

Ineffective aid and emerging risks



The Government is projecting to the international community an image of inefficiency in matters of human security. This is reflected in the way that Official Development Assistance is allocated. The distribution of aid is tied to political and media strategies rather than to the people's needs, which postpones the fight against poverty and the humanitarian response in most crises. On the home front, terrorism is being tackled with repressive military and police measures, and responses to the problems of unemployment, domestic violence and immigration have been totally inadequate.

Intermón Oxfam

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Insufficient and badly distributed aid

Millions of people in the world are threatened by poverty, international humanitarian aid does not get through to dozens of forgotten conflicts, and light arms are responsible for the deaths of 500,000 civilians each year. However, these threats to human security are of secondary importance to world leaders, who are giving priority to the struggle against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. The Spanish Government shares this approach, as can be seen in the political decisions it has taken in a range of different situations.

In 2003 Spanish Official Development Assistance (ODA) amounted to only 0.28% of the Gross National Product (GNP); it should have been 0.33% as a step towards the 2006 target of 0.39%, the percentage that the European Union committed to at the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development in March 2002. These scarce resources are not being channelled into the fight against poverty, with little more than 20% of the total being spent on basic social services, nor are they being allocated to Least Developed Countries, which only receive 0.03% of GNP instead of the 0.15% they should get. The majority of Spain's aid goes to middle income countries and Africa is systematically forgotten.¹ Moreover, the dispersal of state bodies responsible for ODA in more than six ministries contributes to inefficiency and makes it difficult to implement the much-needed improvements to the service and to put an end to the link between Spanish aid and the country's political and commercial interests.²

On top of this, the distribution of aid resources by the international community is not defined ac-

ording to needs-based humanitarian criteria, but rather serves political and media interests. Although there are over 40 ongoing armed conflicts and 35 million people displaced from their homes in the world, each year most of the aid is channelled into one or two humanitarian crises. In 2002 nearly half the funds donated for humanitarian aid went to Afghanistan, while the rest was distributed among another 23 on-going crises. History repeated itself in 2003, with Iraq receiving more money than the 15 humanitarian crises afflicting Africa put together.³

UN data⁴ confirm the general trend towards the politicisation of humanitarian aid. They show that in 2003 the Spanish Government made contributions to alleviate only 3 of the 21 humanitarian crises currently taking place (Iraq, Colombia and Burundi), and that of every EUR 10 (USD 12.5) that went to the UN for this kind of aid, nine ended up in Iraq and one went to the other crises.

More weapons, more deaths, more poor people

Conventional weaponry (anything that is not a weapon of mass destruction), and in particular light arms (which one person can carry), pose a serious threat to human security because they cause the most deaths worldwide and are the most difficult to control. Today in the world one person is shot dead every minute, so millions of people are living under the daily threat of armed violence.⁵

The damage caused by conventional weapons goes beyond the deaths caused by shootings, since on the one hand their uncontrolled proliferation encourages insecurity and violations of human rights, while on the other, the money countries spend on purchasing arms reduces the pos-

sibilities for combating poverty. Since 1999, countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America have spent USD 87 billion on arms. To put this in perspective, an annual sum of around USD 22 billion would be needed for those same countries to move towards their Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education and the reduction of maternal and infant mortality.⁶

Despite the high costs of the lack of control over arms sales, the arms trade is flourishing and there is no international legislation prohibiting exports that entail threats to development, human rights and International Humanitarian Law. Spain, which is eleventh on the list of arms-exporting countries, still refuses to provide transparent information on its arms sales, a good many of which are irresponsible.⁷

Alternative proposals

For a world without poverty

The Co-ordination of Non-Governmental Organisations for Development (CONGDE) and the autonomous regions launched a joint campaign called "0.7 Reclámalo" (Demand the 0.7%).⁸ This calls on the central Government and autonomous regional and municipal governments to take resolute steps to reach 0.7% of GNP for ODA, and demands that these resources be used in the fight against poverty, focusing on the Least Developed Countries, the populations most in need and the provision of basic social services. The campaign also demands that the funds be managed with greater efficiency and transparency.

In addition, there are calls to prepare a framework plan in line with the co-operation law in order to improve Spanish co-operation for development. Such a plan would have only one aim: the fight

1 Intermón Oxfam. "Ayuda social para el desarrollo" in www.intermonoxfam.org/page.asp?id=394

2 For further information about Spanish development aid see "La Realidad de la Ayuda 2003-2004", Intermón Oxfam, Colección Informes No 26. Summary available at www.intermonoxfam.org

3 See "Más allá de los titulares. Una agenda de acción para proteger a los civiles en conflictos olvidados", Intermón Oxfam 2003, and also "La Acción Humanitaria en la Cooperación Española", Intermón Oxfam 2003. Available at www.intermonoxfam.org

4 United Nations "Consolidated Appeal" for 2004, presented on 18 November 2003.

5 Intermón Oxfam - Agencia de Noticias de Información Alternativa (ANIA). <http://ania.eurosur.org/noticia.php?id=7358>

6 Oxfam international. www.oxfam.org/esp/policy_pape_armas.htm

7 "Vidas destrozadas. La necesidad de un control estricto del comercio internacional de armas", Amnesty International and Intermón Oxfam, 2003. Available at www.armasbajocontrol.org

8 There is further information about the "0.7 Reclámalo" campaign at the Spanish CONGDE web site: www.congde.org

against poverty. The plan needs to contemplate re-designing the Aid and Development Fund (FAD), breaking the link between ODA and commercial, cultural and strategic interests, and making policies towards countries in the South more coherent.

For a world without forgotten crises

If humanitarian action is still unable to respond to the needs of the population and the forgotten emergencies are ignored, human security will continue to be under threat. What is needed, on the one hand, is a coherent and multilateral approach to make sufficient funds available for all emergency situations, with special attention being paid to the “forgotten” crises. On the other hand, the link between

the army and the FAD must be severed by reducing the role of the armed forces and limiting it to intervention and security tasks. In addition, as Spain is a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council it should promote a commitment on the part of the international community to preventing and resolving armed conflicts, and to improving protection and assistance for civilians trapped in those conflicts.

For a world free of uncontrolled arms

The war against terrorism has increased military and arms co-operation among supposed allies, which exacerbates the global proliferation of arms instead of controlling it. Every minute 15 new arms are put

into circulation, in a world where there is already one weapon for every ten people.

To put an end to this critical situation, Spain must make a commitment to and promote the adoption of the Global Arms Trade Treaty for 2006. The Treaty should serve as an instrument to ban exports that contribute to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and create obstacles to human development. Moreover, a national law is needed in Spain to regulate the transfer of military, security and police equipment, which should include transparency of information, parliamentary control over exports, strict application of the EU Code of Conduct, and regulation of the activities of agents. ■

Threats, risks and points of vulnerability in Spain

In Spain in 2003, a number of threats to human security became more acute. The political stance and legislative programme of the party in power have not promoted the climate of dialogue needed to strengthen human rights, which form the basis of human security. The main issues that stand out are the threat of terrorism, pressure for reform in the labour market, problems in the social welfare system, domestic violence and the question of immigrants.

Terrorism still occupies centre stage in the collective mind in Spain. The “Political Parties Law” targeting those who advocate terrorist violence has come into force. The Government’s laudable firm hand in dealing with terrorism has in practice relied exclusively on using police and judicial measures to respond to the problem. In the political debate on terrorism certain sectors, including public institutions, and a number of democratic political parties have suggested that Constitutional reform may be needed. The Government has led the reaction against this proposal, insisting that initiatives be kept within the prevailing legal framework; meanwhile, it refuses to initiate talks which it considers would provide no guarantees as long as terrorist violence continues. There is increasing polarisation, and even signs of a possible institutional breakdown in the territorial configuration of the State and in the existing consensus on the Constitution.

The Government withdrew its 2002 labour reform plan because of opposition from social actors, but the issue is still on the agenda and there is a great deal of pressure to make the labour market more flexible. Growing European competitiveness and the trend towards delocalising production are often cited as motives for introducing reforms that would increase precariousness in the Spanish labour market, where the casual labour rate already stands at 55%. But little attention is paid to this issue in the debate on employment. The undermining of the mechanisms designed to achieve the economic integration of naturally vulnerable sectors of the population - like women, young people, or foreign nationals - is increasing insecurity for these groups and jeopardising their prospects for the future. Although there is more employment, it is precarious, which means less stability and less security.

Social welfare coverage in Spain has not improved nor is it expected to do so. Public expenditure on social welfare stands at 20.1% of GDP, which is still seven points below the European average of 27.3%. Besides the fact that this figure is low, an analysis of the evolution of the social welfare system yields worrying conclusions, with what used to be considered social rights enshrined in law now being transformed into concessions that may be granted through administrative channels and subject to other conditions. The Government’s “zero deficit” policy goal, which it aims to meet through a surplus in the social security budget, in no way helps to improve social welfare in the country.

In mid 2003, a law concerning protection for the victims of domestic violence came into force, which helps to make the measures protecting this group more responsive. Even so, in order for certain provisions of the new law to be made effective reforms are needed to the penal code and the remand system. In addition, more financial resources must be allocated to ensure that the law is enforced.

At the end of 2003 a new foreign nationals law modifying the 2002 law came into force. The new legislation does not contribute to defining a proper system for integrating the growing immigrant population into society, which remains the big unresolved issue. The Government continues to focus obsessively on controlling migrant flows, which means that coherent measures and an integration policy based on respect for diversity and the management of opportunities is still lacking.⁹ What is especially worrying is that there are so many illegal immigrants who are almost completely without protection. The Government puts the figure at 680,000, while social organisations estimate one million, and the new law will further undermine their security. ■

Cáritas Española

⁹ For further information, Cáritas Española will shortly be publishing its work proposal on the situation of immigrants, “Nadie sin Futuro” (“No-one should lack a future”).

11 March 2004

Between 06.39 and 06.42 GMT on March 11, three days before the general election, 10 bombs exploded in Madrid on four trains that were full of workers, students and schoolchildren. At the time of writing, the death toll is over 200 and there are 1,200 injured, some of them very seriously. Each bomb consisted of 10 kilos of explosives packed in a backpack, which were detonated by remote control.

The first three went off when the first train arrived at Atocha Station in Madrid; the other seven exploded at almost the same time on the other trains which were approaching the station, and the police found three further bombs that had not exploded.

At first the Government and some media blamed ETA, the Basque terrorist organisation, but later seven detonators and an Arabic language video were found in a stolen van near the station, and a London newspaper received a message from Osama bin Laden's organisation claiming responsibility. The following Sunday, Election Day, another video came to light in which a supposed al-Qaeda spokesman claimed responsibility for the attacks. The Government kept insisting that ETA was responsible, and it has emerged that the Minister of Foreign Affairs instructed her ambassadors to take advantage of "any opportunity" to put the blame on ETA.

The day after the blasts Madrid witnessed the largest demonstration in the country's history when 2 million people marched in silence to honour their dead and in protest against the terrorist attacks. It is estimated that 11 million people throughout Spain took to the streets that evening.

The night before the elections, crowds staged protests in different cities demanding the truth and that "the dead should not be used". Mobile phones, internet and all possible means of communication were used to let other voters know what had really happened: that the information released about the attacks and the government's investigation were completely biased, and that they were being backed up by the media.

The Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) headed by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero won the general election on 14 March (the turnout was 8.5 points higher than in 2000). The PSOE ended up 12 seats short of the 176 seats needed for an overall majority, and to be able to govern they will have to come to some arrangement with like-minded minority parties. The Madrid newspaper *El Mundo*, said that never before in the history of Spanish democracy had a party with an absolute majority (referring to President José María Aznar's Partido Popular) been turned out of office. According to this newspaper, it was the government's hasty action in putting the blame for the attacks on ETA that cost them the election. Now that it seems al-Qaeda was responsible, people are again criticising the Partido Popular government for involving Spain in the war on Iraq, and this seems to have been one of the key elements in their electoral defeat. ■

Written by the Social Watch Secretariat
based on information in the press.