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Abstract

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the foreign aid behavior of new donors on humanitarian cooperation? The non-OECD-DAC donors, such as Qatar, try to adapt to the new environment of development and humanitarian aid under COVID-19 pandemic. Qatar has successfully used public diplomacy to deal with regional geopolitical challenges. In this sense, the current situation presents an opportunity to Qatar for opening up to new geographies. This research analyzes Qatar's foreign aid, utilizing a novel dataset on Qatar's foreign aid interactions before and during the pandemic. These interactions show Qatar's main recipients of foreign aid, with which country, income group and geography it interacts more. This dataset is essential to demonstrate Qatar's priorities in humanitarian diplomacy as well. The pandemic makes this dataset even more interesting because it is worthwhile to investigate how a global health shock might affect the aid behavior of a new donor. Our analysis shows that Qatar has increased its foreign aid interactions compared to the pre-pandemic period. Qatar's foreign aid regime is evolving according to income group and geographical differentiation, new communications with different recipients, revealing the country's aspirations to be a global donor. However, Qatar's foreign aid also has many limitations that negatively affect its global status. These factors are related to Qatar's insistence on providing aid to specific regions and countries. Although Qatar has increased its humanitarian aid interaction with underdeveloped countries and disadvantaged geographies, the country privileges certain countries and geographies. The income group diversification in Qatar's foreign aid policy does not manifest a strong positive inclination toward LDCs.

Keywords

least developed countries, Qatar, development aid, humanitarian aid, new donors

International development cooperation has been a pivotal factor in determining whether foreign aid donors have prioritized recipient benefits during the pandemic. When we consider the social,

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economic, and political problems brought about by the current pandemic, it can be easily seen that a global cooperation is essential. In this context, foreign aid donors have played a significant role in coping with the pandemic, since many countries lack the necessary social and medical infrastructure. The pandemic-aid nexus has become more diverse as the presence of many non-traditional (i.e., non-OECD-Development Assistance Committee members) donors, including China, Turkey, the UAE, Qatar, and many other countries, has increased globally. These donors' pandemic responses present important cases that would help us identify whether COVID-19 has changed foreign aid policy and humanitarian diplomacy for non-traditional donors. This study investigates how Qatar has responded to the pandemic through examining its global development cooperation, relationship with economically less fortunate countries, and geographical differentiation among aid recipients. Moreover, this study introduces a novel dataset of Qatar's foreign aid interactions between June 2018 and June 2021.

While the pandemic has entailed a more comprehensive aid policy for the developing world, mapping Qatar's foreign aid remains an unexplored area. Despite Qatar's growing presence in the global aid landscape, few research studies focus explicitly on Qatar's foreign aid behavior. Moreover, with the exception of a few studies,¹ Qatar's foreign aid data remains largely unexplored.² This work examines Qatar's foreign aid data during and before the pandemic to capture the different and continuing trends between June 2018 and June 2021.³ We also provide qualitative information collected from interviews and secondary sources. Furthermore, we analyze Qatar's global development cooperation based on its organizational engagement with the OECD, its support for least developed (LDCs) and lower middle-income countries, and geographical diversification toward African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACPs) countries. The pandemic provides extensive information on whether there is a notable change in Qatar's global development cooperation.

This study also shows the limits of Qatar's foreign aid initiative, as Qatar's income group and geographical aid diversification are not sufficient to build a robust and resilient global development cooperation role. Moreover, Qatar—whose geopolitical interests depart from the Saudi-driven politics of the Gulf region—has increased its diplomatic and political presence in the neighboring geography and beyond since the Arab Spring (Ulrichsen, 2014). Connected to Doha's general foreign policy, regional factors have diverted Qatar's foreign aid from the global arena to the regional level, that is, continuous support for the Palestinian cause. Our contribution to the literature is twofold: First, we introduce a novel dataset of Qatar's foreign aid behavior before and during the pandemic, including primary recipients, regions, income groups, and other characteristics. Second, we offer an analysis of Qatar's foreign aid data, showing diverse, ongoing trends in its foreign aid policy regarding its engagement with LDCs and ACPs.

Qatar and the Developing World

The concept of development cooperation is strongly associated with poverty eradication (Degnbol-Martinussen & Engberg-Pedersen, 2003). Therefore, economic aid to the most impoverished countries is an indicator of whether donors prioritize this standard. There is a vast literature on the foreign aid-growth nexus for OECD-DAC donors. Scholarly debates and literature on the growth-aid nexus show a positive relationship between aid and growth (Burnside & Dollar, 2000; Sachs et al., 2004; Fasanya & Onakoya, 2012). However, some scholars believe that donors do not always prioritize recipient need. Therefore, they argue that foreign aid initiatives should set targets to help more people, and donors should directly reach out to populations in need rather than rely on recipient governments (Easterly 2001, 2006; Moyo, 2009). Most of the debate on the aid-need or aid-growth nexus is associated with OECD-DAC donors. There is also growing positive evidence of the aid-growth nexus among non-traditional donors (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, & Tierney, 2021).

In studies on economic aid, there is a need to explore to what extent non-traditional donors target disadvantaged country groups. The pandemic hit the already fragile economies of LDCs particularly hard, as these countries continue to struggle to provide medical services and vaccines (Kavanagh, Gostin, & Sunder, 2021). Valensisi (2020) argues that the aid provided to LDCs during the pandemic is hardly sufficient for economic recovery. The effects of the pandemic on foreign aid pose a puzzle for non-traditional donors that are often seen as undermining traditional aid policies (Naim, 2007). Another element of development cooperation is geographical differentiation of recipients, including ACPs. Some multilateral institutions such as the EU have special forms of cooperation with ACPs (Klingebliel, 2014; Carbone, 2017).

In this study, we focus on to what extent foreign aid donors target disadvantaged countries, income groups and geographies. We classify non-traditional donors as countries that are not members the OECD-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) (Manning, 2006; Kragelund, 2008). Although many non-DAC countries have provided foreign aid for a long time, we classify these countries as new, non-traditional donors based on their increasing presence in the aid debate (Dreher, Fuchs, & Nunnenkamp, 2013). Qatar is labeled as a non-DAC donor, like China, Turkey, the UAE, and India. The visibility of emerging non-OECD-DAC⁴ donors increases and, they have the capacity to change the traditional landscape of OECD-DAC donors (Naim, 2007; Gore, 2013). As elicited above, non-DAC donors are often labeled as a potential obstacle for policy harmonization in development cooperation. Blaming non-traditional donors is a part of the current debate, which argues that new donors undermine Western foreign aid policies. However new donors do not have an organization like the OECD-DAC, and each of these donors has different characteristics, i.e, geographic orientation, specific aid sectors modalities, as donors (Dreher et al, 2011). Therefore, stereotyping new donors is not a useful way to capture their characteristics. In this context, providing more data would offer new insights to help scholars analyze the characteristics of these new donors (Dreher et al, 2018). In this context, providing more data would offer new insights to help scholars analyze the characteristics of these new donors (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, & Tierney, 2018).

In this study, we present data on Qatar's aid interactions before and after the pandemic. Despite having a less coordinated foreign aid system, Qatar conducts very complex public diplomacy initiatives that range from foreign aid to operating Qatar Airways and media (Cooper & Momani, 2011). As the literature suggests, small states might be more generous and provide higher quality aid (Hoadley, 1980). Moreover, part of Qatar's complex foreign aid mechanism is its mediation activities (Al-Kuwari, 2020). Qatar's emergence as a small state includes mediation activities and significant foreign aid flows to conflict-affected destinations (Al-Ansari, Aras, & Yorulmazlar, 2021; Kamrava, 2011). Qatar's new orientation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is intertwined with its economic and political interests and ideational perspectives that prioritize the needs of recipient countries. The data we collected in our research helps explain these complex trends in Qatar's foreign aid policy.

The Characteristics of Qatar's Foreign Aid

Qatar can be classified as a small state according to its small territory and population (Crowards, 2002). Being a small state, Qatar's foreign aid policy face more challenging situations in comparison to big traditional donors while it copes with the external shocks, ranging from geopolitical events to health crisis. Although historically Qatar was a part of the regional Gulf cooperation, it has adopted a more independent and active foreign aid policy since the Arab Spring (Pala and Aras, 2015). Qatar has also increased its foreign interactions, including global development cooperation and humanitarian endeavors. Development cooperation is a crucial step in overcoming Qatar's regional limitations.

The resilience Qatar's humanitarian diplomacy against external shocks is also a matter of debate (Kharas, 2015). The pandemic constitutes an external shock against which Qatar might enhance its global outreach. In this study, we look at significant indicators of Qatar's global development cooperation. Qatar's outreach and global development cooperation is also a part of the debate on whether or not the pandemic leads to more development cooperation (Drezner, 2020; Lipsy, 2020). This topic is part of the debate on the effects of COVID-19 on global development cooperation.

Qatar's increasing aid volumes, its global outreach, growing aid transparency, and professionalism corresponds to its engagement with the global institutions. The international setting and existing global aid initiatives also shape Qatar's attitude as a donor. For instance, the OECD-DAC has had a particular concern for harmonizing Arab aid within the DAC framework. The Arab-DAC dialog has also materialized in policy bodies, such as the Arab Coordination Group, which is composed of various bilateral and multilateral foreign aid initiatives, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, and Kuwait. As reported by the OECD, the Arab-DAC dialog has aimed to decrease and target acute poverty globally.⁵ The group meets annually, which is a sign of regular multilateral interaction. Multilateralism is one of the principles often stressed by Qatari state representatives, including the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani himself. For instance, in his speech during the opening session of the 75th UN General Assembly, Amir of Qatar claimed that multilateral cooperation was the only option to solve global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and many others.⁶

Another significant point of global development cooperation is a principle championed by Qatar in the area of development—namely, sustainability. As such, Qatar stresses the importance of green projects to protect the environment and combat climate change.⁷ The Qatari government and its public aid initiative, Qatar Fund for Development, provided aid to the LDCs, and Small Island Developing States through sponsoring projects for green industries and jobs. For example, at the annual meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) in 2020, the Qatari state minister for foreign affairs Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi pledged USD 100 million to LLDCs to tackle climate change-related challenges.⁸

The pandemic has made healthcare and medical supplies a prominent part of foreign aid flows. Healthcare has become another crucial issue in Qatar's foreign policy. Qatar made significant medical aid contributions to LDCs to assist them in their pandemic response. It also provided USD 140 million to multilateral healthcare institutions that were working on developing vaccines for Sars-Cov-2.⁹ In a virtual meeting of the UN Economic and Social Council, Khalifa Al Kuwari, the Director-General of QFFD, stressed the vulnerabilities of LDCs, including their fragile healthcare infrastructure and limited material resources, and the need to assist them in the face of the pandemic.¹⁰ The Qatar Red Crescent has been active both before and during the pandemic in assisting LDCs. For example, since 2003, they have been working on building the health infrastructure of Sudan and helping local communities in Darfur who were hit by floods.¹¹

Do the practices listed above show us that Qatar is giving more aid to underdeveloped or disadvantaged countries? The points highlighted above show Qatar's intention and discourse to help countries in need, but empirically we need a more in-depth analysis. How can we understand whether Qatar directs its foreign aid resources to the least developed countries or disadvantaged geographies in case of urgent need? The current pandemic actually provides us with such a natural testing environment. When we take into account that the pandemic has hit all countries, we can say that economically/socially underdeveloped countries will need assistance more. Qatar initially provided USD 20 million for the Global Fund and pledged to give an additional USD 30 million between 2020 and 2022.¹² Qatar's multiple actor aid provision structure are in action to provide Qatar's aid at the global level in this critical period of time. In sum, although the humanitarian discourse of Qatari decision makers dominates Qatar's discourse on foreign aid, whether this trend continues during the pandemic period is an open question. The section below compares Qatar's aid volume before and after

the COVID-19, based on OECD data. In the next section, we explore which income groups and disadvantaged regions/countries have more foreign aid interaction with Qatar, regardless of aid volume. Through this data, we examine whether the pandemic has diverted Qatar's foreign aid behavior to certain disadvantaged groups of states.

Qatar's Foreign Aid before and after the Pandemic

The OECD's 2019 and 2020 estimates are helpful in capturing Qatar's pre-COVID-19 inclinations regarding development cooperation.¹³ The total amount of aid given by Qatar in 2019 was 526 million US dollars. This figure corresponded to 32% of Qatar's national income. In the same year, the average of OECD-DAC countries was 30%. Qatar was above the DAC average in terms of aid/GNI ratio. In 2020, the year the pandemic hit the world, Qatar's total ODA flows was 527 US million dollars.¹⁴ In 2020, the first year of the pandemic, OECD reports that Qatar allocated 0.30% of its GNI as foreign aid, while OECD-DAC donors' average is 0.32%.¹⁵ Based on this data, the current pandemic did not show a sharp increase or decrease in terms of both Qatar and OECD-DAC. Such relatively higher amounts of aid are in line with Qatar's or other Arab donors' historical tendencies (Boogaerde, 1991; Nielson, Powers, & Tierney, 2009; Shushan & Marcoux, 2011). Moreover, we also need to look at the African continent, hosting 33 of the 46 LDCs listed by the United Nations.¹⁶ While in 2019, 14.8% of Qatar's total foreign aid was given to Africa, this rate was 14.2 in 2020. While Africa received 24% of the total DAC aid in 2019, this rate was 28.1% in 2020. From this point of view, it is difficult to say that Qatar extensively supported disadvantaged geographies.¹⁷

However, the ODA/GNI ratio does not show geographic and income group orientation. Therefore, there is not any dramatic change in total aid volumes for the developing world. Indeed, the pandemic has led to substantial changes regarding aid sectors. For instance, Qatar's humanitarian aid increased from 100 to 225 million dollars due to the pandemic, while the health sector increased from 14 to 59 million dollars. As aid in the humanitarian and health sector covered 21% of all Qatar's ODA in 2019, this rate increased to 53% during the pandemic period in 2020.

Although there was no expansion in overall aid volume from 2019 to 2020, Qatar interacted with more countries through its foreign aid initiative. While the total number of recipients was 61 in 2019, this figure increased to 80 in 2020. At this point, we propose that the number of foreign aid interactions is more important than the volume, because the volume of foreign aid does not precisely indicate Qatar's foreign aid engagement with other countries.

How can we measure Qatar's global foreign engagement before and after the pandemic? This section introduces crucial parts of our dataset regarding the global character of Qatar's aid and its aid engagement with different income groups and regions. By so doing, we capture old and new trends in Qatar's development cooperation. We collected our data manually from open resources, including Google, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)'s Financial Tracking Service,¹⁸ and the websites of Qatar Charity, Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), and Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS). The last three organizations are Qatar's leading public and private aid initiatives through which Qatar implements foreign aid projects.

We looked at many variables, including the names of recipient states, multilateral organizations, cooperation, income group, geography, date, implementation status,¹⁹ implementation agency, public or private status, aid volume,²⁰ and Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Sector codes. We harmonized our data collection with OECD Standards, according to the standards of Aiddata on data sources.²¹ Additionally, we employ some variables, such as aid OECD-CRS sectors, to visualize which sector is most dominant in Qatar's global development. The analysis will show the sectors Qatar prioritized before and during the pandemic. Our data also provides the necessary information on whether Qatar prioritizes recipients' needs. As seen in [Figure 1](#), the first two items show the total number of

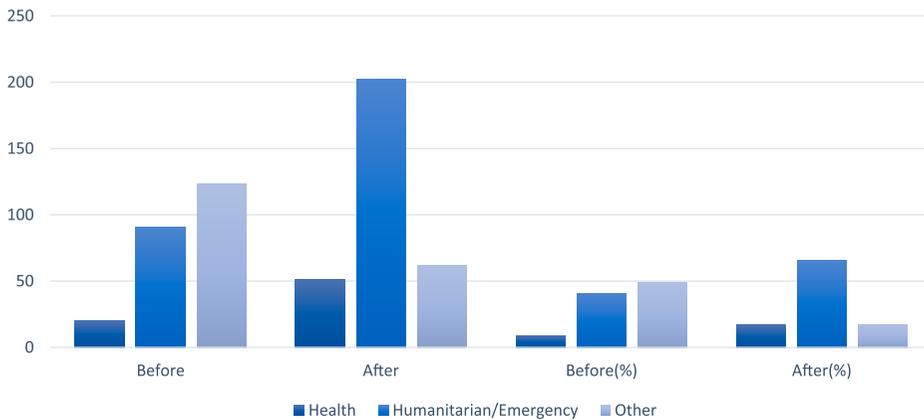


Figure 1. The leading OECD-CRS Sectors before and after the pandemic.

interactions in a specific sector, while the last two items show the share (%) of certain sectors in Qatari foreign aid interactions.²²

Figure 1 shows that Qatar has responded to the pandemic by mobilizing aid for specific sectors. However, we also need to look for other factors such as Qatar pandemic- and non-pandemic-related aid. For example, we detected 327 interactions between February 2020 and June 2021 and 242 observations between June 2018 and January 2020. Among all of the analyzed interactions, 168 of 327 interactions are related to the pandemic. Thus, the majority of Qatar's foreign aid interactions over the last 2 years are related to the pandemic. Comparing this with the overall number of aid interactions during an equivalent period before the pandemic shows Qatar's immediate response to the pandemic. In other words, the sectoral changes in Qatar's foreign aid show a rapid response to the needs of aid recipients against the pandemic.

Qatar's growing number of foreign aid engagements/interactions with recipients and changing sectoral distribution are only one facet of its global development cooperation. Therefore, we also need to investigate its foreign aid engagement across different income groups and geography. For instance, we expect that low-income countries or disadvantaged geographies such as Africa might have more foreign aid interaction with Qatar, as these countries may be most affected by the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic might last longer in low-income countries and disadvantaged geographies (Simeon and Panizza, 2020; Nonvide, 2020). The following section explains Qatar's foreign aid data across different categories such as income groups and geographical interactions.

Qatar and Its Cooperation with Different Income Groups

Donors' actual policy harmonization with OECD-DAC donors can be understood not only from its policy dialog but also its actual aid allocation to least developed and ACP countries. Recipient need is the primary target of the new bilateral and multilateral foreign aid agenda as articulated in the Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs and SDGs) (Sachs, 2012). LDCs and lower middle-income countries are at the locus of non-traditional donors' engagement with poorer countries. LDCs may suffer more during and after the pandemic, and it seems very difficult for these countries to get their economies back on track without outside support (Valensisi, 2020).

LDCs have low income per capita and acute economic and environmental problems.²³ We derive the LDC country list from the OECD-DAC data, which changes every 3 years depending on a country's income level. The OECD uses the United Nations standard for LDCs.²⁴ There are

currently 46 countries on the UN list. As the COVID-19 crisis hit LDCs especially hard, the UN closely followed government responses, vaccination, and testing statistics during the pandemic.²⁵ In such a setting, foreign aid and development cooperation become vital issues for LDCs, which are also primarily aid dependent. In this sense, Qatar's economic policies—including foreign aid—are significant indicator for its global development cooperation.

Qatari officials often stress the aid they give to LDCs and urge other wealthy nations to increase their assistance, saying that their aid quantity is insufficient. Again, during the opening remarks of the 75th UN General Assembly, Amir al-Thani claimed that Qatar was providing aid to more than 60 countries and five international organizations to help combat the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁶ During his speech at the G77 Plus China Second South Summit in 2005, he pledged a set percentage of Qatar's GDP to be allocated as aid to LDCs and called on Northern developed countries to do the same.²⁷

As a wealthy nation from the Global South, Qatar presents itself as the voice for LDCs in its meetings with Northern countries. At the same time, Qatar encourages LDCs to open their customs and liberalize their markets, according to former Deputy PM Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Mahmoud. At the World Trade Agenda in 2013, the Amir pointed out that the global economic losses caused by protectionism were estimated at USD 170 billion a year.²⁸ In this regard, Qatar also encourages South–South trade and cooperation on favorable conditions and equity.²⁹ Assistant Foreign Minister and Vice-Chairperson of Qatar Fund for Development H.E. Lolwah Al Khater claimed in a preparation meeting for the next UNLDC Summit, “... We will strive to realize the sustainable development goals ambitions and work for hand in hand to put together a strengthened framework to support LDCs...”³⁰ Qatar will host the fifth United Nations Conference on the LDCs in Doha amid the social and economic quagmire of the pandemic in February 2022. This event is substantial and influential to set the development agenda for the LDCs. The conference will determine the new policies in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic.³¹ Hosting and leading such events are more likely to manifest Qatar's image as a supporter of the LDCs. However, one still needs to analyze Qatar's interactions and discourses toward LDCs. Do LDCs really take up as much space as they should in Qatar's humanitarian diplomacy and foreign aid?

Our dataset examined Qatar's development cooperation specifically concerning LDCs and disadvantaged territories. Examining the first group provides insights into Qatar's income group orientation, while the latter offers significant motivations for geographical diversification. This issue becomes more critical as the pandemic has shaken aid-dependent countries. By employing these two indicators, we also have a chance to test Qatari policy makers' discourse of moral responsibility for less advantaged countries.

In 2019, Qatar provided 86% of its foreign aid to LMICs and LDCs. While LDCs received 16% of Qatar's total foreign aid volume in 2019, Qatar allocated 15% of its all total aid volume to the LDCs in 2020.³² Qatar's annual aid volume shows us that the current pandemic has not made much difference in Qatar's foreign aid flows to the LDCs. However, the number of interactions is important for our purposes in this research. [Figure 2](#) shows that Qatar's foreign aid interactions increased for all income groups during the pandemic, as expected. On this basis, we need to look at which income group expanded its presence in Qatar's foreign aid allocation, particularly at LDCs. [Figure 2](#) shows that there is a slight increase in Qatar's aid interactions with LDCs in terms of percentage of total interactions. Aid interactions with UMICs³³ and HICs also increased. This differentiation can be understood according to the view that the pandemic hit all countries, regardless of their income or income per capita. Qatar's aid initiative also expanded for upper middle-income and high-income countries. We can see income group differentiation, for example, from the aid Qatar provided to Italy.³⁴ Qatar established two field hospitals in Italy including medical equipment and personnel support. The pandemic provided a chance for Qatar to increase its aid interactions with different income groups, including high-income countries. However, we also expected that LDCs' share among different

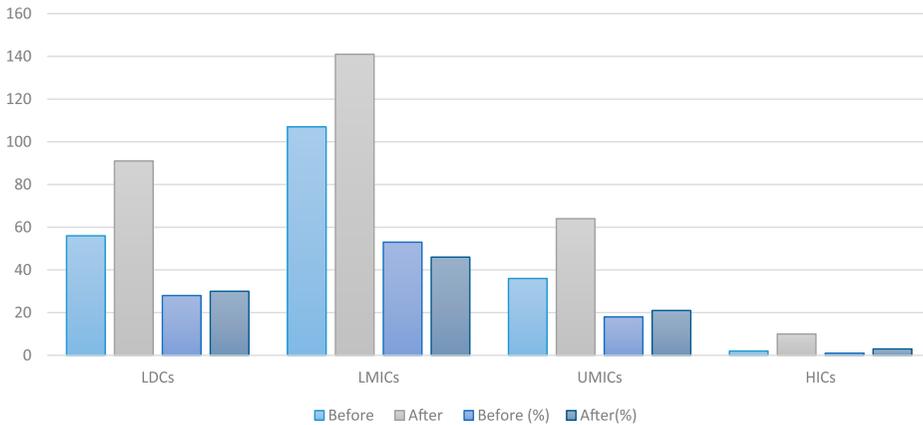


Figure 2. Qatar's foreign interactions across different income groups before and after the pandemic.

income groups would increase within Qatar's foreign aid interactions. However, we see only 2% increase in total interactions when compared to the pre-pandemic period for the LDCs. In sum, we see substantial income group diversification in Qatar's foreign aid policy, however, this differentiation does not manifest in a strong positive inclination toward LDCs. In the next section, we discuss a different trend in Qatar's foreign aid. The geographic distribution of aid interactions is a significant element, showing the level of Qatar's global development cooperation.

Qatar's Regional Policies

While Qatar aspires to become a global player in international arena, it faces challenges at the regional level (Barakat, 2019). There was uncertainty regarding whether Qatar could maintain the expanded scope of its foreign policy after the Arab Spring (Nuruzzaman, 2015). Qatar not only managed to withstand regional pressures after the Arab Spring and during the Qatar Blockade, but also became a more resilient foreign aid actor after such external shocks (Barakat, Milton, & Elkahout, 2020). This resilience can be traced from Qatar's total annual foreign aid volumes. Despite the foreign political and economic crises in the last 5 years, Qatar has not reduced the total amount of aid. Apart from aid volumes, Qatar's global humanitarian outreach expanded significantly during and after the Qatar Blockade, as seen in the third figure. Therefore, Qatar builds its resilience as an aid donor in terms of volume and aid recipients. However, do these indicators show the global character of Qatar's foreign aid initiative? At this point, we need to look into the geographical distribution of Qatar's foreign aid (Figure 3).³⁵

Figure 4 shows the geographical differentiation of Qatar's foreign aid. The first column shows all aid interactions before the pandemic. The second column displays all aid interactions during the pandemic. However, the last column indicates only COVID-19-related foreign aid flows. We see that before the pandemic, the Middle East, South and Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe were the primary recipient regions. The pandemic led to more regional diversification. For instance, the share of European countries in total aid interactions increased. The same trends were observed for Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia. Interestingly, Qatar substantially increased its foreign aid engagement with the American continent. It is also significant that Qatar's COVID-19-related aid manifests more geographical differentiation, which is a sign of rising global cooperation. The Middle East's share decreased substantially for COVID-19-related foreign support. This is an indication of Qatar's humanitarian outreach across the globe.

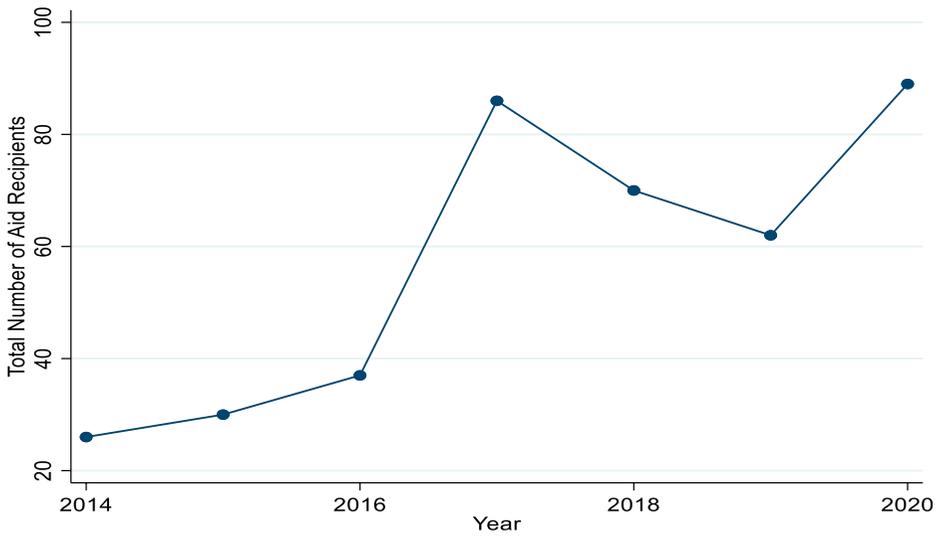


Figure 3. Qatar’s aid recipients by year.

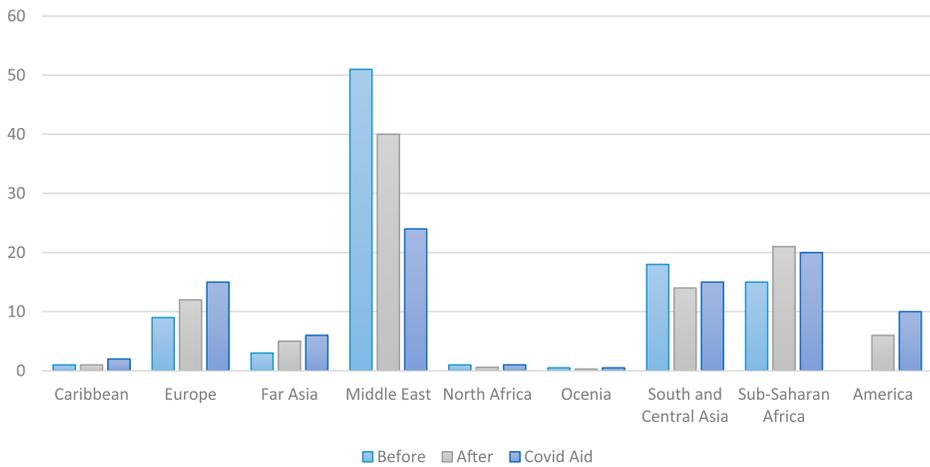


Figure 4. Geographical differentiation of Qatar’s foreign aid interactions.

Qatar continues its pre-pandemic inclinations in some respect. When we look at pre-pandemic trends for 2019, we can also calculate the volume of aid as assessed by OECD-CRS. In 2019, the top five recipients of Qatar’s aid were Palestine/West Bank and Gaza (313.17), Somalia (66.98), Tunisia (21.01), the Syria (19.45), and Morocco (6.03).³⁶ These five countries received 93% of Qatar’s foreign aid in 2019. Even if we exclude Palestine from the recipient sample, the top five countries still received 81% of Qatar’s ODA. Therefore, it is discernible that Qatar’s foreign support before the pandemic was highly concentrated on particular countries, which prevents Qatar’s geographical diversification. Although OECD-DAC countries have different priorities and are fragmented, DAC countries’ top five recipients—India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Syria, and Indonesia—receive only 12% of total aid flows,³⁷ far from the lion’s share of total DAC ODA. Such an intense concentration seems to be the main obstacle to Qatar’s geographical diversification (Table 1).³⁸

Table 1. Top 10 recipients of Qatar's foreign aid (by % share).

Countries	Before	After	COVID-19 Aid
Palestine	35	43	15
Sudan	16	24	5
Pakistan	14	10	8
Lebanon	13	16	6
Yemen	11	19	7
Turkey	11	4	2
Iraq	11	1	5
Bangladesh	9	9	2
Somalia	9	7	1
Syria	9	30	15

When we look at Qatar's foreign aid behavior after the pandemic, we continue to observe that similar countries receive much more aid than others. As seen in the first table, Palestine, Sudan, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria are the top five recipients of Qatar's pandemic support. These 10 recipients received 63% of Qatar's total aid interactions before the pandemic. After the pandemic, they received 52% of all aid. This means that Qatar did diversify the recipients of its foreign aid flows by almost 10 percent. This trend is also visible in not only interactions, but also in volumes. In 2020, the top five recipients—Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Morocco, Somalia—received 64% of Qatar's total foreign aid, which is almost 29% lower than 2019.

On the other hand, Qatar's assistance to certain countries still negatively affects its global aid outreach. Most of its top recipients are not listed as LDCs, including Turkey, Palestine, Morocco, and Syria. One of the important reasons for the weakness of Qatar's foreign aid relationship with the LDCs stems from its support for its top recipients who are not LDCs. For instance, if we exclude Palestine from our sample, LDCs receive 26% of Qatar's all total aid volume, which designates a 11% increase in favor of LDCs. Moreover, if we exclude Palestine from the sample, Qatar interacts with the LDCs by 35%, meaning a 6% increase during the pandemic. In sum, the geographical diversification of Qatari aid during pandemic did not indicate a major shift from regional priorities discussed in this section.

Conclusion

As the pandemic has hit every country, new donors such as Qatar have aimed to show themselves as dedicated global donors. This article focused on Qatar's development cooperation by introducing a novel dataset that includes the latest available data from 2019 OECD estimates in order to compare Qatar's pre-pandemic foreign aid interactions with post-pandemic trends. We first situated Qatar within the context of non-traditional donors in order to assess its inclinations in the new global aid environment. As a non-DAC donor, Qatar's cooperation in line with the international aid agenda (MDGs and SDGs), income group orientation, and regional diversification are significant elements for assessing its image as a global donor. Our analysis showed that Qatar increased its development interactions with recipients based on income group and regional diversification.

During the pandemic Qatar expanded its foreign aid interactions when compared to pre-pandemic trends. The share of LDCs among Qatar's aid recipients slightly increased. Moreover, geographical differentiation and Qatar's global outreach increased during the pandemic. The increasing number of Qatar's aid interactions shows that Qatar is more likely to implement needs-based pledges under pandemic as we see greater geographical differentiation for COVID-19 aid compared to 2019 estimates. However, there are still significant impediments to Qatar's international development

cooperation. First, both 2019 OECD data and our dataset show that there is still considerable continuity concerning geographical concentration in specific regions and countries. Considering that Qatar will host the fifth United Nations Conference on LDCs and promises of the high-level policy makers to the LDCs, there is need for improving geographical diversity and aid allocation for LDCs. This point is crucial for Qatar's future policy harmonization with multilateral foreign aid initiatives and cooperation with UN-generated development goals. Policy makers should take specific measures toward improving cooperation with LDCs and ACP countries by increasing foreign aid volumes as a share of GNI and allocating more aid to ACP countries, which constitute the majority of LDCs. Future studies should analyze Qatar's foreign aid choices for specific countries through case studies, such as the case of Palestine.

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Notes

1. The recent available data for country-year dyad is 2019 OECD-CRS estimates. *Aiddata* also provides for the years between 2010 and 2013: <https://www.aiddata.org/data/qatar-tuff-donor-dataset-level-1-v1-0>
2. As of 2021, only reported data is available only in OECD-CRS Database. Apart from that Qatar's annual reports also a source of information. However, we still do not have a time-series data before 2019.
3. Half a year before and after the pandemic.
4. OECD-Development Assistance Committee
5. Arab-DAC Dialog on Development—OECD. Retrieved November 20, 2021, from OECD Web site: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/arab-dac-dialogue.htm>
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18. Financial Tracking Service. (n.d.). Retrieved January 24, 2022, from UNOCHA Web site: <https://fts.unocha.org/data-search>.
19. Planning, Continuing and Completed
20. We measured volume as tons or national and currency in US Dollars, however, we could not extract all the necessary information for volumes because news often do not report the volume of aid.
21. For more detail see, AidData Qatar TUFF Donor Dataset, Version 1.0. (n.d.-a). Retrieved December 1, 2021, from AidData—A Research Lab at William & Mary, Web site: <https://www.aiddata.org/data/qatar-tuff-donor-dataset-level-1-v1-0>
22. There is a minor difference regarding coding CRS Sectors. We coded an interaction as "humanitarian" if the aid includes volatile elements such as masks, sanitizers and other medical equipment. However, if Qatar provides other more sophisticated medical tools, then we coded the interactions as "Health."
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35. From Qatar Fund For Development’s annual reports and our open source research.
36. Million US Dollars in Parenthesis
37. 2018 and 2019 average, based on “Aid at a glance charts—OECD. (n.d.-b). Retrieved from Home page—OECD Web site: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/aid-at-a-glance.htm>”
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