Summer School

Development Aid in Practice – DHPP 222

Peter Uvin

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Course Description

This course is an overview of the operational and professional world of development. It teaches students about the policy and operational debates ongoing in the development world as a profession, an institution, a community of like-minded people. It is a cutting-edge, contemporary, and operationally relevant course on the issues now being discussed and implemented in the development community. Students who have taken it will understand what the profession is about, what practitioners and managers talk and think and worry and write about; they will be able to engage in conversations or interviews with any development professionals and fake up-to-date knowledge of the field. They will not learn all the technical knowledge in the various areas of development (education, infrastructure, livestock, food security, health, etc.)—for that, many other courses are required—but they will learn the cross-cutting managerial and strategic issues that manifest themselves in all these fields of development cooperation.

By the end of this class, students will be able to:
- understand the structural and ideological underpinnings of the current development aid system, as well as the effects of these underpinnings on development organizations and the individuals working for them
- understand the nature, strengths, and weaknesses of the key tools used in development aid: technical assistance, capacity building, participation, conditionality, and so on
- apply contemporary social science insights from a wide range of disciplines to critically analyze general aid management dynamics in a wide variety of areas
- propose actionable innovations in all areas of development management discussed in class
Course Grades

You are responsible for checking announcements on Blackboard every week for 1) updates on the reading and 2) specific questions or any updates on tasks.

Students will be graded on a series of tasks and associated small papers to be done before each class. Papers handed in after the beginning of class will not be accepted. Please send the papers as email attachments to me. Use the same naming system for all papers: “your name class number”, e.g., if I were a student, my first paper would be “Uvin class 1” etc. For the group papers, put the names of all names of the group in the title.

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<th>Class</th>
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Participation in class will account for the remaining 30% of the grade.

Expectations

- I expect you to do the readings before class. Frankly, class will not be half as good if you don’t—and yet the cost remains the same.
- I expect you to be mentally in the class during class—do not surf the internet, leave comments on your friends’ facebook status, reserve your ticket to tonight’s concert, check out the reviews of the new Elvis Costello CD, and so on. There are at least 40 hours between classes to do this. It is disrespectful to others, and frankly a waste of your time, to allow yourself to indulge in the constant diversion of the web.
- It is explicitly forbidden to record any part of this class without my permission. Even if such permission is granted, you may not distribute such recordings without my permission.
- I expect you to let me know in advance if you have to miss class. Class participation is a very important component of the learning. An absence from class can be necessary, but it is not a guaranteed gift.

Calendar

Section 1: The players: who are they and why do they do it?
1. Introduction
2. What is development? And why is aid given?
3. Evolution of thinking – five decades of aid
4. New donors and motives

Section 2: How do they do it?

5. Participation and Power
6. Technical Assistance
7. Conditionality and beyond
8. From Capacity Building to Harmonization & Alignment

Section 3. Questioning the System and Moving beyond the Status Quo

9. Institutional Change—theirs and ours
10. Social Engineering and Anthropological perspectives
12. Final class—TBD

Class 1. Introduction to development aid

Introduction to the course
Getting to know each other.
Definitions. What is foreign aid? How big is it? What types are there? How does it compare to other flows?
Where to find information in this field?

Before class exercises (individual)

1. Send me an email with a) a one phrase definition of development, and b) a one-paragraph explanation of what aid can do to promote development. Don’t over-think it—just jot down what you believe.
2. Do the readings.
3. Find data on development aid to a country (or a few countries) of your choice—a country you may well wish to continue focusing on as the course progresses
4. Wake up on time on Tuesday morning. Figure out where the School is, and the class. Go there.
5. Smile.

Readings


Optional
- DFID First White Paper on International Development, 1997, Section 1, p 8-21
  - See especially the following graphs:
- Center for Global Development. *The commitment to Development Index*. Washington DC, annual [www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/cdi](http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/cdi)

Class 2. *What is development? And why is aid given?*

This class deals with two oft debated issues. First, what is development? How do we measure it? And second, why do donors give aid? What motivates them?

Before class exercise (individual)

Pick a country of interest to you—and, ideally, one that you know something about. Look up its indicators in at least 6 of the tables below (and/or add any other ones you wish to consider); if possible, look at some trends. Interpret what the data seem to be telling you. Does it tell a coherent story? Does it match what you expect?

One good place to start for a lot of indicators is [http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/tables/default.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/tables/default.html)

Readings

Check all the databases below and read two of the articles in the last section.

Data specific to development:
- UNDP. *Human Development Report*.

Different ways of measuring progress:
- Redefining Progress. *The Genuine Progress Indicator*. Check out the whole website…
- Richard Estes. *International Index of Social Progress*.
- World Times. *Wealth of Nation Triangle Index*. 6-monthly

Data about other relevant trends
- freedom house
- transparency international
- gender indicators from UNDP
- human security index
- Ibrahim index
- Inequality indexes? Probably not, but at least data
- Happiness data
- Friends of the Earth. *Index of Sustainable Welfare*. Bi-annual
- The Heritage Foundation. *The Index of Economic Freedom*.

**Readings about development**

Read 2 of the following articles. *These are all long and tough articles, making mostly non-mainstream arguments, so it is OK to skim them. Just get the basic tenor of the arguments—we will not necessarily debate the technical issues in great detail. All I want to do is to get you thinking about what development is beyond eradicating poverty.*

- Chambers, Robert.

**Articles about the motives behind aid**

Read two of the following articles.


**Class 3. Evolution of thinking – Five Decades of Aid**
We begin with an intellectual-operational overview of big development debates from the 1960s to now.

Much of the intellectual debate the last decade has been between those who want a dramatic increase in international aid and those who want anything but that. Both sides are smart, passionate, and use empirical and theoretical data to make their case. This debate has become associated with Sachs and Easterly, but in reality everyone has a position on it. Yes, you too. While settling the debate once and for all is not very important and maybe impossible in any case, it is useful to think through the arguments made by different sides, and how they apply to your career, your values, your practice. What are the arguments in favor of more spending on the poor—in terms of efficiency, equity, growth, or other criteria of development? What are the arguments against?

Before class exercise (group + individual)

Read the top four required readings in the order indicated and discuss in a group. What scholarly arguments are Sachs and Easterly making? What types of arguments they (evidence based, moral, political, etc)? What counter-arguments do they use against each other?

• Jeffrey Sachs. Ending Africa’s Poverty Trap. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 1:2004 (Read the first 31 pages – up to Table 9)
• Easterly, William. *Planners vs. Searchers in Foreign Aid*. Manila, talk at the Asian Development Bank, 18 January 2006. (26 pages)
• Sachs, Jeffrey. How to help the poor: piecemeal progress or strategic plans? *The Lancet*, 367, April 22, 2006. (3 pages)
• Easterly, William. The Big Push Déjà Vu. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 44 (1) March 2006 (15 pages)

Individually, write down your assessment of the arguments and their strengths in no more than 3 pages—use bullet points if you wish.

Required Reading


Optional

• Eric Thorbecke. *The Evolution of the Development Doctrine 1950-2005*. s.d., s.l. (may be tough for those without decent economics knowledge, but it provides a nicely detailed overview from the perspective of an economist)
• Sen, Amartya. The Man Without a Plan, Foreign Affairs, March/April 2006. (4 pages)
• Check the Bank’s site on the MDGs: ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/GMIS/home.do?siteId=2

Class 4. New donors and motives

In recent years, all kinds of new donors have entered into the field of international development. The biggest and most discussed one is surely China (although other countries like India, Korea, Turkey, Brazil have also become donors). Another phenomenon that has attracted major interest has been the rise of international Islamic philanthropic organizations. Finally, foundations (e.g., Gates, Clinton initiative, Kiva) have also become much discussed.

Much of what we read about these new players has been either very negative (China, Islamic charities) or very positive (corporations, foundations). Why? Is that really deserved? Also: how is the development enterprise changing as a result of the entry of these new players? And what is the likely impact on the poor of the entry of these new donors?

Before class exercises (group)

1. Discuss: should new donors—India, China, Brazil, South Africa, Turkey—continue to receive aid from the old donors? You will be interviewed tonight on Parker Spitzer’s CNN show (congratulations, by the way) and you need to provide an answer in 4 minutes. Prepare your answer. You can focus on a particular donor/recipient if you wish, or make a general statement. You can use the following links to inspire you, but I encourage you to think beyond them and seek other information
   http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=4237
   http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=3699
2. Read the following two documents and discuss the similarities and differences between them:
3. Individually, write one page about each of these tasks.

Readings
• Bräutigam, Deborah. China, Africa and the International Aid Architecture. Washington DC, March 2010, draft MS.

Optional
• Adele Harmer and Lin Cotterrell. ‘Diversity in donorship: the changing landscape of official humanitarian aid’, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute, HPG Report 20, September 2005
• Jonathan Benthall. ‘Have Islamic aid agencies a privileged relationship in majority Muslim areas? The case of post-tsunami reconstruction in Aceh. *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, 2008
• Watson, Iain(2011) 'Global Korea: foreign aid and national interests in an age of globalization', *Contemporary Politics*, 17: 1, 53 — 69

Class 5. Participation and Power

*Exercise (group)*
Read Final Assessment USAID/Zimbabwe. Assistance to Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Discuss how you would re-engineer the project so that it be more participatory. What challenges might you encounter and how would you deal with them?


Go to http://www.powercube.net. Take the project you chose and describe, using the power cube: how is power at work there, and how is resistance at work? Feel free to go beyond the power cube if it does not work for you!

Write this up as a group paper.

Required Readings

  &rct=j&q=world%20bank.%20participation%20handbook&ei=w37ETb6CEOK-0AH86pSkDw&usg=AFQjCNGMMx4LUKhP-CppGqlbgZKQY7bpzQ&cad=rja

- Andrea Cornwall. Unpacking ‘Participation’: models, meanings and practices, Community Development Journal. 2008

Optional readings

Class 6. Technical Assistance (with Rachel Schiller)

Many of us have been, or want to be, technical assistants. Indeed, the technical assistant is one of the oldest and most enduring features of development aid. Yet, it is also, and since decades, a deeply contested practice. What are the reasons to provide technical assistance? Are these aims achieved, and, if not, why not? What can be done better? Why is it not done? What does this mean for you?

Before class exercise (group)

Based on the critiques of technical assistance discussed in the literature, what solutions would you recommend for the case of Aceh described in the two articles below? Arrange your proposals from the least to the most departure from the status quo. Try to ground your suggestions in actual practice. Write up the results in a 2 page memo, written as a group.

If you have time left, check how development projects on the ground currently ongoing in Aceh are dealing with the issue.


Readings
Class 7. Conditionality and Beyond

Most people believe that the act of giving development assistance, especially to the poorest and weakest countries, confers on the donor a lot of power to dictate recipient behavior. People from both the Left and the Right think this power has been ill used, and make proposals how to do so better. But does this power really exist? If not, why not? And what can be done better?

Before-class exercise (individual)

1. Find or recall an instance of the exercise of conditionality (economic or political) in a country. Look back at some newspaper accounts at the time: did it work? Was it perceived as successful at the time? What do you think explains the (in-)effectiveness observed? Second, look at the current situation of this country: was the goal of the political conditionality achieved? What happened with the specific issue that the conditionality pertained to? Is the result (if there was one) still there now—or vice versa? Write his up in an individual paper, no more than 3-4 pages.

2. Check a country in the MCC rankings, and compare its rankings there with other rankings we have discussed in class so far. What story emerges? Does it fit, according to you, the criteria for partnership based on post-hoc conditionality?

Readings


Class 8. Capacity Building, Institutional Destruction, Harmonization & Alignment

The very way international aid is given—the multiplicity of donor agencies, each with their own aims projects, and procedures—undermines recipient capacity; some go so far as to talk about institutional destruction. In the last decade, donors have come to recognize this problem, and they have developed a set of answers to it as well.

Before class exercise (group)

Read extracts from my report about Belgian Aid to Burundi. Write down what you would propose based on my diagnostic. (Also feel free to critique my diagnostic—this was the last time I was hired by the Belgian Technical Cooperation!)


Required Readings
Class 9. Institutional Change—thems and ours

At the end of the day, almost everything the development community tries to achieve consists of—or requires—institutional change in recipient countries. No project or program will produce a meaningful or sustainable impact if it is not backed by a favorable institutional change. But how do institutions change anywhere? And what can outsiders do to promote institutional change?

This class also takes look inwards, at the development system itself. Some scholars have started recognizing that the very organization of the development system itself creates a set of perverse incentives that make meaningful change hard if not impossible. What are the factors that would cause such an outcome? And how could they be changed?

Organizational learning is in part an answer to these problems; it is also a professed goal of most development agencies since long. What are the ideas out there to become knowledge organizations in
the field of development? For that matter, whose knowledge shall be promoted and mainstreamed, for what purpose, and how?

**Before class exercise (individual)**

Take an organization you worked for (ideally one that was active in the field of development or social change), read the article below, and take the test indicated there.


**Required Readings**
- Bertin Martens, with Uwe Mummert, Peter Murrell and Paul Seabright. *The Institutional Economics of Foreign Aid*. 2001 (chapter 1)

**Optional**
- Helmke & Levitsky, *Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics*, Perspective on Politics, 2004

• Rondinelli, Dennis. Development Projects as Policy Experiments. London, Routledge, chapters 5 & 6 (skim—it is written in a painfully boring and verbose way)
• Cooley & Ron. The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the political economy of transnational action. International Security 27, 1 (Summer 2002)
• Peter Senge. The Fifth Discipline. Short presentation

• Sarah Parkinson. The learning organisation as a model for rural development. Development in Practice, Volume 20, Number 3, May 2010

Class 10 – Social Engineering and the anthropological perspective

Required Readings
• David Mosse. *Is Good Policy Unimplementable?* or
• David Mosse. *The Making and Marketing of Participatory Development*
• John D. Cameron. ‘Development is a bag of cement’: the infrapolitics of participatory budgeting in the Andes. *Development in Practice*, Volume 19, Number 6, August 2009

**Optional**

• James Scott. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed.* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999 (Chapter 9)
• Patrick Develtere and Tom De Bruyn. The emergence of a fourth pillar in development aid. *Development in Practice*, Volume 19, Number 7, September 2009

**Class 11. On The Horizon**

**Required Readings**

• John Floretta. *Scaling up* 2011.

**Optional**

Before class exercise (individual)

Come to class prepared with one action/organization/process/idea that you consider an innovation in development—something that improves on the critiques we have gone through throughout this class. Use the analysis framework I will provide you with to indicate on which variables/issues this innovation is doing better.