

U8 discussion group 24.10.07

Do nations have a moral obligation to support one another?

1. Yes – because individual people do, so that should go to a national level
2. Yes, especially if the countries have pre-existing links, perhaps through colonialism or trade.
3. Yes, so long as it is done mindfully.
4. Depends on the kind of support. Morally, no because morality is subjective. Some other form of obligation though, yes.

It doesn't matter who the person is, because humans are human and we have a universal and objective reason to provide assistance. This doesn't have to imply cultural imperialism – though this should be considered as something to avoid.

What kind of support should be provided?

Provision for basic physical needs. This should be given directly to the people in need.

Concerns though about dependence and the treatment of symptoms rather than causes.

Hopefully decisions will be based on morality, and will thus be good solutions. Ultimately, morality comes down to a moral opinion.

Morals (extra-marital sex etc.) distinct from ethics (ethical consumerism etc.)? Not sure morality necessary – have objective goals like MDGs.

Who should support whom?

The rich support the poor. But not everyone fits into a neat category like that. Is China a giver or receiver, for example?

The rich should give freely. Suggestion of NGOs taxing countries.

Decisions should be made by individual countries based on their capacity to provide support.

Government priority is at home. Whilst the government may not always have a moral obligation to help its own people first, it does have a practical obligation to do so.

Support should not just be charity – it can be reciprocal. For example, international trade rules can be adjusted to be more beneficial to other countries. Trade is central.

First do no harm.

Removal of subsidies negatively affects home farmers.

Where poverty can be attributed to western nations (colonial past, unfair trade regulations etc.) it is our responsibility to fix that.

Do we have a right to tell others what to do, when we still have high inequality in the UK?

However, there is little in the way of extreme poverty in the UK. Needs in the third world are greater.

Would we be better able to sort the worlds problems with a single world government? Maybe we need more power for the UN. Competition between nations gets in the way of cooperation.

Economic reasons are compelling and may be more convincing. It is easier to convince people to receive than to give.

Is material wealth the goal of development? The western world is lacking in community spirit.

Wealth and happiness are tied, though not in a perfect correlation.

Are trivial considerations about oneself as important by virtue of being personal? We don't appreciate what we have, so it doesn't make us happy to have it.

In the west we *can* live alone, so perhaps more inclined to be selfish.

Top down vs bottom up approaches.

People need to see the changes they effect. However, they often seen aid money squandered.

Morality is an individual judgement, so maybe we should make the market make decisions for us.

Would hope that rather than being under moral *obligation*, that we would help one another because we want to.