traore A. “Our priority is just to survive” Magazine for Development and Cooperation (Deutsch). http://www3.giz.de/E+Z/content/archive-eng/07-2006/foc_art5.html (accessed on 25/05/2013).