

Ethical Considerations in the Provision of Humanitarian Aid and Development Assistance to Countries and Societies in Sub-Saharan Africa by the European Union and its Member States

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to present the role that ethical factors play in providing humanitarian aid to the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that are considered the poorest, and are sometimes even extremely poor and underdeveloped. The administrative and economic weakness of these countries is due to the colonial legacy inherited by the newly independent states, among other reasons. Moral sensitivity plays an important role in the European Union and its member countries providing humanitarian aid and development assistance, but these considerations often give way when the significant political and economic interests of donor countries are at stake. The research method is a literature review and analysis of documents and secondary sources.

Keywords: sub-Saharan Africa, humanitarian and development aid, ethics

Sub-Saharan Africa and the European Union (EU) are two very different worlds, with many stark contrasts. On the one hand, the EU and its member countries are among the most developed, richest, best governed, and most stable countries in the world. On the other hand, Sub-Saharan Africa comprises countries that are among the poorest – sometimes abjectly poor and underdeveloped – ill-managed and extremely corrupt, while being the most unstable and sometimes even bankrupt. In addition to these problems, there are the natural disasters that often haunt the region – droughts, floods, and locust

infestations – ravaging local agriculture and its crops, which are the backbone of the local economy in many countries and the livelihood of most of the population, as well as the scourge of malaria and AIDS, and since 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic, and a host of internal armed conflicts, with the resulting mass internal and external refugee migration (Kaczmarek, 2019; UNHCR, 1998; Kłosowicz, 2017).

The roots of the organizational and economic fragility of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa lie partly in the colonial legacy that was bequeathed to the newly independent states, whose borders were drawn at conference tables in the late 19th century. European colonizers did so mostly in isolation from the local economic, political, tribal, or cultural traditions and brought about a disruption in the territorial continuity of traditional states, with a few exceptions (Zanzibar, Rwanda, Burundi, Lesotho, and Swaziland) (Vorbrich, 2012; Kłosowicz, 2017). The causes of the economic troubles and destitution of sub-Saharan African communities can also be found in the structure and functioning of the states and the communities living there, which are often feuding and mired in armed conflicts bearing the hallmarks of civil war. The origins of most of these conflicts can be traced mainly to rivalry over access to the many natural resources in which this region abounds, as well as rivalry over access to scarce farmland and water resources (Boniface, 2001). The old conflicts sometimes erupt with tremendous force and often escalate to genocide. Such was the case with the internal conflict in Rwanda in 1994, which claimed from 800,000 to 1 million lives. Its aftermath was the Rwandan-Ugandan intervention in Congo, as a result of which the country became an arena of internal strife claiming nearly 5 million victims, with foreign interveners looting its natural resources for many years (Reybrouck, 2014; Boniface, 2001). Sometimes these conflicts are fueled by external factors, especially competing European powers and states with vested interests in the exploitation of the area's natural resources. Some of these states – former colonial empires, such as France – are sometimes directly involved in these conflicts and jealously guard their former spheres of influence from their rivals (Kapuściński, 2006).

As a consequence of this constellation of events, new so-called “humanitarian spaces,” or areas in need of urgent and regular intervention in the form of humanitarian aid, are emerging in sub-Saharan Africa. Besides humanitarian aid – which is short-term and does not solve problems requiring long-term action – the countries concerned, as well as international organizations and private foundations, are providing development aid to the countries of the region, as otherwise it would be impossible to solve many problems in this part of the world. While humanitarian aid is channeled straight to those in need, sometimes bypassing the authorities of the country in which the needy reside, development assistance is delivered in a more regular manner over a longer period of time, aimed at “reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development, supporting democratic reforms and the rule of law, ensuring respect for human rights, developing civil society, promoting economic growth, and preventing conflict and other threats to security and peace” (Grzebyk & Mikos-Skuza, 2016, p. 10).

The significance of rendering humanitarian aid in the modern world was aptly summarized by Rony Brauman, then president of Médecins Sans Frontières – the largest medical humanitarian organization in the world, providing medical aid in more than 70 countries – in an interview with the French magazine *Liberation* (1992, as cited in Forum, 1993): “Providing humanitarian aid is still a necessary thing; it’s a matter of life and death. And one can say that it is inherently linked to war: war zones are its main area of operation” (p. 10). The issue of humanitarian aid is defined somewhat more precisely by the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, under which

the European Union and EU countries have committed to coordinate their actions under common objectives and principles for humanitarian relief interventions. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid lays down a strategic framework that guides the actions of the EU and EU countries to ensure effective and coordinated quality humanitarian assistance. (European Commission, n.d.)

According to the Consensus, humanitarian aid is triggered in emergency situations in order “to provide a needs-based emergency response aimed at preserving life, preventing and alleviating human suffering and maintaining human dignity ... in response to man-made crises (including complex emergencies) and to natural disasters as needed” (European Commission, n.d.). It declares that “humanitarian aid is a fundamental expression of the universal value of solidarity between people and a moral imperative” (Joint Statement by the Council and Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Meeting within the Council, the European Parliament, and the European Commission, 2008). Therefore, the authors of the European Consensus, while officially undertaking commitments to provide humanitarian aid, also appealed to ethical considerations. This was also reflected in the premise that “the principle of humanity means that human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable in the population. The dignity of all victims must be respected and protected” (Joint Statement by the Council and Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Meeting within the Council, the European Parliament, and the European Commission, 2008). The Consensus also includes a commitment by its participants to respect and promote international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and refugees’ rights. Human rights, in turn, are closely linked to international morality. Thanks to its influence and pressure, “there has been an impressive expansion of the various forms of their international protection and the commitment of states to this process” (Kuźniar, 2000, p. 262). As Roman Kuźniar (2000) notes, to put it more broadly, human rights can be considered part of ethics, which “with its norms, values, and moral ideas is part of the various forms of consciousness in international relations” (p. 263).

The European Union and its member countries are the world’s largest donor of international public humanitarian aid, accounting for about 36% of global humanitarian

assistance. In March 2021, the European Commission issued a Communication on EU humanitarian action, outlining the priorities of EU humanitarian aid policy. The European Commission's Directorate-General for EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations is responsible for the implementation of EU humanitarian relief work (European Commission, 2021). The United States also has an immense role in this area. Meanwhile, in US political science, the issue of global justice only gained greater prominence in the 1990s, with globalization playing no small role in this process. Prior to that time, as Jon Mandle (2009) notes, American analysts representing a position known as realism believed that moral considerations did not apply in foreign relations. According to Roman Kuźniar (2000), "realists believe that a state's conduct in the international arena is not subject to moral judgment, that the national interest justifies ignoring moral principles that may constrain foreign policy, and that the main 'moral principle' is national survival." This author pits the realists against the spokesmen of the trend known as idealism and moralism, with many proponents of replacing the state-centric ethic, marked by egoism, with a "cosmopolitan" ethic, which is geared primarily toward realizing goals that are important to the international community, such as global distributive justice (Kuźniar, 2000).

At the dawn of this century, stakeholders raised the problem of the threats that globalization poses to human rights, which entailed shifting economic and social rights issues to a more prominent place on the human rights agenda. Moreover, attention has been paid to the issue of attitudes toward and respect for human rights on the part of large multinational corporations (Freeman, 2007). The emergence of a network of global corporations, large international organizations, and non-governmental organizations was and is an effect of globalization, wherein the cultural factor played a significant role, facilitated by the diffusion of cultural patterns, if only in the realm of consumption. However, the moral factor is also present and significant alongside the cultural factor in the processes of globalization, because, as Janusz Mariański (2015) notes, while referring to the concept of Anna Pawełczyńska, "the goal is such an all-human community, which would recognize certain principles regulating the moral order on the scale of all humanity (moral globalization)" (p. 220). Pawełczyńska (as cited in Mariański, 2015) defines a global society as a community with "such a bond with moral content that at least limits aggressive tendencies against outsiders" (p. 220). She points out that in such a world, "social injustice on one continent can have its origins on another." Such were the ramifications of European states instituting violent and exploitative relations with local communities living in sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial period.

Colonialism, and especially the slave trade, left an indelible mark on Europe's relations with Africa. By the time slavery was abolished in West African ports, more than 11 million sub-Saharan Africans had been loaded onto slave ships, of whom some 9.6 million survived the voyage and were then sold at slave markets in America (Hochschild, 2016). Colonial rule also led to the incapacitation of African communities and their regular

plunder. The growing role of social Darwinism and the spread of racist ideas in Western societies left African natives treated with a distinct tinge of paternalism or even racist superiority. Acts were committed against Africans that would have been difficult to condone against whites at the time. The most egregious aftermath of colonialism in Africa was the spate of crimes committed by whites against black and other non-white Africans. Unspeakable crimes on a massive scale occurred at the turn of the 20th century in the Congo, ruled by Belgian King Leopold II, Conrad's "heart of darkness," where starvation, exhaustion, brutality, and murder claimed an estimated 5 million victims (Hochschild, 2012). Next in line for the title of murderer was one who even felt pride in the role he played, Kaiser Wilhelm II, who oversaw the massacre of the Nama and Herero tribes in Southwest Africa (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2012). Particularly repugnant was the conduct of the British in Kenya at the end of their reign in the country, when, in order to suppress the independence movement more effectively, they interned the 1.5 million people of the Kikuyu tribe in concentration camps. Many of them, including women, were imprisoned in appalling conditions and abused in bestial ways (Elkins, 2013). All this happened less than 10 years after the crushing, with substantial British participation, of the murderous Nazi regime and the discovery and exposure of the magnitude of the horrendous crimes committed by the Germans in Europe under Hitler. It is worth noting that many black Kenyans gave their lives during World War II in the ranks of the British army (Pawelczak, 2004).

The pernicious impact of colonialism was also evident in the destruction of the legitimacy of traditional African sociopolitical structures and the creation of artificial administrative boundaries, subsequently inherited by newly established African states, often gathering mutually hostile tribal communities within their borders, which in turn had a deleterious effect on their future prospects for stability and governance. As Peter Calvocoressi (1998) notes, "African countries lacked the basic attributes of any state: a clear identity and authority of power" (p. 621). Almost every state that emerged in Africa experienced a coup d'état. According to estimates of governance effectiveness, made under the auspices of the World Bank in 2011 and covering 47 sub-Saharan African countries, 19 of them were found to be very poorly governed, with a further 15 rated as poorly governed. Countries in the region are also riddled with almost ubiquitous corruption. According to a ranking of "corruption perceptions" published in 2012 by Transparency International, of the 47 countries reviewed, the situation was considered very bad in 7 and bad in a further 19 (Lal, 2015). Botswana is a commendable exception in this regard, as the situation in that country was assessed as good in both instances.

The colonial period left a legacy of annihilation and marginalization of traditional elites, with no one to replace them, since, as Deepak Lal (2015) notes, only 3% of working-age people in the newly established African states had a secondary or higher education and "this segment became the nationalist elites who inherited the artificial colonial states" (p. 218). In Congo, there were only 16 graduates with university degrees

when the country gained independence, and as David van Reybrouck (2014) notes, “the army had not a single black officer. There was not one native physician, not one engineer, not one lawyer, agronomist, or economist” (p. 343). It must be said here, evoking the opinion of Fr. Adam Boniecki (2004), that various tribal groups – sometimes even hostile – which by no means formed a national community, lived and continue to live side by side in the newly formed states, with their numbers varying from several (3) as in Rwanda and Burundi to several hundred as in Nigeria (250) or Congo (about 200). The author also remarks that there is a lack of “competent people capable of managing the state apparatus in a professional, honest and proper manner, and there is also a lack of people capable of efficiently and responsibly managing the economy” (p. 27).

Another legacy of the colonial era that breeds negative outcomes is the system of food purchase and distribution. The monopoly of food purchase by colonial government agencies, which was created in response to needs arising from the war economy, was inherited by newly independent states. It has enabled those in power to artificially keep prices for agricultural products as low as possible, as African leaders fear unrest in the cities, where the population is steadily growing due to migration from the countryside. This policy consequently leads to the ruthless exploitation of the African countryside by the cities, and in essence by corrupt economic elites exploiting the entire nation (Cohen, 2000; Meredith, 2011; Iliffe, 2011).

The adverse phenomena of poor governance, instability, and pervasive corruption are present in many sub-Saharan African countries. Many ills are caused by corruption, which has its origins in the traditional culture of the region and is perpetuated by the unethical conduct of European companies bidding for contracts in tenders organized by local authorities (Przybył-Orłowski et al., 2014). An influential African politician who decides on the awarding of contracts must, in the process, take care of their clan – and this means giving gifts (bribes) to their relatives (Zaremba-Bielawski, 2016; Etounga-Manguelle, 2003). These factors make it difficult to combat the poverty that is quite common here. Poverty, or destitution, is an economic and sociological category that describes a permanent shortage of the material resources necessary to meet an individual’s basic needs – in particular, food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and basic cultural and social needs. Poverty is therefore a threat to the attainment of life goals or objectives (Jarosz, 2002).

In contrast, the concept of absolute poverty is used in international statistics and denotes the extreme form of poverty. Until recently, the criterion for extreme poverty was living expenses not exceeding the equivalent of \$1.25 per day per person. According to a 2014 UNDP Report, there were about 1.2 billion such people in the world. In 2015, the World Bank raised the international poverty line from \$1.25 to \$1.90 in daily income for one person (UNIC Warsaw, 2014; Kaczmarek, 2019; Milenijne cele rozwoju, n.d.). Most of those affected by extreme poverty are sub-Saharan Africans and South Asians. Therefore, one of the Millennium Development Goals was to reduce by half the number

of people suffering from hunger or extreme poverty. However, the pace at which this goal is being achieved and the absence of political will from rich countries suggests that it is unachievable at this time and that poverty is actually worsening in some regions. The World Bank estimates that it will take another generation to eradicate it. According to UNDP estimates referring to the Multidimensional Poverty Index, nearly 1.5 billion people in 91 developing countries live in poverty due to inadequate healthcare, education, and living standards. And while the overall number of people living in poverty is declining, nearly 800 million are at risk of returning to a life of poverty (UNIC Warsaw, 2014). To step up aid efforts for the poorest countries in November 2008, the European Union decided to transfer 0.15%–0.20% of its GDP to countries on the Least Developed Countries (LDC) list. By 2011, this rate had reached 0.13% of EU GDP being routed as aid to countries on the LDC list. Simultaneously, the EU urged other countries to join the donor lists and thus facilitate the lifting out of poverty of as many LDC-listed countries as possible (Potocki, 2011). These countries were also given some trade privileges with the EU and the USA.

The situation in sub-Saharan Africa is of mounting concern to the international community due to the dire situation of many countries and societies in the region. The list of the world's 50 poorest countries included as many as 33 African countries in 2011; of the 10 poorest, nine were located in sub-Saharan Africa: Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Liberia, Eritrea, Central African Republic, Niger, Malawi, and Madagascar (Potocki, 2011). In 2023, the ranking of the world's poorest countries based on IMF data again included seven of the previously mentioned countries, the only difference being that Congo, Liberia, and Zimbabwe were replaced by Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, and Mozambique (Shulim, 2023). In 2014, in turn, the list of the world's 37 most unstable countries featured 21 located south of the Sahara, with the four most unstable countries being South Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and Sudan. In 2019, according to the Fragile States Index (2019; see also Nowa Strategia, 2014), of the 31 most unstable countries in the world, 22 were located in sub-Saharan Africa.

It is worth stressing at this point that poverty, including in sub-Saharan Africa, has more than just a material dimension. It also has an intangible side, which is heavily emphasized in studies of the Global South, which includes Sub-Saharan Africa. As Ruth Lister (2007) notes, the intangible aspects of poverty include “a lack of voice, disrespect, humiliation and an assault on dignity and self-esteem, shame and stigma; powerlessness; denial of rights and diminished citizenship” (pp. 19–20). The author refers to the constellation of these phenomena as relational/symbolic aspects of poverty and suggests that they result from the daily interactions of people in poverty with other members of the society in which they live. They concern

the way they are talked about and treated by politicians, officials, professionals, the media ... The less value-laden word “poor” is itself problematic. It is an adjective that we “apply”

to “them” but people in poverty themselves are often reluctant to wear what they perceive to be a stigmatising label, with its connotations of inferior as in “poor quality.” (Lister, 2007, p. 20)

This intangible side of poverty has left and continues to leave a distinctive mark on the livelihoods of African farmers, especially women. It is in sub-Saharan Africa that the world’s poorest farmers live, making up nearly 70% of the population there at the end of the previous century (Caparrós, 2016). According to Daniel Cohen (2000), the poorest people globally certainly include African women. The scholar believes that “it would not be an exaggeration to say that African women are today’s slaves ... Aside from being an insult to the rest of humanity, which hypocritically accepts its existence, the exploitation of women creates a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty: by making it unnecessary to invest in machinery, it allows [a man] to save enough money to buy another wife, who will bear more children, who will work for their father if they are boys and who will be sold if they are girls” (p. 17). An example cited by Martín Caparrós corroborates this claim. He writes about a farmer from Niger who, motivated by cultural considerations, eventually used the money he had set aside to buy a plow – with which he could have multiplied the effects of his labor and cultivated a larger area of land – to get a second wife. While this is not a universally applicable rule in social relations in sub-Saharan Africa, it should be remembered that the principal function of the African family is procreation, which ensures the continuity of the family and clan (Waldenfels, 1997). One of the main reasons for the polygamy which occurs in sub-Saharan Africa, and which is highly controversial, was the constant shortage of labor in Africa relative to its territory, something which drove local societies to increase procreation (Easterly, 2008). African women actively contribute to the production of national income in sub-Saharan Africa, although their contribution is unquantifiable, as most of it is not recorded (or accounted for) in any way. According to a 1998 WHO estimate (as cited in Forum, 1998), women in sub-Saharan Africa had a critical share in the production of basic food volume, estimated then at about 60%–80%. In many communities, especially rural ones, however, women’s lives are anything but easy. The plight of Kenyan women who live in rural areas was described by Rebecca Lolosoli (as cited in Wax, 2005). “Samburu women have no rights,” she says, referring to members of her tribe, including men from a neighboring village. “You aren’t able to answer men or speak in front of them whether you are right or wrong. That has to change. Women have to demand rights and then respect will come” (Wax, 2005, p. 37).

Today, the vast majority of sub-Saharan African countries have introduced modern legislation, encompassing constitutions that guarantee equal rights for men and women, regardless of place of birth, level of education, or wealth. One of the most relevant international documents underpinning the protection of women’s rights in sub-Saharan Africa is the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, also known as the Banjul Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. Women’s rights have also been incorporated

into other normative acts, such as family and labor codes, which increasingly guarantee them equality in the areas of rights to property, inheritance, or divorce (Michałowska, 2008). However, as in the issue of combating the practice of female circumcision, as in the protection of their rights, experience often diverges from theory. An example of this is the issue of women's access to education, ostensibly guaranteed by the constitution, but severely handicapped in practice because it is often optional and involves a small fee. However, even the elimination of this fee changes little, since the ability to continue education is not only affected by the price of school books or compulsory uniforms, but also by early marriage and subsequent early motherhood (Michałowska, 2008).

While the very idea of humanitarian aid is not very controversial, evaluations of the provision of development assistance to sub-Saharan Africa are not conclusive, especially in terms of the effectiveness of the measures taken in this area. According to contemporary estimates, the aid officially granted to sub-Saharan African countries over a period of 30 years (until 2014) amounted to the equivalent of just over \$607 billion. However, it has not brought much benefit to the beneficiaries. As Deepak Lal (2015) writes, "the region has received more aid than any other region in the world in the last 50 years. It remains the poorest region in the world" (p. 215). The bulk of this aid has gone to the public sector, where it has been squandered and stolen. The financial aid flowing into sub-Saharan African countries on a regular basis has enabled many of the dictators there and the small cliques clustered around them to get rich with impunity (Meredith, 2011) while pursuing economic policies that have had no positive effect on the local population. "Ill-conceived and ill-managed economic policies produced crippling external debts out of all accepted proportion to GDP or export revenues" (Calvocoressi, 1998, pp. 620–621). This form of aid is often met with criticism, not least from Africans themselves (Lal, 2015), who are aware of the detrimental consequences it entails in its current form because it does not offer hope for effective solutions to key problems that block the economic development of countries in the region. Still, there is no shortage of advocates among Western voters for the continuation of development aid in its present form, so in the UK, for example, despite the need to cut budget spending in 2008 due to a massive budget deficit, both the ruling and opposition parties unanimously agreed on the inviolability of development aid spending.

One of the main arguments for the legitimacy of such a course of action is that these funds cover a significant portion of budget expenditures, up to 50% in some countries, and a sudden pullback of such aid could lead to disaster (Swianiewicz & Rosiak, 2014). However, some of the expenditures for this purpose should raise serious questions, since relief funds often serve to prop up violent dictatorships, such as that of Rwandan President Paul Kagame, otherwise a favorite of the West. His regime, with the help of censorship and manipulation of facts (i.e., deception) has created, for the benefit of international public opinion, as one foreign journalist Anjan Sundaram (2016) put it, a "magical nation," with a face that is far removed from the grim reality of the daily lives of the people

of Rwanda. In this way, Europe rewards with European taxpayers' money a politician who is reputed to be remarkably effective in action, without inquiring into the details of his doings and without trying to push for the democratization of the regime there (Sundaram, 2016). Such actions can be considered to lack moral sensitivity, as they do not meet the rationale underlying the provision of such assistance, and are therefore highly unethical. This is by no means an isolated case, for as William Easterly (2008) writes, rich countries have opted to provide aid only through the government of the recipient country. Thus, in 2002 alone, the 25 most corrupt countries in the world received a total of \$9.4 billion in foreign aid. Consequently, Easterly asks, "What are the chances that these billions are going to reach poor people?" (p. 113). After all, the donor community intended that the money should. Interesting, albeit depressing, in this context are the findings that Easterly cites of a study conducted by World Bank economists in selected health centers in Tanzania. "In the survey, new mothers reported what they least liked about their birthing experiences assisted by government nurses. The poor mothers-to-be were 'ridiculed by nurses for not having baby clothes' (22%) and 'nurses hit mothers during delivery (13%)'" (Easterly, 2008, pp. 113–114).

In view of the failure of the existing form of providing development assistance, which consists mostly of transferring vast sums of money to the accounts of governments that often top the rankings of the world's most corrupt, attention is drawn to the need to phase out this form of development assistance. Instead, measures should be taken to ultimately make these countries independent of such aid, by creating advantageous conditions for development based on internal factors and establishing favorable terms for sub-Saharan African countries in trade relations with the outside world. It is worth quoting here the remarks by Janusz Kaczurba (2004), who says that

if justice in the international order is an extension of the concept of justice in the relations of the national community, then the basic and politically most important, I believe, connection between justice so understood and the world order ... is the presence of developing countries in [the WTO]. There are about a hundred of these countries today, which is two-thirds of all WTO members. (p. 65)

This line of reasoning, according to the author, stems from the fact that the idea of building a multilateral international trade system that is beneficial to its participants was the work of countries "which, for the most part, had an infamous colonial past" (Kaczurba, 2004, p. 65) and, consequently, moral considerations were to some extent unavoidable in their actions. Following the argumentation of Kaczurba, it should be recalled that colonialism significantly boosted the economic power of the colonial countries and metropolises. Therefore, developing countries, pointing to colonialism as a blatant manifestation of injustice in international relations and "its legacy of development deformities and deficiency of trade capacity," demand special treatment (Kaczurba, 2004,

p. 66). Meanwhile, bearing in mind that agricultural products such as food and cotton, in addition to natural resources, are a significant portion of the exports of sub-Saharan African countries, highly developed Western countries (i.e., the European Union or the USA) apply protectionist barriers to trade in these products through high external tariffs and subsidization of their own agriculture. Furthermore, in many cases, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have on more than one occasion made aid to poor African countries conditional on the cessation of any agricultural subsidies and the freeing of prices for agricultural products under the pretext of bringing them into the “global free market system” (Caparrós, 2016, p. 51) from which developed countries had previously been eager to exclude their own agriculture. Such measures should be evaluated as another example of actions devoid of moral sensitivity on the part of developed Western countries, which are the main sponsors of the two aforementioned institutions: the IMF and the World Bank. Meanwhile, the World Bank has acknowledged over time that “it is the agricultural subsidies that are four times more effective than any other measure” (Caparrós, 2016, p. 51) in helping to successfully combat famine, which is one of the most formidable scourges of the region. Meanwhile the European Union and its member countries, and the United States, are participating in combating famine with humanitarian aid by sending the countries affected by it their own subsidized grain.

It is indisputable that ethical considerations are present in the EU’s and its member states’ provision of humanitarian aid, if not that of development assistance, to countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This is especially true since the media images of starving children or endless streams of refugees arouse sympathy in viewers and have a powerful impact on public opinion in these countries. However, the way in which this aid is organized and distributed on the ground, i.e. in the so-called “humanitarian space,” can raise large ethical doubts at times. A behind-the-scenes look into the so-called humanitarian aid industry and the ethical dilemmas involved – aid is given even if the goods and money feed the war coffers of warring parties – were described in the acclaimed book *The Crisis Caravan: What’s Wrong with Humanitarian Aid?* by Linda Polman (2011). In the Foreword to Polman’s book, Janina Ochojska-Okońska wrote that “the book also talks about how aid should not be given and the dangers associated with its large-scale use” (p. 7).

The factor of moral sensitivity has an unassailable place among the motives accompanying development assistance to countries in sub-Saharan Africa. It is certainly involved in the case of countries that are former colonial empires, which once drew significant material benefits from this, while committing numerous atrocities against the indigenous population, as mentioned earlier in the text. They contributed to distorting and retarding their development, besides often destroying traditional elites and failing to prepare new ones to take over in African states liberating themselves from white domination. While the very fact of providing aid to countries in sub-Saharan Africa has, in the words of Tony Bair (as cited in Lal, 2015), at its core “a scar on the conscience of the world” (i.e., a factor of high moral sensitivity), the forms of providing this aid and its direct

recipients show that ethical considerations often lie in the deep shadow of the political and economic interests of the donor countries of this aid (p. 211). That this sensitivity fades when specific actions are taken is not only evidenced by the maintenance of barriers to protect Western agriculture from competition from Africans, but also when it comes to external interests, since the assistance all too often reaches countries that do not meet these criteria, despite official declarations about the recipient countries' need to democratize internal structures and to respect human rights. The relief money often serves to strengthen undemocratic and corrupt systems. If it turns out that important geostrategic interests are at play, political and economic motives take precedence over respect for moral norms in international politics.

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