



What is foreign aid?

KS2

KS3

Ages 7-14 ⌚ 2 min read

Foreign aid is when one country gives money, goods, or services to another country to help solve problems or improve people's lives. It's a bit like when your neighbour brings over a casserole when your family is going through a tough time — except instead of casseroles, we're talking about billions of pounds, medical supplies, or teams of engineers.

Why Countries Give Aid

Countries give **foreign aid** for several reasons. Sometimes it's genuine kindness — wealthy nations want to help poorer countries fight diseases, build schools, or recover from natural disasters. But there are often practical reasons too. Countries might give aid to make friends with important allies, to help create stable trading partners, or even to gain influence in different parts of the world.

Think of foreign aid like lending your football to the new kid at school. You might do it because you want to be kind, but you also hope they'll want to be your friend and maybe share their crisps at lunch.

Different Types of Aid

Not all aid looks the same. **Emergency aid** rushes to help after earthquakes, floods, or wars — things like tents, clean water, and medical care. **Development aid** is more long-term, helping countries build better hospitals, roads, or farming systems. Then there's **military aid**, where countries provide weapons or training to help allies defend themselves.

Some aid comes as gifts that never need to be paid back, whilst other aid comes as loans with very low interest rates. Occasionally, aid comes with strings attached — the receiving country might have to agree to buy certain products from the giving country or follow specific rules.

Does Aid Actually Work?

This is where things get complicated. Foreign aid has definitely saved millions of lives and helped many countries develop better infrastructure and healthcare systems. Countries like South Korea and Botswana have used aid effectively to transform their economies.

However, aid doesn't always work as intended. Sometimes corrupt governments steal the money, or aid creates dependency rather than helping countries become self-sufficient. Critics argue that aid can sometimes do more harm than good if it's not carefully planned and managed.

The truth is that foreign aid works best when receiving countries have good leadership, clear plans, and when donor countries stick around for the long haul rather than just dropping off help and disappearing.