India: Transiting to a Global Donor

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Campaign for Survival and Dignity

India is home to about a third of the world's poor and has nearly a sixth of the world's population. Averaging 7% growth, it has marched ahead to become the world's fourth largest economy after the United States (US), China and Japan. It has become a net exporter of capital. Its information and communication technology industry is a globally recognized leader. Although about 250 million still live on less than a dollar a day, overall poverty has officially declined from 40 to 25 percent, average life expectancy has increased to 63 years, and India hopes to halve the proportion of its population living in extreme poverty by 2015 in line with the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Between 1951 and 1992, India received US$55 billion in foreign aid, becoming the world's largest recipient (although when translated into per capita terms it appears much less reliant on aid). From being one of the world's largest recipient of foreign aid in the mid-1980s, India has become a net donor. Foreign aid constitutes less than 0.3% of its gross domestic product (GDP). Multilateral aid is around US$0.6 million per year while net flows to India dipped to just US$21 million in 2004. It became a net creditor in the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In 2008 it allocated about US$547 million to aid-related activities while approving US$2.96 billion in Lines of Credits (LoCs) mostly to Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

The Rise of India

India emerged as a big economy with the phenomenon of the newly industrializing countries of Asia. In 2007-2008, its real GDP (GDP taking inflation into account) registered a robust growth of 9%, with manufacturing and the services sectors boosting overall growth. However, the Indian economy is estimated to have slowed down in 2009 due to the global economic crisis. At any rate, GDP per capita in 2007-2008 is high at US$1,064.10 while inflation rate remains in check at 4.7 percent. (See **Table 1**)

India's macroeconomic outlook remains robust despite the global recession. Trade remains bouyant and, according to the Minisry of Commerce and Industry, the country is expected to achieve a target of US$175 billion in exports in 2009 even in the face of slowing global trade. The Governmment of India is positive that the currency will appreciate modestly, inflation will be subdued, and economic growth will be stronger than in most other countries.

India has since independence supported nationalist struggles in Africa and Asia, playing a key role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and promoted South-South solidarity and self-determination. The end of the Cold War, India's post-1991 economic growth and its nuclear tests in 1998 have seen India assert itself to become a key nation amongst G77 nations in the various institutions of global governance such as the UN, especially in its Security Council, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the IMF.

While aspiring to be a regional power in competition with China, India is an aspirant to membership in the UN Security Council. It has been a keen participant in multilateral groupings

Table 1. India Economic Indicators, 2003-04 to 2008-09

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
GDP (at current prices, US$ bn)	599.4	700.9	808.7	916.4	1170.5	1,217.1
GDP Growth (at constant prices, %)	8.5	7.5	9.5	9.7	9.0	7.1
Inflation rate (WPI, avg. %)	5.5	6.5	4.4	5.4	4.7	3.36 (Feb 14)
Gross Fiscal Deficit (% of GDP)	4.5	4.0	4.1	3.5	2.7	6.0
Exchange Rate (Rs/US$, avg.)	46.0	44.9	44.3	45.3	40.2	50.41 (Feb 26)
Exchange Rate (Rs/Euro, avg.)	54.0	56.5	53.9	58.1	57.0	64.03 (Feb 26)
Exports (US$ bn)	63.8	83.5	103.1	126.3	162.9	132.0 (Apr-Dec)
% change	*21.1*	*30.9*	*23.4*	*22.5*	*29.0*	*17.1*
Imports (US$ bn)	78.1	111.5	149.2	185.6	251.4	225.8 (Apr-Dec)
% change	*27.3*	*42.7*	*33.8*	*24.4*	*35.5*	*31.5*
Trade Balance (US $ bn)	-14.3	-28.0	-46.1	-59.3	-88.5	-93.8 (Apr-Dec)
Current Account Balance (US$ bn)	14.1	-2.5	-9.9	-9.6	-17.0	-22.3 (Apr-Sep)
% of GDP	*2.3*	*-0.4*	*-1.2*	*-1.1*	*-1.5*	-
Forex Reserves (US$ bn)	113.0	141.5	151.6	199.2	309.7	249.7 (Feb 13,'09)
External Debt (US$ bn)	111.6	133.0	138.1	171.4	224.8	222.6 (Apr-Sep)
External Debt to GDP Ratio (%)	17.8	18.6	17.2	18.0	19.1	-
Short Term Debt / Total Debt (%)	4.0	13.3	14.1	15.6	20.9	22.5 (Apr-Sep)
Foreign Investment Inflows (US$ bn)	15.7	15.4	21.5	29.8	63.8	13.4 (Apr-Dec)

such as the Commonwealth, G-77, G-20, NAM, and numerous other developing country blocs and development aid consortiums.

It has been a vocal votary of strengthening the UN. It has played a major role in WTO negotiations. It is already among the largest contributors to the new UN Democracy Fund. It has also lobbied to join the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Shanghai Cooperation Council. It has played an active role in the formation of the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum and the related IBSA Fund for Alleviation of Poverty and Hunger managed by the UN Development Programme (UNDP). The IBSA Fund is intended to bring together experience, expertise, and resources to deal with development challenges. India is also working towards a South Asian Regional Forum. All these are part of its assertion and growing importance internationally and leverage for a greater strategic role.

India is also emerging as a leader in South-South cooperation. India co-founded the Global Network of Exim Banks and Development Finance Institutions (G-NEXID) in 2006. It promoted the setting up of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) under the aegis of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2007. In 2008 its voting share in the IMF increased slightly. It is one of the largest contributors to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) that provides developmental assistance in the form of workshops and technical advisors for short and long term assignments. It offers capacity building to member states by providing relevant technical advice through the provision of manuals, model legislation and codes of best practices. India is also a major contributor to the SAARC Development Fund to promote actions on social, economic and infrastructure.

In 2003, India became a net creditor to the IMF and the World Food Program after having been a borrower from these organizations for years. It provided 205 million in special drawing rights (SDRs, equivalent to some US$308 million) to the IMF's Financial Transactions Plan followed by an additional SDR 235 million in February 2005 besides contributing to the IMF's Emergency Assistance Fund which supports recovery from natural disasters and armed conflicts.

India laid out its new policy in June 2003. It would not accept any tied aid in the future. Bilateral aid would be accepted only from five countries, namely the United Kingdom (UK), the US, Russia, Germany and Japan in addition to the European Union (EU). Three of them were members of the UN Security Council with the other three potential future permanent members. But later in September 2004, donors such as Canada, France, Italy and the Scandinavian countries were reinstated. The bilateral cooperation with other donors would not be renewed after completion of then on-going programmes though they may channel their assistance through non-government organizations (NGOs) and multilateral agencies.

In 2003 India decided to repay some of its bilateral debt to all but Japan, Germany, the US and France. The Ministry of Finance announced that it would repay bilateral credit owed to 15 countries, namely the Netherlands, Canada, Russian Federation, Italy, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, Kuwait, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Australia, Saudi Arabia and the Czech and Slovak Republics involving US$1.6 billion. This followed the pre-payment of US$2.8 billion of more expensive debt owed to the World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) earlier in 2002-2003. Its remaining bilateral debt owed to Germany, Japan, the US and France was US$12.7 billion. Its burgeoning foreign reserves standing at US$118 billion in July 2004 enabled the bilateral debt pre-payment.

Another 22 bilateral donors were asked to channel assistance funds through NGOs, UN agencies or other multilateral institutions. India cancelled US$24 million worth of debt of seven Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCs): Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Guyana and Nicaragua. India increased its contribution to the UN from Rs185.9 million in 2002 to Rs279.9 million in 2004.

Besides dispensing with assistance from many bilateral donors, the government decided to establish its own overseas development aid ties under the India Development Initiative (IDI). Established under the Ministry of Finance, the IDI was also to leverage and promote strategic economic interests abroad**.** This was announced in the 2003-04 budget speech of the Finance Minister of the right-wing government. Under this, India was to borrow in the international capital markets and then on-lend on concessional terms to less credit-worthy countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. At least 85% of the value of such loans was to be tied to Indian procurement.

Official Development Assistance

India's overseas development assistance (ODA) is a mix of project assistance, purchase subsidies, lines of credit, travel costs, and technical training costs incurred by the Indian government. Details are not easily available since India does not report its aid flows to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the donors' club established within the OECD. India along with China, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, Korea, Kuwait and Brazil do not belong to the OECD. At any rate, India's development assistance stretches far and wide from Central Asia to the Pacific islands to Southeast Asia. The countries receiving substantial amounts of aid include Senegal, Tajikistan, Ethiopia, Vietnam, and Kampuchea.

In 2004, India lent more than US$400 million to Brazil, Indonesia and Burundi under the IMF Financial Transaction Plan. In 2007-2008, Indian development assistance under the MEA's jurisdiction reached US$420 million, 20% higher than the previous year's figure.

Budget allocation to aid-related activities as grants, contributions to international organisations and international financial institutions (IFIs), direct loans, and subsidies for preferential bilateral loans increased in 2008 to approximately US$547 million (Rs26.7 billion). (See **Table 2**) The approved LoCs through the Exim Bank of US$704 million in 2007-08, brought the total outstanding commitments to US$2.96 billion by March 2008.

Infrastructure, health, and education are the focuses of Indian development assistance in South Asia whereas it is mostly technical training of civil servants and managers working in state-owned enterprises and government-run institutions such as hospitals, railways, and universities in Africa. While regional leadership and strategic goals are clearly the aim of India's assistance to South Asian nations, a complementary set of commercial and political interests are clearly evident in its assistance to Africa.

Table 2. Budgetary Allocations for Aid-related Finance (in INR millions)

	1998-09	2008-09
Foreign Grants	5,604	192,643
Foreign Loans	2,730	1,386
Total grants and loans	8,334	2,064,950
of which MEA budget for ITEC		650
Africa	110	800
Afghanistan		4,450
Bhutan	4,500	8,184
Nepal	700	1,400
Myanmar	510	560
Contributions to IOs [7]	1,621	3,531
Allocations to IFIs		171
of which, AfDB		144
Exim Bank interest equalization subsidy		2,320
Total estimated foreign aid	9,955	266,712
Exim Bank loans and guarantees	21,013	350,039

Prioritizing Neighbors

India's ODA has been focused primarily on its immediate neighbourhood, namely Bhutan, Nepal and Afghanistan. The aid to Bhutan and Nepal has been mainly in infrastructure, education, and health, with infrastructure such as hydroelectric projects holding the top position. Economic and political concerns, rather than direct humanitarian assistance, have been the prime motive, with the assistance categorized as economic cooperation rather than aid. (See **Table 3**)

The non-plan grant includes humanitarian along with technical and economic assistance.

India chooses which projects in the Bhutanese government's five-year plans to fund with the consideration of course of the direct benefits such projects shall bring to India. For instance, the power from hydroelectric projects as the Tala and the Punatsangchu will be sold to India.

Meanwhile, India's assistance to Nepal is considered a part of a deeper and mutually beneficial bilateral relationship, both economically and politically, as both countries have historic connections. For instance, there are over a hundred thousand ex-Indian army Gurkhas residing in the Terai region of southern Nepal which is historically and geographically connected to the adjoining Indian state of Bihar. Many Indian-funded projects such as roads are located in this region.

Meanwhile, India also provides ODA to Myanmar, which goes to supporting trade with the military junta despite both internal and global criticisms. This has been perceived as India's growing interest in Southeast Asia, with Myanmar as the land link for access to the market as well as to natural gas in Myanmar particularly the Shwe Gas Project.

India and Afghanistan also have historic links. Many Indian state-owned companies, for instance, had worked in Afghanistan in the 1970s and 1980s. ODA to Afghanistan was revived after the fall of Taliban and Afghanistan was the second largest recipient of Indian ODA during the 1998-1999, and is poised now to move to the top slot.

India has been one of Afghanistan's top five donors with commitments of over US$1 billion since 2002. India donated 1 million metric tons of wheat in 2002, which was not only the single

Table 3. Non-plan grants and loans from the Ministry of External Affairs (Rs million)

	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Bangladesh	310	110	300	850	1,140	900	400	50
Bhutan	1,650	2,000	1,900	2,000	2,100	2,310	2,420	2,450
Nepal	750	700	650	650	1,090	1,070	920	590
Africa	100	110	110	70	50	50	90	1,050
Maldives	130	80	100	100	90	90	80	80
Myanmar	200	510	350	235	210	180	90	100
Sri Lanka	60	80	90	145	160	180	200	150
Other developing countries	450	500	600	550	560	1,170	1,710	2,490
Total (incl. Others)	**3,650**	**4,090**	**4,100**	**4,620**	**5,430**	**6,010**	**6,000**	**5,750**

Source: Ministry of Finance
Note: A portion of the 'other developing countries' category relates to grants and loans to Afghanistan.

largest pledge in the history of the UN World Food Programme (WFP)[1], but also propelled India to the rank of a donor.

India and Sri Lanka signed a free trade agreement (FTA) on December 28, 1998, which became operational from 2003, covering 5,112 items for duty free or preferential treatment. Consequently, the value of India's exports to Sri Lanka increased from US$640 million in 2000-2001 to US$3.3 billion in 2008. Indian investment in Sri Lanka also increased to over US$8.5 million during the period.

India also extended assistance to Sri Lanka for long-term reconstruction following disasters such as floods in 2003, besides emergency equipment for rescue operations. India is believed to have provided logistics and intelligence support, besides patrolling of the seas, in the Sri Lankan battle against LTTE. The humanitarian assistance as of November 2009 consists of bilateral assistance of US$104,167 and US$2.77 million to UNHCR for provision of non-food relief items to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees.

Finally, India assisted Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries during the 1980s, such as Vietnam to whom a large amount of aid was given. Presently it agrees to assist the setting up of centres for English Language Training (ELT) in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. There are agricultural projects through IBSA in Laos. Joint agricultural research in the fields of processed food safety, quality standard, post-harvest technologies is being assisted in cooperation with Mekong countries. An Advanced Resource Centre in information technology was set up in Hanoi with India's contribution in 2005. An India-Mekong Biotechnology Cooperation Network with Indian support has been set up for implementing digital solidarity mechanism.

Assistance to Africa

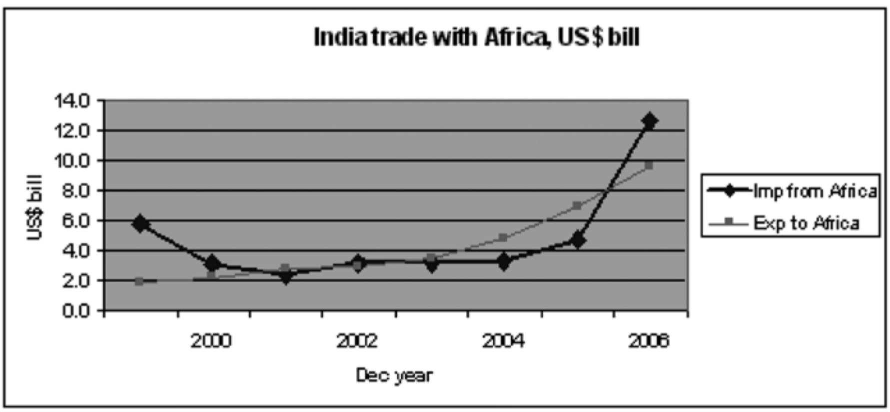
India cooperates with others primarily through South-South initiatives such as the NAM and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). Its cooperation with Seychelles, Madagascar, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya and Mozambique has further increased in recent years, developing linkages with Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa).

India established its first listening post on foreign soil in northern Madagascar in July 2007. There is increasing defence cooperation including combined air exercise, combined naval drills, training, and supply of arms with South Africa, Tanzania, Mozambique, Seychelles, and Madagascar. Blocking of Pakistan's membership in the IOR-ARC and China's access to IBSA is part of India's increasing political, economic and security interests in the region. While Kenya and Tanzania are among the more important trade and investment partners, South Africa dominated the non-oil exports.

The government of India is keen to emphasize the benefits that accrue to India with its external assistance. The boosting of India's business is showcased as a result of such assistance. Companies such as Tata Motors (US$19 million World Bank tender to provide 500 buses to Senbus, a transport company in Senegal) the state-owned RITES (sales of locomotives to Sudan Railways and other involvements in Tanzania, Ethiopia and Uganda), and oil companies such as ONGC Videsh (oil assets in Sudan costing US$750 million) and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOC) are cited.

India's trade with Africa, excluding oil, surged from US$967 million in 1991 to more than US$10 billion in 2007. (See **Chart 1**) During the period April 2006-January 2007, its trade with the continent was estimated at US$19.3 billion. Its exports to Africa however were only 7% of its total exports in 2006 worth US$103 billion. Exports to Africa consist mainly of manufactured items, chemical products, and machinery and transport equipment. Major markets are South Africa with exports totaling US$2 billion in 2006, followed by Kenya with US$1.3 billion, Nigeria at US$936

Chart 1. India Trade with Africa, 1999-2006 (US$ Billion)



Source: World Trade Atlas

million, Egypt at US$739 million, and Mauritius with US$539 million. The largest imports in 2006 were from Nigeria totalling US$5.6 billion followed by South Africa with US$2.5 billion, Egypt at US$1.4 billion, Algeria with US$532 million and Morocco at US$517 million. Indian imports are mainly primary goods (extractive goods) viz. oil, gold, phosphate chemicals, nuts, and copper ores. Still, this trade is negligible when compared to China's US$55 billion trade.

Economic and political foreign policy is obvious and openly acknowledged in present-day Indian-East Africa relations. Seventy percent of the oil in Africa is extracted from West Africa's Gulf of Guinea, traditionally not a close strategic or economic regional partner of India. Eight resource-rich (especially oil) Francophone countries, namely Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Mali, Ivory Coast, and Senegal together with India formed the Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement (TEAM-9). India extended US$500 million credit facility from Exim Bank in 2004 to this initiative to improve relations considering their oil and mineral wealth. TEAM-9 targets agricultural activities, infrastructural improvements, and purchase of Indian manufactured equipment. India extended another US$200 million LoC to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) under the India-Africa Fund designed to promote African economic integration.

India's US$2 billion worth of grants and LoCs to African countries over the past five years have been for projects as varied as IT training centre (Lesotho), rural electrification (Mozambique, Ethiopia), construction of the National Assembly complex (Ghana), railways (Senegal, Mali), military barracks (Sierra Leone); and cement factory (Congo). It supports the Afro-Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO) formed by China, Egypt, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Nigeria, and the Philippines. It offered US$600,000 during 2009-2011 for capacity building of AARDO member countries through training in the institutions of excellence in India and exposure visits to successful and innovative models of rural development and poverty alleviation.

Private investments by Indian companies have also progressed alongside these. Between 1995 and 2005, ONGC increased its holdings from two to 14 with investments in Sudan, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Libya, Egypt, and Gabon. In 2005 OVL entered into a joint venture with Mittal Steel to form ONGC Mittal Energy (OMEL), which entered into a US$6 billion infrastructure deal with Nigeria in exchange for two offshore acreages. ONGC/OVL has invested in Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Ivory Coast, Côte d'Ivoire, and Gabon. The Essar Group is interested in oil and gas exploration in Madagascar. The IOC began to operate in Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique in 2007. India's largest public-sector oil company, ONGC invested US$10 million to build a railroad in Nigeria.

Following is the current Indian aid to Africa:

Recipient	Sizeable Indian aid activities in Africa
Angola	US$40 million credit line for railway reconstruction (tied) and US$5 million Exim credit for purchase of agricultural equipment in India
Benin	Donation of 60 tractors
Burkina Faso	US$31 million TEAM-9 credit for agricultural equipment
Cameroon	Donation of 60 tractors
Djibouti	US$1 million for food relief
Gambia	US$7 million Exim credit for purchase of tractors and assistance to set up a tractor assembly unit in Gambia
Ghana	US$15 million Exim credit; US$27 million Exim concessional loan for rural electrification and support to non-traditional exports; and US$2 million for technical assistance to ICT centre
Ivory Coast	US$27 million TEAM-9 credit for 400 Tata buses
Lesotho	US$5 million. Exim credit for agriculturally related activities
Mauritius	US$100 million. Exim credit for ICT development; US$7.5 million donation for ICT; and US$10 million Exim credit for sewerage
Niger	US$17 million TEAM-9 credit for purchase of transport equipment in India
Senegal	US$48 million TEAM-9 credit for irrigation system, ICT development and a steel manufacturing site; US$18 million Exim credit for 350 Tata buses; and US$15 million Exim credit for agricultural equipment
Sierra Leone	US$800,000 donation for construction of 400 barracks (tied)
Tanzania	Establishment of two cashew nut processing companies, and US$20 million bilateral debt forgiveness
Togo	US$10 million Exim credit to finance imports from India
Uganda	US$1.7 million humanitarian aid; and US$5 million bilateral debt forgiveness
Zambia	US$100,000 donation for ARV medicine; US$10 million Exim credit for ARV medicine; and US$5 million bilateral debt forgiveness

Source: Compiled by Peter Kragelund from Indian embassies in Africa to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA, 2007).

Some Trends in Indian Aid

- India's aid is conceived as an important foreign-policy instrument largely for self interest.
- India's development assistance lacks a strict well-defined set of clear objectives, and approach with clear definitions, accounting and monitoring.
- There is the shift from the rather simple imports-exports to a more organized diverse interactions consisting of government support, joint ventures, official lines of credit, and export guarantees. There is an increased emphasis on providing budget support to recipient governments, especially in the form of debt relief. Grants are increasingly being advocated because of growing concern with the debt problems of poor countries and the recognition that many types of aid (particularly in the social sectors) yield returns only in the long term.
- India attaches far less conditionality to its grants and also gives beneficiaries a greater voice in the process. India's assistance is focused on promoting goodwill, long term economic development and promoting influence rather than exporting skilled manpower and repatriating profits. It focused mostly on promoting local capacity. However, there are indications that India is moving from exerting soft to hard power. The goodwill generated could very well get diluted with India emerging as a major donor.
- Assistance given for political or economic purposes can be a highly effective means to improve relations. However, it can become counter-productive if the assistance is wrong.
- The debt cancellation helps many African governments to be able to borrow money on international financial markets.
- A large part of India's development assistance to Africa is more an export subsidy scheme for its surplus goods. The trend is towards catalyzing trade, access to extractive resources and political influence rather than facilitating economic and social development. A large share of the loans provided is not on concessional terms and is tied to the procurement of goods and services in the donor country. While India refuses to accept tied bilateral aid from others, ironically a large proportion of its own loan programmes are tied. This accumulates negative feeling towards the donors.
- Development assistance linked to trade and investment is criticized as new mercantilism. The recipient countries consider this as positive as it offers considerable freedom for economic and commercial partnership. The emerging donors are also becoming 'development partners'.
- India's Africa assistance seems to correlate with African countries with significant Indian diaspora such as Tanzania and Kenya.
- While the DAC donors are moving towards untied financial aid, the majority of the non-DAC aid is becoming tied reducing the overall efficiency of aid. India is also not eager to adopt DAC standards in aid.
- The share of technical cooperation has risen. Technical cooperation per se does not achieve greater self-reliance in the recipient countries. It is a form of assistance largely controlled by the donors. It tends to generate considerable economic benefits for the consulting industry in the donor

country. Most technical cooperation is provided in kind. It takes the form of personnel or administrative costs accruing to donor-appointed agents. The personnel receiving highly technical skills form a small elite group, often receiving better pay and work conditions that demoralizes local service. Personnel expenditure forms the bulk of the expenditure as high as 40 percent.

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Endnotes

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