
RUSSIA AS A HUMANITARIAN AID DONOR

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This paper addresses the role of Russia as a humanitarian aid donor in the context of the increasing participation in international aid of so-called ‘new’, ‘emerging’ (or ‘re-emerging’), or ‘non-traditional’ donors. In the recent years Russia has made a number of international aid commitments, for example within the G8, marking its re-emergence as an international donor since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In line with Russia’s increasing international aid commitments, the level of Russian humanitarian aid has also been increasing over recent years. Nonetheless, the country still faces several obstacles in developing its donor capacity.

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SUMMARY

This paper addresses the role of Russia as a humanitarian aid donor in the context of the increasing participation in international aid of so-called 'new', 'emerging' (or 're-emerging'), or 'non-traditional' donors, such as the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and others. Much debate in recent years has centred on such questions as the impact of these donors on patterns of international aid provision and the rationale for their aid efforts. This paper aims to answer these questions from the standpoint of Russia by drawing on official statistics and secondary literature. It examines Russia's institutional arrangements for humanitarian aid provision; the types and volumes of aid sent; the recipients of this aid; the differences and similarities between Russia and the other members of the two main global donor groups – the G8 (and the wider Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC)) and the BRICS countries; and finally the Russian government's and public's perceptions of the country's role as a donor.

In the recent years Russia has made a number of international aid commitments, for example within the G8, marking its re-emergence as an international donor since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Yet the country's involvement in aid also has clear limitations – crucially, it has still not signed up to the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) Principles and lacks a single international development agency, with the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergencies (EMERCOM) currently playing a dominant role in the area of humanitarian aid provision.

In line with Russia's increasing international aid commitments, the level of Russian humanitarian aid has also been increasing (with some fluctuations) over recent years, though both in absolute terms and as a percentage of GDP it still remains far below the levels achieved by most 'traditional' donors and some 'new' donors. Another notable characteristic is that Russian humanitarian aid is primarily in-kind, consisting predominantly of processed foods, transport, shelter, and so on. The majority of this aid is directed towards the former Soviet republics, highlighting Russia's traditional regional focus in terms of aid giving. Russian aid tends to be implemented through multilateral organizations rather than bilaterally, and the country is also reluctant to work with non-governmental organizations. Nonetheless, something of a break with old traditions is evident, with Russia acquiring new partners outside the region and beginning to send more significant amounts of aid to countries struck by natural disasters.

After considering these developments, this paper goes on to compare Russia's humanitarian aid-giving patterns with those of other BRICS and G8 countries. On the one hand, just as in other BRICS countries, the Russian aid budget has only recently begun to increase. On the other hand, Russia is the only BRICS country that is not also an aid recipient, and it has also been more ready to provide humanitarian assistance to nearby countries engulfed by conflict.

Some experts have therefore suggested that while the aid policies of other BRICS countries are influenced primarily by the principle of South–South co-operation, Russia's are far more influenced by *Realpolitik*. It has also been argued that Russia does not perceive itself as a member of the global South, instead prioritizing its position among the developed Northern states. This view is in part supported by the attitudes of the Russian public, among whom the view of aid as demeaning is prevalent, while countries that are aid donors are perceived as strong. Overall, Russia holds a unique middle-ground position between the developed and the developing world. As such, it has the potential to play an important role in introducing new ideas on aid discourse and practice.

Although the provision of humanitarian and development assistance is perceived in Russia as an indicator of strength, and a number of experts have emphasized the importance of geostrategic

influence and economic interests as driving forces behind Russia's development as a donor, there is much that is positive in the country's efforts to adopt good practice in humanitarian assistance provision. The aid commitments it has made as a G8 member, its endorsement of several key aid effectiveness initiatives (such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action, and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation), and its moves to join the OECD and start reporting official development assistance expenditure are all examples of this.

Nonetheless, the country still faces several obstacles in developing its donor capacity, namely its lack of a designated aid agency; its low level of humanitarian aid volumes compared to 'traditional' and even 'new' donors; the significant prevalence of in-kind aid over cash assistance; the public's predominant concern for national interests; and the failure to date to sign up to and apply the core GHD Principles. Thus, Russia still has some way to go to realize its full potential as an effective and efficient humanitarian donor.

1 INTRODUCTION

So-called 'new'/emerging' (or 're-emerging') /'non-traditional' donors, such as the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), Turkey and the Gulf states, are drawing increasing attention in the international aid community as well as in recipient countries. Much debate in recent years has centred on such issues as the **impact of these donors on patterns of international aid provision and the rationale for their aid efforts.**¹

Humanitarian aid from these 'new' donors is steadily increasing, although it still represents a small proportion of their overall aid flows.² It can therefore be expected that these countries will become important humanitarian players in the near future, making it crucial to understand why, how, when, and to whom they are giving assistance.

This paper sets out to discuss the role of Russia as a humanitarian aid donor. The re-emergence of Russia as a donor poses some questions, including 'Why become a donor again?', 'Why now?' and 'Where does Russia focus its assistance?' It can also be examined in the context of Russia's wider foreign policy and in the light of the international Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) Principles.³ Perhaps even more interestingly, comparisons can be drawn with other donor states. Russia is in the peculiar position of being both an emerging economy and part of the developed world, as exemplified by its G8, G20 and BRICS memberships (and likely accession to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)). This paper considers the above issues with the help of official statistics⁴ and secondary literature. It examines in turn Russia's institutional arrangements for humanitarian aid provision; the types and volumes of aid sent; the recipients of that aid; differences and similarities between Russia and the other members of the two main global donor groups – the G8 (and wider OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)) and the BRICS countries; and the Russian government's and public's perceptions of the country's role as a donor.

The focus of this paper is primarily on humanitarian aid, which is defined by Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) development initiative as 'aid and action designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of emergencies'.⁵ In the context of this paper humanitarian aid is taken to encompass emergency response activities such as material relief, food aid, and support services, incorporating related logistics, distribution, and co-ordination, but not extending to humanitarian action implying deeper involvement, for instance in reconstruction, disaster prevention, and preparedness.⁶

2 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

During its G8 presidency in 2006 Russia made a number of international aid commitments, both in-principle and financial, so marking its re-emergence as an international donor. The *Concept of Russia's Participation in International Development Assistance* adopted in 2007 outlines Russia's Official Development Assistance (ODA)⁷ priorities, goals, and principles. According to this document, the main goals of Russia's ODA policy are the following:

- to influence global processes with a view to establishing a stable, fair, and democratic world order based on universally acknowledged norms of international law and partnership between countries;
- to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable economic development in developing and post-conflict countries;
- to eliminate the consequences of humanitarian, natural, environmental, and industrial disasters and other emergencies;
- to foster democratic processes, the development of market economies, and respect for human rights in recipient countries;
- to develop political, economic, educational, social, cultural, and academic relations with other countries and international associations;
- to create a zone of good neighbourliness along Russia's national borders; to prevent the occurrence and facilitate the elimination of causes of tension and conflict, as well as sources of drug trafficking, international terrorism, and crime, particularly in regions neighbouring the Russian Federation;
- to develop trade and economic co-operation between Russia and its partner countries;
- to encourage the integration of recipient countries' national markets with Russian capital, commodity, services, and labour markets;
- to strengthen the credibility of Russia and promote an unbiased attitude to the Russian Federation in the international community.

Russia has declared its adherence to the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action,⁸ and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation,⁹ which have been agreed in a succession of inter-governmental conferences. It has also continued to make major international aid commitments as part of its G8 membership (in particular, the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative in 2009).¹⁰ Russia is also in the process of acceding to the OECD, and started reporting its ODA expenditure in 2010.¹¹

Importantly, however, when it comes to humanitarian aid specifically, Russia has not signed the GHD Principles, which are the international benchmark for accountable, flexible, and predictable aid, given according to the core principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. In this it is similar to the other 'new' donors such as the other BRICS countries, the Gulf states, and Turkey.

Another key feature that distinguishes Russia from 'traditional' donors – as well as some of the 'new' donors - is the absence of a single aid agency. Whereas in many countries international aid provision is handled by the ministry of foreign affairs or a specialized ministry of development, in Russia the function is split between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Economic Development, Education and Science, and Health, and the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergencies (EMERCOM). At the time of writing there is no one body providing overall direction and monitoring of Russia's general aid policy and action.

Russia's humanitarian aid is administered predominantly by EMERCOM. This ministry has been providing a range of humanitarian assistance to foreign countries for nearly two decades and more recently has begun to collaborate with other governments, international organizations, and agencies. To facilitate better co-operation, it was decided that from autumn 2005, two EMERCOM representatives would be permanently based in Brussels, allowing for a constant dialogue with the European Union and NATO.¹² There is an EMERCOM representative at the Permanent Council of the International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO), based in Geneva.

In 2011 the Ministry of Finance announced that an international development agency (the Russian International Aid Agency) would be set up in 2012, incorporating all aspects of foreign aid and overseeing activities such as specialist training, equipment supplies, and construction.¹³ There was hope that this might resolve the current institutional ambiguity. However, in September 2012 the Ministry of Finance reported that the new agency would not now be established. Instead the plan was to build the capacity of an existing agency, *Rosstrudnichestvo* (Russian Co-operation), to develop and deliver Russia's international aid programme.¹⁴ This body – its full title is the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Expatriates and International Humanitarian Co-operation – reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was set up in 2008, principally to develop relations between Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).¹⁵ For the next few years at least, however, it is very likely that EMERCOM, with its profile and experience, will continue to manage Russia's humanitarian aid.

Box 1: Overview of EMERCOM's key activities

EMERCOM is Russia's principal humanitarian/emergency response operator. According to the ministry's official website,¹⁶ it is engaged in four major strands of work in the area of humanitarian response: the development of a legislative framework for international co-operation; co-operation with the UN to respond to humanitarian crises worldwide; co-operation with other countries with advanced emergency management systems; and exchanges of experience in the area of emergency/humanitarian response.

Russia co-operates multilaterally through agreements binding several states or through international organizations. At present, it has partnerships with bodies such as the European Union the United Nations, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), NATO, and the ICDO. Historically, EMERCOM has worked most extensively with the UN humanitarian agencies. This began in 1993 with co-operation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a partnership first tested during the crisis in the former Yugoslavia between 1993 and 1996 and again from 1999 to 2000, and in Central African Republic in 1994–1995. In 2002, following the signing of another agreement, EMERCOM began working actively with the World Food Programme (WFP), specifically providing logistical support to WFP operations.

Over the last decade, EMERCOM's Central Search and Rescue Team ('Centrospas') has responded to all major international disasters, including the Asian tsunami in 2005 and the earthquakes in Haiti (2010) and Japan (2011). In June 2011 Centrospas received the highest classification (i.e. Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team) within the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG).¹⁷ As part of co-operation with ICDO, meanwhile, since 2007 EMERCOM taskforces have been deployed for humanitarian demining in locations including Serbia, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, and Nicaragua.¹⁸

In addition, the ministry works with other states on a bilateral basis. In particular, Russia has been developing ties with other countries which already have strong civil defence, disaster prevention, and rescue agencies. For example, 'Operation Focus', deployed during the events of 1999–2000 in the Balkans, saw EMERCOM partner with Switzerland, Greece and Austria in rescuing civilians and delivering humanitarian aid. In the early 2000s similar co-operation with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan supported the humanitarian response in Afghanistan. The ministry also has a successful record of co-operation with the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), as part of a working group on emergency management and response set up under the US–Russian bilateral presidential commission.

3 HOW MUCH AID?

In absolute terms, the level of Russian humanitarian aid has been increasing (with some fluctuations) in recent years, averaging \$39.3m/year in the period 2008-2012, according to UN OHCA financial tracking system. However, it should be noted that it is still far below the levels of humanitarian aid provided by some 'traditional' donors with GDPs similar to Russia's (for example, in 2010 Canada gave \$500m in humanitarian aid),¹⁹ and also well below the levels provided by some of the 'new' donors with lower GDPs, such as Turkey (\$150m in 2010)²⁰ and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (\$114m in 2010).²¹ In the same year Russian humanitarian aid amounted to \$40.3m. However, when compared with its peers from the BRICS group, Russia actually appears to be a fairly average case, especially alongside India and Brazil, who also have comparable GDPs. In 2010, India gave \$37m²² and Brazil \$29m²³ in humanitarian aid. For a more detailed discussion of how Russia compares with other humanitarian donors, see section 6, 'Russia and other donors'.

Turning to the proportion of humanitarian aid in total Russian ODA flows, the trend has been primarily downward, as Table 1 suggests. This is a reflection of the fact that, while the overall level of ODA increased almost fivefold in the period between 2005 and 2011 (although, importantly, Russia's ODA volumes are still way below the 0.7% ODA/GDP target), this was not matched by equivalent increases in humanitarian aid. **Nevertheless, the large increases in the level of ODA indicate that Russia has the potential to make much more significant commitments to humanitarian aid.**

Table 1: Russian ODA and humanitarian aid flows, 2001–13

| Year | Total ODA, \$m | ODA volume as % of GDP | Humanitarian aid, \$m | Humanitarian aid as % of ODA |
|---------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 2001 | n/a | n/a | 0.8 | n/a |
| 2002 | n/a | n/a | 17.8 | n/a |
| 2003 | n/a | n/a | 17.2 | n/a |
| 2004 | n/a | n/a | 17.5 | n/a |
| 2005 | 101.3 | 0.01 | 20.5 | 20.2 |
| 2006 | 101.8 | 0.01 | 19.9 | 19.5 |
| 2007 | 210.8 | 0.02 | 2.9 | 1.4 |
| 2008 | 220.0 | 0.01 | 44.0 | 20.0 |
| 2009 | 785.0 | 0.06 | 32.5 | 4.1 |
| 2010 | 472.4 | 0.03 | 40.3 | 8.5 |
| 2011 | 479.0 | 0.03 | 28.2 | 5.9 |
| 2012 | n/a | n/a | 51.6 | n/a |
| 2013 (by May) | n/a | n/a | 17.8 | n/a |

Sources: UN OCHA Financial Tracking System²⁴ ; GHA²⁵ ; OECD Statistics²⁶

It is important however to note that analysis of Russian humanitarian aid expenditure is complicated by discrepancies between the figures presented by different sources. For example, data on Russia humanitarian aid presented by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking System (by far the most detailed statistical data on Russia's aid efforts) and data published on the EMERCOM website are quite inconsistent. Overall, EMERCOM's approach to publishing figures has been less consistently, with a detailed

expenditure breakdown given only for 2005. But even the example of 2005 alone highlights the very significant disparities in the numbers presented by the two sources. For example, the ministry stated that in that year it ran eight operations providing humanitarian aid to foreign governments, and that spending on these operations alone amounted to over \$36 million.²⁷ Yet as shown in Table 1, UN OCHA gives Russia's total humanitarian aid for that year as \$20.5 million. These disparities are likely to be a result of discrepancies in the definitions of humanitarian aid and inconsistency in reporting mechanisms. **While it is not sure that all aid is reported to FTS, further challenges in reporting may be caused by the lack of a single institution to co-ordinate the country's activities in all spheres of aid, to which all data and information related to the country's aid activities would be reported.** However, it should be noted that Russia has recently started reporting its ODA figures using the OECD DAC format. This move, along with Russia's likely accession to the OECD, gives grounds to hope that a coherent system of ODA statistics will be put in place.

4 TYPES OF AID

Russia tends to operate through multilateral organizations rather than bilaterally when it comes to aid provision. The latest figures from the Ministry of Finance state that in 2011 roughly 60 per cent of total ODA was multilateral.²⁸ This bias is even more visible in the case of humanitarian aid provision, as Table 2 suggests. **In 2012, only 6.3 per cent of all Russia's humanitarian aid was channelled bilaterally.** This has not always been so. In fact it has only become an increasing trend since 2006: whereas no aid was channelled through multilateral organizations in that year, by 2012 the proportion so channelled reached 86.9 per cent. The preference for working through multilateral organizations could be due in part to Russia's relatively weak aid structures. If a stronger controlling institution existed – such as the proposed but delayed central aid agency – it would increase and consolidate the government's capacity to oversee and direct its foreign aid programme, thereby reducing dependency on multilateral platforms.

Table 2 also reflects **Russia's continued reluctance to work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).** While this is perhaps to be expected given the contentious place of civil society in Russia, where recent legislation has placed new restrictions on NGOs,²⁹ more surprising is that Russia started collaborating with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement only in 2012 (when Russia contributed to the International Committee of the Red Cross's operations in Syria).

Table 2: Channels of humanitarian aid delivery (as percentage of total aid), 2006–13

| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 (by May) |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| <i>Bilateral</i> | 100% | 60% | 64.3% | 16.7% | 30.8% | 20.8% | 6.3% | 11.5% |
| <i>NGOs and civil society organizations</i> | - | 20% | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| <i>International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement</i> | - | - | - | - | - | - | 6.8% | - |
| <i>Multilateral organizations</i> | - | 20% | 35.7% | 83.3% | 69.2% | 66.7% | 86.9% | 80.8% |
| <i>Others (details not yet provided)</i> | - | - | - | - | - | 12.5% | - | 7.7% |

Source: GHA³⁰; Authors' calculations based on UN OCHA Financial Tracking System data³¹

A notable characteristic of Russian humanitarian aid is that currently it is provided primarily as in-kind aid. Whereas in the early 2000s several African states received humanitarian aid from Russia in the form of direct grants (for example Algeria received \$7.6m in 2002, and \$5.3m was transferred to Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2003), more recently Russia's humanitarian aid has mostly taken the form of goods and services.³² Table 3 shows a breakdown of the different forms of Russian in-kind aid and the recipient countries in the period from 2010 to 2011.

Table 3: Russia's in-kind humanitarian aid by type of aid and recipient country, 2010–11

| Type of aid | Recipient countries and territories (by region) |
|--|--|
| <i>Processed foods (e.g. tinned food, sugar, etc.)</i> | CIS & other former Soviet Union countries and territories: Abkhazia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, South Ossetia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Namibia, Tanzania, Tunisia Other: Chile, China, Haiti, Montenegro, Pakistan, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Yemen |
| <i>Wheat/wheat flour</i> | CIS & other former Soviet Union countries and territories: Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Africa: Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Other: Afghanistan, North Korea, Palestine, Yemen |
| <i>Transport (cars, buses, etc.)</i> | CIS & other former Soviet Union countries and territories: Abkhazia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova Other: Israel, Montenegro, Poland |
| <i>Shelter (tents, blankets, etc.)</i> | CIS & other former Soviet Union countries and territories: Abkhazia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, South Ossetia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Namibia, Tanzania, Tunisia Other: Chile, China, Colombia, Haiti, Japan, Montenegro, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Serbia, Venezuela, Yemen |
| <i>Equipment (including electronics)</i> | CIS & other former Soviet Union countries and territories: Abkhazia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, South Ossetia, Ukraine Africa: Namibia Other: Chile, China, Colombia, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Yemen |
| <i>Medical supplies</i> | CIS & other former Soviet Union countries and territories: Abkhazia, Kyrgyzstan Other: China, Colombia, Haiti, Pakistan |

Source: EMERCOM³³

Box 2: Demining

Apart from the types of aid tabulated above, Russia has been providing experts and equipment for demining, as well as liquidation of unexploded ordnance.³⁴ Unfortunately, spending on these operations is not accounted for by the UN OCHA database. This type of aid, labelled here as 'demining', can be seen as humanitarian in the sense that it is both life-saving and a form of post-conflict assistance (whereas civilian efforts to build a lasting peace and avoid another armed conflict would be deemed development aid). Demining has been part of EMERCOM's activities since 1996, when the first operation in a foreign country, Tajikistan, was undertaken. In 2000 a specialized organization, EMERCOM-Demining – Center of Humanitarian De-mining and Special Blasting Operations, was set up to 'provide rapid and effective solutions to international humanitarian operations'.³⁵ Though it generally operates on a bilateral basis, in recent years this organization has increasingly worked in partnership with the ICDO. Currently, a five-year programme is being implemented in Serbia, and in recent years projects have also taken place in Lebanon, Nicaragua, and Sri Lanka. Assistance from Russia includes equipment, such as mine detectors and road-building machinery; experts who participate directly in the process of demining land and water; and instructors who train local specialists to continue operations in the long term, after Russian expertise is withdrawn. The organization also provides special blasting services, for example for channel and ditch building, building demolition and ice blasting. Since its creation, EMERCOM-Demining has held 35 explosives clearing contracts, as a result of which 23,303 hectares of land and water have been cleared.³⁶

Humanitarian food aid is currently the largest component of Russia's humanitarian aid. It has been a significant part of the aid mix since 2007, as Table 4 shows, and the significance of this category of aid within Russia's total humanitarian aid contribution has increased in recent years, albeit with some significant fluctuations.

Table 4: Humanitarian aid by sector (including bilateral and multilateral aid), 2006–13

| Year | Food | Health | Multi-sector | Shelter and non-food items | Water and sanitation | Other |
|---------------|-------|--------|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-------|
| 2006 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 66.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 33.2% |
| 2007 | 34.2% | 0.0% | 42.0% | 23.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| 2008 | 27.3% | 6.8% | 49.4% | 16.5% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| 2009 | 81.0% | 0.0% | 8.2% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 10.8% |
| 2010 | 46.1% | 5.7% | 0.0% | 5.5% | 2.5% | 40.2% |
| 2011 | 31.2% | 7.1% | 0.0% | 20.0% | 1.2% | 40.5% |
| 2012 | 43.0% | 23.0% | 1.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 32.9% |
| 2013 (by May) | 77.4% | 0.6% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 22.0% |

Source: UN OCHA Financial Tracking System³⁷

Like the other types of humanitarian aid provided by Russia, recent humanitarian food aid has been primarily multilateral (through the WFP) and in-kind. Unfortunately, neither the UN OCHA Financial Tracking System nor the WFP denote whether contributions classified as 'humanitarian food aid' were provided in cash or in kind. But if we analyse the content of Russia's humanitarian food aid contributions in 2012 using other sources, it appears that out of nine humanitarian³⁸ contributions most, as Table 5 shows, were in-kind contributions. In-kind food aid falls into two main categories: processed foods, particularly canned foods with a long shelf life; and wheat and wheat flour, whose prominence is unsurprising given that Russia is one of the world's top wheat producers (and one of the largest in terms of production per capita³⁹). These two types of aid are sent to a wide variety of recipient countries, as Table 3 shows.

Table 5: Russia's directed humanitarian food aid contributions to WFP by project, 2012

| Country | Programme category | Project title | Contribution (\$) | Type of contribution |
|--|--------------------|--|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Armenia | PRRO ⁴⁰ | Transitional Relief and Recovery Assistance for Vulnerable Groups | 1,000,000 | N/A |
| Djibouti | PRRO | Assistance to Vulnerable Groups Including Refugees | 1,000,000 | In-kind (foodstuffs) ⁴¹ |
| Kenya | PRRO | Food Assistance to Refugees | 1,000,000 | In-kind (wheat flour) ⁴² |
| Kenya | PRRO | Protecting and Rebuilding Livelihoods in the Arid and Semi-Arid Areas of Kenya | 1,000,000 | In-kind (wheat flour) ⁴³ |
| Korea, Democratic People's Republic of | PRRO | Nutrition Support to Women and Children | 5,000,000 | In-kind (wheat flour) ⁴⁴ |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Kyrgyzstan | PRRO | Support to Food Insecure Households | 6,000,000 | In-kind (wheat) ⁴⁵ |
| Palestinian Territory, Occupied | PRRO | Targeted Food Assistance to Support Destitute and Marginalized Groups and Enhance Livelihoods in the West Bank | 2,000,000 | In-kind (wheat flour) ⁴⁶ |
| Somalia | EMOP ⁴⁷ | Tackling Hunger and Food Insecurity in Somalia | 2,000,000 | In-kind (foodstuffs) ⁴⁸ |
| Syrian Arab Republic | EMOP | Emergency Food Assistance to People Affected by Unrest in Syria | 4,500,000 | Cash ⁴⁹ |

Source: UN OCHA Financial Tracking System⁵⁰, WFP⁵¹, and media sources referenced in the table

Box 3: In-kind aid versus cash-based responses in emergencies⁵²

In-kind humanitarian aid is given by a large number of both 'old' and 'new' donors; for example, the USA and Brazil as the leading global agricultural producers give large amounts of in-kind food aid. Yet this way of giving aid may not always be the most appropriate.

In some crises, in-kind humanitarian aid is essential to saving people's lives. For instance, in situations when certain goods are not available on the market, are in short supply, or people cannot physically access the market because of conflict or other restrictions, in-kind transfers may be the most appropriate way to meet needs. For example, in-kind food aid may be essential to help alleviate malnutrition or to meet immediate needs of people in crisis situations where markets are failing or cannot be accessed. But in some cases, the provision of in-kind food aid can actually have negative consequences. Often, there is enough food available on the market in emergency situations, but people do not have enough money to purchase it. When in-kind food aid is not needed because there is food available on the market, it undermines the local economy and can actually have a negative impact on traders' and farmers' incomes, thereby increasing vulnerability.

There is a growing body of evidence from large humanitarian emergencies over the last decade (such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the Pakistan floods of 2010, the 2011 Horn of Africa food crisis, and the 2012 unrest in Yemen) which suggests that in many cases cash-based assistance is a more appropriate response to people's needs. There is also ample evidence that in many instances, the risks commonly associated with cash transfer programming, such as security and corruption risks, can be mitigated through a number of measures. Cash transfers are not inherently more risky than any other form of assistance; rather, they entail *different* risks that like any other modality need to be properly understood and managed in given contexts. In fact, cash transfers have successfully reached beneficiaries in highly insecure areas, including Somalia, Chechnya and Afghanistan. Giving people cash instead of food – or other basic needs – in contexts where markets are functioning will stimulate the local market and can be a more dignified form of assistance – providing people with the choice decide what they need and when to buy it.

5 AID RECIPIENTS

Generally speaking, in the past decade the countries that have most frequently received the highest proportion of Russian humanitarian aid are located within Russia’s sphere of influence, and in particular the former Soviet Union. Table 3 in the previous section gives an indication of Russia’s regional focus in terms of aid giving. The only group of countries to receive every type of aid in 2010–11 was the CIS/FSU countries and territories, which also received the most substantial aid in the form of transport and equipment. This is indicative of Russia’s deeper involvement and participation in its fellow former Soviet republics. In quantitative terms, the picture has been the same. Between 2007 and 2013, the Caucasus and Central Asia region was the top recipient of Russian humanitarian aid. To be more specific, the bulk of this assistance went to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Table 6: Regional recipients of Russian humanitarian aid, 2007–13

| Region | Aid Amounts in \$M |
|---|--------------------|
| Africa, North of Sahara | 9.3 |
| Africa, South of Sahara | 29.5 |
| Middle East | 23.7 |
| Europe (Western Europe, Central Europe and Balkans) | 10.5 |
| Central and South America and the Caribbean | 13.8 |
| South Asia | 6.9 |
| South-East Asia | 2.2 |
| East Asia | 29.2 |
| Caucasus and Central Asia | 57.4 |
| Not defined | 13.0 |

Source: UN OCHA Financial Tracking System⁵³

Other countries in receipt of high levels of recurrent humanitarian aid from Russia include other former Soviet republics – Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia – as well as countries and territories such as Afghanistan, North Korea, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Serbia, Pakistan, and Somalia. To a degree, this reflects some **continuity with Soviet aid policies**: countries such as North Korea became Soviet aid recipients during the Cold War era and continued to receive aid from Russia after the break-up of the Soviet Union. The geographical distribution of Russia’s aid must be viewed in the context of its long-term strategic ambitions. Russia regards former Soviet republics as its sphere of influence, and its willingness to maintain close ties with them explains why they receive such a large proportion of its aid.

The regional focus of Russian aid efforts has caused many experts to conclude that its motivation for becoming a donor once more is primarily one of *realpolitik*. This observation is compatible with the vision expressed in the recent *Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept*, which states that ‘Russia’s foreign policy is transparent, predictable and pragmatic.’⁵⁴ In this view, geostrategic leverage and positioning in the world economy are what drive the country’s actions as a donor in the post-Soviet world.⁵⁵ Russia’s focus on the CIS/FSU countries is consequently often interpreted as a way of maintaining a degree of influence over these countries, and several scholars highlight the correlation between regimes that are friendly towards the Russian government and the amount of aid these states receive from Russia.⁵⁶ The cases of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and sometimes Armenia are cited in particular. It is important to note, however, that the blurring of boundaries between humanitarian aims and economic or foreign policy objectives is recognized as a growing problem in donor action globally. If perceived self-interest shapes aid policy, assistance may not be allocated within and between countries according to human need. Moreover, in conflict situations people and institutions implementing aid programmes on the

ground may be viewed by parties to the conflict as partial or politically motivated, and so may face greater security risks, as may the beneficiaries.⁵⁷

On the other hand, a break with old traditions is also evident, as Russia has acquired new aid partners and begun to send aid to countries in one-off crises, such as natural disasters. For example in 2005–06, following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, of all context Russia gave aid to, it gave the most to Indonesia in terms of financial value; in 2008 it was China (following Sichuan earthquake), in 2010 Haiti (following the earthquake), and in 2011 Japan (following the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami) (reflected in the high proportion of aid to East Asia shown in Table 6). **Such efforts may suggest that Russian aid policy is perhaps placing greater value than before on allocating aid on the basis of need – in line with the fundamental principle of humanity and impartiality which underpins the GHD undertakings of more ‘traditional’ donors.** At the same time, it is important to note that Russia’s current humanitarian commitments to the Syrian crisis (at least as reported in the FTS) has been of rather limited in comparison with most ‘traditional’ donors and some of the Gulf donors, as Table 7 suggests. Although comparisons of the volumes of aid to Syria should be done with caution, taking into account highly political nature of the conflict (for a discussion on how some donors’ military and security interest are shaping current aid giving globally, see Oxfam’s *Who’s aid is it anyway? Politicizing aid in conflicts and crisis*).⁵⁸

Table 7: Humanitarian aid to Syria: donors and contributions, 2012-13 (by July 2013)

| Rank | Country/Organization | Contributions, \$m |
|-----------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| | Total | 3,019.3 |
| 1 | United States of America | 814.2 |
| 2 | European Commission | 377.7 |
| 3 | Kuwait | 332.2 |
| 4 | United Kingdom | 265.6 |
| 5 | Germany | 154.1 |
| 6 | Saudi Arabia | 89.0 |
| 7 | Japan | 81.9 |
| 8 | Canada | 67.4 |
| 9 | Australia | 67.3 |
| 10 | Norway | 62.1 |
| 11 | Netherlands | 40.9 |
| 12 | United Arab Emirates | 40.5 |
| 13 | Sweden | 38.5 |
| 14 | Qatar | 36.2 |
| 15 | France | 36.1 |
| 16 | Switzerland | 31.1 |
| 17 | Denmark | 21.6 |
| 18 | Italy | 18.8 |
| 19 | Finland | 13.3 |
| 20 | Russian Federation | 12.8 |
| ... | ... | ... |
| 24 | China | 7.9 |
| ... | ... | ... |
| 33 | India | 0.6 |
| ... | ... | ... |
| 41 | Brazil | 0.2 |

Source: UN OCHA Financial Tracking System⁵⁹

6 RUSSIA AND OTHER DONORS

As already suggested in the introduction, there is a certain duality in the country's position within the international aid system. On the one hand, several characteristics in terms of aid types, aid volumes, and public perceptions of aid (discussed in Section 7) seem to cement Russia's position in the group of 'new' donors. On the other hand, it stands alongside the world's more affluent nations on the international stage, with membership of such elite groups as the G8 and a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council. By signing up to certain international commitments and principles of aid effectiveness (although crucially not to the GHD Principles), Russia signals that it sees itself as among the 'Western donors'. Below we discuss what place Russia occupies in each of these groupings, and the implications of this positioning for its role as a donor.

THE BRICS COUNTRIES AND OTHER 'NEW' DONORS

Box 4: Russia and the other 'new' donors: history and definition

There has been a good deal of discussion recently about 'new'/'emerging' (or 're-emerging')/'non-traditional' donors; in much of the literature Russia is placed in this group. This means that in terms of aid Russia has been compared to the other BRICS countries and sometimes to other emerging economies such as Turkey, Indonesia, Mexico, and the Gulf states. The key reason for this grouping, and the recent interest, is of course the term 'emerging': all these countries with their strong and increasingly competitive economies have been growing politically more influential. At the same time, it is only recently that they have been able to afford to become aid donors and grown interested in doing so. The term 'emerging' is relative, however. Russia is often dubbed a 're-emerging donor' with reference to the Soviet Union's Cold War legacy of huge volumes of aid to African, Asian and to a lesser degree Latin American countries – in 1986 alone, it provided 26\$ billion in foreign aid.⁶⁰ Nevertheless it is often forgotten that China and India also had experience in this area: the Bandung Conference of 1955, which aimed to promote South–South co-operation in a world defined by the clash of two superpowers, opened the way to extensive co-operation and humanitarian assistance. While the Soviet Union's aid projects were arguably more substantial, it is not wholly accurate to view Russia as the only 're-emerging donor' among the BRICS countries. Yet one undeniable difference with regard to timing is that, while for three of the other BRICS countries⁶¹ (but not South Africa) it was 2005, the year immediately following the Indian Ocean tsunami, that broadly signalled their emergence/re-emergence, evidence of Russia's humanitarian involvement exists as early as the 1991-92 Georgia–Ossetia conflict (indeed it was as a result of the Russian Rescue Corps's intervention there that EMERCOM was established).⁶² Nevertheless, it should be noted that during the 1990s Russia was itself a recipient of international aid, while the volumes of aid it provided were very insignificant; it would therefore be appropriate to say that its re-emergence as a donor actually started only in the mid-2000s.

The BRICS states vary widely in terms of total ODA volumes: by this measure, Russia is slightly ahead of Brazil but lags far behind India and China. In 2010 China's total ODA stood at \$2bn and India's at \$639m, while Russia and Brazil gave \$472m and \$362m respectively.⁶³ (South Africa, itself a recipient of \$1.03bn in aid that year, gave a total of \$98m.⁶⁴) In absolute terms these figures reflect differences in economic performance among the BRICS countries, as Table 8 shows. Yet owing to the very large populations of China and India, per capita income levels across the BRICS countries are of course very different, placing relative ODA volumes in a different light. By some calculations Russia's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010 was almost twice that of China (\$9,910 to \$4,260) and more than seven times that of India (\$1,340), with Brazil (\$9,390) not far behind.⁶⁵ At the same time, **of all the BRICS countries, Russia is the only one not to be an aid recipient as well as a donor.**

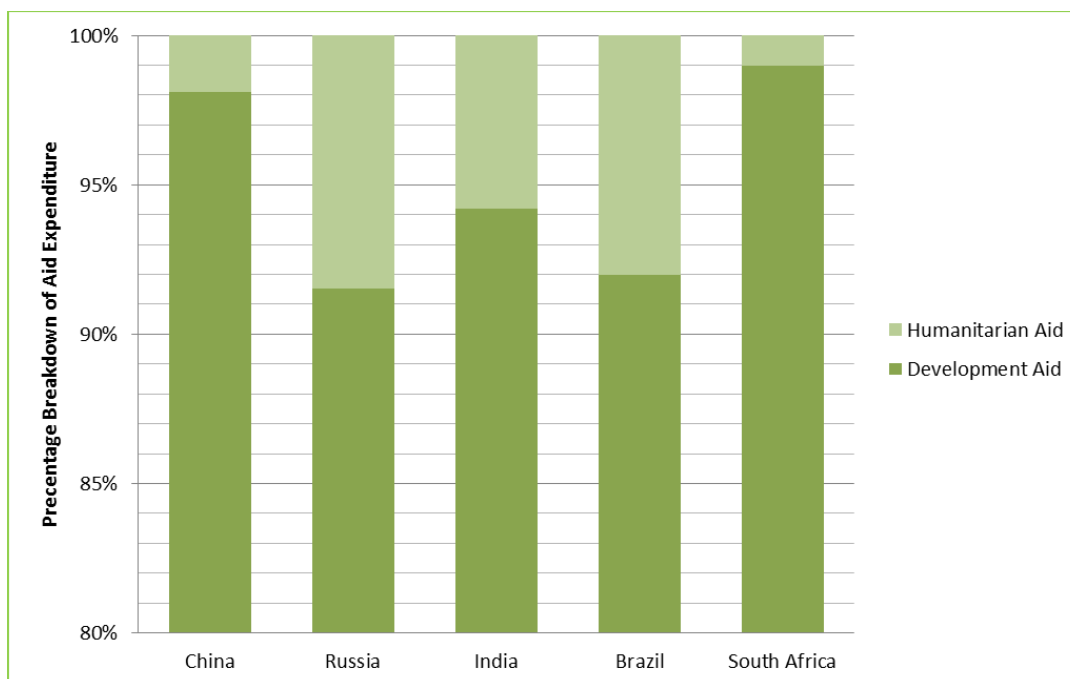
Table 8: ODA and humanitarian aid from BRICS countries and other 'new' donors, 2010

| | GDP, \$m | ODA, \$m | ODA as % of GDP | Humanitarian aid, \$m | Humanitarian aid as % of ODA | Humanitarian aid as % of GDP |
|---------------------|-------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Brazil</i> | 2,143,035.3 | 362.2 | 0.017 | 28.9 | 8.0 | 0.0014 |
| <i>Russia</i> | 1,487,515.6 | 472.3 | 0.032 | 40.3 | 8.5 | 0.0027 |
| <i>India</i> | 1,710,908.8 | 639.1 | 0.037 | 36.5 | 5.7 | 0.0021 |
| <i>China</i> | 5,930,529.4 | 2,010.6 | 0.034 | 37.6 | 1.9 | 0.0006 |
| <i>South Africa</i> | 363,523.2 | 98.4 | 0.027 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.0002 |
| <i>Kuwait</i> | 124,348.3 | 210.6 | 0.169 | 10.6 | 5.0 | 0.0085 |
| <i>Saudi Arabia</i> | 450,792.0 | 3,479.6 | 0.771 | 255.9 | 7.4 | 0.0568 |
| <i>Turkey</i> | 731,144.4 | 967.4 | 0.132 | 149.5 | 15.4 | 0.0204 |
| <i>UAE</i> | 297,648.4 | 412.1 | 0.138 | 113.8 | 27.6 | 0.0382 |

Source: GHA⁶⁶ and World Bank database⁶⁷

Looking at humanitarian aid specifically, the BRICS countries (again with the exception of South Africa) are closer to parity in absolute terms, **making Russia the most 'humanitarian' of the group** in 2010 in terms of the proportion of its aid budget allocated to humanitarian assistance, as shown in Figure 1. It is nonetheless worth noting that in the same year, Russian humanitarian aid was equivalent to just under 0.0025 per cent of nominal GDP: roughly the same as for India, but significantly higher than for Brazil (just under 0.0014 per cent) and China (just under 0.0006 per cent), as shown in Table 8.⁶⁸

Figure 1: BRICS countries total aid percentage breakdown: development versus humanitarian aid, 2010

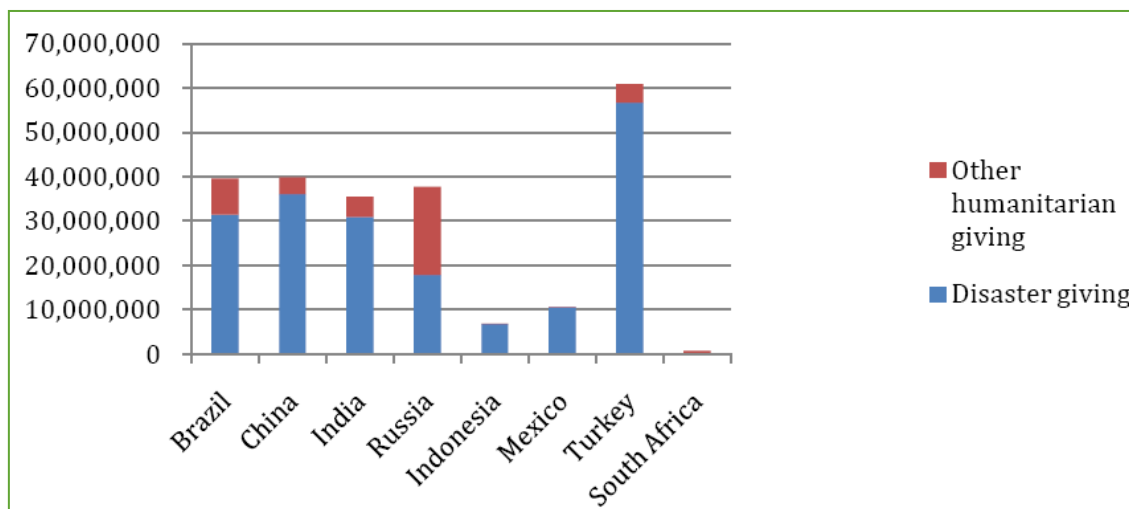


Source: GHA⁶⁹

In terms of sectoral preferences, an emphasis on **food seems to be common among the 'new' donors, including the BRICS countries**. Indeed, in 2011, humanitarian food aid accounted for most humanitarian aid spending by the other three significant humanitarian donors among the BRICS countries: for Brazil the figure was 83.67 per cent, for India 78.5 per cent, and for China 80.23 per cent.⁷⁰ A notable difference between the BRICS countries was that while Russia, Brazil, and India provided their humanitarian food aid primarily via multilateral institutions, China did it mostly on a bilateral basis.⁷¹

Further distinctions within the BRICS group are found in the types of crisis to which the countries choose to respond. While it is suggested that 'new' donors have generally preferred regional over global giving in the past six years⁷², it is the specific types of crisis in response to which they give that display dissimilarities. For example, while **the other BRICS countries with significant humanitarian aid budgets tend to concentrate on natural disaster relief rather than armed conflicts** – owing to their generally cautious approach to issues of national sovereignty – **Russia has had no problem in providing humanitarian assistance to nearby countries at times of conflict**. This difference is shown in Figure 2, which reveals that Russia's disaster response assistance accounts for no more than half of its total humanitarian budget, in contrast to a significantly higher proportion for other 'new' donors. This difference is also reflected in the current humanitarian aid flows to Syria – so far Russia's contribution has been far greater than the contributions of other BRICS countries, although, as shown in Table 7 above, in comparison with 'traditional' donors and some of the Gulf donors Russia's contributions have been relatively minor.

Figure 2: Disaster response as proportion of total humanitarian assistance by 'new' donors, 2010, \$



Source: Center for Strategic and International Studies⁷³

Lastly, an important difference is apparent between Russia's motivation for becoming an aid donor and that of other BRICS countries. **Russia's reasons are discussed in section 5 and may be summarized as being largely influenced by *realpolitik*.** Conversely, some experts argue, **the aid policies of other BRICS countries, while shaped in some measure by perceived self-interest or cultural affinity, are also influenced by the principle of South–South co-operation**, i.e. a relationship marked by presumed equality between a donor country in the global South and the countries that it helps.⁷⁴ It would be naïve to assume that presumption of equality is a constant in other 'new' donors' aid flows, as other observers have noted both in relation to other BRICS states⁷⁵ and to the wider group of Southern donors.⁷⁶ Yet when that principle was first conceptualized in 1955, it was in some sense a protest against the tendency of the major powers to exert their influence in international affairs through aid and assistance. Since at that time the Soviet Union was one of those major powers, there has never been a tradition of South–South co-operation in Russia, and humanitarian aid continues to be perceived as the 'willingness of the strong to help the weak'.⁷⁷ Moreover, Russia does not perceive itself as a member of the global 'South', instead prioritizing its position within the developed Northern states; South–South co-operation is thus seen largely as an alien concept. Thus, while Brazil, China, India, and other emerging economies of the global South may maintain at least some notion of equality in their aid efforts, for Russia aid flows continue largely to embody power assertion.⁷⁸

THE G8

Russia still lags far behind the other G8 members in terms both of the development and sophistication of its aid mechanisms and practices and of its overall volume of both ODA and humanitarian aid. Whereas in 2012 three of the G8 countries (the USA, the UK, and Japan) were among the top five humanitarian donors worldwide (the other two top donors were European Commission and Sweden), Russia's own figures were considerably more modest, as noted above. Most of the other G8 countries' humanitarian aid budgets are typically at least 10–15 times as large as Russia's, as Table 9 shows.

Table 9: Humanitarian aid from the G8 countries, 2012

| Donor country | Humanitarian aid contribution, \$m | Humanitarian aid as % of GDP |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>United States</i> | 3,922.1 | 0.025 |
| <i>United Kingdom</i> | 773.3 | 0.031 |
| <i>Japan</i> | 654.1 | 0.011 |
| <i>Germany</i> | 539.0 | 0.016 |
| <i>Canada</i> | 500.8 | 0.028 |
| <i>France</i> | 129.9 | 0.005 |
| <i>Russian Federation</i> | 51.6 | 0.003 |
| <i>Italy</i> | 49.2 | 0.002 |

Source: UN OCHA Financial Tracking System⁷⁹; IMF World Economic Outlook Database⁸⁰

Russia's compliance with G8 commitments to the developing world as a whole has also been poor. In terms of material assistance, it has been making improvements and increasing the sums donated to humanitarian agencies, but it is in other areas of ODA that it falls short. A report published by the University of Toronto's G8 Research Group shows that Russia had the lowest level of compliance with the G8's Africa-related development commitments made between 2001 and 2008.⁸¹

Accordingly, **Russia's recent increased activity as an aid donor can be attributed to its desire to narrow the gap with the other G8 donors:** some experts argue that this process was set in motion by the country's 2006 G8 presidency. Certainly, in 2006 Russia was the only G8 country that lacked a coherent structure for donating aid. Yet a year later Russia began actively to try to improve this situation, for example by expanding its focus towards development assistance through the government's *Concept of Russia's Participation in International Development Assistance*⁸² and later announcing that a central aid agency would be set up (although, as discussed in section 2, this plan has been shelved in favour of a decision to develop the capacity of an existing agency). The volumes of humanitarian aid have also risen since 2006, as illustrated in Table 1. It is of course difficult to draw conclusions from any perceived patterns within humanitarian aid, where volumes can change owing to unforeseen circumstances such as major natural disasters. Nonetheless it appears from these examples that Russia's policies are largely G8-orientated, as part of its efforts to establish itself once more as a great power in a multipolar international system, although, its humanitarian aid volumes remain very modest by the standards of the G8. At the same time, any criticism of Russia's activity, or inactivity, as a G8 donor should be seen in the context of failings by other members, particularly against their Gleneagles Summit commitments to increase international assistance to 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2015 (a pledge to which Russia did not subscribe, instead focusing primarily on debt cancellation).⁸³

7 RUSSIA AS A DONOR: SELF-PERCEPTION

Finally, in order to understand better the current and potential patterns of Russia's humanitarian aid giving, it is important to see how the country's role as a donor is viewed by its own authorities and population.

Without a doubt, one of the key goals of the Russian government since the 1990s has been to re-establish the country as a 'great power' and join the circle of Western prosperity; in other words to be recognized as a force in a multipolar, globalized world. According to an opinion poll conducted in 2011 by the Levada Center, Russians currently believe that on a scale of one to ten, Russia has an influence of six in international affairs.⁸⁴ Yet throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, Russia itself had to be one of the Eastern bloc recipients of Western aid, undermining its self-image. Indeed, during that period many Russians would remark, with a sense of irony, 'We are not starving Africans!'⁸⁵ Although the exact date when the country started to move away from being a recipient and became a net donor is unclear – some put it as early as 1993,⁸⁶ some as late as 2007⁸⁷ – Russia is now strictly a donor, and keen to escape its past as a recipient of aid.

Russia's desire to reinstate itself as a great power after years of being an aid recipient itself has had a decisive impact on its role as a donor. True to Marcel Mauss's definition of a gift, **the perception in Russia is that aid is somehow demeaning, or at least 'wounding', in the sense that it 'implies obligations and opens up a social relation'**.⁸⁸ Another state's inability to fulfil an obligation and return a 'gift' thus demotes it on the international stage, displaying its weakness. This attitude largely characterizes the understanding of aid among both the country's public and its policy elites. 'Demeaning' may seem an extreme term, but **within Russia the countries that are aid donors are certainly perceived as strong, aid recipients as weak**. This suggests that perhaps Russia's involvement in humanitarian assistance could be a sign that the country sees itself as strong, or at least wants to be seen as strong, and feels that engaging in disaster relief and other forms of aid is necessary to that end.

At the same time, Russia is aware of its unique position: in many ways it is the middle ground between the developed 'North' and the less developed 'South'. As S.Cornelissen put it, Russia 'sits uncomfortably in both Northern and Southern camps'; this implies that although Russia aspires to be a part of the Northern camp, it cannot deny its ties with the less developed states.⁸⁹ This peculiar position seems to influence the country's attitude towards aid. For example, government officials under Putin have put forward an argument that Russia is in a better position than some of the 'traditional' donors to defend the interests of developing countries and could act as a 'metaphorical bridge between the G8 and the global South'.⁹⁰ Similarly, in a report on its activity in the international sphere, EMERCOM states that its 'specific geographic positioning allows Russia to play a role of connecting link in the integration process between the European and Asian forces specializing in disaster relief'.⁹¹

However, attitudes towards humanitarian aid among the public are very mixed. Unfortunately, **a large proportion of the population has a negative or ambivalent attitude towards Russia's role as an aid donor**. In 2010 the World Bank published the findings of an opinion survey entitled 'Russia's role as international donor'.⁹² While the survey did not focus specifically on humanitarian aid, most Russians tend to think of aid as humanitarian disaster relief, rather than as longer-term development projects. The survey shows that many are concerned that conditions in Russia itself are not good enough for it to be engaging in helping others. Sixty-six per cent answered that Russia is not rich enough both to help poor countries and to improve the welfare of

its own population, and 82 per cent believed that Russia should be more concerned with its domestic problems. Only 10 per cent agreed that their country should take a more active part in international affairs and just 29 per cent fully approved of Russia's aid to the world's poorest countries. This ambivalence is underscored by the proportion of 'I do not know' and 'I do not care' answers. On a scale of one to ten, respondents gave a mean rating of approximately 4.5 to the extent of their interest in international affairs and information on Russia's assistance to poor and developing countries.

Furthermore, **Russia's pragmatic approach to aid is also reflected in Russian society's attitudes on the subject.** Fifty per cent of the respondents to the same survey said that they 'completely agree' that when making a decision about whether to help poor countries, Russia should put its own interests first; combined with those who said that they 'somewhat agree', the figure rises to 88 per cent. The respondents also identified Russia's top three objectives for helping poor countries as extending the circle of countries friendly to Russia, reducing the threat of terrorism and drug trafficking between Russia and neighbouring countries, and increasing Russia's influence and prestige in the world. Reducing extreme poverty and laying the basis for the long-term sustainable development of poor countries came only fifth and sixth in the list of priorities. That said, it is important to understand that public concern about the balance between welfare at home and abroad is also far from uncommon in more traditional donor countries, with a trend towards scepticism even in the relatively pro-aid United Kingdom.⁹³

Another characteristic of Russian aid – its **regional focus** – was evidenced by the Levada survey: only 12 per cent of respondents believed that Russia should help poor countries regardless of their geographical location. In response to the question of what countries Russia should give aid to, 47 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that Russia should aid poorer countries of the former Soviet Union; 44 per cent with the statement that Russia should aid poorer neighbours that could pose a threat; and just 23 per cent with the statement that it should aid poorer countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

As the Levada research concluded, a **basic lack of information and understanding** about Russia's aid efforts is a factor in more negative attitudes towards needs-based assistance. So too are **socio-economic factors**: opinions are divided in particular along geographical and generational lines. It was found that people living in large urban centres and with a higher level of education displayed 'the greatest interest in international affairs and in information about aid to poorer nations'.⁹⁴ Similarly, some evidence suggests that the younger generation, particularly those who did not grow up in the Soviet Union, have more positive attitudes towards Russia's role in the world and as a donor of international development assistance, although this has not yet been properly investigated.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, some experts are hopeful maintaining that charity and philanthropy are 'growing phenomena in Russia' and suggesting that attitudes towards international humanitarian aid are improving.⁹⁶

8 CONCLUSION

Over the last decade Russia has been gradually increasing its activity in the area of international humanitarian assistance, mobilizing emergency response and relief efforts during major disasters worldwide. However, Russia's overall humanitarian contributions remain comparatively low and well below the contributions of most of the 'traditional' and also some of the 'new' donors. Nevertheless, an increase in aid budgets over the past five years and the development and increased activity of EMERCOM as the main national aid operator speaks of a desire to re-establish the country as a prominent force within the international aid community.

Russia is in a unique position in belonging to both 'new' and 'traditional' donor 'clubs'. Its position within the BRICS group is assured, yet it aspires to being viewed as on the same level as other G8 countries. In terms of the proportion of ODA allocated, Russia is the most strongly 'humanitarian' of the BRICS group. What most distinguishes Russia from the other donors in that group, however, is its humanitarian assistance to countries involved in military conflicts, and the lack of a sense of South–South co-operation in its aid policy. Russia simply does not see itself as a country of the global South.

Instead, it views itself as a rightful member of the global North. As humanitarian and development assistance is perceived in Russia as an indicator of dominance – a 'willingness of the strong to help the weak' – the country's desire to re-establish itself as a donor can be seen in the context of its general ambition to gain the reputation of being a great power in a multipolar world order. To conclude, Russia is unique in its middle-ground position between the developed and developing world and, and as such, could play an important role in introducing new ideas on aid discourse and practice.⁹⁷

While most recent scholarly literature has argued that the *realpolitik* of geostrategic influence and economic interests continues to inform Russia's development as a donor, there is much that is positive in its efforts to incorporate areas of good practice from the initiatives of 'traditional' donors. The aid commitments it has made as a G8 member; its endorsement of several key aid effectiveness initiatives, such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation; and the moves to join the OECD and start reporting ODA expenditure are all examples of this.

Nonetheless, **the country faces several obstacles in developing its donor capacity:**

- Firstly, although EMERCOM has a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance, **the lack of a designated aid agency means there is no single co-ordinating body, and no clear reporting system in place.**
- Secondly, despite the recent increases in its aid volumes, **Russia still provides far less humanitarian assistance than the majority of 'traditional' and even many 'new' donors.**
- Thirdly, **Russia's humanitarian aid is largely in the form of in-kind assistance rather than cash assistance** (for example in 2012, more than 75 per cent of humanitarian food aid provided by Russia was in-kind). Cash assistance, however, is often more appropriate, effective and efficient in contexts where food markets are functioning and affected populations have access to these markets; it will also serve to boost the local economy of a crisis-hit area rather than undermining it.
- Fourthly, **Russian public opinion on aid is strongly skewed towards the country's national interests, generating little public pressure on the government to develop its humanitarian assistance practices.**

- Lastly, but by no means least, **Russia's failure to date to sign up to and apply the core GHD principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence leaves a wide margin for its humanitarian aid in particular to lag behind international standards of effectiveness and accountability.**

Despite the progress made in its humanitarian aid role, therefore, Russia still has some way to go to realize its full potential as an effective and efficient humanitarian donor. The country has great capacity to respond to humanitarian crises worldwide and should sign up to the international norms of humanitarian aid provision, particularly the GHD principles.

NOTES

- ¹ See works on emerging donors such as White, S. (2011) 'Emerging Powers, Emerging Donors', in *CSIS Programme on Crisis, Conflict, and Cooperation CSIS Programme on Crisis, Conflict, and Cooperation*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.csis.org/> (Accessed: July 2012); Kaplinsky, R. and Farooki, M. (2009) 'Africa's Cooperation with New and Emerging Development Partners: Options for Africa's Development', *Open Research Online*, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.oro.open.ac.uk> (Accessed: July 2012)
- ² White, S. (2011) *op.cit.*
- ³ The Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship were adopted in 2003 by 18 major donors with the aim of improving the coherence and effectiveness of international response to humanitarian crisis. The GHD Principles established humanitarian assistance as a discrete component of broader donor aid policy and committed signatories to seek to provide predictable, flexible funding in accordance with the core principles of humanity, impartiality, independence, and neutrality. The GHD group now comprises 37 members. <http://www.goodhumanitariananddonorship.org> (Accessed: March 2013)
- ⁴ Statistics and data on aid used here have been taken mainly from information published online by the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergencies (EMERCOM) and from the Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) website, which gets its statistics for non-OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members primarily from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking System (FTS). Other sources include the CRED EM-DAT Disaster Database, the UN OCHA FTS itself, the OECD DAC database, and the World Food Programme website. This is of course to an extent a problematic choice of sources: as it is a government organ, information released by EMERCOM cannot be viewed as objective and impartial. Similarly, the GHA website is not very detailed about its methods of obtaining and quantifying data; moreover, databases such as those provided by the FTS are likely to be incomplete, since reporting to them is completely optional and is done on a voluntary basis. Nonetheless, since Russia is not an OECD DAC member, it has no obligation to report its aid flow figures, so these are currently the only two sources where detailed information and data can be obtained.
- ⁵ Global Humanitarian Assistance Development Initiative, *Defining Humanitarian Aid*, Available at: <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/country-profiles> (Accessed: July 2012)
- ⁶ The line between humanitarian and development aid is often blurred but the OECD DAC has tried to set clear cut-off points; for example, the prevention of floods or conflict is considered beyond the scope of humanitarian relief. In short, while aid can be split into two categories, it is primarily humanitarian aid that is under investigation here, and all figures used represent this type of aid only, unless otherwise stated.
- ⁷ Ministry of Finance of the Russia Federation (2007) Concept of Russia's participation in international development assistance. Available at: http://www.minfin.ru/common/img/uploaded/library/2007/06/concept_eng.pdf (Accessed: May 2013)
- ⁸ OECD, Countries, Territories and Organisations Adhering to the Paris Declaration and AAA. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/countriesterritoriesandorganisationsadheringtotheparisdeclarationandaaa.htm#> (Accessed: May 2013)
- ⁹ OECD, Countries, Territories and Organisations Adhering to the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/busanadherents.htm> (Accessed: May 2013)
- ¹⁰ L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) (2009) "L'Aquila" Joint Statement on Global Food Security. Available at: http://www.g8italia2009.it/static/G8_Allegato/LAquila_Joint_Statement_on_Global_Food_Security%5B1%5D.0.pdf (Accessed: May 2013)
- ¹¹ Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation (2011) 'In 2009-2011, Russia contributed 330 mln US\$ to global food security'. Available at: <http://www1.minfin.ru/ru/press/speech/index.php?id4=12569> (Accessed: May 2013)
- ¹² EMERCOM, Humanitarian and International Activities. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.mchs.gov.ru/activities/?SECTION_ID=346 (Accessed: July 2012)
- ¹³ Chin, G. and Malkin, A. (2012) 'Russia as a Re-Emerging Donor: Catching up in Africa', Centre for International Governance Innovation, [Online]. Available at: <http://www.cigionline.org> (Accessed: July 2012)
- ¹⁴ The agency was set up in 2008 with an aim 'to maintain Russian influence in the CIS area, and to build up a friendly atmosphere for the pursuit of Russia's political and economic interests abroad.' Currently, Rossotrudnichestvo is represented by centres of science and culture in 77 countries. Until recently its functions have been similar to the functions of such institutions as Goethe Institut, British Council, etc. For details, see <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/eastweek/2008-09-18/kremlin-reinforces-russias-soft-power-cis>, <http://rs.gov.ru/node/28132>. (Accessed: June 2013)
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