

Arab-related Bilateral and Multilateral Sources of Development Finance: Issues, Trends, and the Way Forward

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1. INTRODUCTION

ARAB development finance represents a somewhat neglected aspect. Whilst naturally being much smaller than western aid in absolute terms, Arab countries have been generous donors in the past and an important source of development finance. They are also the only significant providers of development finance other than western developed countries. Other donors such as Iceland, Turkey, the Czech Republic, India, South Korea, China and Taiwan provide only very small amounts and, with the exception of Iceland, are recipients of aid flows themselves.

Similar to the western world, a complex range of national and multilateral agencies have been established to manage Arab aid. After a presentation of the organisational structure of Arab aid and development finance, its characteristics are analysed with a comparative view towards western aid donors, organised in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC).¹ Whilst Algeria, Libya, Iraq and Qatar also provide aid, the major Arab donors are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The other Arab countries are recipient countries rather than donors and not least major recipients of Arab aid.

We analyse Arab aid in terms of motives behind the allocation of aid, absolute volume, relative generosity, allocation across regions and income groups, financial

¹ With the accession of Greece, the OECD-DAC now comprises 22 countries, namely the 15 member countries of the European Union, plus Norway, Switzerland, the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

terms, the dependency of recipient countries on aid, the role of export promotion, the sectoral distribution as well as the engagement of donors in discussions of the proper objectives and design of development finance. We mainly concentrate on aid or, in the terminology of the OECD, official development assistance (ODA), which is defined as grants as well as highly concessional loans (that is, loans with a grant element of at least 25 per cent) that are ‘undertaken by the official sector’, administered with the ‘promotion of the economic development and welfare’ of the recipient countries as its main objective (OECD, 2002b, p. 294). In the final section we propose various recommendations on how Arab aid can be re-designed for the twenty-first century with a view towards strengthening it and rendering it more effective in terms of poverty alleviation in recipient countries.

2. THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ARAB AID AND DEVELOPMENT FINANCE²

a. The National Agencies

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are the three Arab donors to have national aid agencies. None of the other smaller Arab donors like Algeria, Libya, Iraq or Qatar have such agencies.³ All three national agencies share a number of characteristics. They provide a whole range of finance to recipient countries, including grants, loans, guarantees and technical assistance. They also channel some of their aid through multilateral agencies, either Arab agencies (discussed further below) or multilateral development banks such as the African Development Bank or the World Bank’s International Development Association. This works via contributing to the capital stocks of such agencies. It is noteworthy that often the majority of annual aid allocated by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE is *not* channelled through these agencies, but through the finance ministry or even some more or less secret funds at the discretion of the ruling families (Nonneman, 1988; and Van den Boogaerde, 1991). This is particularly the case for Saudi Arabia.

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development was the first national Arab aid agency to be established in 1961. It has always assumed the role of a kind of role model and pioneer for other Arab aid agencies to follow. It is also the most important national agency providing cumulative gross development finance worth US\$9.3 billion by 1997 (Coordination Secretariat, 1998). The United Arab Emirates followed the example of Kuwait in creating the Abu Dhabi Fund

² We concentrate on the most important ones. More detailed information of these and other agencies can be found in Neumayer (2002).

³ The Iraqi Fund for External Development ceased to distribute aid in 1982 (Van den Boogaerde, 1991).

for Arab Economic Development in 1971, now called the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development. Compared to the Kuwait Fund, the cumulative gross development finance provided until 1997 is relatively small at US\$1.7 billion (Coordination Secretariat, 1998). The Saudi Fund for Development was created in 1974. Its cumulative gross development finance amounts to around US\$6.5 billion by 1997 (Coordination Secretariat, 1998). This is clearly lower than the respective figure from the Kuwait Fund. Note, however, that more Saudi Arabian aid and development finance are provided outside the realm of the Saudi Fund than is the case for Kuwait, making Saudi Arabia the biggest Arab donor.

b. The Multilateral Agencies

Multilateral agencies represent the combined and coordinated effort of Arab donors to provide development finance. Contrary to the national agencies, the multilateral agencies provide almost exclusively (low-interest) loans and guarantees, but hardly any grants at all, mostly in the form of technical assistance. Suggestive of such difference is already the fact that some of the multilateral agencies are called banks (Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and Islamic Development Bank) rather than funds. We will include here two agencies, namely the Islamic Development Bank and the OPEC Fund for International Development, which strictly speaking are not exclusively Arab multilateral agencies, but the Arab members of both are by far the major contributors.

Of the multilateral Arab aid agencies, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) with headquarters in Kuwait City is one of the most important. With operations starting in 1974, its cumulative disbursed gross development finance amounts to around US\$7.8 billion by 2001 (AFESD, 2002). It is an exclusively Arab organisation as participating countries must be members of the League of Arab States. It also hosts the Coordination Secretariat for Arab National and Regional Development Institutions (see further below).

The Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), with headquarters in Khartoum (Sudan), assumed operations in 1975. As its name would suggest, its objective is to provide development finance to countries, which are members of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), but not the League of Arab States. By 2000 BADEA had disbursed gross development finance worth US\$1.17 billion (BADEA, 2002).

The Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), established in 1976 with headquarters in Abu Dhabi (UAE), provides assistance exclusively to Arab countries in order to overcome balance-of-payments difficulties. It also provides the Secretariat for the Council of Governors of Arab Central Banks and Monetary Agencies and, like the IMF, publishes a joint Arab Economic Report on the state of the economy in member countries. In 1989 it created the Arab Trade Financing Programme (ATFP), which provides export and import credits for the promotion

of inter-Arab trade. The ATFP also organises buyer-seller meetings and trade information points as part of its inter-Arab trade information network.

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) with headquarters in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) also started operations in 1975. It provides concessionary and non-concessionary loans to member countries of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). One of its main objectives is to raise money through several modes of Islamic financing that are compatible with Shari'ah rules, that is, with the beliefs and the rules of conduct mandated by Islam. By far the most important of these Islamic financing modes is Murabaha, where one partner buys a good and sells it on to the other partner on a cost-plus basis with the profit to the seller and repayment by the buyer specified in the initial contract. By 2000 its cumulative gross disbursements of development finance had reached US\$14.8 billion (IDB, 2002), making it the single biggest Arab agency donor. Like the World Bank Group, the IDB is more a group of development finance organisations with different administrative arrangements and operational rules than one single bank and also calls itself the IDB group. Its main components are the IDB Unit Investment Fund (UIF), the IDB Infrastructure Fund, the Islamic Corporation for Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC) and the Islamic Corporation for the Development of Private Sector (ICD). In addition, the IDB has a trade finance and promotion department whose objective is the promotion of trade among IDB member countries for which import finance (US\$4 billion) and export finance (US\$200 million) are provided.

The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) was established in 1976 and, like the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) itself, has its headquarters in Vienna. In addition to the usual project and programme loans, OFID also provides loans for balance-of-payments support and for debt reduction within the framework of the World Bank's and the IMF's initiative for highly indebted poor countries (HIPC Initiative). By 2001 OFID had disbursed gross development finance amounting to US\$3.1 billion (OFID, 2002).

c. The Coordination Secretariat

In 1975 a Coordination Secretariat for Arab National and Regional Development Institutions was established under the auspices of the AFESD. It brings together the eight most important aid agencies of the Arab world: The Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Saudi Fund, the AFESD, BADEA, the IDB, the AMF and the OFID. There is substantial co-financing of projects among the agencies of the Coordination Secretariat as well as, albeit less so, with western donors and western-dominated institutions such as the World Bank. However, the Secretariat's objective is very limited. Its main function seems to be to collect and disseminate statistical information about Arab aid-giving. It does not have its own website. Neither does it publish the statistical information online.

d. Comparison with Western Agencies and Western-dominated Institutions

One cannot help observing some striking similarities between Arab and western aid and development finance institutions. The national aid agencies, the AFESD, BADEA and the OFID are the counterpart to the western national agencies and multilateral organisations such as the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The counterpart to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), albeit on a much smaller scale of course. In many respects the IDB is organised along the lines of the World Bank. The IDB has its own currency, called the Islamic dinar, but it is nothing else but the IMF's Special Drawing Rights (SDR) in disguise as one Islamic dinar is equivalent in value to one SDR. Like the World Bank Group, there is an Islamic Development Bank Group. The Arab donors even have a Coordination Secretariat, which is roughly comparable to the OECD's DAC even though the DAC is more important as a coordinating forum of national aid agencies and produces much more comprehensive statistical information and policy documents.

As is the case with western donors, a certain amount of overlap and duplication in Arab development finance is also clearly observable. This stems from the multiple functions Arab donors fulfil. As Arab countries, they want to give special attention to other Arab countries and as Muslim countries to other Muslim countries; hence, for example, the existence of separate trade financing programmes for fostering inter-Arab and inter-Muslim trade. Or take the special relations with African countries as another example: Arab donors give aid to African countries via the BADEA, but as OPEC members also via the OFID and, if the recipient country is predominantly Muslim, via the IDB as well.

3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ARAB AID: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH OECD-DAC AID

a. Motives for Aid-giving and Allocation

The motives for Arab aid-giving and allocation have been controversially discussed in the literature. Scholars from western countries have often been critical (Hunter, 1984), whereas representatives from the Arab world have been more positive in their assessment, insisting that Arab aid is less motivated by donor interest and more beneficial to developing countries than western aid (Shihata, 1982).

What are possible motives for Arab countries to give aid and to allocate the aid flows the way they are allocated? To start, Arab countries have always been and still are the main beneficiaries of such aid. Arab countries like to portray this as a living example of active Arab solidarity of the donor countries with their

poorer cousins (Achilli and Khaldi, 1984). More critical voices see it as the attempt to buy off a threat by more populous, envious and greedy neighbours in inducing them to believe that friendly relations are more rewarding than hostility would be (Hunter, 1984). However, generally speaking, eligibility and the range of recipient countries widened substantially after the very early periods of Arab aid allocation.

In addition to Arab countries, many observers also suggest that Sub-Saharan African countries are favoured due to the pursuit of Afro-Arab unity and the traditionally strong links between these countries and Arab countries (Simmons, 1981, p. 16). Many Arab countries are located in Africa, have shared a history of colonisation with African countries and have generally supported nationalist liberation movements against the colonisation powers.

Besides Arab and African solidarity, another potential preference suggested by, for example, Mertz and Mertz (1983) and Hunter (1984) is with respect to Islamic countries. Khaldi (1984, p. 13), however, rejects the suggestion that Islamic countries might be favoured by Arab aid in claiming that 'Arab aid does not have any religious character'. Turning towards more directly political factors potentially influencing Arab aid allocation, Mertz and Mertz (1983, p. 21) claim that 'political interests dictate the distribution of Arab aid' such that aid allocation might be biased towards countries that are similar in their foreign political positions, in particular with respect to issues concerning the Israel-Arab conflict (similarly, Simmons, 1981). This claim is disputed by Al-Ani (1984). Finally, Arab donors, like many other aid donors, suggest that they take the need of potential recipient countries into account in favouring poorer countries (Al-Humaidi, 1984; Humaidan, 1984; and OFID, 2002).

b. Absolute Volume

Table 1 provides an overview of the development of Arab country and multi-lateral agency aid in the form of net ODA disbursements and net other official flows (OOF) in comparison to the analogous stream of finance provided by OECD-DAC countries over the period 1974 to 2000. OOF comprise other flows of finance to recipient countries that do not meet the conditions of ODA 'either because they are not primarily aimed at development, or because they have a grant element of less than 25 per cent' (OECD, 2002b, p. 294).

Note that no data for individual countries or agencies are available after 1989.⁴ Also, these data stem from OECD estimates. As Iqbal (1983, p. 31) notes, OECD estimates have tended:

⁴ The data from individual countries and agencies do not always add up to the aggregate country and agency figures due to inconsistencies and inaccuracies in estimation.

TABLE 1
Net Development Finance in Current Million US\$

	1975–95	1980–84	1985–90	1990–94	1995–99
Net official development assistance (ODA)					
Arab countries	5,238.1	5,710.8	2,618.2	2,137.5	464.0
Algeria	76.6	83.4	51.7	n.a.	n.a.
Iraq	263.1	218.3	–17.7	n.a.	n.a.
Libya	158.4	164.9	81.5	n.a.	n.a.
Qatar	199.5	138.9	5.5	n.a.	n.a.
Kuwait	984.8	1,101.1	415.7	n.a.	n.a.
of which: Kuwait Fund	188.9	332.7	139.0	n.a.	n.a.
Saudi Arabia	3,526.0	4,299.5	2,250.5	n.a.	n.a.
of which: Saudi Fund	149.6	255.3	79.5	n.a.	n.a.
UAE	991.8	561.2	41.8	n.a.	n.a.
of which: Abu Dhabi Fund	76.9	53.7	–43.3	n.a.	n.a.
Arab agencies	578.3	305.2	108.3	190.4	–13.2
AFESD	108.2	79.3	122.5	n.a.	n.a.
IDB	108.4	121.2	–22.6	n.a.	n.a.
OFID	111.6	198.6	–13.2	n.a.	n.a.
BADEA	29.6	33.5	13.8	n.a.	n.a.
DAC	10,869.9	17,684.9	28,030.4	41,448.7	37,731.3
Total Arab ODA as per cent of DAC ODA	54.10	34.47	10.36	5.76	1.22
Net other official flows (OOF)					
Arab countries	794.9	769.6	–163.8	50.5	n.a.
Arab agencies	47.6	41.4	40.3	–11.5	n.a.
DAC	2,387.2	4,456.9	4,217.0	7,595.3	9,336.6
Total Arab OOF as per cent of DAC OOF	35.30	18.20	n.a.	0.51	n.a.
Net OOF as per cent of net ODA					
Arab countries	15.18	13.48	n.a.	2.36	
Arab agencies	8.23	13.56	37.21	n.a.	
DAC	21.96	25.20	15.04	18.32	24.74

Note:

n.a.: not available or not applicable.

Source: Van den Boogaerde (1991) and OECD (2002a).

to diverge from indications provided by certain national authorities. These divergences can largely be attributed to differences in the definition of assistance and coverage, and have probably led to underestimates in the DAC figures.

Some donors, particularly Saudi Arabia, also keep a part of their aid-giving secret (Nonneman, 1988; and Van den Boogaerde, 1991).

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the information contained in Table 1. First, the total amount of aid given is substantial. The vast majority of this aid stems from only three countries (in order of importance): Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Smaller amounts come from Algeria, Libya, Qatar and in past years from Iraq as well. Second, the amount of OOF is

small compared to ODA and becomes negligible or even negative in the 1990s. This suggests that ODA is the greatly dominating part of development finance provided by Arab donors. Third, the amount of aid given is volatile and changes quite substantially from period to period. There is much more volatility in Arab aid than there is in aid given by OECD-DAC countries. Fourth, there is a substantial fall in the amount of Arab aid given in the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s. For the Arab agencies the net ODA figures even turn negative between 1995 and 1999, suggesting that more money flew back to the agencies in the form of repayments than were newly given out. Note that part of the sharp downfall in aid in the early 1990s is due to incomplete data: Until 1992, the aggregate Arab country data comprise the combined total for Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. From 1993 to 1996 the data cover Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE only, from 1997 onwards data for the UAE are not included. As concerns the Arab multilateral agencies, the data comprise the combined total for BADEA, AFEDS, the IDB and the OFID. Fifth, the amount of Arab aid has been quite substantial in the past compared to DAC bilateral aid, reaching around half of DAC aid in the late 1970s.

What are the reasons for the volatility of total Arab aid that was already mentioned? Column I of Table 2 provides estimation results from a simple econometric model with the log of total Arab net ODA over the period 1971 to 1997 as the dependent variable combined oil and natural gas revenue of Kuwait, Saudi

TABLE 2
The Determinants of the Total Volume of Arab Aid

	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>
<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<i>ln(total Arab net ODA)</i>	<i>ln(Arab net ODA as per cent of GNI)</i>
ln(oil and gas rents)	0.798 (4.50)**	0.475 (2.44)*
Gulf War dummy	-1.178 (3.36)**	-0.427 (1.36)
ln(GNI per capita)		-0.284 (0.86)
Time trend	-0.040 (2.11)*	-0.078 (4.14)**
Constant	74.218 (1.88)	148.68 (3.95)**
Observations	27	27
R-squared	0.81	0.85
R-squared detrended	0.61	0.31

Notes:

Robust *t*-statistics in parentheses.

* Significant at 5 per cent; ** significant at 1 per cent.

Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (taken from World Bank, 2001), a dummy variable for the years after the Second Gulf War as well as combined oil and natural gas revenue of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (taken from World Bank, 2001), a dummy variable for the years after the Second Gulf War as well as a time trend as the independent variables. Note that the aid and natural resource rent values have been converted into US dollars of 1995 with the help of the IMF's world unit import price index. Standard errors are robust towards arbitrary serial correlation and heteroscedasticity. The estimated elasticity for the oil and natural gas rents is 0.8, which clearly shows the dependence and strong sensitivity of the total amount of aid given towards the total revenue of Arab donors from their natural resource extraction. The Gulf War dummy is also highly significant and negative. This variable captures the effect that Arab countries had to contribute enormous amounts of money for their war and post-war efforts, which reduced their willingness to give aid. Note that the time trend is of importance, but not outstandingly so. The *R*-squared for our model falls from 0.8 to 0.6 if the dependent variable is detrended as suggested by Wooldridge (2000, p. 337). This suggests that the volatility of the resource rents and the exogenous shock of the Second Gulf War are the main determinants of the volatility in total Arab aid flows.

c. Generosity: Aid as a Percentage of GNI

Arab countries have been rather generous donors in the past if generosity is measured in terms of aid as a percentage of the donors' gross national income (GNI). Indeed, except for very recent years, Arab donors have been more generous and often substantially more generous than western donors. How generous Arab donors exactly are is difficult to say due to two things: First, as mentioned in the last section, the total amount of Arab aid is somewhat difficult to establish with certainty. Second, and more importantly, the GNI of Arab countries is more difficult to estimate accurately than that of western donors as their GNI is heavily dependent on oil and natural gas extraction. Table 3 provides estimates of the net ODA to GNI ratio of Arab donors over the period 1975 to 1999 (GNI data taken from World Bank, 2001). Note that, again, no data for individual countries are available after 1989.

An important and distinctive feature of Arab aid-giving that has been alluded to already in the last section is its volatility, which not only shows in the absolute amount of aid given, but also in terms of the amount of aid given as a percentage of GNI. What explains this volatility of generousness in Arab aid-giving? Round and Odedokun (2003) show that the donor country's income, the extent of military adventurism as well as characteristics of the donor country's political system determine aid generousness by DAC donors across countries and time. Clearly with Arab aid, military adventurism is not an issue and their political system is

rather homogeneous both across donors and time. However, what about income, is it a determinant of aid generosity as is the case for many western donors? Column II of Table 2 presents results for the same model as in the last section, but this time the dependent variable is the net ODA-to-GNI ratio and we add the log of per capita GNI as a further explanatory variable. Per capita income is highly insignificant, but the variable measuring rents from oil and natural gas extraction is still positive and statistically significant. In other words, contrary to western countries, Arab donors' generosity of aid-giving depends on the total profits from natural resource extraction, but not on their per capita income levels. The Gulf War dummy no longer is significant. The reason is probably that the Gulf War not only brought total aid volumes down, but also the GNI of Arab donors. The time trend is more significant than was the case when total aid volume was the dependent variable. Over time, Arab donors have become substantially less generous. The importance of the time trend can also be seen in comparing the *R*-squared of our model with the one of the detrended dependent variable. The *R*-squared falls from 0.85 to 0.31. This implies an increasing extent of aid fatigue of Arab donors over time.

It is important to note that the figures contained in Table 3 potentially underestimate the generosity of Arab aid-giving, however. This is because the GNI of Arab aid donors mainly derives from the extraction of non-renewable resources and is likely to be inflated. Since such extraction leads to exaggerated income figures, given that the partial liquidation of capital (the resource stock) is erroneously counted as true income (Neumayer, 1999 and 2000), actual GNI is lower and the aid provision to GNI ratio therefore higher than the published figures would suggest. Another aspect to consider is that whilst western multi-lateral development agencies can borrow money at very favourable terms from the international capital markets due to their excellent credit rating, this is not really possible for the Arab agencies. Instead, they depend entirely on contributions from member countries as well as from profits accruing from their lending activities.

Critics of Arab donors have sometimes argued that the huge amount of money given to the so-called front-states bordering on Israel such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon as well as potentially that given to other Arab countries as well, should not be counted as aid due to its mainly political rather than developmental motivation (Hunter, 1984, p. 180; Porter, 1986; and Nonneman, 1988). We will see further below that Arab aid indeed is heavily concentrated on Arab recipient countries. However, if one were to follow such an argument, then one would also need to deduct from US aid-giving American aid going to Egypt and Israel, for example, or French aid going to its former colonies. Indeed, studies of aid allocation such as Berthélemy and Tichit (2002) or Neumayer (2003b and 2003c) demonstrate that most donors pursue political, economic and other interests in their aid allocation besides a desire to help poorer countries.

TABLE 3
The Generosity of Arab Aid-giving Compared to DAC Aid (in per cent of GNI)

	1975–79	1980–84	1985–89	1990–94	1995–99
Arab countries	3.48	1.85	1.00	0.94	0.24
Algeria	0.28	0.19	0.09	n.a.	n.a.
Iraq	1.20	0.61	–0.04	n.a.	n.a.
Libya	0.96	0.51	0.35	n.a.	n.a.
Qatar	6.47	2.12	0.18	n.a.	n.a.
Kuwait	5.89	3.78	1.58	n.a.	n.a.
Saudi Arabia	7.57	4.63	1.57	n.a.	n.a.
UAE	8.03	1.87	0.07	n.a.	n.a.
DAC countries	0.33	0.36	0.35	0.32	0.24

Note:

n.a.: not available.

Source: Van den Boogaerde (1991), OECD (2002b) and earlier similar volumes.

TABLE 4
The Geographical Allocation of Aggregate Arab and Western Aid Across Regions

	1980–84	1985–89	1990–94	1995–99
Arab bilateral country donors				
Arab countries	51.0	44.1	61.7	60.3
Non-Arab Africa	15.5	12.6	8.1	20.5
Latin America	0.7	0.8	2.4	3.0
Asia	11.0	18.4	7.9	8.7
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0	0	0.35	2.8
Arab multilateral agency donors				
Arab countries	24.5	52.5	73.5	n.a.
Non-Arab Africa	50.6	35.8	19.8	n.a.
Latin America	2.0	1.6	1.6	n.a.
Asia	17.9	9.1	4.4	n.a.
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0	0	0.46	n.a.
DAC				
Arab countries	16.4	15.2	19.1	10.1
Non-Arab Africa	24.8	26.4	22.2	20.0
Latin America	10.4	11.5	11.0	11.7
Asia	30.0	29.6	27.6	32.7
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0	0.02	0.53	2.3

Note:

n.a.: not available.

Source: OECD (2002a).

d. Geographical Allocation

In terms of regions, Arab aid has always been mainly given to Arab countries, then to Sub-Saharan African and Asian countries with little aid going to Latin American countries. This is demonstrated in Table 4, which shows the regional

allocation of aid in five-year averages over the period 1980 to 1999. Note that the aid figures refer to commitment rather than net ODA disbursements, as the latter is more volatile and dependent on back flows of money from loans in earlier periods. Arab agencies have shifted emphasis from Sub-Saharan African towards Arab countries over time. In comparison, aid from OECD-DAC countries has gone mainly to Asian and Sub-Saharan African, with less aid going to Arab and more aid going to Latin American countries. There can be little doubt that western aid is more geographically balanced than Arab aid. Table 5 provides similar information averaged over the whole time period, but broken down according to major donor. It is clear that only the OFID is somewhat geographically more balanced and that the Abu Dhabi Fund is most clearly focused on Arab recipient countries, apart from the AFESD of course, which provides aid exclusively to Arab countries.

Looking at the allocation of Arab aid across countries, Neumayer (2003a) finds that poorer, Arab, Islamic and Sub-Saharan African countries are more likely to receive some positive amount of Arab aid (gate-keeping stage). The same is true for countries not maintaining diplomatic relations with Israel as well as those with voting patterns in the United Nations General Assembly similar to Saudi Arabia. Arab and more populous countries also receive a higher share of the total aid allocated (level stage). The same is true for Islamic countries in the case of bilateral aid and countries with voting similarity in the case of multilateral aid. Donor interest, in particular Arab solidarity, therefore plays a clear role at both stages, whereas recipient need as measured by a country's level of income only affects the gate-keeping stage, not the level stage. The result with respect to donor interest is similar to western aid, which is also heavily influenced by the interest of donor countries. However, contrary to Arab donors, western donors also tend to give more aid to poorer countries (Neumayer, 2003b and 2003c).

e. Allocation Across Income Groups

Another important yardstick for analysing aid flows is to look at the allocation of flows according to income groups, for which Table 6 provides aid commitment data in five-year averages over the period 1980 to 1999. The share of Arab country aid going to least developed countries is roughly comparable to that of DAC countries, but Arab countries give comparatively less to other low-income and more to lower middle-income countries than DAC countries. As concerns Arab multilateral agencies, there is a dramatic shift away from least developed countries towards lower middle-income countries. On the whole, western aid is better focused on the poor countries in need of aid than Arab aid is. This is in accordance with the more rigorous econometric analysis summarised in the last section.

TABLE 5
The Geographical Allocation of Individual Arab Aid Across Regions

	<i>Kuwait Fund</i> (1962–2000)	<i>Saudi Fund</i> (1975–96)	<i>Abu Dhabi</i> <i>Fund</i> (1971–96)	<i>AFESD</i> (1974–2002)	<i>BADEA</i> (1975–2002)	<i>IDB</i> (1976–96)	<i>OFID</i> (1976–2001)
Arab countries	53.8	45.0	81.6	100	0	54.5	n.a.
Non-Arab Africa	17.3	20.1	7.7	0	100	8.8	49.9*
Latin America	2.2	0.91	0	0	0	0	11.9
Asia	20.9	32.46	10.2	0	0	36.6	37.2*
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	5.8	1.45	0.4	0	0	0.16	0.8

Notes:

n.a.: not available.

* Includes Arab countries.

Sources: Kuwait Fund (2002), Saudi Fund (2002), OFID (2002) and Coordination Secretariat (1998).

TABLE 6
The Allocation of Arab and Western Aid Across Income Groups

	1980–84	1985–89	1990–94	1995–99
Arab bilateral country donors				
Least developed countries	20.2	16.2	9.4	16.6
Other low income	6.0	3.2	7.2	15.0
Low middle income	42.8	38.0	69.5	47.1
Upper middle income	5.5	1.6	4.9	24.0
Arab multilateral agency donors				
Least developed countries	60.2	50.6	18.9	n.a.
Other low income	15.0	8.0	6.0	n.a.
Low middle income	18.3	34.3	66.4	n.a.
Upper middle income	2.7	2.2	6.8	n.a.
DAC				
Least developed countries	23.8	23.4	17.1	16.9
Other low income	20.3	20.7	19.8	24.9
Low middle income	30.5	28.5	34.8	30.1
Upper middle income	4.0	3.7	4.9	4.2

Note:

n.a.: not available.

Source: OECD (2002a).

f. Dependency of Recipient Countries from Aid

Given the enormous amounts of aid given to specific Arab countries, particularly those with a common frontier with Israel, one might think that their aid dependency measured as the percentage of GNI derived from foreign aid is much higher than that of major recipients of western aid. It is certainly true that some Arab states derive a substantial part of their GNI from Arab aid. Jordan and Syria, for example, received around four per cent of their GNI in 1994 and 1992, respectively, and since the figures taken from Coordination Secretariat (1998) do not contain a substantial part of aid that is never officially made publicly known, the aid dependency is likely to be higher in reality. Note, however, that such dependency of aid is not uncommon among recipients. In 1999, Guinea-Bissau's GNI stemmed to 25 per cent from ODA and Honduras and Nicaragua derived 15.5 and 34 per cent, respectively, of their GNI from mainly western aid (OECD, 2002b). There can be no doubt that some Arab recipient countries are dependent on their much richer Arab cousins – in the form of aid, cheap oil imports and, not least, on remittances of workers making a living in these countries. But generally speaking, the dependency of these Arab recipient countries is no less than that of many non-Arab developing countries on western aid.

g. Financial Terms of Aid

The degree of concessionality is an important aspect of aid for recipient countries. Grants are better than loans, and loans with high concessionality are better than those with low concessionality. A frequent critique of Arab aid has been that aid to Arab countries has generally been given in the form of grants, whereas the majority of developing countries, including the least developed ones, are given loans that sometimes have low concessionality (Hunter, 1984; and McKinnon, 1997). Western donors, on the other hand, provide the vast majority of their aid in the form of grants. In particular, practically all western aid going to least developed countries is in the form of grants (OECD, 2002b).

h. Export Promotion and Tying Status

A common critique of aid by western donors is that they use their aid in part at least to promote their own export interests. This is done in two ways: First, more aid goes to countries, which are the major importers of the donor country's goods and services. Neumayer (2003b and 2003c) finds strong evidence that this is true for most western donors. In contrast, Neumayer (2003a and 2003c) does not find evidence that this is the case for Arab aid allocation, even though there have of course always been calls to make Arab aid work more in the Arab economic and export interests (see, for example, Khader, 1984). Also, things are slowly changing as Arab donors develop a domestic industrial base. For example, the Saudi Fund has recently changed its Charter in order to allow for the financing and guarantee of non-oil exports alongside the financing of development projects (Saudi Fund, 2002). BADEA issued a board of governors decision in 1997, allowing it to 'intervene in financing Arab African trade' (BADEA, 2002). The IDB has a trade finance and promotion department and established the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credits (IDB, 2002).

Second, sometimes the aid given by western donors is tied towards procurement of goods and services from the donor country. Western donors differ somewhat from each other, but most countries tie at least some part of their aid-giving (OECD, 2002b). Tying aid usually makes the aid given less valuable as the recipient country cannot buy the goods and services it wants to buy or at least not at the lowest available price. In comparison, Arab aid has practically never been tied, with the exception of relatively unimportant specific loans and grants for oil purchases. This is definitely a positive aspect of Arab aid, which remains positive even if critics are right in arguing that the only reason why Arab aid is untied is because they simply do not produce a wide enough range of goods and services to tie procurement to.

i. Sectoral Distribution

Table 7 provides an overview of the sectoral distribution of Arab agencies. It can be seen that traditional uses such as transport and telecommunications, energy and industry and mining account for the majority for almost all donors. In contrast, with the exception of the IDB and the OFID, the Arab donors were late in allocating aid to sectors, which are more important to human development than economic development. For example, BADEA did not finance any stand-alone social projects before 1995 (BADEA, 2000, p. 16). A comparison with western donors is somewhat difficult given that sectoral definitions vary, but OECD (2002b, Table 18) reports that about 30 per cent of OECD-DAC countries' aid in 1999/2000 went into the social and administrative infrastructure and there can be no doubt that western donors have put more emphasis on aspects of human development than Arab donors have so far. Arab donors are slowly giving more priority to such sectors as health, education and empowerment of women now, but still have a long way to go to correct a bias towards more visible, but only seemingly more productive, physical infrastructure projects.

j. Development Aid Philosophy

Particularly in the 1970s and early 1980s Arab donors commonly stated that their aid aims to develop a new international economic order and self-reliance among developing countries (Hunter, 1984), a philosophy western donors naturally never subscribed to. However, such rhetoric is no longer apparent.

A still existent and remarkable contrast between Arab and western aid-giving is that Arab donors by and large have either not followed at all or more commonly have followed only to some extent and after substantial delay the many evolutions – some would say fads – in development aid thinking of western donor agencies. In particular, Arab donors have never been proactive in advancing the debate on the proper objectives and design of development aid. Whereas the OECD-DAC has produced one document after another on how aid should be designed in order to promote poverty alleviation, sustainable development, environmental protection, gender equality, violent conflict prevention, local ownership, effective partnership with recipient countries, good governance, etc., no similar engagement with such topics can be discerned from Arab donors.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

From our review and analysis of the institutions of Arab development finance, its characteristics and trends, a range of recommendations to pave the way forward can be drawn. First, Arab donors should reverse the recent downfall in

TABLE 7
Sectoral Distribution of Arab Aid up to 1996

	<i>Kuwait Fund (1962–2000)</i>	<i>Saudi Fund (1975–2001)</i>	<i>Abu Dhabi Fund (1998)</i>	<i>AFESD (1974–2000)</i>	<i>BADEA (1975–2000)</i>	<i>IDB (1976–97)</i>	<i>OFID (1976–2001)</i>
Transport and telecommunications	34.5	33	92.7	18.5	51.1**	17.9	24.3
Energy	21.3	19	0	28.8	7.1	23.4**	20.7
Water and sewerage	11	18*	3.6	10.4	n.a.	n.a.	7.1
Agriculture and livestock	17	20	0	21.9	29.1	18.7	16.1
Industry and mining	14.7	8	0	10.7	3.2	20.4	2.5
Others (including health, education, training, housing, tourism and balance-of-payments support)	1.5	n.a.	3.6	9.7	2.1	17.5	20.5

Notes:

* Includes education, housing, urban development and health.

** Includes water and sewerage.

n.a.: not available.

Sources: AFESD (2000), BADEA (2002), IDB (1997), Kuwait Fund (2002), Saudi Fund (2002), OFID (2002) and Coordination Secretariat (1998).

aid flows and, more importantly, should strive for a more steady and less volatile flow of aid. They are not poor by any means and a steady and high flow of aid to poorer developing countries will help them improve their reputation in the world, which is always under threat due to the fact that they are amongst the very few high income developing countries. Connected to this, Arab donors should set themselves a target of aid as a percentage of GNI. The United Nations recommended target of 0.7 per cent of GNI could serve as a minimum target. This will help to steady the flow of aid.

Second, there is no need to balance out the regional allocation of Arab aid. The bias towards Arab countries is natural and the bias towards Sub-Saharan Africa not unwelcome given the poverty of these countries. The bias against Latin America does not matter much given the generally higher living standards in these countries and given that western donors provide substantial amounts of aid to Latin America. There is, however, a need to reconsider the allocation of Arab aid across income groups. Arab aid should become better targeted towards the poor and very poor recipient countries. Connected to this, Arab aid should raise the grant share and raise the concessionality of loans to the poor and very poor recipient countries.

Third, Arab donors should refrain from following the bad example of western donors to use aid for the promotion of the donor country's exports. Finance and institutions for trade promotion should be kept strictly outside the finance and the institutions responsible for aid-giving. Fourth, Arab donors should re-allocate more resources towards the 'soft' social sectors of human development and away from the 'hard' physical infrastructure sectors. Fifth, Arab donors should reconsider the structure of Arab development finance, which produces some amount of overlap and sometimes duplication amongst some of the multilateral agencies. A merging of agencies is probably unrealistic, but it is not clear, for example, why the OFID needs to provide development finance for Arab and African countries as well when there exist specialised institutions for both groups of countries. Of course, Arab donors are not alone in this respect. If anything, the complexity and overlap of western agencies are even greater. However, there is also no need for Arab donors to repeat the mistakes of western donors.

Sixth, the Coordination Secretariat should be strengthened. Its role should become enhanced. It should provide more frequent, more comprehensive and more easily available statistics on Arab aid-giving and should represent and promote Arab aid to the outside world. This might imply better staffing of the Secretariat. It should become a forum in which Arab donors can actively participate in discussions and debates about the proper objectives and design of development finance. The OECD's DAC can function as a role model even though not all the functions of the DAC need to be taken over by the Coordination Secretariat. Arab donors should more actively participate in the discussion of issues surrounding the development aid philosophy. Such a discussion should

be fostered both amongst Arab donors and in constructive exchange with western donors. As a logical consequence, the main Arab donors should seek closer cooperation with the DAC in the long run. Joining the DAC is not an option as Arab donors cannot become OECD members given the differences in the political and economic systems between them and the OECD countries. However, there is nothing inherent in aid-giving by Arab donors that makes them incompatible with western donors and would stand against closer cooperation. The current lack of such cooperation seems to be due to a combination of western countries not taking Arab donors seriously as partners of development finance and Arab unwillingness to succumb to the rules of transparency, peer review and open debate that characterises the OECD's DAC.

Following these policy recommendations would help Arab donors to provide more reliable, better targeted and more effective aid for the twenty-first century. Arab aid once was an important and highly regarded source of development finance for poorer developing countries. Arab donors should strive to regain this regard and to do even better than before.

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