Visegrad countries’ development aid to Africa: beyond the rhetoric
Dominik Kopiński

Abstract

By joining the EU and adopting Strategy for Africa, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, also known as Visegrad countries (V4), have formally agreed to gradually shift attention and aid allocation to Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Yet, contrary to official rhetoric but also to public demand, African countries continue to have a low priority in aid policies. Given the current state of affairs there are slim chances they will ever be high on agenda. Development cooperation policy in the V4 is largely focused on the close neighbourhood and current political and business stakes triumph over “needs and merits” logic of aid allocation. It also runs counter to various international obligations that the countries in question assumed and are held accountable for (e.g. focusing on poverty reduction). Officially, a number of African states is classified as priority countries, but in practice, they serve merely as a fig leaf masking a true disinterest - not only in the continent’s fate but actual opportunities that might be exploited in Sub-Saharan Africa. This article seeks to investigate the rhetoric used by the V4 governments with regards to SSA. It demonstrates that in most cases the official message coming from the governments significantly diverges from the reality. It also shows that many arguments used to explain the marginal position of SSA do not longer hold and the current stance towards African countries is rather a result of a lack of strategic vision and ad hoc formulation of foreign policy. Expanding bilateral programs to countries such as Afghanistan proves that geographical distribution of aid can be subject to change in the V4 and is not eternally bound by path dependency. Likewise, new entrants to aid industry, such as Brazil, let alone China or India, demonstrate that the foreign policy lens through which the V4 look at Africa are perhaps obsolete.
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Introduction

For many years the African continent had been a natural habitat of OECD aid-donors. Yet this full-scale domination of the Western world is slowly coming to an end with the advent of the so-called South-South cooperation (Kragelund 2010; Tarrósy 2011). Emerging “heavyweights” such as China (Lancaster 2007; Brautigam 2008; Lum et al. 2009; Chin et al. 2007; Davis 2008) or India (Naidu 2008; Chanana 2009) are making remarkable inroads into Africa (if not specified otherwise Africa is synonymous to Sub-Saharan Africa) with generous aid programmes, loans, debt relief and a diplomacy paved with a political symbolism. New entrants are not just a simple addition to the current aid architecture. They offer a brand new philosophy of development assistance which clearly runs counter to the past aid-giving patterns (Manning 2006). Old school conditionality coupled with structural adjustment programs which gave the development aid in the 1980s and 1990s a bad name and provoked waves of criticism among the African countries traded places with non-interference strategy. Political conditions such as weeding out corruption, promoting human rights, improving governance and accountability are virtually non-existent in the South-South development cooperation. As Woods rightly commented “small wonder that the emerging donors are being welcomed with open arms” (Woods 2008, p. 1220). “Just doing business” approach is a new household name which understandably causes bitter reactions in the West (Naim 2008).

Although Asian powers have captured most of the media and academia attention, many other new emerging and re-emerging donors have increasingly shifted their focus towards the African continent. This, for example, includes Arab countries (Villanger 2007; Neumayer 2003; World Bank 2010), Russia, a growing number of recipients-turned-into-donors such as Brazil (The Economist 2010; Cabral & Weinstock 2010) and other, less obvious new kids on the block in the foreign aid industry, such as Venezuela (Márquez 2005; Marsbach 2006; Corrales 2009). The international aid architecture has therefore changed significantly in the past years. This power shift has translated into real numbers. According to OECD development assistance from other providers then DAC donors lie between USD 12 billion and 14 billion in 2008, which assuming that all of these flows were consistent with the definition of official development assistance (ODA), would represent 9-10% of global ODA (Smith et al. 2010).

Also, financing development in Africa has been for years an integral part of aid policies in the new members states of the European Union. By volume, the so called Visegrad countries (V4), namely the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, deserve a particular attention. Their relative importance in the region has already rendered them an appealing case for academics (Horký 2006; Lightfoot 2010; Szent-Iványi & Tétényi 2008; Vittek & Lightfoot 2010). Although, as studies show, the group is quite diversified, particularly in progress with building organizational set-up and legal framework, all countries share a number of similarities that validates a universal approach to investigating their aid allocation and policies. All four have full membership in OECD which imposes certain obligations on their part with regards to formulation and delivery of development assistance. By accessing to the European Union the V4 assumed additional responsibilities, particularly committed themselves to increase its official development assistance and adhere to rules and recommendations adopted by the community.

Historically, for the V4 countries this is actually not a new venture into Africa. The V4 has a long record of development cooperation, also with the continent. During the communist era the countries of the Warsaw-pact had supported a number of peers — either clear-cut communist countries or the ones on the road to socialism. This was done in the name of solidarity and to spread the communist ideology. As a matter of fact, using the OECD quantitative benchmarks, the assistance was more than symbolic (Manning 2006). In many cases it complied with the 0,7% GDP target adopted by the United Nations which in the history of official development assistance was met by only a handful of Western donors. The donorship era was abruptly interrupted when communism began to fall into pieces. From that point onward pursuing ideological goals did not make much more sense any longer. After the period of a relatively swift democratic transition facilitated by a massive external assistance from the West, and followed by the accession to the club of the world’s richest countries, OECD, the V4 officially joint the donors’ ranks. The transition from recipient to donor was officially over, even though in reality it just begun.
It should be noted that their (re)engagement with Africa took place under circumstances fundamentally different from the ones that informed other non-DAC, non-OECD countries such as China or Brazil. The latter begun its recent venture into Africa mainly as a result of “pull” factors, namely for strategic reasons such as access to raw materials and search for new market opportunities. Poland or Czech Republic have never regarded Africa as a potential strategic trade or investment partner nor it saw any rationale for nurturing economic cooperation with any of the African states. Immersed in resolving internal problems inherited from continuously haunting communist past and preoccupied (which often bordered with obsession) with the idea of European integration, they lost the global perspective and lacked a conviction that moving towards Africa politically or commercially may present any viable benefits. If anything, Africa was seen more as a cold war burden than a land of opportunities.

Nowadays the four countries, still relatively new, yet as the years go by increasingly more experienced donors, are under growing pressure to rejuvenate their development cooperation with Africa. Importantly, most of the pressure comes from the EU, being a result of the past commitments to increase both aid in relation to GDP and what constitutes the central focus of the article - development funding earmarked specifically for Africa (see below). In addition, documents such as Joint EU-Africa Strategy or European Consensus on Development leave no doubt that from the perspective of the EU development cooperation with Africa is to be elevated. The other source of pressure whose importance will most likely be intensifying in the coming years, as the global education efforts start bearing fruits, is the public opinion. The publics expect that the V4 governments use their tax money increasingly to assistant the least developed countries with the most desperate needs instead of pursuing foreign policy related goals, which, with no exception, is the case in the entire group. In many opinion polls Africa stands out as the most needy and thus the most legitimate destination of aid monies (IPA 2005 quoted in Vittek & Lightfoot 2010, p. 30). According to the most recent survey conducted in Poland 52% of the public is of the opinion that this is Africa which should be prioritized in geographical distribution of aid (Polacy o pomocy rozwojowej, 2010).

The paper is structured as follows. First section offers the insight into the mechanics of the EU external assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa. This is followed by an examination of rhetoric employed by countries in question with regards to SSA and MDGs only to confront it with the reality, namely actual development assistance channelled to the region. Further, the paper addresses the arguments of why reality cannot be easily matched with rhetoric. The last section concludes.

**Africa in the EU development cooperation**

The European Union and its members is the largest ODA donor in the world. Its official aid combined (EC + member states) amounted to €48.2 billion in 2009. The European Commission alone provided €10 billion euro in aid of which 36% (the largest chunk) was transferred to Sub-Saharan Africa. This makes the EU also the largest (single?) financier of the African region.

Originally, Africa was the first destination of the European aid monies. Only later it begun encompassing other developing regions. Contemporary, the EU essentially gives aid to Africa through three different channels: the EC budget (external aid represents 9%, i.e. €12,298 billion, of the total EU budget which in 2009 stood at €143 billion), the European Development Fund and to a limited extent through European Investment Bank whose aid is placed outside of the European Commission. The latter is surrounded with a lot of controversies and has been heavily criticized for its operations in Africa ever since.

There may be five key determinants of the EU’s ODA policy to Africa. These include: (1) institutional complexity (European institutions provide planning and funding, but the European legislation is limited to common funding); (2) EU’s foreign policy interests (Africa is not regarded as a key region for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)); (3) history (which laid the foundations for common European external relation); (4) intergovernmental control
of ODA policymaking (e.g. EDF was designed as a fund that is to remain under strict intergovernmental control); (5) the role of the Commission (on one hand, this is the Commission that negotiates the ODA level with aid-recipients, on the other hand — these are Member countries that determine the overall funds available) (Court 2005).

The EC budget is the prime source of financial aid in general6 (whereas EDF, see below, is a main source of financing for Sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa). The Commission delivers budget monies mainly in the form of grants (loans are made by EIB) with preference given to budget support (general and SWAPs). The EC general budget aid consists of 7 different instruments, some of them, however, being by definition unavailable to Sub-Saharan African countries. These include for instance European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), Nuclear Safety Cooperation Instrument (NSCI) and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The above programs are designed to promote mainly middle-income countries which rules out most of the African states. In 2009 they amounted to 29% of all EU external assistance. Similarly, the second most important financial (geographical) instrument, known as DCI (Development Cooperation Instrument) is available mostly to countries other than Africa7. Given the recent trends it is quite likely that the aforementioned instruments will “outshine” the ones tailored for the poorer countries. In one of its reports CONCORD notes that ENPI and IPA budget expand much faster than the funds allocated for the least developed countries. In the period 2004-2008 aid budget for European countries increased by 135% whereas the funds for the least developed countries was raised by only 35% (CONCORD 2010, p. 21).

The other important channel of development assistance is EDF. This entity is placed outside of the EU treaties. It has been established in 1958 as a multilateral fund for development cooperation with former European colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP). The tenth EDF which covers the period from 2008 to 2013 provides an overall budget of €22 682 million. The EDF, due to the high number of poor countries among the ACP (mostly African), is usually regarded as being more poverty-oriented than the EU general budget (UK House of Lords 2004 quoted in Grimm 2008, p. 14). In 2009 84% of the EDF financing was allocated to African continent. It should be noted that this is extra-budgetary sums, remaining outside of the EC budget. However, there have been discussion on the budgetisation of the EDF (moving EDF under the EU general budget), but until now no decision on this issue has seen the daylight8. In terms of timeframe, opposed to EC budget EDF has long-term financing horizons. It makes it more in line with the new aid orthodoxy which requires aid to be a long-term endeavour in order to be effective. It is also argued that budgetisation should be endorsed by the new member states. To quote P. Nielson “The best advice I can give is for the new members to support budgetisation of the EDF. They would get credit for their contribution, influence the policy and access bidding on contracts” (Nielson 2003, p. 5). This, however, is met with a great deal of resistance in most countries as it would increase their overall contribution to the EU development policy (Grimm & Harmer 2005, p. 12). Interestingly, Poland and Hungary once were known as supporters of the EDF budgetisation from 2007 onward (Eurostep 2003).

The EU considers the development of Africa a priority and intends to strengthen its efforts to support African countries in reaching the MDGs. To this end, the European Union has committed itself to increasing its collective level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of GDP by 2015 (0.56 % by 20109), and to allocating at least 50% of the increase to the region of Sub-Saharan Africa. To leave no doubt, the Council Conclusions of May 2005 (doc. 9266/05) paragraph 22 reads: “The EU will increase its financial assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa and will provide collectively at least 50% of the agreed increase of ODA resources to the continent while fully respecting individual Member States' priorities in development assistance.” Those Member States which joined the EU after 2002 (V4) agreed to strive to achieve 0.17% ODA/GNI by 2010 (no V4 country has even come close to that level). This and other commitments to strengthen development cooperation between EU and Africa, were confirmed in the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (2008-2010) adopted in 2007 in Lisbon. If those have been delivered the annual EU aid should be double to over EUR 66 billion in 2010. Given the available data it means that the EU and its members are 12 billion short in relation to original promises. With regards to marginal increase of aid to Africa, to date, only Belgium, Denmark, Portugal, Luxemburg and Finland allocated more that 50% of new aid monies to the continent.
To be sure, the V4 have clear-cut obligations towards Africa and these are difficult to dodge in light of many top-rank legally or politically binding documents. The *aquis* require that the V4 adhere to the EU rules in relation to the area of development cooperation. As New Member States they have to internalize the fact that a primary and overarching objective of the EU Development Cooperation is the fight against poverty which is clearly laid down in Treaty (177–181 TEC) and strengthened by European Consensus on Development, that provides “a common vision that guides the action of the EU, both at its Member States and Community levels, in development co-operation. Also territorial and income related criteria should find their ways into the aid allocation patterns of the V4. According to the EU recommendation preference should be given to Least Developed Countries and African countries. On top of that, Green Paper published by the European Commission in 2010 (European Commission 2010a) clearly stipulates that the development cooperation effort needs to be strengthened in those countries where prospects of achieving MDGs are the bleakest. Lastly, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, adopted in 2007 also by the V4, paves the way for more financing for Africa on the part of the European states. The next section addresses the question whether and to what extent the countries examined adhere to all that.

**Africa in the V4 aid policies: rhetoric**

With regards to development aid, in all countries in question there is an omnipresent narrative of assisting the most impoverished nations in their effort to reduce poverty and improve the livelihood of the people. The humanitarian and moral-obligation undertone is applied almost universally. This particularly pertains to Africa which is legitimately regarded as the continent of the most acute development needs. This official discourse is mirrored in the opinion polls that unequivocally points towards Africa as the most preferred destination of the V4 citizens’ tax monies. Annual reports, booklets - virtually all materials produced by governments and circulated in the public takes a common perspective that development assistance, as the name implies, is about promoting development, and this should implicitly take place primarily in the poorest corners of the world. Furthermore, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) clearly stand out as an overarching objective of the aid effort in all the V4, something that at least on a declarative level navigates the donors through aid-giving and eventually should serve as an yardstick against which the aid ought to be evaluated. On many occasions this pro-development stance is validated by politicians and government officials who attempt to ensure the public and/or external actors about the special place that Africa has in their “hearts and minds”. Nevertheless, the rhetoric exhibits notable variations in countries in questions, with some of them demonstrating more commitment to addressing the ills of the developing world “on paper” (Poland) and others being more restrained in the language employed in the documents and on official websites (Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia).

For example, the Czech Republic makes sufficiently clear that it is committed to supporting the least developed countries and the most impoverished nations. As it can be read in the official Czech communication on development cooperation: “The strategic goal of Czech development policy is to eliminate poverty and support safety and prosperity via efficient partnerships enabling impoverished and less developed countries to achieve their goals. The starting point consists of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” (Czech Development Cooperation Booklet 2009). The document goes on: “the wide range of development activities the Czech Republic focused on in 2009 was intended to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”. Also the website of Czech Development Agency employs rhetoric that suggests a clear focus on the least developed countries: “The Czech Republic sees a moral obligation in contributing to the coordinated international activities aimed at reducing poverty in less developed and less wealthy parts of the world”. In a similar tone MDGs are presented as a central focus of the Czech development cooperation: “We fully support the Millennium Development Goals defined in the Millennium Declaration of 2000 and reaffirmed at the UN World Summit in September 2005 where the international community again expressed its determination to eradicate extreme poverty, its causes and consequences”. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that in the case of Czech Republic the narrative is more moderate and it is difficult to find extreme positions and excessive official statements that would diverge from the reality to the extent of ridiculousness. Quite paradoxically, more easily traceable radical statements come from aid opponents, among which, probably the most
outspoken is the Czech President, Vaclav Klaus, who has expressed his critical stance towards development aid as such on many occasions (Czech President Klaus... 2010).

Relatively more vocal Slovakia, yet also quite moderate, not only demonstrates its strong “verbal” commitment to working towards MDGs but actually provide “evidence” that its development assistance has contributed to MDGs (though the methodology used in the evaluation is quite obscure) (Slovak Aid 2010). Some assertions in the report are bold, but hard to verify. It is, for example, argued that 22% of Slovak ODA has contributed to MDG1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) and these include “projects focused particularly on poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia” (Ibidem). As will be shown in the next section it is infinitely more difficult to align these assertions with crude data on aid allocation, let alone real effects.

In Hungary there has been a noticeable impetus to revitalize relations with Africa in development cooperation. We intend to pay greater attention to Africa - announced to African ambassadors Hungarian Foreign Minister Kinga Gönicz during the Africa Day organized in 2007 in Budapest (Eastern Europe... 2007). In the same vein, Ferenc Gemesi, then Deputy State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, argues that “it is high time that we redefined our goals and interests concerning the African continent and created a new framework for our intentions” and “within our foreign relation aspirations we must define Africa’s position in a rational and future-oriented manner”. He also asserts that “Hungary’s Africa policy has to pay special attention to the bilateral development of relations with those African partner countries that have special relevance and importance to us. We aspire to maintain our present relations and those that we have been building through the past decades.” (Gömbös 2007, p. 16). The above quotes, derived from a publication named “The Future of Development Policies and Changing Priorities: Africa” seem to suggest that Africa is indeed of a growing importance to Hungarian political circles. In other report on Millennium Development Goals (MFA Republic of Hungary 2004). Hungarian government tries to provide a concrete evidence proving that it is taking the MDGs seriously (after using a disclaimer that it should not be “measured according to the same criteria as traditional donor countries with decades of experience in the field of development”). There is, however, a striking contrast between the number of projects being presented as a Hungarian input to the realization of the Millennium Declaration and the actual aid allocation. Most of the projects are either being implemented in relatively prosperous countries located in the “wider neighbourhood”, where the problems enshrined in MDG declaration are less acute, if marginal (MDG3 and “women entrepreneurs in Serbia and Montenegro”) or simply outsourced to Hungarian NGOs (see for example MDG2 or MDG5). A good example of a yawning gap between the rhetoric and reality of Hungarian aid can be found in the MDG7 where the report reads that “[...] the spread of HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest threats to development, especially in poor countries. 40 million people are HIV infected, 26 million in Africa alone.” As an example of Hungary’s addressing the HIV issue The Hungarian Heart Foundation project is shown which has donated a pulmonary screening centre to the Voivodina region in Serbia and Montenegro.

Probably, the greatest amount of rhetoric suggesting a close alignment of aid policy with international norms and rules is employed by Poland. One of the booklets issued by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly recognizes extraordinary financial needs of the African continent. It reads for example that “Africa remains the continent requiring by far the biggest support of the developed countries” (MSZ 2008). In the same vain, 2009 Annual Report notes that out of 1,02 billion undernourished people in the world close to a quarter lives in Africa (MSZ 2010, p. 10). It also reminds that Africa is the place where staggering 1,9 million out of 2,7 million new HIV/AIDS infections was documented in 2009 (MSZ 2010, p. 12) and where the access to primary education remains extremely difficult (almost 50% of children that do not go to school live in African countries) (MSZ 2010, p. 11). Moreover, the report notes, that at the end of 2009 as many as 31 countries were affected by the food crisis and required temporary relief assistance, out of which twenty from the Africa region (Ibidem). The same report is evidently meant to ensure that Africa does have a particular place in Polish aid distribution. The cover photo presents an African community of Tafi–Todzi in Ghana that benefited from the Polish aid (Polska Zielona Sieć). Furthermore, the very first picture in the report (page 8) shows the participants of the project “Education and development through art” carried out by the
Polish Embassy in Addis Abeba (MSZ 2010, p. 8). Obviously, it is difficult to consider the pictures highly representative for Polish aid allocation (as will be shown below). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the authors of the report shift responsibility for the task of supporting Africa on the shoulders of European Union (to where it pays obligatory fees), projects undertaken by the NGOs (which are largely financed by the Ministry) and Polish diplomatic outposts (who work in cooperation with local partners). In the same vain, Minister Radek Sikorski explains that as “the global financial crisis does not facilitate our country and other members of the EU to meet the declared level of financing” […] “it is worth to realize, however, the sheer number of collective undertakings in which Poland participates as a result of its affiliation to the EU, UN and its specialized agencies, to OECD” (MSZ 2010, p. 5). He also states that Poland is “engaged in international aid programs with a confidence that it is easier to achieve the goal together rather than individually” (Ibidem). Interestingly enough, the same report recalls that in May 2005, during the meeting of Council of the European Union, General Affairs and External Relations, in Brussels, 23 and 24 May 2005 it has been agreed that EU will increase its financial assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa and will provide collectively at least 50% of the agreed increase of ODA resources to the continent while (MSZ 2008). On the top of that, Joint EU-Africa strategy adopted in December 2005 envisions strengthening collaboration with Africa in 12 thematic areas. Even the way “the other regions” supported by Poland are listed in the report may actually suggest that the rank of African region is relatively high with respect to the remaining ones (“West Balkans, Africa, Middle East, Asia, Latin America”) (MSZ 2010, p. 37). All the above evidence might point to a direction that African continent, given its vast financial needs and dire situation of its people, should be given priority in aid allocation. It should be noted that the overall message contrasts with the only official document regarding development cooperation adopted by the Polish government that implicitly makes sufficiently clear that African countries do not meet the criteria that drive aid allocation (MSZ 2003).

Africa in the V4 aid policies: reality

The goal of this paper is to show the divergence between the rhetoric employed by the V4 governments and the reality of development aid to Africa. In other words, it is to investigate whether countries in question put money where their mouth is and, more importantly, where their obligations lie. Whereas African countries stand out as natural aid-recipients if MDGs and other international commitments assumed by the V4 are taken seriously, the evidence points to the contrary. These findings should be naturally put in a broader perspective of the V4 failing to meet other commitments in the development cooperation area, be it the volume of aid or different aspects of its quality.

Among Czech Priority countries, which according to the Ministry are “representing the highest partner country category” there is only one African state — Ethiopia. Officially, the country was selected based on the following arguments: “an opportunity to build on a relatively rich tradition of mutual relations and the ongoing activities of certain Czech entities”; “great potential for Czech nongovernmental organizations and businesses”; “interesting prospects for cooperation with the EU and the possibility of complementarity between humanitarian aid and development cooperation” (Czech MFA 2010). It is apparently true that Czech Republic and Ethiopia enjoy good political relations which renders the choice fairly understandable, nevertheless an alternative version has it that the country barely made it to the list if it were not for the pressure of the Czech NGOs. The new strategy stipulates that “the priority countries included those states which, to the greatest extent, met conditions for providing and monitoring assistance level of need, assistance absorption capacity and the quality of development cooperation relations with the Czech Republic”. It is interesting to note that these criteria are met by countries like Afghanistan (where Czech expertise and effective aid delivery is clearly limited), yet former priority countries such as Angola or Zambia are effectively downgraded (“the cooperation with existing priority countries will continue, but with an altered scope and focus to the prior programming period”). Indifference towards Africa is confirmed by the overall geographical distribution. In 2009 Africa (total) received only $9,6 million under bilateral programmes which amounts to 9,9% of the total bilateral ODA ratio (Czech Development Cooperation Booklet 2009, p. 21). No single African country was among 10 top recipients of Czech aid in 2009 whereas in the past years only Angola made it to
the list twice (ninth place in 2007 and tenth place in 2008). The consistent low priority of African partners may contrast with assertions of the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg who in May 2007 during the meeting with African ambassadors in Prague announced that while in 2006 value of the bilateral assistance projects in Sub-Saharan Africa was modest and stood at only about $3 million “this was only the beginning”. In 2007 onwards he promised new bilateral projects and more funds to be allocated to Africa (Eastern Europe… 2007). Also Czech NGOs recognize the problem of underfinancing of the African region and MDGs in general and call on the government to increase the volume of aid channelled to African countries in the region (FoRS 2010). It should be equally stressed that, despite significant room for improvement, in quantitative terms the Czech Republic is the most committed to Africa among its V4 peers with 14% of its bilateral ODA given to Sub-Saharan Africa in the span of 2005-2009 (FoRS 2010). In general, this seems in accordance with the Czech foreign policy towards the continent which at least in relation to post-communist peers remains quite conscious, despite lukewarm attitude, so characteristic for the Central Europe. It was the Czech president that paid the first official visit in South Africa after the fall of apartheid system, it was also the Czech delegation which boycotted the Lisbon Summit in 2007 hand in hand with the British in a protest against the arrival of Robert Mugabe (Horký 2010, p. 290).

Slovakia has probably the least impressive record of aid to Africa among the V4 countries when it comes to sheer volume. Nevertheless, some qualitative changes makes this case quite exceptional in the group. Its first development project in Kenya was carried out only in 2003. Due to a lack of institutional capacity, the project portfolio has been built up in cooperation with UNDP Trust Fund which realized a series of projects, mainly in Kenya, Mozambique and Sudan. The priority countries in Slovakia are chosen on the basis of four criteria: 1. Political and economic criteria; 2. Development criteria including the criteria for allocation of resources on the basis of the needs and efficiency; 3. Logistical and practical criteria; 4. Successfulness, effectiveness of the present Slovak development aid. African countries feature both in programme and project countries categories. Kenya sits in the first category, whereas Sudan and Ethiopia are among 16 project countries (Slovak Aid 2009). It makes Kenya one of the three priority programme countries in the period 2009–13 for which the country strategy paper is to be produced (Vittek & Lightfoot 2010). This is to the author’s knowledge a lonely example of the African country in the V4 development cooperation that actually lived to have its own strategy document. The Slovak Aid argues that general low demand for projects in Africa can be at least partly explained by security concerns of grant applicants and geographical “distance”. This was the reason of relatively low interest in countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan in 2009 call for proposals. In 2010 there has been €3,5 million allocated for development projects. Out of that amount €1,13 million was secured for projects in Kenya which should be regarded as a noteworthy policy change as this is exactly double the amount Kenya was given in 2009 (€0,56 million). The change was accompanied by trimming down the assistance to Serbia which has long been criticized by Slovak NGOs as reflecting purely political considerations and foreign policy goals. Among African aid recipients of Slovak Aid only Sudan could also expect to receive support (€0,32 million EUR). These are clearly small amounts but are nonetheless notable in terms of the evolution of Slovak aid system. The choice of Kenya is not without its controversies (Ibidem). First of all, Kenya remains one of the most prosperous economies in the Sub-Saharan region. Second, the country is among aid darlings of the Western official donors and NGOs, therefore Slovak aid is surely not filling the gaps nor being complementary to the current aid allocation. The choice is being rationalized by government officials using the argument, not without its merit (see below), that one out of five Slovak embassies left in Africa is located in Nairobi.

Deciding on the priority countries in Hungary is as obscure as in other V4. To cite Kiss (2007): “small volume of bilateral aid is spent on too many countries, the selection of partner/target countries is fairly ad hoc, in addition, almost half of the bilateral aid is spent in Europe; neither any African nor any of the least developed countries has priority for receiving more Hungarian aid”. As noted by Paragi (2010) “early documentation prepared by the MFA refers to ‘strict and consistent’ selection criteria but none of these have been listed explicitly and publicly”. The explanation of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs fails to shed more light on the selection procedure. MFA asserts that: “[t]he selection of these countries will ensure coherence between our political, security and economic objectives, on the one hand, and the practice of development cooperation, on the other. The programs are intended
to contribute to the sustainable social and economic development of the partner countries and to the reinforcement of bilateral relations equally” (Paragi 2010, p. 202). The more recent efforts to provide a rationale for the country selection is definitely better worded but this time offers a scope so broad that virtually any kind of choice could be justified. As Paragi accounts: “MFA ‘the selection of the partner countries is the result of a multi-round coordination among the various ministries which took into consideration (i) Hungary’s international environment, its interest system and its political, economic, trade and security capacities, (ii) the development and poverty level of the recipient countries and (iii) the history of the relationship between Hungary and the potential partner countries (Ibidem). Nonetheless, the bottom line is that under both sets of criteria the only African country that has been classified as “priority country” by MFA is, once again, Ethiopia HUN-IDA, Hungarian development cooperation executive arm names also Nigeria, but the organization should not be deemed a part of the official aid architecture. Having said that, however, a number of project carried out (or financed) in Africa by Hungarian government is modest, to put it mildly. It is perhaps also instructive to note that the author herself (Paragi) barely mentions Africa in her paper on Hungarian Development Cooperation which may suggest that either she finds it irrelevant for the debate or there is no government activity to comment on - both explanations proving that the role of Africa in Hungarian aid policy is negligible.

The amount of financing for Africa available in Poland is drastically low, especially taking into account the country’s relative strength in the region and political aspirations. In 2011 the funds under administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs amounted to 109 million Polish Zloty (PLN), which roughly equals to €27 million. Most of this rather symbolic amount was allocated to four countries: Afghanistan (34 million PLN), Belarus (22 million PLN), Ukraine (13,5 million PLN) and Georgia (7 million PLN). Africa as a whole is expected to receive 4,2 million PLN (including 1 million for Small Grants Program). This is nearly the same amount as Moldova (4 million) — a small European country with the population of 3,5 million. Angola has been the only priority country for Poland since Tanzania was taken off the list as a result of shutting down the embassy in Dar es Salam in 2008. A low priority of Africa in the development cooperation translates to the modest number of projects carried out on the continent by Polish NGOs. According to the annual report in 2009 Polish NGOs have undertaken in Africa 23 development projects. On top of that three projects were implemented by higher education and research institutions; 19 projects were carried out by Polish diplomatic missions (13 by the Polish Embassy in Pretoria) (MSZ 2010, p. 107-109). On the top of that, in 2009 the Ministry of Finance disbursed a credit tranche for Angola worth 21 million PLN.

Using strictly numerical criteria, it may occasionally seem that some African states are enjoying a generous support in relations to other countries and make it to the list of top recipients. This, for example, happened in Poland in 2006. According to government’s data Angola received 286 512 435 PLN which was equal to 76% of the total ODA flows and 500 times (!) the assistance Angola had received the year before. The reason for such a gigantic surge is quite straightforward. Angola got its old debt to Poland cancelled and this, using the OECD statistical methodology, can be classified as ODA (although this was in fact an accounting procedure rather than a real transfer of resources).

One of the leading Polish NGO, Instytut Globalnej Odpowiedzialności (IGO), maintains that Africa’s marginal position in development aid programmes is very disturbing and requires urgent action. It warns that in the upcoming year NGOs in Poland will receive nearly 50% less money for Africa compared to the previous year. This clearly goes against the government’s promises. Whereas in 2009 NGOs could count on 3,5 million PLN to be spent on projects in Africa, in 2010 the Ministry will donate close to 2 million PLN. To the NGO community even greater disappointment, the drop corresponds to the overall increase of the money available for other geographical areas. The aid committed to Africa amounts to only 9% of the Foreign Ministry aid project budget. For instance in 2011, Angola will receive only one fifth of the last year’s allocation (IGO 2011). According to IGO, NGO project aid to Africa decreased from €1,75 million in 2008 to €0,31 million in 2010, the result being the funds for NGO in 2010 represent merely 20% of the sums available in 2008 (Ibidem).
Matching rhetoric with reality?

It has been demonstrated that whereas on a rhetorical level the V4 are committed to MDGs or reducing poverty and clearly recognize development needs of African countries, the real life tells a very different story. Africa still remains peripheral in aid policies of all countries in question and there are no vital signs that it will be subject to change any time soon. The divergence is to a large extent a result of international obligations that the V4 governments assumed and now, under rising pressure as fully-fledged donors, are held accountable for by the international community. So what are the real and perceived obstacles to match rhetoric with reality? This section will attempt to provide some thoughts on this conundrum.

To begin with, to be sure, the outcome is partly a result of the more or less explicit foreign policy goals which in the V4 do not necessarily coincide geographically with what the EU or more broadly international community (which by the way, as a term, is nowadays becoming increasingly ambiguous) has in mind when it speaks of development cooperation of tomorrow. A lion share of aid coming from the region is deployed to neighbouring countries or the ones that are deemed politically relevant (see Afghanistan). Having said that, for example, a prominent feature of the Hungarian ODA is strong regiocentrism and the majority of aid is channelled to the neighbouring countries with particular emphasis being put on the Balkan states. In Slovakia in a very similar vein a large chunk of aid goes to Serbia (which enjoys close political and economic ties with the Slovak Republic) and Montenegro. This pattern is equally true for the Czech Republic and even more visible in the case of Poland, whose priority partners and top aid recipients feature Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia. Foreign policy priorities in the V4 include, *inter alia*, securing regional stability, promoting economic cooperation or reinforcing donor’s visibility abroad. This continues to be defended on the grounds of the comparative advantage and the wealth of expertise in transition, democracy and the EU accession. Therefore, this is fair to say that a patchy development cooperation with SSA is to a large extent a result of the foreign policy goals adopted by the V4. It seems that as long as aid remains largely an extension of the foreign policy, Africa will remain out of the equation, unless, the foreign policy formulation changes radically and turns more aware of global opportunities which, however, judging by the past record is rather unlikely.

Interrogated about a lack of real commitment towards MDGs and Africa, most V4 claim they do support the continent, but not necessarily directly, i.e. via bilateral channels. It is true, that due to the obligatory fees to the EU countries contribute financially to the external assistance of the EU (contribution to other multilateral institutions remain miniscule in most cases, e.g. 4% in Poland). These sums should not be ignored as they are substantial in relation to bilateral programmes, in most countries amounting to more than 50% of the reported ODA. The argument is, however, shaky. As has been indicated above, most external assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa is financed via the European Development Fund which is separate from the EU budget (although administered by the Commission) (Grimm 2005, p. 114). The V4 countries have not made payments to EDF in the past and it is only with regards to the 10th EDF that they participate in the implementation. For example, Poland’s first contribution of €39,39 million is to take place only in 2011 (according to the agreement the share of spending will amount to 1,3% of the whole Fund, i.e. €294,886 million). It is also instructive to show that the relative share of aid channelled to Africa in the EU spending on external assistance has drastically decreased since the 1980s, despite a general increase of the EU external assistance. This is to some extent a result of expansion of aid programmes in Central and Eastern Europe prior to their accession and more recently the Mediterranean (Grimm 2004, p. 4). Even if the financial contribution to the EU external aid is viewed as an excuse for a poor record in bilateral aid it should be noted that the V4 countries are known for their virtual lack of coordination and coherent policy towards multilaterals. For example Poland in the OECD peer review report admits that it “recognizes its lack of an overarching policy or strategy guiding its partnership with multilateral institutions and would like to address this” (OECD 2010, p. 19). Consequently, if a country is short of any political leverage concerning its multilateral component it is quite difficult to accept a reasoning that it actually supports Africa via multilateral channels.
There is a host of explanations why Africa has remained marginal in development cooperation policies of the V4. One of the most widely held presumptions among academics is that development assistance in the V4 is the result of path dependence. In principal this means that “even though politicians might aim to create policies and institutions based on different foreign models, they will never be able to escape the effects of the past, as these highly influence attitudes, thinking and even decision making” (Szent-Iványi & Tétényi 2008, p. 575). It suggests, inter alia, that the territorial allocation of development assistance and thus the choice of priority countries is a result of the communist legacy and cannot be easily altered, at least in the short term. A good example in Polish aid is Angola that has been reportedly chosen as a priority country on a basis of historical links and active diplomatic representation in Luanda. This is one of many examples of how geographical focus traces the communist past.

Although this narrative appears to have become a popular thinking in this part of the world, the hypothesis is not bulletproof. It is correct to argue that many developing countries receiving ODA nowadays belonged, at one time or another, to the Soviet camp (Szent-Iványi & András 2008, p. 580). Nevertheless, we argue that path dependence theory is of a limited usefulness in explaining more recent aid patterns in the V4, despite continuing to be a quite convenient way of rationalizing why the transition from recipient to donor is filled with inertia. The evidence comes for example from Afghanistan, a country which in some V4 (see Poland) acquired a priority country status virtually overnight and now features as the top aid recipient. This case clearly shows that development cooperation in the V4 has a potential for a radical change and breaking the historical pattern, which is obviously not written in stone, is not as difficult as suggested elsewhere. In the same vein a lack of interest for tightening development cooperation with African states only partially can be explained by the Communist legacy. We argue that it is rather a lack of strategic vision in foreign policy and ad hoc style of its formulation which helps to explain why whereas South-South cooperation is today rife, the V4 are giving up on Africa (closing diplomatic outposts in Africa is very symbolic here).

In a similar spirit, it is also argued that apart from foreign policy goals which navigate most bilateral programs in the V4, there are also cultural and linguistic affinities which may influence a large chunk of aid flows. This is partly confirmed by Vitek and Lightfoot (2010) in relation to the role of Russian language in Slovak territorial aid allocation. This argument is definitely in line with the path-dependence theory and may show an overall inertia in the aid policy over the past years, but its explanatory power today is coming to an end. In the contemporary world English is slowly becoming lingua franca, particularly among the younger generation of aid officials and practitioners, not to mention NGOs, therefore whereas understandable in the take-off phase in the 90s this argument is surely out-dated, particularly employed in order to justify a lack of impetus to tighten development cooperation with those African countries where English is spoken. The cultural gap compounded by a lack of mutual history indeed poses certain difficulties and may explain a part of the hesitance towards initiating/expanding development partnership. But this again, given the impetus towards helping “exotic” countries like Afghanistan, makes a perceived cultural barrier an easy target for critics. Moreover, in Poland but also other V4, the African Studies community revolves largely around cultural-linguistic and anthropologic studies. This academics would be more than happy, if approached, to help mitigate and bridge the cultural distance that keeps two regions apart.

According to another widely held premise financial and organizational commitment to promote development in Africa is restricted by the lack of colonial and other historical ties. It also seems superficially appealing but again not entirely convincing. The realm of development assistance has changed drastically in the past years and whereas previously aid allocation has been largely informed by former historical links, today given a new breed of donors these arguments do not always hold. Countries such as China, India or Brazil equally lack colonial ties with Africa (to be sure, Sino-African cooperation for example begun already in the 1950s but for one, it was on a relatively moderate scale and for many years actually dormant, secondly it was informed mostly by ideology) (see Kopinski et al. 2011) which does not present any particular impediment for extending aid towards the continent. Interestingly enough, these countries’ core principle is that this is precisely the lack of colonial record which makes their development cooperation exceptional and better-suited to local realities. It is not distorted by decades of ruthless colonial exploitation followed by neo-colonial policies exercised in the course of the cold war. Likewise, some of the
traditional donors such as Norway or Sweden, equally lack colonial ties or shared historical experience with Africa, which does not prevent them from being one of the most active and efficient financiers of development. We argue therefore that the lack of colonial legacy may be used as a decoy in the V4 countries and is rather a sign of their helplessness and again should be viewed as a lack of strategic vision in foreign policy rather than a real obstacle. As many other examples demonstrate no mutual history can paradoxically be an asset in building credible development cooperation programs. New entrants without heavy historical burden are often welcome on the African soil with open arms.13

It is understandable that the V4 are unable to fully emulate China or other donors operating outside of the traditional aid system and the OECD radar. As both the EU and OECD members and in some cases as “soon-to-be” DAC members, countries are significantly constrained by a myriad of existing DAC recommendations and rules, particularly on untying of financial aid and investment-related technical cooperation to developing countries, but also statistical procedures, the standard definition of development assistance, transparency and good practice. This clearly narrows the scope of manoeuvrability with regards to modalities used to disburse development assistance. Donors who do not align to the rules of the game take advantage of the “lawless” environment they operate in by for instance using freely tied aid, concessional loans linked to foreign direct investments etc. which is particularly visible in the case of Chinese foreign aid. To balance that slightly, it can be argued that, despite being signatories of Paris Declaration (PD) it is difficult to point to any particular measures taken by the V4 to move closer to achieving the goals laid down in the document. On contrary, many modalities that are continuously in use in development cooperation in the V4, such as tied aid or export credits on non-concessional terms, continue to play an important role without any real prospects to be phased down completely any time soon.

Another common argument touches upon a patchy net of diplomatic outposts that the V4 possess in Africa. Embassies and consulates with their personnel do play a strategic role in development cooperation across the world. It is infinitely more difficult to coordinate and implement aid, particularly project aid, from overseas without officials and trusted people on the ground. The problem was recently further compounded by decisions to shut down embassies in what is already a small number of African states. Poland, for example, continues to have ten embassies in Africa (5 in Sub-Saharan Africa). These include: Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia and Libya (which was abandoned recently by Polish staff due to security concerns). In 2008 Polish Minister, Radek Sikorski, decided to close diplomatic outposts in Tunisia (Dar es Salaam), Senegal (Dakar), Zimbabwe (Harare) and Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa), unofficially in the name of trimming down costs, more officially as the cooperation with those countries was simply non-satisfactory (Współpraca gospodarcza Polski z Afryką, 2011). The latter move has been also explained as a part of a strategy of setting up a new model of diplomatic outposts reduced to regional hubs. Nevertheless, given the swiftness of the operation and an astonishment of many experts it is difficult to believe that this was indeed a part of the well-prepared plan. Also Czech Republic decided to close or has already shut down diplomatic missions on the continent, namely Dakar (Senegal) and Abidjan (Cote d’Ivoire) which were closed already in 2005 under the Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda, Nairobi (Kenya), Harare in Zimbabwe (still being considered) and Luanda in Angola (already closed), yet still it continues to run 11 outposts (6 in Sub-Saharan Africa). These include the embassies in Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, DRC, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. Hungary closed some of its embassies on the African continent due to the belt-tightening concerns and opened a new diplomatic mission in the Republic of South Africa after the apartheid era ended. Currently, Hungary has only two embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa (Kenya and South Africa — the one in Abuja, Nigeria was closed in the course of 2010) and five embassies in the Maghreb: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. The Slovak Republic has in total five embassies in Africa: Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Africa and Libya. This state of affairs offers development cooperation less opportunities to move European and African countries closer to each other, especially that even the existing outposts are usually very understaffed, lacking experts and administrative personnel. Therefore, argument goes, expanding aid to Africa is impossible for merely practical reasons, namely an insufficient capacity of diplomatic infrastructure abroad. Of
course, diplomatic outposts and its functioning in developing world is a more general problem and singling out Africa should be done with caution.

The last argument advanced in the paper is the one about the so-called “comparative advantage”. All the V4 claim almost unanimously that their territorial distribution of aid monies has its logical rationale which is associated with comparative advantage the countries allegedly hold in democratic and economic transition, but also in convergence with the norms and rules of the EU — the lessons they learned in the course of the accession. This helps explain the proximity bias in aid allocation and a largely unambiguous focus in aid delivery on neighbouring countries in Eastern and Southern Europe. It is, however, questionable what this asset really means beyond rhetoric, how it can be actually applied and what benefits it can potentially yield to aid-recipients (see paper of Horky on that issue). Furthermore, as some NGOs who advocate for more aid to Africa argue, the V4’s experience with transition from communism to liberal democracy and from central planning to free market might also be of use for many African countries that still struggle with various structural issues (e.g. tax reform, privatisation).

Conclusion

This paper seeks to investigate aid allocation of the V4 to African countries using, as a point of departure, various international commitments that impose on the governments in question an obligation to increasingly shift an attention and thus aid delivery to SSA, which clearly stands out as a region with the most desperate development needs. The most specific is the pledge to increase financial assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa and provide collectively at least 50% of the agreed increase of ODA resources to the continent. Having investigated the narrative present in most of the countries we find a yawning gap between the rhetoric and reality. All governments (though to a different degree and with a different intensity) seem to agree that Africa is the least and hence the most needy developing region in the world and that MDGs (which lack progress predominantly in Africa) are their priority. Not incidentally this is the official line of the EU which uses every opportunity to highlight among its members the importance of intensifying development cooperation with the SSA. The message surely trickles down to the new member states but stops short of being rightly tackled.

The evidence tells a very different story. In reality African countries remain marginal in aid distribution and although some find a way to the priority aid recipient categories they mostly serve as a fig leaf masking a true disinterest - not only in the continent’s fate but actual opportunities that might be exploited in Sub-Saharan Africa. It also contrasts with the views of the public opinion in the V4 which rather unanimously agree that this is the African continent which should be given a priority. This means that the governments not only do not put their money where their mouth is and where the obligations lie but also fail to listen to their own citizens. In regards to most public issues pertaining to spending taxpayers’ money this kind of divergence would be at least confronted in the public discourse. However, since in the V4 the development cooperation remains both an exclusive and obscure topic, restricted to officials, experts and NGOs people, the situation does not lead to any foreseeable resolution. Interestingly, there is sometimes a gap between a PR type of documents, such as annual reports or bulletins and official documents, such as strategies, which are much more sober and toned down. In some cases (see Poland), the gap extends to a degree of ridiculousness.

Certainly, the said lack of progress towards implementation of the international commitments with regards to SSA and MDGs should be viewed in a broader context. As many authors before observed development cooperation in the V4 continues to be an area where convergence with the EU norms and rules is very sluggish. After over a decade-long experience quality and institution wise aid policies in the region are still nascent or in the take-off stage. Therefore, neglect of Africa may be a part of a more general, systemic weaknesses rather than a problem in its own right. It should be also stressed that the record of many old members of the EU, both big and influential, such as Italy and small and less relevant, such as Greece or Portugal with regards to development cooperation with SSA is less than impressive. It makes the V4 not really lone wolves but rather a part of the pack.
This paper also sought to address some of the most common arguments used to defend or explain the current state of affairs. The argument that the V4 support African countries indirectly, namely through multilateral aid, appears shaky due to a lack of real influence on and disinterest for how the money is actually spent. Furthermore, as the paper shows, contribution to the EC budget does not equal to resources' transfer to Africa. It is also true, that the path dependence theory or a lack of mutual history can be instructive in explaining aid allocation patterns, especially in the past. Certainly, foreign policy goals with their proximity bias and security concerns also play their part. We argue that more currently this is a result of a lack of strategic vision and ad hoc formulation of foreign policy which provides a great deal of the explanatory power. Expanding bilateral programmes to countries such as Afghanistan proves that geographical distribution of aid can be subject to change in the V4 and is not eternally bound by path dependency. Likewise, new entrants to aid industry, such as Brazil, let alone China or India, demonstrate that the foreign policy lens through which the V4 look at Africa are perhaps obsolete.

References


The Economist, Speak softly and carry a blank cheque, 15 July 2010.


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1 During its G8 presidency in 2006 Russia held a special meeting with donors in Moscow which clearly showed “back in the game” attitude of Russian government.

2 Whereas Slovak and Czech Republic have successfully launched aid agencies and adopted specific law underpinning aid-delivery, Poland is still struggling to have in place a proper legislation. As noted by Lightfoot and Vittek (2010) in relation to Slovak officials this may produce a different pattern of satisfaction and thus determination for political change in the government circles.


4 Most of the EU external assistance, namely 95% (€11,764 billion), is reported as ODA which clearly contrasts with foreign aid composition of the new emerging donors.

5 See for example Counterbalance, http://www.counterbalance-eib.org/

6 EuropeAid budget and non-EuropeAid budget (managed by other DGs) amount in total to €8,796 billion which represents 71,5% of all EU external assistance.

7 47 developing countries in Latin America, Asia and Central Asia, the Gulf region (Iran, Iraq and Yemen) and South Africa + 18 ACP sugar protocol countries.

8 The first proposition to merge EDF into the EU budget was considered in 1973 and then in 1979. Both attempts were declined by the Commission and consequently failed.
The European Union has missed its ODA target for 2010, after failing to meet the collective target of 0.56% of GNI.

Written communication with Ondřej Horky, Institute of International Relations, Prague.

Apparently, cooperation between the Czech Republic and Angola was troubled inter alia over visa issues for Czech aid personnel. See: http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natlinfo/countr/czech/africa.pdf issuing of work visas to the Czech citizens who worked in the programme of foreign development cooperation on a long-term basis.

In 2005 the Hungarian government decided to forgive Ethiopia’s $7.4 million debt (90% of existing debt) under the agreement signed in Addis Abeba on June 28. The remaining obligation was to be spent on poverty reduction programs.

See the Slovak official quoted in Vittek and Lightfoot (2010).

One of the advantage of Poland with regards to Africa over other V4 countries but also other Western donors is multiple presence of missionaries, mostly catholic, that are relatively active in aid delivery and could serve as local anchors for further engagement with the continent. In 2007 there were 919 Polish missionaries in Africa. Being aware of this advantage Polish government seeks to increase the involvement of Polish missions in development aid.
