How should INGOs allocate resources?

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Abstract
International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs) face difficult choices when choosing to allocate resources. Given that the resources made available to INGOs fall far short of what is needed to reduce massive human rights deficits, any chosen scheme of resource allocation requires failing to reach other individuals in great need. Facing these moral opportunity costs, what moral reasons should guide INGO resource allocation? Two reasons that clearly matter, and are recognized by philosophers and development practitioners, are the consequences (or benefit or harm reduction) of any given resource allocation and the need (or priority) of individual beneficiaries. If accepted, these reasons should lead INGOs to allocate resources to a limited number of countries where the most prioritarian weighted harm reduction will be achieved. I make three critiques against this view. First, on grounds the consequentialist accepts, I argue that INGOs ought to maintain a reasonably wide distribution of resources. Second, I argue that even if one is a consequentialist, consequentialism ought not act as an action guiding principle for INGOs. Third, I argue that additional moral reasons should influence decision making about INGO resource allocation. Namely, INGO decision making should attend to relational reasons, desert, respect for agency, concern for equity, and the importance of expressing a view of moral wrongs.

Keywords: poverty; poverty alleviation; NGO; Pogge; distribution; aid; development; scarcity; donors

The severity and breadth of human deprivation and human rights deficits far outpaces the resources currently made available to respond to these injustices. Although official measurements of poverty, human development, and human rights achievement are contested, some statistics give a rough picture of the size of the problem. Nearly, a billion people are malnourished, 2.6 billion people live without access to improved sanitation facilities, and over 800 million live without access to improved drinking water. 1.5 billion live in countries afflicted by conflict, and 22,000 children die every day from preventable illness. The odds of a woman being abused in her lifetime in most countries range between 30 and 60%.1

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To meet this need, in 2010 the USA provided nearly $29 billion in Overseas Development Assistance, about 0.21% of GNI. Outside of ODA, American citizens provided $37.5 billion in philanthropic giving to global causes. In a world of scarce resources and great need, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) devoted to securing human rights, alleviating suffering, and combating injustice face difficult choices in the allocation of scarce resources. In the foreseeable future, the resources INGOs raise will be entirely inadequate to meet individual need. Given that INGOs cannot work with everyone, how should they make decisions regarding resource allocation?

Two important moral reasons that should play a role in decision making about the distribution INGO resources are the consequences (or benefits or harm reduction) that any given resource distribution will have and the severity of deprivation that is reduced. That is, how much harm reduction will occur on the selected allocation of resources versus competing possible allocations, with greater weight attributed to benefits that accrue to those who are worse off? But, is that the only consideration? In this paper, I argue that while consequences should play an important role in determining the allocation of INGO resources, there are a number of other moral reasons that should guide INGO resource allocation. These reasons include concern for equity, claims of moral desert, concern for agency, and the importance of INGOs expressing a view on moral wrongs. I also argue that even if one is a consequentialist, they ought not endorse consequentialism as an action guiding principle for INGOs, nor should they endorse restricting INGO resource allocation to a limited number of morally cost-efficient countries.

‘VALUE FOR MONEY’: CONSEQUENCES AND NEED CLEARLY MATTER AT COST

When selecting between competing, feasible allocations of resources, one undeniably significant moral reason that should carry great weight is the consequences (or benefits or harm reduction) that will accrue per unit of cost as compared to equally costly alternative resource allocations. Economists have long evaluated the effectiveness of INGO resource allocation in terms of consequences. Development agencies are increasingly moving in this direction as well.

Some philosophers have also endorsed the ‘value for money’ approach. Thomas Pogge provides the most rigorous philosophical argument for a broadly consequentialist, prioritarian principle of how INGOs should allocate resources. I, therefore, take Pogge as the starting point for evaluating the consequentialist position.

Pogge is reacting to a view held by many INGOs that he calls the distributive fairness constraint:

They think it unfair to spend more resources on protecting people in some countries than on protecting people in other countries merely because resources can be employed more cost-effectively in the former than in the latter. They believe that, so long as resources can achieve some harm protection in a country, a fair
share thereof should be allocated to this country even if the same resources could achieve much more elsewhere.\textsuperscript{6}

Pogge rejects this distributive fairness constraint, and endorses the following principle:

Other things being equal, an INGO should govern its decision making about candidate projects by such rules and procedures as are expected to maximize its long-run cost-effectiveness, defined as the expected aggregate moral value of the projects it undertakes divided by the expected aggregate cost of these projects. Here aggregate moral value, or harm protection, is the sum of the moral values of the harm reductions (and increases) the projects bring about for the individual persons they affect.\textsuperscript{7}

This principle is spelled out in prioritarian terms, whereby the harm reduction for worse off people counts more than harm reduction for slightly better-off people.\textsuperscript{8} For example, if a particular project could extend one group’s life expectancy from 35 to 45 years, or that of another equally large group from 50 to 62 years, there is greater moral value achieved by serving the former group even though more life years accrue to the latter group. On Pogge’s account, therefore, there are initially only two morally salient reasons that should guide INGO distribution: the need of the individual (how badly off they are), and the potential harm reduction that can be achieved (how much better off they become) per unit of cost.

Pogge addresses several deontological concerns that can be raised against his prioritarian, consequentialist approach. First, Pogge grants that in some cases the prevention of extinction or the preservation of diversity may count as morally valuable in addition to the moral value attached to the individual lives affected. Therefore, these considerations can be factored into the consequentialist’s calculation.\textsuperscript{9} Second, Pogge recognizes that different projects may have different probabilities of success. Again, this can be accommodated by the consequentialist in that projects should be assessed by dividing the probability-weighted expected moral value by the probability weighted expected cost. Third, Pogge considers the possibility that INGOs may raise more money, and thus produce greater moral value, if they accommodate racist or discriminating contributors’ preferences. Here, Pogge allows that the consequentialist may give some weight to, for example, the importance of not implementing the preferences of racist donors in programs, although this would not justify distributing resources in such a way that would substantially reduce the expected moral value of the INGO’s work.\textsuperscript{10} Pogge also grants that small departures from the moral value maximizing distribution could be justified in deference to the preferences of local actors on a project, but he largely views this consultation as instrumental to the success of the project, and such consultation cannot provide normative guidance that would justify significant departures from moral value maximization.\textsuperscript{11} Finally, Pogge recognizes that an INGO’s direct material involvement in harm, or its association with harms committed by others, may justify deviance from the moral value maximization calculation.\textsuperscript{12}

Ultimately, Pogge is driven to the broadly prioritarian, consequentialist account by the awesomeness of the responsibility of the INGO, in that (by his lights) any
decision made to allocate resources to one area means abandoning people in great need elsewhere. Because this responsibility is so awesome, any departure from moral value maximizing distribution that is based on any of the concerns listed above, such as the preferences of local actors or worries about implementing the preferences of racist contributors, should be marginal at best. Any departure from the prioritarian, consequentialist calculation, on Pogge’s account, is tantamount to sentencing some innocent individuals to greater suffering and possibly death because of a morally inefficient distribution of resources.

**THE MORALLY EFFICIENT SELECTION OF COUNTRIES**

One implication of Pogge’s principle for the distribution of resources, in conjunction with certain facts about the moral efficacy of INGO resource allocation in various countries, is that large INGOs should not attempt an even moderately equal distribution of resources across countries:

> The existing allocation of funds for harm reduction efforts is highly inefficient; and concentrating on a few countries would greatly increase what these funds achieve by way of poverty eradication… It seems obvious to me that we should here decide against the proposed distributive fairness constraint and in favor of protecting more people. I recognize that, if we concentrate on a few countries, then we will do nothing to protect many very badly-off people who, through no fault of their own, live elsewhere. But if we spread our efforts fairly over all developing countries, then we will do nothing to protect even more people who are just as badly off and just as free of fault in their fate. Any conceivable allocation of available resources will leave many people exposed to a life of severe deprivation—people who ought to be protected. If we cannot fully protect everyone from such harm, then we should at least achieve as much as possible.13

On this account, working in high cost, difficult-to-succeed countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, or Burma should be abandoned in favor of low cost and easy to succeed countries such as India or Ethiopia where more harm reduction can be achieved per unit of expenditure. Dollar and Collier argue that ‘a poverty-efficient re-allocation of aid … would reduce the average cost of life-long poverty protection from $2650 to $1387 per person, thus nearly doubling aid impact to save 19.1 rather than only 10 million people from poverty.’14

There is a further implication, not mentioned by Pogge, that the reduction of some harms will not be sufficiently morally cost efficient to be included in INGO programming. For example, if the reduction of sexual violence turns out, on the whole, to be less morally cost effective than reductions in childhood diseases, programs seeking to reduce sexual violence should not receive any funding at all.

Pogge, nor anyone else I know of, stipulates an ‘exchange rate’ between various kinds of harms. He simply asks that INGOs explicitly set such an exchange rate, and then apply their considerations consistently. To see how this would exclude certain kinds of harms from INGO operations, consider the following. Suppose Oxfam decides that, for whatever reasons, preventing one childhood death is equal to
preventing 1.5 sexual assaults. (Here I assume that the evaluation of the relative weights of different kinds of harms should precede an assessment of the costs of preventing these harms.) If they subsequently find that it costs the same amount to prevent three childhood deaths as it does to prevent one sexual assault, then the INGO should allocate resources to the prevention of childhood deaths until the marginal cost of preventing one childhood death rises to the point at which the same amount of resources could be allocated to the prevention of 1.5 sexual assaults. Assuming that the INGO expends its entire annual budget before reaching this point, the INGO ought not include the prevention of sexual assault in any of its programming.

Pogge’s principle for resource allocation is intuitively plausible. It seems that if INGOs can more effectively spend their resources elsewhere, everything else being equal, they ought to do so. And if it turns out that, after applying his formula, certain countries should be emphasized to the exclusion of others, so be it. But I have, and I suspect others share, an intuition which pulls in the other direction. Just because a given project might have a low chance of success, or come at a high cost, this does not mean we ought not do it—sometimes INGOs should fight the uphill battle, even if it means not winning other easy victories. Furthermore, it seems odd for INGOs to restrict the scope of their operations solely on account of the high cost effectiveness of working in some countries. In what remains of this paper, I argue for these views and modify Pogge’s account to include a plurality of moral reasons for resource allocation.

A CONSEQUENTIALIST REVISION IN FAVOR OF A MODERATELY WIDE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

On grounds the consequentialist accepts, a reasonably wide distribution of INGO resources should be maintained. Moral value maximization will be undermined if the number of countries in which an INGO works is highly restricted.

Epistemic reasons

Working in a small number of countries limits the epistemic base of an INGO. If Oxfam only worked in Ethiopia, India, and Bangladesh, they would not learn from interesting strategies, policies, or development successes in Kenya, Bolivia, or Vietnam. INGOs do not always already know what works best, and the flow of information is not (or at least ought not) always be from INGOs to poor and oppressed people. Rather, INGOs can learn from the diverse, fluid, and dynamic resistance of poor men and women and their allies. These learning opportunities can inform the work of the INGOs, and INGOs are well placed to distribute that knowledge elsewhere.

Second, INGOs cannot always already know who the worst off are without having a presence in a given area. If there is no Oxfam presence in the Central African Republic, Oxfam will not know the cost of working there, the degree of deprivation
people experience, or the odds of having successful operations. Given extensive cutbacks in the foreign bureaus of major media outlets and the likelihood of restrictions on national and local media in poor countries with weak or non-existent human rights protections, INGOs can frequently be the best and first source of information on deprivation and rights abuses in very poor (and very poorly covered) areas. Absent some reasonably wide distributional spread of resources, the ability to identify the most deprived will be weakened.

**Institutional capacity**

If the limited country thesis is adopted, the institutional capacity to work in certain countries will diminish. INGOs will no longer employ local experts or have strong, reliable, trusting relationships with relevant local actors and community members, including people who understand how the government and political system operates and have a robust understanding of the local culture and geography.

Perhaps this would not be a significant problem if the degree of deprivation, the depth of deprivation, and the cost of operating were all fixed. They are not. Deprivation is fluid and over time some communities and countries may make great progress, whereas others will regress. New countries may become home to the worst off, and the cost of operating will vary with political and economic change over time, including but not limited to the high volatility of currency exchange rates and changing political, economic, and social circumstances on the ground.

Some kinds of disasters may lend themselves to particularly cost-effective harm reduction, but only if an INGO already has an existing presence in a country. For example, following the 2010 Pakistani floods, millions of people were in need of rapid assistance that, if provided, could achieve very large amounts of harm reduction. INGOs with a strong presence in Pakistan before the floods could scale up their operations to serve more people more effectively than those who had little or no presence in the country. But having that prior presence required working in a country that was very costly because of, among other things, insecurity, limited infrastructure, and difficult geographic terrain.

**Small problems become big problems**

Furthermore, some problems that may not be the most morally cost effective for INGOs at one point in time may become the most morally cost effective in the future. Small problems in a high cost country may spread to become much bigger problems. For example, suppose a new disease emerges among livestock in a region that is hard to access. This might be a problem that would not be cost effective to address, as compared to other existing problems at the time. But if that disease spreads to livestock and then to people in a whole region, and it could have been prevented at a much lower cost with an earlier intervention, then it would be cost effective to do so. Given the uncertainty of the counterfactual claim about the future
big problem, it is advisable for INGOs to avoid a narrow distribution of resources (on grounds the consequentialist accepts). 18

Given epistemic concerns, the need for institutional capacity in many countries, and the possibility for small problems to become big problems, the consequentialist should, thus, endorse a reasonably wide spread of INGO projects and programs. I do not endorse the distributive fairness constraint that Pogge rejects, which holds that INGOs should allocate resources equally among countries. I simply claim that INGOs ought not always or nearly always avoid working in countries where the moral value per unit of cost is significantly lower than in the low-cost, high-success rate countries. This view is certainly consistent with concentrating some larger amount of resources in more morally cost-efficient countries.

**REJECTING CONSEQUENTIALISM AS AN ACTION-GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR INGOS**

Thus far, we have only shown that the consequentialist ought to endorse a reasonably wide distribution of resources to various countries, although not allocating resources equally among countries. In this section, I argue that consequentialism ought not serve as an action guiding principle for INGOS. Even if one is a committed consequentialist, one should reject the view that, for example, judges should act as consequentialists, as opposed to upholding professional obligations to rule based on evidence, argument, and proper legal interpretation. Similarly, a committed consequentialist should reject consequentialism as an action-guiding principle for INGOS.

**Implausibility of consequentialism guiding similar institutions**

For institutions that have moral foundations similar to INGOs, almost no one thinks that consequentialism ought to guide their actions. Consider a teacher working in a very challenging context. (I assume here that the primary although not sole institutional purpose of schools is to secure a human right to education. It also bears noting that many INGOs exclusively focus on this human right.) Let us assume that the school is underfunded, the teacher’s pay is quite low, the students come from challenging backgrounds, and have had little previous educational training. Let us also assume that the students are of diverse abilities in two ways: students differ in their ability to learn (from the teacher’s perspective, there are differential returns on investment of teacher time) and in their preexisting level of knowledge (some are worse off than others).

How should this teacher allocate her time in the classroom, assuming that teachers have some flexibility in the amount of attention they pay to each individual student? One principle, crudely consequentialist, would require teaching those students who are best able to learn. The return on investment for the teacher, in terms of educational outcomes produced, would be highest if they spent the most time on the
quickest learning students. Another principle, strictly prioritarian, would require that
the teacher should focus on the worst off students, regardless of the speed at which
they learn. A third principle, parallel to Pogge’s prioritarian consequentialism, would
require allocating teacher time based on both the degree of student need and the
student’s capacity for learning, that is, the teacher should focus her attention on the
worst off students who will learn the quickest. A fourth principle, egalitarian (in
terms of output), would require allocating an equal amount of teacher time to each
student.

In this case, adopting any one of the four principles as a strict guide for action is
highly implausible and insensitive to the relevant moral features of the case. It is
implausible to think that students should receive little or no attention because they
do not happen to be the worst students; that students should receive little or no
attention because they do not happen to be the quickest learning students; or that
students should receive little or no attention because they do not happen to be the
quickest learning, worst off students. Suppose that it is twice as costly to educate
students with physical disabilities than other students, due to the costs of making a
school wheelchair accessible, would it be morally permissible for schools to refuse
wheelchair-bound students on account of the cost it takes to educate them? Certainly
not. I do not deny that school administrators and teachers ought to take seriously the
fact that resources spent on students with disabilities draw resources away from other
students. But, I reject the view that these issues should be resolved through a strict
cost–benefit analysis.

There are a variety of competing principles that should guide the teacher’s conduct
in this resource-scarce environment. Sometimes, she should spend more time with
students who are struggling (a prioritarian principle). At other times, she should give
more attention to students who, with a little bit of extra help, will make quite a bit of
progress (a consequentialist principle). At other times, she should give attention to
very good students who are doing quite well, as a reward for their interest and work
in the subject (a desert principle). And many times, a teacher should give students
attention when they ask (a respect for agency principle). The teacher would be
conducting herself poorly as a teacher, and failing in her institutional role-based
responsibilities, if she acted on any single moral reason all of the time. If she only
gave individual attention to the worst students, or the quickest learning students, or
the hardest working students, we would think she had failed in her institutional role.

If the reader finds a disanalogy between the case of the teacher and the INGO
because the teacher is already in some relationship with the students that generates
specific duties, then just reconsider the above arguments for school administrators.
Just as the teacher should not act on strictly prioritarian, consequentialist grounds, so
too should the administrators not allocate resources according to those principles. If
the case is considered disanalogous because many schools are a function of the state,
then just imagine that the school is run by an INGO in a resource-scarce
environment. If Oxfam is setting up a school in a rural area in a low income
country, should they seek to only serve the quickest learning, worst off students?
I argue not. This is because there are a plurality of moral reasons that Oxfam should
Implausibility of consequentialism guiding INGOs

Not only is it implausible for consequentialism to guide institutions similar to INGOs, it is implausible for consequentialism to serve as a public, action-guiding principle for INGOs. The best work in development studies suggests that INGOs and donors are at their best when they do not act as consequentialists. INGOs must not treat individuals as mere units of consumption and production, but as human beings, agents with inherent value and dignity, bearers of rights and responsibilities, that face difficult choices in the context of scarce resources and an unjust world. Their employees, with a significant dose of humility, must think of themselves as partners, working with others to combat injustice and deprivation. Such an approach requires that individuals not be treated based solely on their degree of need or the cost of providing harm protection.\(^\text{19}\)

If INGOs act as consequentialists, they may encounter a host of serious problems. They would constantly be striving to perform according to consequences that would lead to grabbing the lowest hanging fruit, doing those things that are easiest to accomplish and measure. Building schools is easily done and easily measured—building democracies and securing rights is difficult to do and difficult to measure.\(^\text{20}\) There would be an institutional reluctance to innovate or try projects that might fail, as employees would be uncertain of achieving harm reduction. It might also lead to shifting priorities, and thus unreliability in the delivery of aid, as the costs of operation and the harm reduction achieved frequently change. It would encourage the constant monitoring of the consequences of INGO activity, at the cost of undermining the very ends served by that activity.\(^\text{21}\) Finally, and arguably most importantly, it would undermine the importance of cultivating relationships of mutual respect and accountability that are arguably necessary for development success, and are intrinsically valuable.

The consequentialist might argue that a rights-based approach to development is consistent with a broadly consequentialist allocation of resources. In order for this to work, INGOs would need a kind of two-tiered structure, with consequentialist managers and non-consequentialist employees. Managers would judge people and projects based on their moral cost effectiveness, whereas dictating to the other employees that they do the opposite. In addition to being self-effacing, such an approach would be unlikely to be effective in the actual workplace. Staff would be aware of budget allocation, and managers would need to provide some such justification. This would require either admitting to the consequentialist approach, which is inconsistent with the rights-based approach, or lying. Furthermore, even if such justification could be provided to (and accepted by) INGO employees, there is a great deal of evidence that institutional leadership influences behavior throughout institutions. When generals make torture seem permissible, privates torture.
When executives at financial institutions fail to promote risk management, low level traders take greater risks. And similarly, we can expect if INGOs are run by consequentialists, their employees will be consequentialists as well.

**An example**

Consider Human Rights Watch (HRW). The institutional purpose of Human Rights Watch is to defend and protect human rights, increasingly including economic and social rights. As an institution that is explicitly tasked with human rights protection, the organization must make decisions regarding resource allocation that are guided by this institutional purpose. Consider two kinds of cases that a human rights organization might confront.

First, some kinds of rights violations affect a very small number of people, are very costly to address, and have low chances of success. Such cases include objecting to the imprisonment of political prisoners and campaigning against the death penalty. Human Rights Watch spends a significant amount of time and resources opposing the death penalty in the USA. In 2010, 45 people were executed in the USA. Progress has been slow in the political and legal battle to abolish the death penalty. The consequentialist should object to the persistent allocation of resources to this cause: Human Rights Watch (HRW) could find other areas where much larger numbers of individuals are affected, and the chances of bringing about positive change are greater. I, however, agree that HRW should persist in their anti-death penalty campaigning. To abandon this project is to abandon the fundamental ideals that are in my mind central to human rights advocacy. To defend human rights is, in part, to disregard the importance of the cost of protecting these rights or the likelihood of succeeding. Respecting rights means acting in a way that is consistent with those rights being invaluable, things that ought not be traded away for some other more advantageous arrangement.

Second, some kinds of rights violations may be politically unpopular to address, and thus harmful to the long-run fund raising and effectiveness of an organization. Two recent examples highlight this clearly. Human Rights Watch’s work on Israel frequently raises criticism from a variety of prominent public figures in the USA. Amnesty International was highly criticized after an employee, Gita Seghal, publicly criticized the organization for its work with Moazzam Begg, a former prisoner at Guantanamo Bay, for his alleged (but unproven) opposition to women’s rights and support of terrorism. In both cases, each institution risked significant financial and political support by taking controversial stands that they deemed consistent with their mandate of protecting and promoting human rights, arguably reducing their overall effectiveness (from the consequentialist point of view). If Amnesty and Human Rights Watch had abandoned their work in these areas (or, alternatively, selected not to do it in the first place) after conducting a cost–benefit analysis, they would have been acting in a way that is entirely inconsistent with their institutional purpose. Human rights organizations ought not abandon (or fail to take on) a given
cause because it is politically unpopular or costly to defend it. To be a human rights defender is in part to defend human rights especially when it is unpopular to do so, even if more harm protection could be achieved in the long run by abandoning, or failing to take up, these unpopular cases.

**FURTHER NORMATIVE CHALLENGES FOR THE CONSEQUENTIALIST ACCOUNT**

In addition to being in practice a poor internal principle for INGO conduct, consequentialism as a principle to guide INGO resource allocation faces a number of theoretical objections that will be familiar to the reader as common objections to (at least some forms of) consequentialism.

**Justification to those who are not aided, or simply justification**

One might think that INGOs must be able to justify their decisions to those who are not beneficiaries of their programs. Pogge argues that it would be quite difficult to justify to 5000 potential aid recipients that they had been abandoned because 1000 aid recipients somewhere else helped an INGO keep a wide distribution of resources across countries. But is it the case that INGOs must provide justification to those they do not aid, to their opportunity cost victims?

I had the privilege several years ago to work with a group of young people, mostly students, who were highly engaged in advocacy surrounding the genocide in Darfur, Sudan. Almost all of their non-academic time was devoted to activism. Did these students have to justify their choice of action to people suffering elsewhere? If they could have produced more moral value by working on a different campaign, should they have done so? Many students became involved for personal reasons—including deep regret about US conduct during the Rwandan genocide and familial connections to the Holocaust. Even if the students could have achieved even more harm reduction by working on some other problem, such as child labor or neglected diseases or gender-based violence, it does not follow that either (a) they should have done so or (b) failure to do so deserves moral condemnation. Furthermore, it is not the case that those students owed any justification specifically to child laborers or victims of neglected diseases or gender-based violence as to why they were instead spending their time on anti-genocide activism. Rather, they owed a justification in general that appeals to certain kinds of moral reasons. This is a very fine, but in my mind maintainable, distinction. There is a difference between justifying a given resource allocation as a morally justifiable choice, and justifying it as against all competing alternative choices to the potential beneficiaries of those alternative resource schemes. In the former justification, alternative feasible allocations and their consequences will bear some weight in the process of allocating resources. In the latter, those alternative allocations and their consequences bear nearly all the moral weight. This is the move I hope to resist. I grant, however, two points. First, the
(prioritarian adjusted) consequences of alternative resource allocation schemes are morally significant and thus bear some moral weight in the decision-making process. Second, there are certainly some circumstances in which a justification is owed to one’s opportunity cost victims. These would likely be cases in which the opportunity cost victims had some determinate claim or reasonable expectation of assistance directed at a particular institution. However, even in these cases, there still may be a plurality of moral reasons that could justify to the opportunity cost victims the reason that they were not benefiting from the project.

We can see this clearly if we examine other instances of development assistance that are not moral value maximizing. Consider a doctor working on a very serious disease (say, tuberculosis), but not the most serious disease, in a very poor place (say, Kenya), but not the world’s poorest place. Even if suffering people have a general claim for assistance against wealthy individuals, surely this particular doctor is discharging her duty to poor people. She does not need to justify her decision to work on tuberculosis to people with malaria, and she does not need to justify her decision to people suffering in Malawi. Even if Malawians do have a claim for assistance, it strikes me as implausible that the doctor needs to justify her decision to them. And it strikes me as implausible that we want to say that the doctor should really be doing more than she is to reduce suffering.

Just as is the case with individuals, INGOs do not have to be able to justify their decisions regarding resource allocation to all those they fail to aid. If an INGO is established to reduce the number of fistulas, it need not justify that decision to people with river blindness. Furthermore, their institutional duty to alleviate suffering associated with fistulas is discharged just insofar as the INGO reduces a large number of fistulas (assuming their conduct is otherwise morally acceptable). It is neither the case that they have not discharged their duty, nor that they ought to be doing otherwise, if they could reduce more suffering by working on a different disease, or if they could reduce more suffering from that disease by working with different patients who are more ‘cost effective.’ In particular, they do not have to explain why some smaller number of people had access to their services because of distributional decisions. They simply have to be able to justify their decisions with reference to morally plausible reasons, weighed according to some reasonable procedure or other.

This has great implications for the most forceful argument in Pogge’s article. He appeals to the awesomeness of the responsibility of considering who will live and who will die in distributing INGO resources. But if it is the case that an INGO does not need to justify its distribution of resources to those that it does not serve, then the concern that motivates the consequentialist approach loses some (but not all) force. It is only when the INGO must explain to those who will otherwise die if the INGO does not distribute its resources in the most moral value maximizing way that we are drawn to the consequentialist approach. Because we do not owe such a justification when we are discharging our duty to prevent harm, the motivation for the consequentialist approach is weakened.


Incommensurability

The harm reductions that an INGO seeks to achieve are pluralist and, in many cases, incommensurable. If you could prevent one hundred rapes, or prevent 30 deaths from malaria, which is morally better? There is no decisively correct answer to these questions. Of course, INGOs and policy makers still do have to think about the relative size of budgets for public health and gender based violence, but such decisions ought not be reached through a mathematical equation—weighing the costs of the proposed activities against the moral value of their achievements.

The consequentialist might respond that despite the incommensurability of various harms, within any given area of harm reduction one can easily apply a moral cost-benefit analysis. The INGO that works on basic sanitation, for example, can still assess its basic sanitation projects just in terms of the moral value in basic sanitation versus the cost of the project. More people with access to basic sanitation is better than fewer. It need not concern itself with cross-harm comparisons. But this merely moves the problem a further step back. Even if it is easy to apply the cost-benefit formula within the sanitation sector, INGOs must still ask what percentage of their resources should go to this sector versus others. If an anti-poverty INGO does not work in multiple sectors, it must still justify its single-sector focus when it could allocate resources elsewhere.

The consequentialist might argue that despite the incommensurability of various kinds of harm reduction, public policy makers (and people suffering these deprivations) must make decisions regarding incommensurable dimensions of deprivation with great frequency. Eventually, any action guiding reasons will have to address, either explicitly or implicitly, the incommensurability of harms. We accept and encourage governments, for example, to work to reduce deprivations in education, sanitation, physical safety and consumption, even though putting resources into any one area means not putting those resources into another area. It may be that we would always sacrifice an additional day of school to save a life through more health care provisions, but this does not mean that we advocate abandoning all education spending until every possibly preventable death has been averted. The question is thus whether incommensurability presents a greater challenge for the consequentialist than for other accounts. I believe it does, as the consequentialist explicitly requires the summing of harm protection to guide resource allocation. This is exactly how an INGO must decide on resource distribution on the consequentialist account. On the account I offer, the INGO’s primary aim is the moral end it has set for itself. If the INGO has committed to combating human rights abuses, for example, then its distribution of resources across incommensurable harms does not require an appeal to the value of each of those harms, but rather an appeal to whether such an allocation is consistent with its moral ends and the moral reasons it can plausibly appeal to.
Inequality

The consequentialist prescriptions might also countenance exacerbating pre-existing group-based inequalities. For example, if the cost of getting boys decent education were lower than for girls, INGOs should spend exclusively on boys education. Or if it is more expensive to work in remote areas inhabited by indigenous populations, then no INGO resources should support indigenous peoples (assuming an equal number of non-indigenous people are equally badly off) and the already extensive gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous achievement should continue to grow.

The consequentialist can respond in one of two ways. First, one could reject that equality is inherently valuable, and therefore accept the implication that INGO resources should sometimes be distributed in very unequal ways just as long as such inequalities do not have negative long-run consequences. Pogge asks us to imagine a hypothetical INGO distributing food aid in an emergency which must select who should be the recipient of aid, knowing that those who do not receive assistance may die. He also stipulates that more people will be saved who have the lowest caloric needs, and many women have lower caloric needs than men. ‘Facing this question, I think we ought to apply optimizing selection rules to the situation. We ought to protect 20 men and 65 women, for example, if doing so enables 85 people to survive instead of the 80 that would survive if we chose to protect equal numbers of men and women.’

In this case I have an intuition that INGOs ought not save more people if marginally more survivors results in much greater inequity. Would we want to say that the INGO should only protect 1 adult man and save 84 women if doing so would produce the most survivors? Or suppose 100 black people and 100 white people need food aid, and we only have enough for 100 people, and all of the white people happen to have lower caloric needs than all of the black people. I would argue we should save fewer total people to avoid saving all of the white people and none of the black people. Or, suppose in some other hypothetical case, it is cheaper to serve men than women. Should a program target 100% men and 0% women if this is what the math tells us to do? I find this highly implausible, and I suspect others would as well. How can we justify this intuition? We need to appeal to concerns that extend beyond individual need and harm reduction. We must appeal to concern for group-based inequalities. Such concern can be reflected both in the allocation of INGO resources (that is, with a concern for unequally distributing resources so as to privilege some groups over others) and in the outcomes (that is, concern for a state of affairs in which some groups are disproportionately deprived).

The importance of addressing inequality can be seen more clearly if we remove the weight of lives lost from the hypothetical example. Suppose that an INGO seeks to provide decent sanitation facilities. It can reach 100 urban non-indigenous people per project or reach 75 rural indigenous people, all of whom are equally badly off, and equally in need of sanitation facilities. It seems plausible that if the indigenous group has been subject to systematic deprivation and is on the whole at least as badly off as other groups in the country, it is plausible to allocate the sanitation project to
the indigenous rural area rather than to the urban area, even though doing so would create less overall harm reduction.

The consequentialist could respond that equality (of the kind I am concerned with) is itself a valuable thing that can be included in moral cost benefit analysis. If so, then consequentialists would have reasons to grant that considerations of equality should influence distributions of resources across populations (including across countries, across genders, across ethnicities, etc.) While I would welcome this move, this very broad consequentialism must then accommodate a host of other morally significant factors (such as desert and agency).

Alternatively, the consequentialist might respond that any distribution of resources is unequal, in so far as some people are recipients and others are not. But this misses the point of the objection. Some distributions of resources will exacerbate pre-existing inequalities between morally salient groups (such as indigenous and non-indigenous people) while other distributive choices will combat these inequalities. Deontological or teleological accounts of INGO resource distribution can justify explicitly combating pre-existing inequalities, even when doing so would have less moral value for badly off individuals than would alternative resource allocation schemes.

Applicability

Finally, the long run moral value maximization calculation is particularly difficult to make, and it would be almost paralyzing to try to act on this principle. Imagine the foreseeable but nearly impossible to predict events that will change the moral value maximization calculation in the coming years: a tsunami hits; war breaks out; a government changes hands; a new drug is released, and so on. The inputs for the moral value calculation are constantly changing, and any serious long run projections will be riddled with uncertainty.

The consequentialist might object that a decision procedure should be employed that takes account of epistemic uncertainty about the moral value calculation in the future. (Pogge explicitly builds in a probability weighted component to his prioritarian, consequentialist principle). Alternatively, the consequentialist could simply argue for projects in those areas and sectors that have the lowest degree of future uncertainty. Furthermore, the consequentialist might respond that any account of how INGOs should act will face difficulties in applicability.

On the applicability problem, deontological, teleological, and pluralist positions fare better. Given that in many cases one cannot know the consequences of a given resource allocation, and in many more cases one does not know the likely consequences, other theories will fare much better, in that some higher degree of certainty can be achieved in knowing whether the resource allocation is consistent with the moral reasons that are identified as relevant for consideration. Uncertainty about future consequences is simply less troublesome for non-consequentialist theories that appeal to a plurality of moral reasons.
MORAL REASONS TO GUIDE INGO RESOURCE ALLOCATION

There are a number of moral reasons that should influence resource allocation and moral priorities for INGOs. In no particular order, I list seven reasons here.

The first two are already recognized by the prioritarian consequentialist. First, individuals’ need, or amount of harm currently suffered, is a relevant moral consideration in resource allocation. Second, the consequences (or benefit or harm reduction) that accrue to those individuals are a relevant moral consideration.

The third is equity. INGOs cannot reach every individual, or provide every individual access to their resources. INGO resource allocation cannot be equitable in the sense that each receives an equal amount, or each receives in proportion to her need or desert. But INGO resource allocation can be governed in part by equity in another sense: everything else being equal, an INGO’s resource allocation should be designed to attempt not to exacerbate existing (horizontal or vertical) inequalities, and, when possible, should reduce these inequalities. That is, if an INGO is selecting between assisting two groups in equal need, but one is systematically disadvantaged in the society and another is not, concern for equity would move the decision in favor of reducing horizontal inequalities.

The fourth is relational. INGOs may have greater reasons to operate in certain areas either as reparation for harms that they have committed or as reparation for harms committed by others to which they are morally connected. In the first kind of case, an INGO may have harmed people through their own conduct, either directly or indirectly. In these cases, as Pogge argues, the INGO has a very strong reason, almost always decisive, to make reparations to those they have harmed.

There is a different kind of harming relationship, also recognized by Pogge in his recommendations for INGO resource allocation and the centerpiece of his global justice project, that might guide INGO resource allocation. In some cases, an INGO may bear some kind of associative duties of reparation to individuals whose harm they did not cause. For example, US-based INGOs may have greater reason to provide assistance to refugees from the Iraq war than other INGOs. Because they are based in the USA, funded largely by US donors, and presumably employing a large number of Americans, even if these INGOs have not committed any harm (and may have even advocated against the harms that some people suffered), they may be a vehicle through which duties of reparation are discharged. US-based INGOs may, therefore, give greater weight to the suffering of Iraqi refugees given the USA role in the harm they suffered.

There may be a third kind of relational reason that INGOs may bring to bear on their resource allocation decision making. They may take into account other relational connections to a particular harm even if the INGO has no direct or indirect causal relationship to the harm suffered. For example, the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) has been a forceful advocate for genocide prevention. There is no clear harming relationship, either direct or indirect, between AJWS and victims in Sudan. But, the organization, given its explicitly religious makeup, does have an associational relationship with genocide. It, therefore, strikes me as entirely plausible
for AJWS to invoke this relationship as one kind of moral reason to justify allocating greater resources toward genocide prevention, even if such allocations have less moral efficiency than other alternative allocations. This associational reason can justify at least some departure from maximizing moral harm reduction.

The fifth is desert. Desert may be morally significant for INGOs in two distinct ways: first, they may consider suffering-based desert. Some individuals or groups may be more deserving of INGO resources than others because they have been victims of great injustice, or suffered in distinctive or especially morally abhorrent ways even if they are not as badly off as others. For example, survivors of the Holocaust may have been deserving of support from INGOs even if, following the end of World War II, many other people on earth were worse off than they were. INGOs should also take account of effort-based desert. Some individuals and groups are deserving of INGO resources in virtue of their efforts to combat injustice, secure rights, and improve well-being. For example, there was no period in which black South Africans were the worst off people on the planet. Nonetheless, the mere fact of a strong anti-apartheid movement combating gross racial injustice was a significant, stand alone moral reason to support black South Africans and their allies in the struggle against apartheid. They were deserving, not only as victims of injustice but also as agents organizing against injustice.

This leads us to the sixth normatively significant consideration, agency. The degree to which a project or resource allocation respects the agency of individuals is in itself morally significant, independent of the instrumental value of respecting partner agency. Agency can influence INGO distribution in two countervailing ways. First, if a particular project is opposed by its intended beneficiaries, then this is a near-decisive reason to reject the distribution, even if the foreseeable consequences of the project are still very good. Second, if a particular individual or group of individuals has organized and called for support of a particular campaign or project, this is a morally significant reason to support them. Such solidarity with organized activists resisting their own oppression should be encouraged by INGO resource allocation.

There is one final moral reason that deserves consideration. There is an expressive component to moral action that is frequently overlooked. The allocation of INGO resources should not be evaluated simply by only what that allocation achieves but also by what it says. When INGOs allocate resources to a given project, sector, or advocacy effort, they should be concerned not only with the likely outcomes that will be produced but the moral statement that is made by that allocation. External human rights advocacy against violations of civil and political rights in China, for example, seems to have had very little effect on the conduct of the Chinese government. But, despite this low probability of success, INGOs should allocate resources to human rights advocacy on China simply to morally condemn those human rights violations, and to call on others to join in this condemnation.

The consequentialist can respond that each of these reasons requires privileging certain groups (based on agency, desert, or the desire to condemn moral wrongs) at the cost of not allocating resources to other projects and programs that would result in much more harm reduction for badly off individuals. When I recommend
allocating resources to the condemnation of Chinese human rights abuses with the expectation that very little change will occur in the country, I do so at the expense of potentially very morally cost-effective harm reduction elsewhere. And, these reasons (need and harm reduction achieved) certainly should carry significant weight. I merely intend to suggest that there may be other moral reasons that can justify some further deviation from the prioritarian, consequentialist principle for resource allocation than can help explain INGO resource allocation toward projects that are more costly, or less likely to succeed than alternative allocations.

CONCLUSION

Like Pogge, I am not convinced this settles the discussion. But, I hope to have given a credible case for thinking (a) that although INGOs ought not endorse the distributive fairness constraint, they ought to maintain a reasonably wide allocation of resources and (b) that a plurality of moral reasons should be brought to bear on the question of how INGOs should allocate resources. What I have not done here is to provide any information on how these pluralist reasons can be weighed against each other to make decisions regarding resource allocation. At a minimum, INGOs should give some weight to each of the reasons, and be transparent in the reasons they provide for any given resource allocation.

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NOTES

1. Danshen You, Gareth Jones, and Tessa Wardlaw. ‘Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: Report 2010’ (New York: UNICEF, 2010). Food and Agriculture Organization, The State of Food Insecurity in the World: Addressing Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises (Rome: Food and Agricultural Association, 2010) UNICEF, Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water: 2010 Update (Geneva: UNICEF, 2010) World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011); World Health Organization, WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2005).

2. Hudson Institute, The Index of Global Philanthropy and Remittances, 2010, p. 7. This is a small minority of the total $290 billion given each year in total philanthropic giving by Americans. See Giving USA 2011, ‘Executive Summary’, The Annual Report on Giving for Year 2010, p. 4.

3. There is an important question that is best set aside for the purposes of this article. To what extent must an NGO undertake to fulfill the wishes of its donors? I assume that an NGO and its agents act wrongly if they misallocate resources to serve ends that are not consistent with the organization’s mandate, even if it is toward a morally good, or even much morally better, cause. If the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria was secretly
allocating their resources to reducing violence against women, that would be morally wrong, even if doing so would bring about more harm reduction.

4. Peter Singer seems to hold a similar view. Peter Singer, The Life You Can Save (New York: Random House, 2009), 105–25.

5. It of course bears noting, as most readers are well aware, that Pogge is not generally a consequentialist. Rather, he argues for global justice reform from a very ecumenical, minimalist position that emphasizes deontological obligations to stop harming the global poor through our actions. However, once one has established moral obligations to rectify or mitigate global injustice, agents ought to select among the range of feasible alternatives that are available for discharging their duties which brings about the most harm reduction. His broad prioritarian consequentialism regarding INGO resource allocation presents no inconsistency with his broader project: in fact, it is entirely consistent with his two step process of (a) minimalist deontological justification followed by (b) pragmatist consequential reform of which the Health Impact Fund is but one example.

6. Thomas Pogge, ‘Moral Priorities for International Human Rights NGOs’, in Ethics in Action. The Ethical challenges of International Human Rights Nongovernmental Organizations, eds. Bell D. and Coicaud J. M. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 228.

7. Ibid., 241.

8. Ibid., 224–25.

9. Ibid., 238.

10. Ibid., 247–48.

11. ‘Given the current mismatch between total INGO resources and the vast scale of severe deprivations, INGOs face vital choices about where to operate. This kind of primary decision cannot be made in consultation with local partners and the deprived themselves because their identities cannot be known in advance of the decisions. Furthermore, it is simply infeasible to involve potential partners and potential beneficiaries from all poor regions in such primary decisions making.’ Ibid., 248.

12. More on this reason below.

13. Ibid., 231–32.

14. Ibid., 231. See the text for Pogge’s critique of the Collier and Dollar paper, and thus his qualified use of it. Also see Paul Collier and David Dollar, ‘Aid Allocation and Poverty Reduction’, European Economic Review 46 (2002): 1475–500.

15. See the excellent new website by the Overseas Development Institute, available online at www.developmentprogress.org (accessed October 31, 2011).

16. For the classic statement of this view, see Robert Chambers, Whose Reality Counts: Putting the First Last (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1997).

17. At the micro level, there is a very high turnover rate of families both into and out of poverty. Anirudh Krishna’s work on the Stages of Progress method has shown that even within communities in which the poverty rate is static from year to year, some families will have moved out of poverty, whereas others will have moved into poverty. See Anirudh Krishna, ‘Studying Poverty in Dynamic Contexts: The Need of New Methods’, in Poverty Dynamics: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, eds. Tony Addision, David Hulme, and Ravi Kanbur (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 183–201 and ‘The Stages-of-Progress Methodology and Results from Five Countries’, in Reducing Global Poverty: The Case for Asset Accumulation, ed. Moser C. O. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2007), 62–83. This can also be seen at the country level as well. Compare, for example, Russia in 1988 and Russia in 1993, or Rwanda in 1992 and Rwanda in 1995.

18. Failure to sufficiently intervene in the years preceding the Rwandan genocide, which might have appeared as a relatively small conflict, made 1994 much more violent than it otherwise would have been, and the subsequent years much more violent for the broader the Great Lakes region. ‘The slide from what had been a nationally focused genocide into a global war had one basic cause: there was no political treatment of the genocide in Rwanda by the
international community. No efforts were made to prevent it, no efforts were made to stop it, and not efforts were made to remonstrate with those who spoke in the name of the victims when they started to abuse their role. Mature political treatment was replaced by humanitarian condescension and diplomatic bickering.’ Gerard Prunier, *Africa’s World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 47.

19. See, for example, Duncan Green, *From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World* (Oxford: Oxfam International, 2008).

20. ‘The cult of “results-based management” imposed by government funders can bias the activity of INGOs and their local partners toward short-term, measureable results and away from efforts to promote longer term change and respect for rights. It is easier to measure how many clinics or school places have been created than the extent to which attitudes to women’s rights have changed’. Ibid., 373–74. Andrew Natsios, former administrator of USAID, in a scathing critique of the development ‘counter-bureaucracy’ argues that ‘those development programs that are most precisely and easily measured are the least transformational, and those programs that are most transformational are the least measurable.’ Andrew Natsios, ‘The Clash of the Counter-Bureaucracy and Development.’ Center for Global Development Essay (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2010), p. 4.

21. Rosalind Eyebend, of the Institute for Development Studies, has recently promoted a big push back against the paradigm that privileges measureable, actionable results. She writes, ‘In my book *Relationships for Aid*, I wrote about the international aid culture that ignores power, relations, the partiality of knowledge and complexity, and pretends there are no surprises and unplanned consequences. In the last couple of years, it has only got worse. British government aid (DFID) is now imposing extraordinary demands in terms of reporting against indicators of achievement that bear little relation to the manner and possibilities donor-funded activities have for supporting social transformation. Researchers and NGOs in other European countries report a similar phenomenon. And because the pressure is coming from international donors, we know that the same trend is being experienced all over Aidland. Theoretical and contested concepts such as civil society, capacity or policy become reified and then numbers assigned to the reification e.g. “state the number of policies influenced.” Answers are required to absurd value-for-money questions in which institutions are considered as if they were motor cars.

Last year a government donor organization asked me “what evidence exists of the relative cost, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and quality demonstrated by civil society organisations, in comparison to the UN or profit-making organisations?” That was the moment when I decided it was time for a big push back.’ Rosalind Eyeben, ‘The Big Push Back!’, Hauser Center Blog, available online at http://hausercenter.org/iha/2010/10/11/the-big-push-back/ (accessed October 11, 2010).

22. Death Penalty Information Center, ‘Facts about the Death Penalty’, available online at http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/FactSheet.pdf (accessed November 2010).

23. See Aryeh Neier, ‘The Attack on Human Rights Watch’, *New York Review of Books* 53, (2006).

24. Widney Brown, ‘Amnesty International, Moazzamm Begg and Gita Sahgal’, available online at http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/22645/ (accessed March 3, 2010).

25. Pogge ‘Moral Priorities’, 232–33.

26. There arguably would be no antigenocide movement if we followed consequentialist principles, as the costs of preventing conflict and providing aid in conflict are quite high, and the chances of success are much lower than in many other areas of harm reduction. Certainly these students should have been reflective of their choices—does our activism on this issue produce good outcomes? Are they evading more difficult tasks for problematic reasons? But we must distinguish between that which we have caused, that for which we are
nonetheless responsible even if we did not cause it, and that which we have merely failed to prevent. It may be that the failure to prevent bad things from happening creates some obligation on wealthy westerners. But when individuals are doing quite a bit to discharge their duties regarding prevention, well beyond their fair share, it seems plausible to me that they do not owe justification to those who are not aided.

27. I suspect this is only true in a broad sense. For example, if an INGO does not operate in Peru, I doubt they have to provide justification to Peruvians. However, when the implications of INGO operations will have political ramifications, for example working in one part of a slum rather than another, then they surely must justify that decision to the non-beneficiaries because of the potential political ramifications that could result from such a decision.

28. The question of what will count as a morally adequate procedure, and who the participants should be in such a procedure, is an important one, but I cannot take it up here. Potentially, INGO board members and staff, donors, and actual or potential beneficiaries are all candidate participants in such a procedure, and potentially all of their interests should have some bearing on the outcome. For one internal procedural mechanism, see Samia Hurst, Nathalie Mezger, and Alex Mauron. ‘Allocating Resources in Humanitarian Medicine’ Public Health Ethics 2, no. 1 (2009): 89–99.

29. Pogge, ‘Moral Priorities’, 236.

30. There may be two issues at play here. The first is the apparent inequality of distributing resources so that no individual women are recipients. The second is a distinct but related point about the unit of analysis we should use in making assessments of social justice. One view, argued by Iris Marion Young, is that we must identify structural inequalities by reference to groups such as gender, class, race, and age. If correct, and there are justice claims to be made in the distribution of INGO resources, then it may support arguments against strictly individualistic, consequentialist distribution of resources. Iris Marion Young, ‘Equality of Whom? Social Groups and Judgments of Injustice’, Journal of Political Philosophy 9, (2001): 1–18. Similar work on the importance of addressing group-based inequalities has recently gained considerable support in development studies. See Naila Kabeer, ‘Can the MDGs provide a pathway to social justice?’, (New York: United Nations Development Program, 2010); United Nations Research Institution for Social Development, Combating Poverty and Inequality: Structural Change, Social Policy, and Politics (Geneva: UNRISD, 2010); F. Stewart, ‘Horizontal inequalities: A neglected dimension of development’, QEH Working Paper No. 81 (Oxford: Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 2000).

31. For a useful account of how INGOs actually do claim to distribute their resources, see Jennifer C. Rubenstein, ‘The Distributive Commitments of International NGOs’, in Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics, eds. Barnett M. and Weiss M. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 215–34.

32. See Pogge ‘Moral Priorities’, 249–54. Of course, there may be other reasons for INGOs to reject such a role in ameliorating state harm, particularly if they viewed such action as implicitly condoning or encouraging future state harm.

33. This view is broadly shared by Lisa Fuller, who argues that INGOs are ‘organizations of principle’ and thus have the latitude to act to uphold certain values, within some limited constraints. See her article ‘Priority-setting in international non-governmental organizations: its not as easy as ABCD’ forthcoming in Journal of Global Ethics. Fortunately for readers interested in this subject, Fuller also has a forthcoming book on the topic of allocating aid. Carens also suggests conceiving of INGOs as independent agents who can act from a diverse set of viewpoints. See Joseph Carens, ‘The Problem of Doing Good in a World that Isn’t: Reflections on the Ethical Challenges Facing INGOs’, in Ethics in Action: The Ethical challenges of International Human Rights Nongovernmental Organizations, eds. Bell D. and Coicaud J. M. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 257–72.
34. There is a second class of context-related reasons that deserve consideration, although I cannot give them full treatment here. First, the political and practical feasibility of a particular project or program matters. Second, concern with institutional displacement or corrosion of state institutions (the only institutions that can properly guarantee rights) might deter any particular INGO resource allocation. Third, INGOs ought not work in certain areas if it brings too much risk of serious harm to either their employees or local communities.