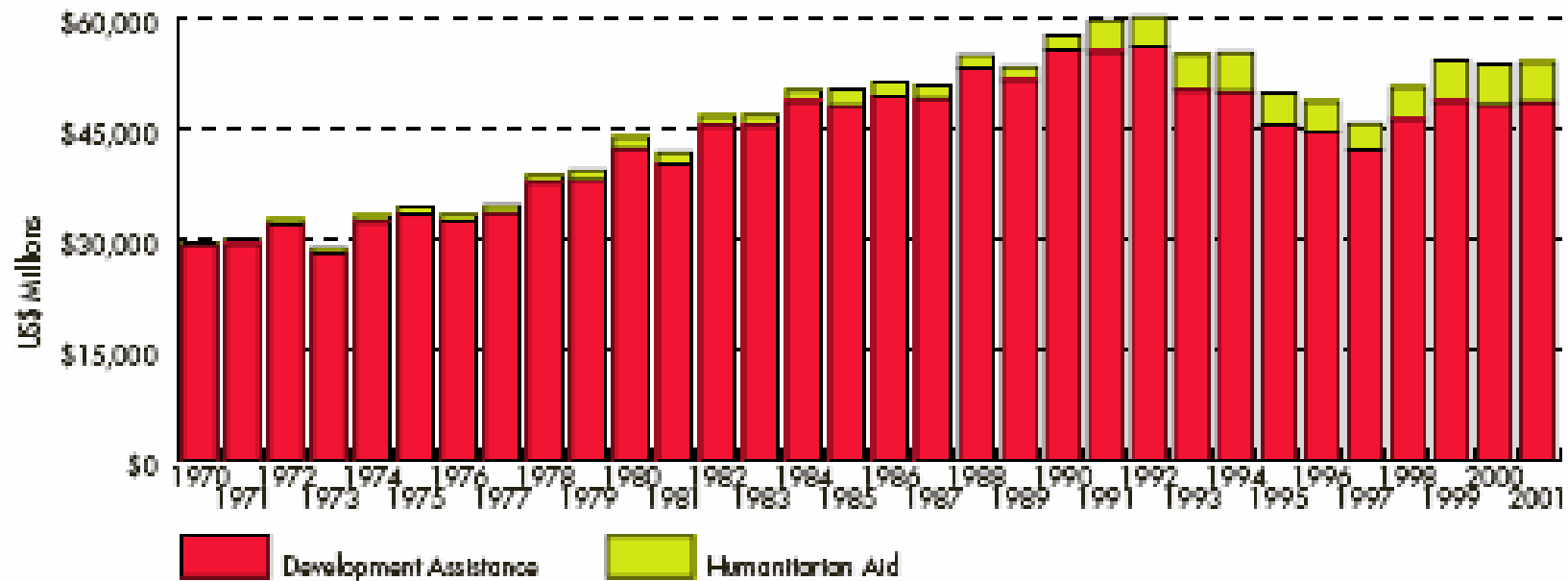


“Distribution and Emergency”

Jennifer Rubenstein
Princeton University

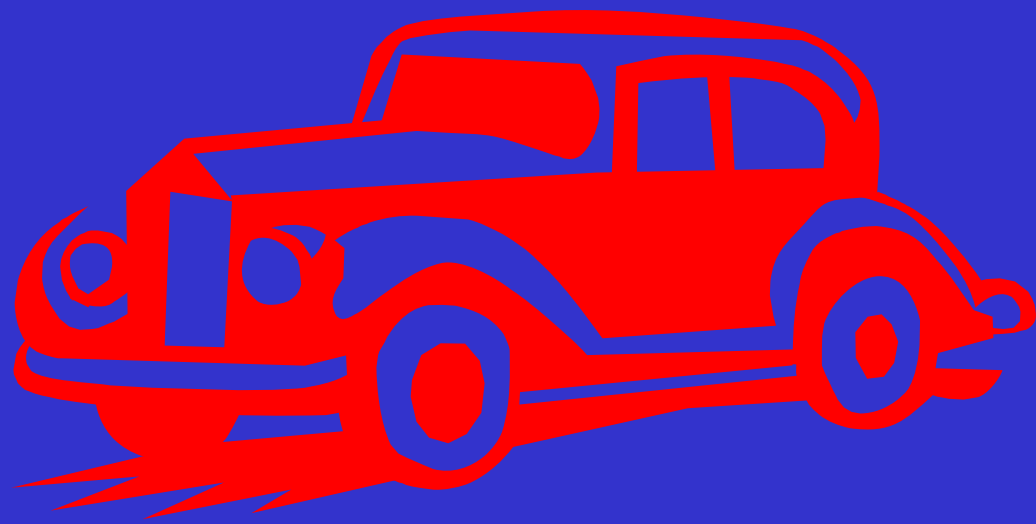
Mershon Center
Ohio State University
April 3, 2006

Figure 2.4 Humanitarian aid as a share of total ODA, constant (2000) prices



Source: OECD/DAC Statistics Online Table 1 and 2a

Source: Development Initiatives, "Global Humanitarian Assistance 2003," p. 15.



Outline

1. Define “emergency”
2. How the emergency/development distinction functions in practice
3. Argument #1
4. Argument #2
5. Conclusion

Outline

- 1. Define “emergency”**
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My definition of “Emergency”:

“A situation characterized by urgent and severe need.”

My definition of “Emergency”:

“A situation characterized by urgent and severe need.”

OED’s definition:

“A state of things unexpectedly arising, and urgently demanding immediate action.”

Outline

1. Define “emergency”

2. How the emergency/development distinction functions in practice

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Outline

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Three Principles for Distributing International Aid

- Prioritize the Worst-off
- Maximize Aggregate Utility
- Fulfill Special Obligations

Prioritize the Worst-off

Prioritize the Worst-off



Emergency
Aid

Development
Aid

Prioritize the Worst-off

Emergency
Aid

Development
Aid



Prioritize the Worst-off



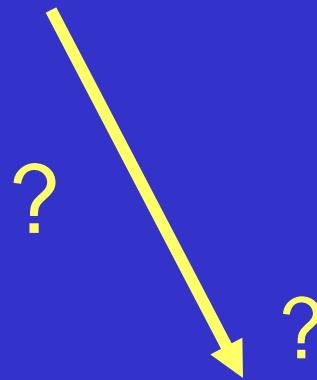
Emergency
Aid



Development
Aid

Maximize Aggregate Utility

Maximize Aggregate Utility



Emergency
Aid

Development
Aid

Maximize Aggregate Utility

Emergency
Aid

Development
Aid



Four reasons why maximizing utility does not necessarily entail prioritizing development aid

1. The opportunity costs of not providing emergency aid might be higher than the opportunity costs of not providing development aid.

Four reasons why maximizing utility does not necessarily entail prioritizing development aid

2. Development aid might be less effective than emergency aid, and it might cause more harm.

Four reasons why maximizing utility does not necessarily entail prioritizing development aid

3. Providing aid cost-effectively gives agents an incentive to make groups they dislike expensive to assist.

Four reasons why maximizing utility does not necessarily entail prioritizing development aid

4. Some resources are restricted to emergency aid, and cannot be used for development aid.

Maximize Aggregate Utility

Emergency
Aid

Development
Aid



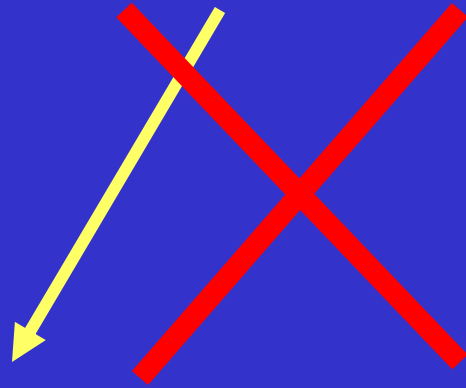
Maximize Aggregate Utility



Emergency
Aid

Development
Aid

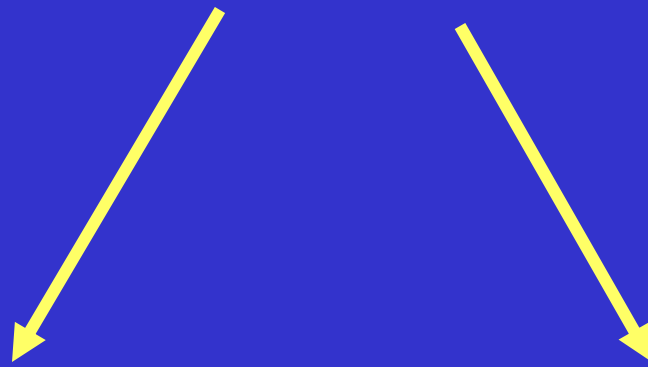
Maximize Aggregate Utility



Emergency
Aid

Development
Aid

Maximize Aggregate Utility



Emergency
Aid

Development
Aid

Fulfill Special Obligations

Fulfill Special Obligations



Emergency
Aid

?



Development
Aid

Fulfill Special Obligations

```
graph TD; A[Fulfill Special Obligations] --> B[Emergency Aid]; A --> C[Development Aid];
```

Emergency
Aid

Development
Aid

Outline

1. Define “emergency”
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- 4. Argument #2**
5. Conclusion

Why prioritize a given emergency?

Why prioritize a given emergency?



Morally relevant
reasons

Morally irrelevant
reasons

Why prioritize a given emergency?



Morally relevant
reasons

- Urgent and Severe Need

Morally irrelevant
reasons

Why prioritize a given emergency?



Morally relevant
reasons

- Urgent and Severe Need

Morally irrelevant
reasons

- Event-like features
 - rapid-onset
 - seemingly temporary
 - negative divergence from normatively acceptable state of affairs

Event-like features are analogous to physical proximity.

- Both tempt us to prioritize aiding some over aiding others.

Event-like features are analogous to physical proximity.

- Both tempt us to prioritize aiding some over aiding others.
- Yet, both are claimed to be morally irrelevant to our obligations to assist.

Event-like features are analogous to physical proximity.

- Both tempt us to prioritize aiding some over aiding others.
- Yet, both are claimed to be morally irrelevant to our obligations to assist.
- Both are intertwined with features that are (claimed to be) morally relevant.

Outline

1. Define “emergency”
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Main conclusions

1. The emergency/development distinction does not track widely-accepted distributive principles. Therefore, it should have no effect on how international aid is distributed.

Main conclusions

1. The emergency/development distinction does not track widely-accepted distributive principles. Therefore, it should have no effect on how international aid is distributed.
2. Emergencies' event-like features are not morally relevant according to widely-accepted distributive principles. Therefore, they should have no effects on how aid is distributed.

Two broader implications:

1. Because a given set of categories is useful for implementing efforts to improve human welfare does not mean that it is conducive to a principled distribution of resources among those efforts.
2. A focus on distribution can help us to avoid over-stating the distinctiveness of emergencies.

The End