

The Development Cooperation Act of 1990: A Proposal For U.S. Support Of Equitable And Sustainable Development

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Ongoing economic, political, social and environmental crises in the Third World have led religious, environmental, hunger, human rights and development groups, as well as the U.S. public and policymakers, to question the effectiveness of current U.S. foreign assistance programs in promoting long-term sustainable development. In response to the efforts of the House Foreign Affairs Committee to rethink foreign assistance, a broad range of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have contributed to the drafting of the "Development Cooperation Act of 1990." Its purpose is to help U.S. development assistance become more effective in the promotion of a process of long-term development that is equitable, participatory, environmentally sustainable and self-reliant.

The draft bill draws heavily from and incorporates the Africa Famine Recovery and Development Act, the Caribbean Regional Development Act and existing and proposed legislation on the environment and women in development. It has the following key features:

1. A shift in the priorities of development assistance to build upon activities of the poor. As defined in this draft bill, development assistance supports the expansion of the participation of women, the landless, subsistence producers, migrants and others that make up the poor majority through processes of economic development and growth that enable them to: a) increase their income and access to productive resources and services; b) protect and advance their rights; c) influence the decisions that affect their lives; and d) pursue a strategy of development that is ecologically sound and in which a balance is found between resources available and the needs of local populations.

2. Consultation with the poor at all stages of the development process. In order to provide more responsive, effective development assistance, the implementing agency is mandated to take into account the perspectives of the poor in all stages of the design and implementation of assistance policies, programs and projects through close and regular consultation with Third World organizations that work with the poor and that have demonstrated effectiveness in or commitment to the promotion of local, grassroots development. The draft bill mandates that particular attention be paid to the active participation of women in determining development policy and in project and program identification, design, management, implementation and evaluation.

3. Protection and promotion of peoples rights and human health. The provision of development assistance is denied to any government that systematically violates or that does not take steps to protect and promote internationally recognized human rights, internationally recognized worker rights, the rights of women, indigenous people and other distinct population groups and the rights of all people to organize and associate freely. In addition, the provision of assistance is prohibited for the purchase of any chemical or other substance if its use is not permitted under laws of the recipient country or the United States. Any person may submit a petition to the implementing agency to ensure enforcement of the above provisions.

4. The inclusion of priority areas in support of long-term development. The four priority areas of assistance are: a) the protection and enhancement

of the natural resource base through production methods suited to local environmental conditions and the development of renewable energy resources; b) the improvement of forestry management and the promotion of sustainable agriculture to satisfy local needs; c) the enhancement of human welfare through improved education and self-sustaining community-based primary health care and voluntary family planning services; and d) the integration of national and regional economies through support for community-based small and medium enterprises and the strengthening of regional infrastructure.

5. Reduction of debt and promotion of equitable development. The President may waive payments of interest and principal on loans incurred by those governments of the relatively least developed countries that have not consistently used U.S. foreign assistance funds for purposes other than the improvement of the well-being of their citizens. Local governments may repay any principal and interest on loans in local currencies to be used and managed by indigenous non-governmental organizations. The implementing agency is prohibited from using development assistance to finance debt reduction measures.

6. The creation of an independent aid agency. A Development Cooperation Administration (DCA) is established as an independent agency and the principal bilateral aid institution of the U.S. government. Under this new agency, aid is divided into two categories: a) program assistance, which is given on a multi-year basis to those governments and public agencies that have exhibited a commitment to a form of development that directly benefits the poor; and b) project assistance which is provided to the most capable governmental and non-governmental institutions in any country including those not designated "program countries." The draft bill also mandates the continuation of the Inter-American Foundation and the African Development Foundation.

7. The separation of security assistance from development assistance. In order to ensure that development assistance supports the objectives and priority areas delineated in the draft bill, the DCA is designated the principal vehicle for U.S. bilateral development assistance, while the management and application of security supporting assistance remains under the jurisdiction of the State Department.

8. The creation of a Center for Private and Voluntary Cooperation. A Center for Private and Voluntary Cooperation is created within the DCA to: a) encourage fuller cooperation with indigenous NGOs in the implementation of U.S. development assistance; b) provide grants to support the design and implementation of development assistance projects by U.S. NGOs in conjunction with local organizations; c) develop basic policies, procedures and criteria for programs and projects in support of private and voluntary organizations; d) direct programs of development education to the U.S. public; and e) assess the effectiveness and impact of such private organizations on development.

9. Greater accountability to the U.S. public and the Third World poor. The Office of Technology Assessment is designated to monitor and evaluate the effect of U.S. development assistance programs and policies and the progress made by U.S. development assistance in achieving the goals delineated in this draft bill. Required reports shall be submitted to newly created Committees on Development Cooperation Oversight in the House and Senate.

A Citizens Advisory Committee on Development Cooperation comprising leaders of U.S. NGOs is designated to monitor implementation of this draft bill and suggest actions to ensure adherence to its mandate. In addition, the President is required to develop a plan to ensure that U.S. development assistance contributes to the achievement of the goals of this draft bill.

For more information please contact The Development GAP.

The Development Cooperation Act of 1990 is the result of a process of drafting and consultation involving representatives of Bread for the World, CARE, Church World Service/Lutheran World Relief, The Development GAP, Friends Committee on National Legislation, InterAction, International Development Conference, National Audubon Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, Overseas Development Council, RESULTS, The Sierra Club, World Resources Institute, World Wildlife Fund and Zero Population Growth.