

Türkiye's Development Assistance: Current Status and the Perspective of the 12th Development Plan

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Abstract

Türkiye's development assistance has evolved significantly, positioning the country as a key global donor. Since 1990, Türkiye has increased its aid, focusing on regions with historical, cultural, and strategic ties, such as Central Asia, the Balkans, the Middle East, and Africa. Through institutions like TİKA, the Turkish Red Crescent, and the Maarif Foundation, Türkiye provides aid in areas such as education, health, infrastructure, agriculture, and humanitarian relief. The country's development model emphasizes cooperation, mutual benefit, and sustainability rather than traditional hegemonic aid approaches. Türkiye's assistance strategy aligns with its foreign policy goals and is shaped by national development plans, including the Twelfth Development Plan. This plan emphasizes technical cooperation, infrastructure development, energy, digitalization, and migration management. The plan also encourages increased collaboration with international organizations and NGOs, aiming for more effective aid delivery and regional cooperation, particularly in Africa. Türkiye's development assistance prioritizes demand-driven aid while integrating economic and strategic objectives. By strengthening coordination among public, private, and civil society actors, Türkiye aims to enhance the impact and sustainability of its aid programs. This comprehensive approach not only increases Türkiye's global influence but also contributes to international development cooperation.

Keywords: *Development assistance, technical aid programs, financial aid programs*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Official development assistance refers to the transfer of resources, experience, and technical capacity from developed to underdeveloped or developing countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2015). Its historical origins date back to the United Kingdom's resource transfers to its colonies in the 19th century (Little & Clifford, 2009). The first modern implementation was the Marshall Aid for Western Europe's post-World War II reconstruction. In the post-Cold War era, development assistance became a tool for promoting liberal policies, trade liberalization, and structural reforms under the Washington Consensus (Pettinger, 2017; Williamson, 2004). However, aid misuse in some African countries led to the integration of democracy as a parameter in development assistance (Bermeo, 2011; Brown, 2005). Over time, new actors and practices have emerged, and globalization has allowed developing countries to become donors. The EU's enlargement policies and the U.S. "War on Terror" have also influenced development assistance (Mawdsley, 2012). More recently, Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine have shifted priorities towards health and crisis management (OECD, 2021; OECD, 2022; U.S. Department of State, 2022).

Official development assistance (ODA), representing total public aid provided by donor countries, has historically risen from 39.9 billion USD in 1960 to 212.9 billion USD in 2023. However, the ODA/Gross National Income (GNI) ratio of OECD-DAC member countries, traditionally dominant donors like the U.S., Germany, the UK, and Japan, declined from 0.49% in 1960 to 0.43% in 2023, falling short of the UN's 0.7% target. Traditional donors aim to gain allies, strengthen trade ties, maintain global security, and secure international support. However, criticism has emerged regarding their centralized and bureaucratic aid models, which often fail to address local needs effectively (Easterly & Pfutze, 2008). Calls for more flexible, locally focused solutions have led to reforms, notably the 2005 Paris Declaration, emphasizing ownership, local priorities, results orientation, and accountability.

Emerging donors distinguish themselves with rapid, small-scale project implementation, partnerships with recipient countries, and a win-win approach. Their motivations include increasing regional and global influence, gaining credibility, accessing new markets, and supporting foreign policies. Unlike traditional donors, emerging donors are heterogeneous, characterized by economic growth and expanding roles in development assistance.

International organizations also play a crucial role in development assistance. Funds transferred to them are categorized as "multilateral aid" by the OECD-DAC. Donors use multilateral aid to enhance visibility and expertise in unfamiliar regions. Organizations like the World Bank and IMF promote structural reforms and free-market policies through conditional loans (Heckelman & Knack, 2008), but they face criticism over high administrative costs and inefficiencies (Easterly, 2002). NGOs have also grown as key actors, providing significant aid through special grants.

The composition of aid recipients has evolved, with low-income countries consistently receiving the largest share. Sub-Saharan Africa has remained the leading aid recipient. Over time, in-kind aid to less developed countries has decreased, while funding for social infrastructure has increased. Covid-19 significantly impacted development assistance, with ODA increasing in 2021 to address the crisis. However, the surge was insufficient to meet global needs. The pandemic prompted donors to increase aid, introduce debt relief, and expand financial assistance mechanisms. Additionally, macroeconomic challenges in 2022 and the Ukraine war heightened demand for aid (Eichengreen, 2022), diverting resources toward short-term relief at the expense of long-term projects.

Türkiye has significantly increased its development assistance since 1990, focusing on regions with historical and cultural ties, such as Central Asia, the Balkans, the Middle East, and Africa. Türkiye's aid spans humanitarian relief, health, education, infrastructure, agriculture, and rural development, with refugee expenditures playing a key role. Aid initiatives are conducted through institutions and NGOs such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Turkish Red Crescent, Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), and Türkiye Diyanet Foundation.

Türkiye's approach to development assistance emphasizes mutual cooperation and solidarity, aiming for sustainable development through long-term partnerships. Unlike hegemonic aid models, Türkiye fosters collaborative and humanitarian projects, extending support to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island States. This cooperative model reflects Türkiye's commitment to inclusive and needs-based development assistance.

This study aims to assess Türkiye's strategic priorities in the field of development assistance and the effectiveness of its implementation in this field. The research questions of this research can be listed as;

1. What is the current status of Türkiye's development assistance and through which main instruments is it provided?
2. How should Türkiye's development assistance be shaped in the perspective of the Twelfth Development Plan and what is the impact of this plan on development assistance?

2. METHODOLOGY

This research evaluates Türkiye's strategic priorities in development assistance and the effectiveness of its practices. A case study design is employed to assess the effectiveness of these strategies, providing a detailed analysis of a specific phenomenon within its context (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

2.1. Data Collection

Data collection includes OECD-Stats data, expert opinions, and document review. OECD data from the OECD statistical database provides comprehensive insights into Türkiye's position, regional distributions, diversity, and economic impacts in development assistance. Expert opinions are gathered through focus group interviews with representatives from academia, public and private sectors, civil society, and international agencies. Document review involves analyzing official reports, strategic plans, and publications from international organizations.

2.2. Study Group

The study group consists of 20 participants, all of whom are affiliated with different institutions and actively engaged in development assistance activities. The group is composed of nine senior practitioners from public institutions, two representatives from organizations responsible for financing development assistance initiatives, three academics, and six representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are actively involved in field operations. This diverse composition ensures a comprehensive perspective on development assistance policies, financing mechanisms, and field-level implementation.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data are analyzed using qualitative methods. OECD quantitative data are examined to assess the impact of development assistance at national and global levels. Expert opinions and document reviews are analyzed thematically to identify Türkiye's strategic focus in international development and its potential role in global cooperation.

2.4. Validity and Reliability

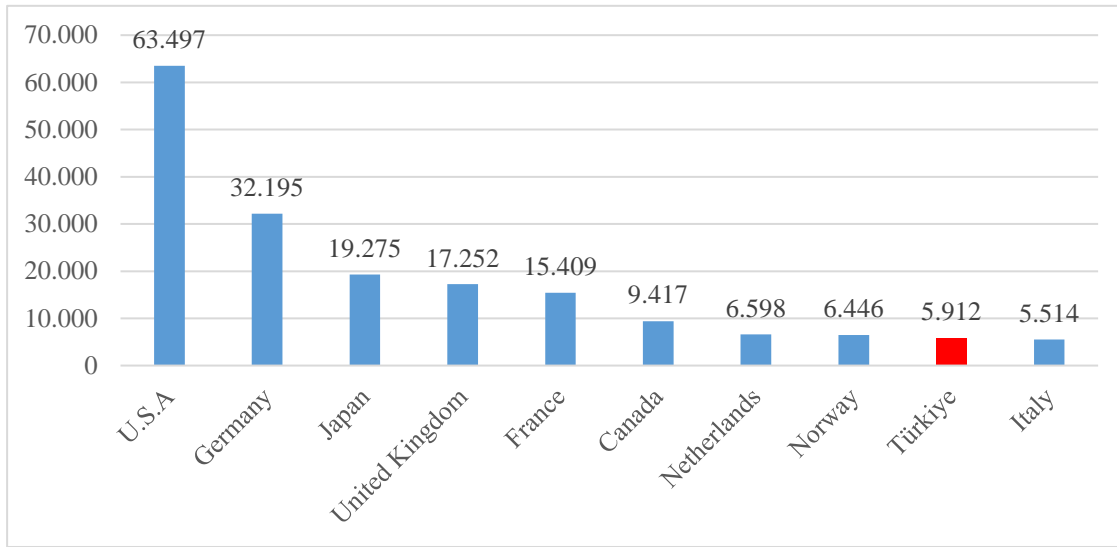
The validity and reliability of data collection methods used in the research was ensured by the diversity of data sources. OECD data, is internationally recognized as a reliable and valid source of data, provided a robust quantitative foundation, while qualitative data sources have offered different perspectives and in-depth information.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Current Status of Türkiye's Development Assistance and Main Instruments Used

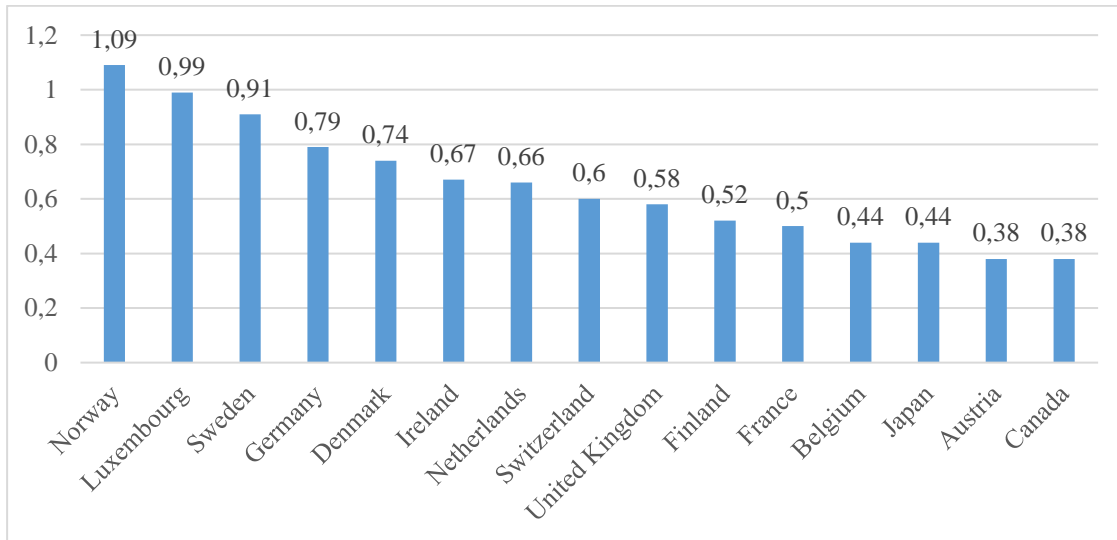
Türkiye, an emerging donor since the Cold War, received 69.2 billion USD in development assistance from 1960 to 2022. In the period from 1990 to 2022, Türkiye provided 66.96 billion USD in ODA, surpassing DAC members such as Belgium, Austria, Finland, Ireland, and Portugal. Between 2018 and 2022, Türkiye provided 40.84 billion USD in ODA, accounting for 61% of the total aid in the previous 32 years, highlighting a significant increase in development assistance and reinforcing Türkiye's prominence among donor countries.

Chart 1. Top 10 Aid Providers (2023/Million USD)



According to OECD Data Explorer (2024) With an ODA of 5 billion 912 million USD in 2023, Türkiye was the ninth largest aid donor (Chart 1). Chart 2 shows the ODA/GNI ratios of the top 15 aid donors (OECD Data Explorer, 2024). Considering that DAC member countries have an average ODA/GNI ratio of 0.43 percent, it is clear that Türkiye is one of the most generous countries in the world with an ODA/GNI ratio of 0.6 percent.

Chart 2. ODA/GNI Ratio of Top Aid Providers (2023/percent)



According to the World Bank, Türkiye is classified as an upper-middle-income country and is also listed as an aid beneficiary by the DAC. Türkiye's engagement with development assistance dates back to the post-World War II era, when it received aid under the Marshall Plan. Since then, Türkiye has received a total of 69.16 billion USD in development assistance from major donors, including the United States, Japan, Germany, the UK, and EU organizations. Türkiye's top 10 donors are described in Table 1 (OECD Data Explorer, 2024).

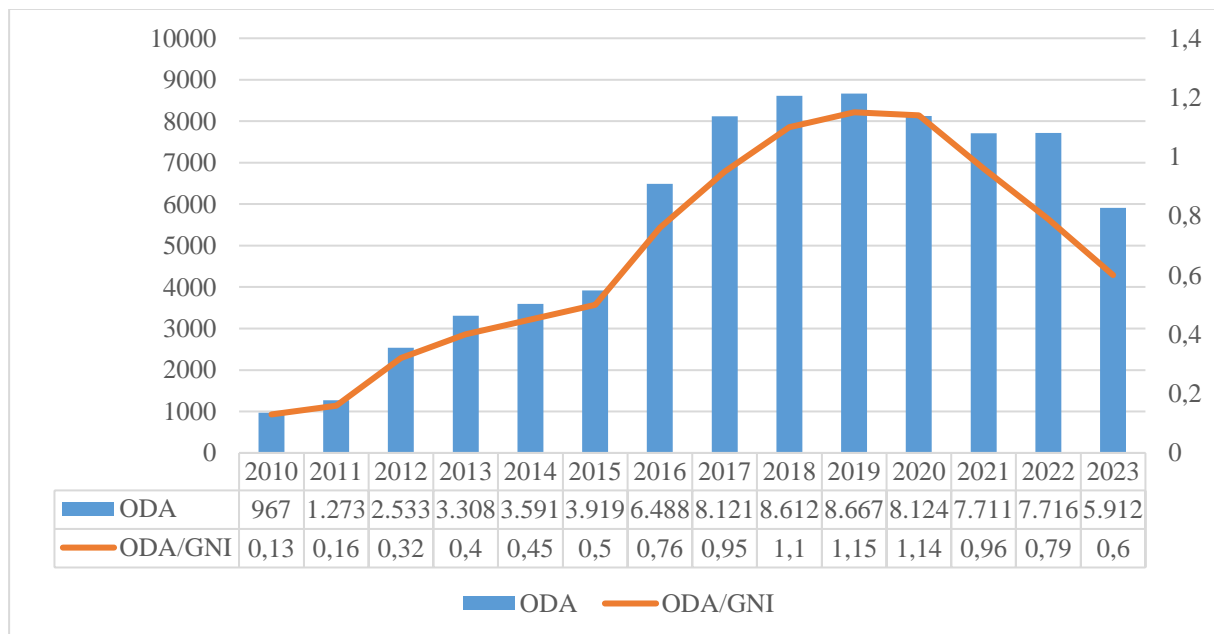
Table 1. Türkiye's Top 10 Donors (Million USD)

	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2023	Total
EU Institutions	482.7	889.0	403,6	411.0	3,848.3	18,117.4	24,152.0
USA	8,377.8	2,044.2	2,098.6	-80.2	-144.7	647.8	12,943.5
Germany	1,454.2	2,132.2	3,170.0	928.1	-298.0	2,944.8	10,331.3
France	192.8	94.8	352.4	533.3	680.0	1,358.5	3,211.8
Japan	6.8	188.3	951.8	868.1	587.3	331.1	2,933.4
United Kingdom	781.1	142.4	180.7	73.3	-1.1	716.2	1,892.6
UN Institutions	179.8	427.2	230.8	167.7	102.8	129.8	1,238.1
Italy	478.9	132.9	235.7	93.9	-63.7	352.9	1,230.6
Austria	66.0	57.9	322.9	108.6	244.2	412.8	1,212.4
Kuwait	0.0	1.8	124.8	944.7	81.9	-92.8	1,060.4
Total	12,020.1	6,110.6	8,071.3	4,048.4	5,036.9	24,918.4	60,205.7

Note: Donor ranking is based on the total amount of aid provided in the 1960-2023 period.

Türkiye's historical and cultural ties with newly independent states in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Balkans have provided significant opportunities for development assistance. Leveraging its experience in democracy and development, Türkiye has strengthened relations with these regions. Since the early 2000s, Türkiye has steadily increased its ODA (OECD Data Explorer, 2024), reaching a ratio of 0.40 percent of GNI in 2013, surpassing countries like the UK and Germany. By 2017, Türkiye's ODA/GNI ratio rose to 0.95 percent, making it the fifth-largest donor globally. In 2023, Türkiye's ratio was 0.60 percent, positioning it as the ninth-largest ODA donor relative to GNI (Fidan & Nurdun, 2008).

Chart 3. ODA Provided by Türkiye (Million USD / Percent)



Since 2012, the most important reason for the high increase in aid figures is that many people migrated to Türkiye due to the Syrian crisis that started in 2011. Most of the expenditures for foreigners

under temporary protection status are reported to OECD-DAC as ODA. The regional breakdown of Türkiye's ODA in 2021 is shown in Table 2 (OECD Data Explorer, 2024). Of the USD 6 billion 794 million in aid to the Middle East region, around 98 percent was provided to Syria. This figure clearly shows the impact of the Syrian crisis on Türkiye's aid.

Table 2. Regional Breakdown of Türkiye's Aid (2022)

	Million US Dollars	Percent
Oceania	1.12	0.01
America	22.85	0.30
Africa	59.72	0.77
Europe	104.95	1.36
Asia	5,304.23	68.74
Asia-Middle East	5,205.52	67.46
Asia-Central East-Syria	4,656.34	60.35
Other	1,480.88	19.19

The Donor Reporting System (CRS), the system through which countries classified as official donors by the OECD-DAC report their development assistance, consists of seven main sectors: social infrastructure and services, economic infrastructure and services, production sectors, multiple/overlapping sectors, aid in kind/general program assistance, debt-related transactions and humanitarian assistance. The sectoral breakdown of Türkiye's bilateral development assistance for 2015-2022, as envisaged by the CRS, is presented in Table 3.

In the period covering 2015-2022, Türkiye has provided a total of USD 51 billion 746 million in ODA. Of this figure;

- 78.9 percent (USD 50 billion 163 million) was humanitarian aid;
- 6.3 percent (USD 4 billion 24 million) social infrastructure and services;
- 1 percent (US\$ 640 million) economic infrastructure and services;
- 1.6 percent (USD 1 billion 32 million) for multiple/overlapping sectors;
- 0.3 percent (USD 188 million) in-kind/general program assistance and
- 0.26 percent (USD 166 million) of this amount was allocated to production sectors.

is in the form of humanitarian aid.

When the distribution of aid provided by Türkiye is taken into consideration, it is seen that humanitarian aid takes the lead. As mentioned before, the humanitarian crisis caused by the events in Syria in 2011 is the main reason for this situation. On the other hand, education and health-related aid, which are provided in the context of social infrastructure and services, constitute the second largest item of aid after humanitarian aid. This is one of the concrete reflections of Türkiye's humanitarian development approach in the field.

Table 3. Distribution of Aid Provided by Türkiye

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
1. Social Infrastructure and Services	780.8	421.9	316.2	635.5	605.6	295.8	540	428.3	4,024.00
1.1. Education	120.5	205	144.1	376.8	429.4	220.5	413.9	226.8	2,136.90
1.2. Health	82.2	56.2	77	78.9	39.7	22.4	16.7	45.1	418.2
1.3. Population Policy and Reproductive Health	5.4	0.2	0.2	0.9	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.05	7.35
1.4. Water Supply and Sanitation	4.8	2.7	2.4	5.9	5.8	4.2	13.3	59.9	98.8
1.5. Public and Civil Society	473.6	66.2	40.5	117.6	78.8	17.5	61.9	45.7	901.8
1.6. Other Social Infrastructure and Services	94.4	91.7	52	55.5	51.8	30.7	34.2	50.7	460.8
2. Economic Infrastructure and Services	90.5	156.6	136.7	190.6	19.7	13.8	28.5	3.5	639.9
2.1. Transportation and Storage	10.7	6	2.7	6.2	10.9	2.1	0.9	0.6	40
2.2. Communication	78.8	79.1	10.1	71.5	7.5	7.7	26.6	0.9	282.1
2.3. Energy	0.1	0.4	17.9	0.3	1.1	0.8	0.9	1.1	22.6
2.4. Banking and Financial Services	0.2	0.1	0	0.1	-	0	0.1	0.02	0.52
2.5. Business and Other Services	0.7	71.1	105.9	112.5	0.2	3.3	0.2	0.9	294.7
3. Production Sectors	23.3	20.3	68.3	9.6	9.8	7.8	8.1	19.1	166.3
3.1. Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries	5.9	7.5	4.1	4	5.3	6.7	6.2	15.2	54.9
3.2. Industry, Mining, Construction	0.8	11.6	61.1	0.5	2.7	0.6	1.3	1.8	80.4
3.3.1. Trade Policy and Regulation	16.3	1	2.9	4.7	1.5	0.2	0.2	1.2	28.1
3.3.2. Tourism	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.9	2.9
4. Multiple/overlapping sectors	11.1	46.1	271.7	158.7	186.9	351.7	4.4	1.8	1,032.40
5. In-Kind Aid/General Program Aid	0.9	14.9	47.6	32.8	20.8	32	32.9	5.8	187.7
6. Debt Related Transactions	-	-	-	-	-	3.4	-	-	3.4
7. Humanitarian Aid	2,737.80	5,865.80	7,277.80	7,351.30	7,573.80	7,270.50	6,785.00	5,301.10	50,163.10
Other	451.5	161.8	282.2	54.6	52.4	57.7	229.3	1,212.10	2,501.50
Total	4,095.90	6,687.50	8,400.50	8,433.00	8,469.00	8,032.60	7,627.90	6,971.69	63,548.36

In addition to the bilateral aid of 63 billion 548 million USD between 2015 and 2022, Türkiye provided 1 billion 186 million USD in multilateral aid in the same period as shown in Table 3 (OECD Data Explorer, 2024). In addition, private flows of 3 billion 11 million USD, all in the form of direct investment, were also channeled to developing countries in the same period (OECD-Stat, 2024a). There is very limited information on aid provided through NGOs. Between 2015 and 2022, Türkiye's aid through NGOs amounted to 60 thousand USD each in 2018 and 2019. Except for these two years, there is no data on aid provided through NGOs (OECD-Stat, 2024b).

3.2. Türkiye's Motivations for Providing Development Assistance

Türkiye concentrates its assistance around three main factors. These are humanitarian aid, mainly for refugees; aid to countries with strong historical, political and cultural ties; and aid provided through international organizations.

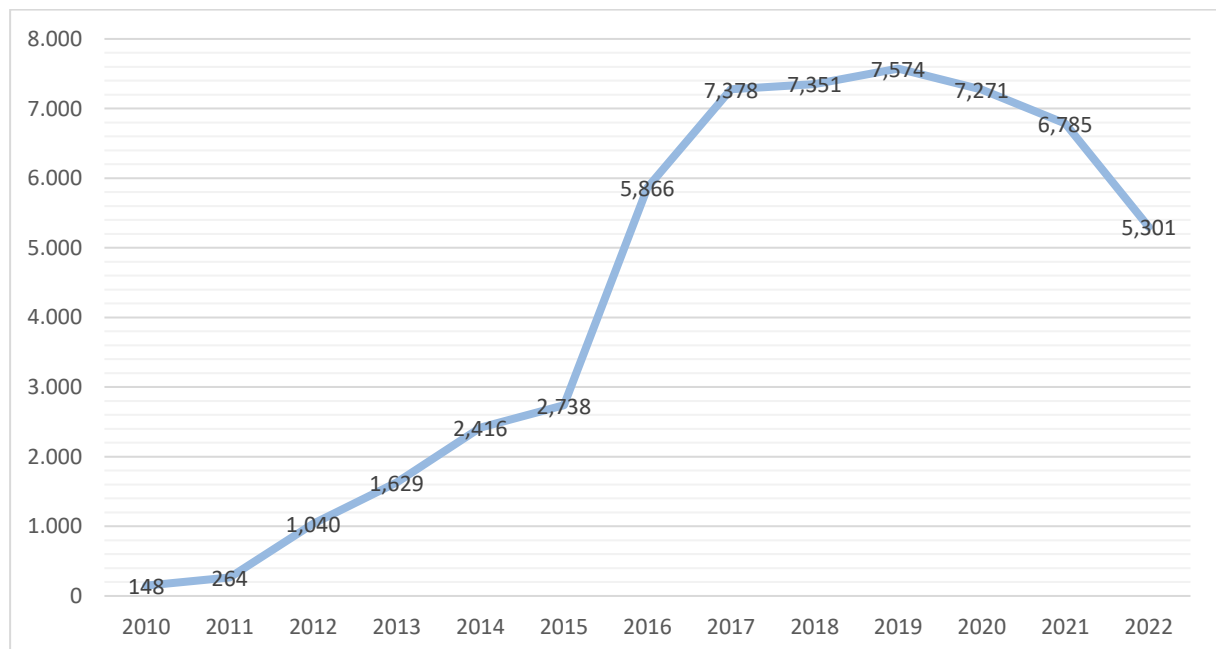
3.2.1. Humanitarian Aid

In the 2015-2022 period, 78.9 percent of Türkiye's development assistance (USD 50 billion 163 million) was allocated to humanitarian aid. The primary reason for this situation is the regional crises caused by the events that started in Syria in 2011. In addition to Türkiye, the Syrian conflict has also directly affected the aid policies of EU countries, which are particularly the destination of Syrian refugees. In order to prevent migration before it reaches their borders, EU countries have provided more development assistance to Syria and other countries on the migration route.

While Türkiye provides fast and effective aid to crisis regions with a humanitarian development approach, EU countries focus on preventing migration. Emerging donors are becoming more visible in humanitarian crises thanks to fewer bureaucratic hurdles.

From USD 148 million in 2010, Türkiye's humanitarian aid has increased over the years, reaching USD 7 billion 574 million in 2019 and USD 5.3 billion by 2022 as shown in Chart 4 (OECD Data Explorer, 2024).

Chart 4. Türkiye's Humanitarian Aid (Current Prices, Million USD)



3.2.2. Historical, Political and Cultural Relations

Türkiye's development assistance is directly influenced by its historical, political and cultural ties. Especially the aid provided to the Central Asian and Balkan countries that gained their

independence after the Cold War is shaped by cultural and historical motivations. Türkiye's aid to these regions has been built on historical past relations and cultural ties.

However, with the changes in foreign policy, the increase in aid to African and Middle Eastern countries has expanded the scope of aid based on political and cultural ties. Türkiye's aid to these regions is built not only on historical ties but also on political relations and cultural similarities.

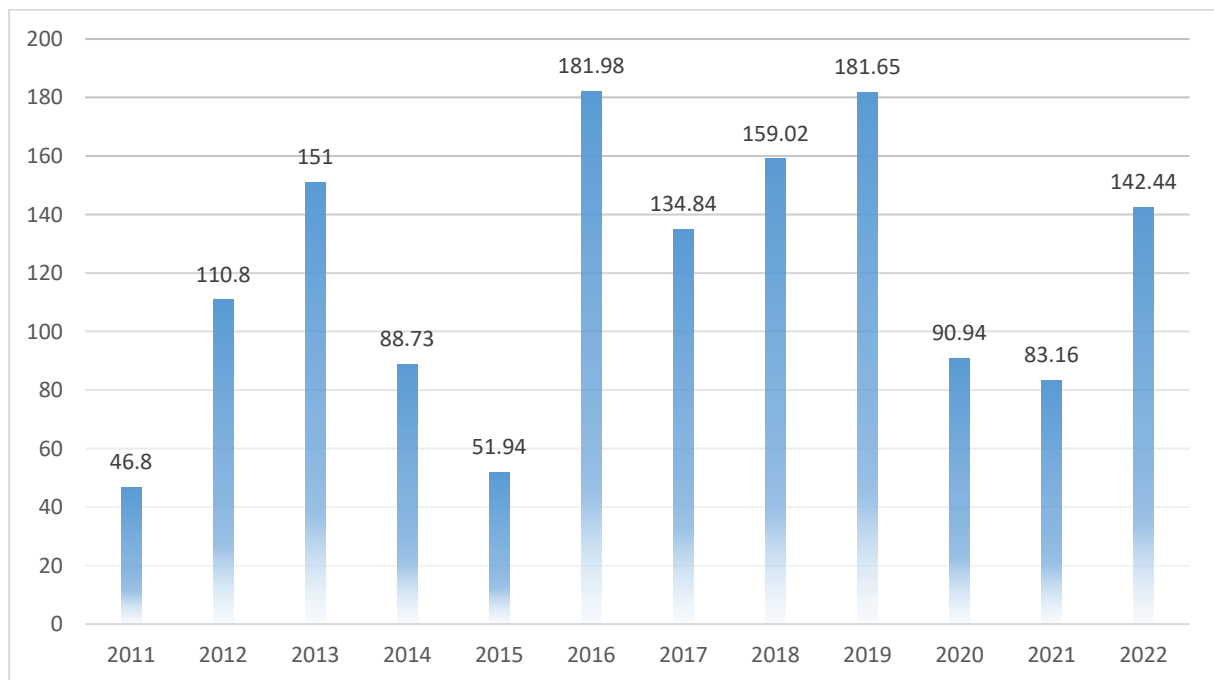
On the other hand, Türkiye also provides assistance to regions and communities with no historical, political or cultural ties. Native Americans, small island states such as Fiji, and various communities have been included in Türkiye's aid activities. It carries out aid activities in line with its “Entrepreneurial and Humanitarian Diplomacy” approach.

3.2.3. Aid through International Organizations

Türkiye has used development assistance as a strategic tool to increase its influence in international and regional organizations, and has developed relations with new countries during its temporary membership in the UNSC. Moreover, the relocation of regional offices of the UN and other international organizations to Türkiye has led to significant gains towards its goal of becoming a global actor. For example, UNDP, the World Health Organization and other UN-affiliated bodies relocated their regional offices to Türkiye.

In the 2011-2022 period, Türkiye's total resources transferred to international organizations amounted to USD 1.42 billion. In the last five years, the average annual contribution reached USD 131.4 million as shown in Chart 5 (OECD Data Explorer, 2024).

Chart 5. Türkiye's Transfer of Resources to International Organizations (Millions of US Dollars).



Similar to traditional donors, Türkiye's aid policy is in line with the principles set by organizations such as the OECD-DAC. By voluntarily adopting these principles and providing aid in line with universal values, Türkiye considers global norms such as the UN Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals as part of its aid policy and aims to contribute to these goals.

3.2.4. Türkiye's Strategic Approach to Development Assistance

Türkiye's development assistance policy, rooted in historical heritage, aims to establish strong relations with neighboring countries through a people-oriented approach, setting it apart from traditional donors. Initially focused on Central Asia, Türkiye's assistance gradually expanded to the Balkans, Africa, and the Middle East, benefiting from historical and cultural ties to better understand regional needs and priorities. Türkiye has also extended its support to special groups, such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island States. The 2011 technical cooperation program commits 200 million USD annually to LDCs and emphasizes knowledge-sharing in areas like trade, technology, education, tourism, agriculture, energy, water management, and climate change. The UN Technology Bank for LDCs, established in Gebze in 2018, is dedicated to strengthening LDCs' capacities in science, technology, and innovation, facilitating technology transfer, and is the only UN organization exclusively focused on LDCs, with Türkiye as its main supporter. Türkiye's foreign policy priorities, set annually by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, align with the development assistance goals in the Tenth (2014-2018) and Eleventh (2019-2023) Development Plans, focusing on improving international cooperation, regional effectiveness, and contributing to global development goals, particularly for emerging economies and LDCs. The Tenth Development Plan was the first comprehensive policy document addressing development assistance. The objectives and components of the program include the following:

- Strengthening Türkiye's development assistance infrastructure legally and strategically.
- Enhancing institutional and human capacity for development assistance across public institutions, private sector, and civil society.
- Raising national awareness and positioning Türkiye as a regional hub for international development assistance.
- Expanding training and research activities for international cooperation.
- Developing and activating foreign relations units within public institutions.
- Strengthening missions abroad to enhance humanitarian aid effectiveness.

Since 2014, Türkiye has increased its development assistance to Central Asia, the Balkans, Africa, and the Middle East, focusing on areas of specialization aligned with its foreign policy priorities. This shift reflects changes in Türkiye's foreign policy approach, emphasizing cooperation and mutual interest over economic and political pressure. TİKA, established in 1992, initially focused on cooperation with cognate communities and has expanded to 63 offices in 61 countries. Restructured in

2011 and affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2018, it continues its activities. Türkiye's development assistance follows a flexible, participatory model tailored to recipient countries' needs, with key institutions like TİKA, AFAD, YTB, YEE, TDV, Turkish Red Crescent, and Maarif Foundation actively involved. This approach enhances Türkiye's soft power and strengthens its role as a regional and global actor.

3.2.5. Turkish Development Assistance in the Context of the 12th Development Plan

In this chapter, in line with Türkiye's foreign policy priorities in technical cooperation and development assistance, and with the aim of providing faster and more permanent solutions to regional and global problems and using resources more effectively, and in line with Türkiye's foreign policy priorities in technical cooperation and development assistance, the actions to be taken to provide faster and permanent solutions to regional and global problems and to use resources more effectively are grouped under three parts, based on the opinions and findings put forward by the representatives of the public, private sector, civil society and academia who are stakeholders in the field of development assistance. Sectoral and thematic priorities, regional and strategic priorities, and methods, tools, models in technical cooperation and development assistance activities are addressed in the following sections.

3.2.5.1. Sectoral and Thematic Priorities

Türkiye's technical cooperation and development assistance activities, carried out through public institutions, organizations, and NGOs, are primarily concentrated in specific sectors such as education, culture, health, and food. These activities should align with the priorities of the recipient country while also reflecting Türkiye's expertise and capacity. Furthermore, in line with global developments, common issues such as migration, climate change, and digitalization have also become significant topics on the global aid agenda.

Education: Türkiye has extensive experience in vocational education, having identified the need for skilled personnel a decade ago and achieved significant progress through infrastructure development. This expertise can be further utilized in technical cooperation to implement projects and programs that promote long-term, sustainable employment. It is considered that *the experience of our country in the field of vocational education can be transformed into a program through TİKA projects and can be reflected to the field with NGOs that have experience in this field.*

The 'Türkiye Scholarships' program, administered by YTB, is a key component of Türkiye's development assistance in education. This program enables successful students from diverse regions to pursue higher education in Türkiye through scholarships. Upon graduation, recipients contribute to their home countries' public or private sectors and may also work in Türkiye's institutions abroad or private sector operations. These scholars foster enduring ties between Türkiye and their home countries, enhancing mutual cooperation and human resource potential. Therefore, *civil society organizations such as "Alumni Associations" should increase their activities to maintain contact with the scholarship*

students. These associations should include not only students benefiting from the Türkiye Scholarships program, but also students who are independently awarded scholarships by our universities and return to their countries after completing their education.

The primary objective of the education sector is to strengthen human capital. Especially *opening development assistance programs and establishing research centers in universities will contribute to increasing human capital.* The necessary steps should be taken by the academy to carry out adequate studies in our universities, to add relevant courses to the curriculum and to train researchers in the field.

Health: The health sector is another area of Türkiye's success, driven by nearly two decades of investment and support. With significant progress in both quality and capacity, Türkiye can leverage this expertise in the context of development assistance. It is thought that *the legislation in force for the operation of health centers built or supported by Türkiye abroad can be improved to solve the problems encountered in the field.*

The most important investment made by Türkiye in health sector, especially in recent years, is the city hospitals. It is possible to transfer the models developed for the construction and operation of these hospitals to the beneficiary countries in the context of technical cooperation. Therefore, *the city hospitals operation model, which provides important experiences in terms of working with the private sector, can be used for the operation of health centers built by Türkiye abroad.*

The experience of our healthcare professionals at all levels provides an important opportunity for technical co-operation with developing countries in terms of training healthcare professionals. In addition, it is important to expand, develop and increase the number of events such as 'Health Week' organized by Türkiye in certain periods in the countries with which Türkiye cooperates. This is because these activities positively affect the effectiveness and visibility of our country in the field.

Construction: The construction sector plays a vital role in Türkiye's economy, driving growth through its linkages with other industries. With extensive experience in infrastructure and building construction, Türkiye generates significant employment opportunities both domestically and in beneficiary countries through overseas contracting services.

Moreover, the construction sector plays an important role in the export of goods and services. *Supports to be provided in the context of technical co-operation in the beneficiary countries have the potential to pave the way for the construction sector.* For example, providing consultancy services for infrastructure projects will increase the volume of contracting services in the country in question. It is suggested that this situation will also be beneficial for the beneficiary country. *In the event that different projects to be carried out in overseas contracting services are integrated with the consultancy services to be provided, the effectiveness of these investments will be increased.*

Energy: The global energy sector is undergoing a paradigm shift toward green energy, accelerating the transition from fossil fuels (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2020;

International Energy Agency, 2022). As a strategic sector for Türkiye, energy production relies significantly on renewable sources due to limited fossil fuel reserves. Given its geographical advantages—abundant sunlight, wind corridors, and river capacity—Türkiye has substantial potential in solar, wind, and hydroelectric energy, which can be leveraged for international cooperation. *In developing countries with favorable natural conditions, there are opportunities for cooperation in various ways, such as the establishment of renewable energy generation plants, the operation of existing ones or providing technical support for local actors to operate them.*

Despite the global shift toward renewable energy, the majority of world energy production still relies on fossil fuels, driving continued exploration for new reserves. Türkiye has gained substantial experience in this area, particularly in recent years, through reserve exploration activities in land and sea border regions. *It is considered that technical co-operation can be made for various exploration and reserve extraction studies with countries that do not have the necessary infrastructure and experience to reveal their reserves.*

Food: The food sector is of strategic importance for both Türkiye and the world, with nutrition being a fundamental priority for all nations. Currently, the world faces a severe food supply crisis, exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine war and climate change. This crisis threatens to deepen, impacting migration and conflict. Ensuring global food security has become a key priority for international organizations and donor countries. Türkiye took significant diplomatic steps in 2022 to address this issue, establishing a year-long grain corridor through negotiations with Russia, Ukraine, and the UN, allowing grain transport from the conflict zone to needy countries. Moreover, *sharing Türkiye's institutional, human and technological capacity in the field of agriculture with the countries in need is expected to contribute to capacity building and improvement of agricultural infrastructure in the target countries.*

Culture and Tourism: The tourism sector is a key area where Türkiye has extensive experience, making it a valuable field for technical cooperation. It is particularly important for countries dependent on depleting energy resources like oil for national income. Türkiye, generating substantial revenue from tourism, boasts considerable expertise in facility infrastructure, service quality, and country promotion. In this sector, *Türkiye has opportunities to develop co-operation in different ways such as construction and operation of facilities, training of personnel to provide services and teaching how to promote the country.* These opportunities should be utilized both through public institutions and private sector companies.

Culture plays a crucial role in both tourism and the preservation of values. The restoration of cultural assets requires specialized expertise within the construction sector. Sharing Türkiye's experience and knowledge in cultural asset restoration with developing countries is vital for effective cooperation. *The experience in promoting cultural values in the world should be shared with developing*

countries as much as possible. In such co-operations, the possibility of including NGOs and private sector companies operating in this field in the process as much as possible should be taken into consideration.

State Experience: Türkiye, which has an undeniable experience in establishing and organizing public institutions and making them operational in the context of public administration, *can play an important role in the reconstruction process of countries experiencing instability in its nearby geography.* Sharing its experience with these countries in the context of technical cooperation will contribute to both regional stability and the recovery of the beneficiary country. This is because in countries such as Ukraine and Syria, in addition to the renewal of physical infrastructure, public institutions and organizations will also need to be rebuilt and reorganized.

Migration: Migration has historically been a strategic issue for Türkiye, with the influx of migrants from Syria since 2011 significantly increasing its importance. Türkiye, receiving migrants from the Middle East, Caucasus, Central Asia, Africa, and the Balkans, must cooperate with source countries, neighboring nations, and migration destination countries to effectively manage this situation.

The most important factors that force people to migrate are conflict, political instability, unemployment and poverty. *Therefore, co-operation with the countries that are the source of migration should aim to eliminate the factors that cause unemployment and poverty.* Considering that a significant part of the population in the above-mentioned geographies live in rural areas, cooperation for rural development comes to the fore. Türkiye has realized many rural development projects especially in the Balkan region for many years. It is considered that the experience gained here can also be used in other geographies. *Creating opportunities for the rural population to earn a living where they live will make an important contribution to stop migration at its source.*

Türkiye's cooperation with neighboring countries in the context of migration should aim to ensure border security. *With neighboring countries that do not have the necessary technical and human resources, it is considered that cooperation can be made for training security forces, establishing technical infrastructure and taking joint measures for border security.*

Cooperation with migration destination countries is essential to address the root causes of migration. For instance, Africa's hunger crisis drives migration towards Türkiye and ultimately Europe. This is a problem beyond Türkiye's capacity to resolve alone. Therefore, all countries along migration routes, both target and transit, must collaborate to tackle this issue. *Multilateral cooperation to solve the problems that cause migration at the source should aim at the establishment of various funds, the establishment of development banks and/or the implementation of various development programs directly on the ground and should include international organizations.* Considering the number of asylum seekers in Türkiye, it is also considered that efforts should be made to be more active in relevant international organizations and to include country priorities in their macro plans.

Digitalization: Digitalization is a crucial issue for both Türkiye and the world, gaining prominence in development cooperation. Türkiye has significant experience, particularly in the digitalization of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) , and shares this expertise with developing countries through organizations like İSEDAK. Programs led by KOSGEB and the Digital Transformation Office could be expanded to more countries through multilateral or bilateral cooperation. Global companies such as Google, Amazon, and Microsoft dominate this field due to their technological infrastructure and capital. Türkiye must increase its engagement to capitalize on opportunities in digitalization cooperation. In particular, it is considered that the experience gained from digitalized public services such as *UYAP, Integrated Social Assistance System, MERSIS and MERNIS* can be shared with strategically close countries through bilateral cooperation.

Türkiye can expand its digitalization experience to more countries through NGOs, particularly DEİK. For Gulf States, whose economies rely on oil, digitalization is seen as a potential income alternative, similar to tourism. Therefore, exploring new cooperation opportunities with countries focused on digitalization is essential, involving the private sector and civil society. DEİK, through its digitalization-focused business council, has already established connections with many countries in this field.

Climate Change: Climate change is a strategic issue for both Türkiye and the world, driven by factors such as decreasing clean water resources, reduced agricultural land, extreme weather events, climate-induced migration, and food insecurity. These challenges position climate change as a top priority for many nations. For instance, At the COP26 summit in Glasgow in 2021, estimates and commitments show that the goal of mobilizing 100 billion USD per year will be met by 2023 (United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties 26, 2021). Addressing this issue through cooperation and projects can enhance Türkiye's global standing and offer opportunities to collaborate with international organizations. Proposals from Türkiye on climate change are expected to be well-received and financially supported, promoting a shared mission.

Climate change-induced migration is a critical issue, with regions losing habitability due to drought and extreme temperatures, particularly in Africa and Asia, driving migration. Türkiye, due to its geographical location, serves as a destination or transit country for these migrants. As managing this issue at the source is challenging, it is crucial for Türkiye and other countries affected by climate-induced migration to collaborate on establishing new cooperation initiatives to address this pressing concern. *It is not possible for a country to solve the events caused by climate change alone. Therefore, it is necessary to cooperate with different countries and international organizations on this issue.* Türkiye is expected to play a leading role in establishing multilateral cooperation in this field. It is essential to conduct studies on the nature of these cooperations and their establishment, particularly with the inclusion of civil society.

3.2.5.2. Regional and Strategic Priorities

Türkiye's development assistance priorities should align with its foreign policy objectives, focusing on increasing cooperation with international organizations, enhancing bilateral ties, and boosting global/regional influence. However, these priorities are not always evident in the predominantly humanitarian aid provided. In humanitarian assistance, demand-based practices are crucial for visibility, and prioritizing mutually beneficial demands reflects a strategic approach. In technical cooperation, Türkiye's agenda should take precedence over that of the beneficiary country. The countries to be supported, the type of assistance, and the institutions involved should be determined based on Türkiye's strategy and priorities, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. This ensures all actors work towards the same overarching goal.

On the other hand, it is observed that sometimes the work in the field is carried out through individuals rather than organizations. It is also important that the activities are owned by organizations rather than individuals in order not to deviate from the strategies and objectives pursued.

The distinction between near and far geography is also a determining factor in terms of the way of providing assistance and strategic priority. For Türkiye, the Turkic States, the Balkans, the Middle East and Africa are geographies of particular importance. *Our historical and cultural ties with these geographies are among the main reasons why Türkiye is a donor in the field of development assistance. In this respect, it can be considered that while demand-oriented aid is emphasized in our near geography, search-oriented action is taken in distant geographies.*

Türkiye needs to reconstruct its priorities for official development assistance on the basis of national interest-oriented objectives such as the 'Africa Initiative' and the 'Asia Re-entry Initiative'. It is also imperative to reconsider the way of providing aid in this direction.

Due to factors such as its population, natural resources and geographical location, Africa is on the priority agenda of not only Türkiye but also all countries and is of strategic importance. *Plans and programs to be prepared for Africa, which has a demographically very young population, should be youth-centered. Rural development is of vital importance for African countries with a significant portion of their population living in rural areas.* It is considered that Türkiye can utilize its rural development experience gained in other geographies in Africa.

Another of Türkiye's strategic priorities in the field of development assistance is to increase cooperation with international organizations. This objective aims to enhance the diversity of activities, expand project geographies, and diversify financing. By cooperating with international organizations, Türkiye can gain new capabilities through participation in multilateral development programs. Geographically, Türkiye can extend its presence in regions without representative offices by engaging in international missions. Additionally, such cooperation provides access to supportive financing for projects. Türkiye's institutional presence in international organizations needs strengthening, as its

current cooperation with bodies like the African Union (AU) is limited. Given Türkiye's influence in Africa, it should aim to be a key player in the AU and reflect its success in bilateral cooperation in multilateral efforts. This approach should be reviewed across all regions where Türkiye operates, as bilateral successes can be further advanced through enhanced cooperation with international organizations.

3.2.5.3. Methods, tools, models in technical cooperation and development assistance activities

Methods: Türkiye's aid delivery approach prioritizes humanitarian assistance, demand-driven support, and the priorities of beneficiary countries. However, this approach needs revision to better align with broader objectives while maintaining the core principles and values. *While the current approach should be maintained in terms of humanitarian aid, which constitutes an important part of development assistance, the technical cooperation side should be guided by economic priorities.* Separating humanitarian aid from technical cooperation and setting priorities without favoring one over the other would allow for a revision that upholds Türkiye's values. Increasing technical cooperation assistance would enable a realignment of Türkiye's aid delivery in accordance with its priorities.

Humanitarian aid contributes significantly to international recognition, visibility and image. In addition to the direct benefits to the recipient country, it also provides Türkiye with the opportunity to conduct humanitarian diplomacy. Regional associations such as the Organization of Turkic States, D-8 and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation provide leadership in this context. Therefore, the gains made through humanitarian assistance should be used to enhance technical cooperation opportunities.

Humanitarian aid and the demand-driven approach of providing aid creates a sense of trust in beneficiary countries towards Türkiye. In this respect, *it is assessed that strengths can be enhanced by acting in a planned manner and considering long-term interests on the technical cooperation side, and by continuing to act quickly, flexibly and demand-driven when necessary on the humanitarian assistance side.*

Tools and Models: The instruments used in development assistance are closely tied to the adopted approach, with capacity also influencing their selection. Currently, nearly all of Türkiye's aid is delivered through public institutions and organizations. *The capacity of NGOs and the private sector should be taken into account and cooperation between the public, private and NGO sectors should be emphasized more when developing new instruments.* Collaboration with civil society, in particular, has been shown to improve relations with beneficiary countries more rapidly. The case of Somalia shows that civil society organizations can have a significant impact on the ground.

In Africa, a region with complex developments and potential diplomatic and security risks, collaborating with civil society allows for effective engagement. Public institutions' guidance to NGOs in development assistance will also strengthen the capacity of these organizations. *In regions that are*

risky from different perspectives, the realization of aid activities designed by public institutions through NGOs is considered as a convenient tool for providing aid.

YTB's ability to provide direct financial support to NGOs in its operational regions offers a significant opportunity to strengthen civil society through the public sector. This support enables NGOs with limited financial capacity but strong field effectiveness to implement more projects. Operating across a wide geography, YTB's financial backing enhances NGO mobility and diversifies their activities. YEE, a key cultural institution within development assistance, aims to increase global connections to Türkiye and Turkish culture. With its extensive communication network, YEE can play a pivotal role in fostering new bilateral and multilateral collaborations, leveraging cultural initiatives to advance projects in other sectors.

Another method that can be developed while providing development assistance is to mobilize the resources (human, natural, institutional) of countries with various underground riches, which they cannot use due to technical inadequacies, through development cooperation programs to be developed with stakeholders such as NGOs and the private sector, especially in requests for infrastructure improvement. These assets, which will be transformed into a commercial value, can be used to finance infrastructure investments, thereby securing the return on infrastructure investments to be made by private sector companies.

Cooperation with entrepreneur-led NGOs in development assistance offers several advantages. For instance, DEİK can play a bilateral role by partnering in Türkiye's initiatives and leveraging aid opportunities to encourage private sector investments in beneficiary countries.

Many African countries associate Western nations with their colonial past (Cardoso, 2007; Dunning, 2004; Frank, 1966; Fuller, 2002), while Türkiye stands out positively in this regard. Türkiye's entrepreneurial humanitarian policies can address the backlash against France in many African nations. This creates an opportunity to guide private sector companies wishing to invest in the region, leveraging the positive atmosphere generated by Türkiye's development assistance. *This should be utilized for new cooperation opportunities. Türkiye's positive perception can also be used to establish trilateral cooperation with countries that have ample financial resources to invest in this geography.* Countries unable to create a favorable investment environment can expand their scope by cooperating with Türkiye, which also provides an opportunity for Türkiye to secure resources for projects it cannot implement due to financial constraints.

Türkiye provides more aid than many countries with larger economies. Türkiye, which is quite advanced in terms of generosity, needs to further diversify its sources for financing its aid. *New models can be created by focusing on participation finance.* One of Türkiye's most important recent projects is the Istanbul Finance Center. *Using the interest generated by this project, a bank that will provide funds to Gulf countries and financially support development cooperation activities can be established in*

Istanbul. This model provides Türkiye with a sustainable financial source for its aid, while Gulf countries gain the opportunity to implement projects in regions where they lack presence. Since much of Gulf aid is in the form of direct budget support, whose effectiveness is often questioned, this model allows them to use their funds more effectively.

The use of funds such as “*venture capital*” or “*angel investors*” in financing development assistance will support “start-ups” in beneficiary countries. Scaling up the scope and volume of business models to be designed and piloted through aid organizations, supported by these funds, will make a vital contribution to the sustainability of the projects. *The funding model can also be used for R&D activities. Funds for various research activities by the private sector and civil society organizations would make a significant contribution to continuity and efficiency in the field.*

Many developing countries with which Türkiye conducts foreign trade have customs systems incompatible with Türkiye's, leading to time and cost losses for exporters. *Support could be provided to the relevant countries in the context of technical cooperation for the regulation of these customs systems.* Thanks to the Customs Union agreement with the EU, Türkiye has significantly increased its technical knowledge and know-how in this area in line with international standards. Sharing the “IT” infrastructure in the field of customs with other countries will not only make foreign trade more efficient, but also strengthen and long-lasting relations with these countries.

Development assistance also has a significant potential for improving political and economic relations. Increasing active communication and cooperation channels with international organizations will have a multiplier effect on bilateral and global political relations (Milner & Tingley, 2012). *Sending interns, students or civil servants to international organizations will both improve the quality of human resources and strengthen relations with these organizations.* The persons to be sent to international organizations will be ambassadors to strengthen relations between Türkiye and these organizations.

Coordination: Development assistance is multilateral in nature, with many actors active in the field and many different institutions and organizations involved in decision-making and policy-making processes. The lack of effective coordination between decision-makers and implementers in the field leads to a lack of statistical reporting and reporting on the implementation of aid in the first place. Coordination in this area needs to be strengthened. *Data sharing and information flow through a digital platform open to all stakeholders and the use of this platform in planning, decision-making and implementation processes will contribute significantly to effective coordination.*

To maximize effectiveness and efficiency, coordination in the expanding Turkish foreign assistance ecosystem needs to be revisited and strengthened in line with new needs. Increasing coordination should be aimed at planning and avoiding duplication. Sharing positive or negative experiences in the field with relevant institutions and organizations will enable different stakeholders to feed off each other.

The coordination mechanism should be established to include planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation processes. It is important that the planning process is based on data and information, that the views of public, civil and private sector stakeholders are taken and that plans are approved at the highest level and put into effect. The decision-making process should be based on plans, but should be carried out in such a way that revisions can be made when necessary. In the implementation process, decisions should be adopted by all stakeholders and actively reflected on the ground.

Considering international practices, the coordination mechanism can be established in four different ways. The first one is the establishment of a board under the chairmanship of the Vice President, the second one is the establishment of an independent ministry and subordination of the institutions operating in the field of foreign aid to this ministry, the third one is the subordination of the institutions operating in the field of foreign aid to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the last option is the provision of coordination within TİKA by eliminating legal and institutional deficiencies.

Although there has been an ongoing effort in the tenth and eleventh plan periods to create an inclusive legislation in the field of development cooperation and development assistance, no concrete output has been achieved. It is believed that *a mechanism where the political authority is represented will pave the way for the legislative arrangements needed to increase effectiveness and eliminate duplication*. There is also a need for the preparation of policy documents explaining the country's basic approach, goals and objectives in the field of development assistance. A policy board to be established will publish periodic policy documents setting out the country's main goals and objectives in this field.

The main expectation from coordination is to plan and avoid duplication. The fact that there are many different stakeholders in the field is one of the main reasons for the need for coordination. Bringing stakeholders together under various categories will contribute to acting in a uniform manner. A regional categorization in the context of the geographies where aid is provided is important in order to develop a holistic perspective. In this way, the effectiveness of the aid provided will yield positive results for both Türkiye and the beneficiary country. A thematic distinction will also contribute to the effectiveness of coordination and allow for the identification of different priorities.

A well-functioning monitoring and evaluation (feedback) system is vital when setting strategic priorities. In addition, there is a need for a data collection mechanism where institutions and organizations can present their data to the public, academia, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders, which will form the basis for monitoring and reporting on foreign aid. The coordination mechanism envisaged for the establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation system is considered to be essential for ownership.

4. CONCLUSION

Türkiye's development cooperation requires a multi-dimensional approach, focusing on sectors like education, health, energy, food security, culture, tourism, migration, digitalization, and climate change. By sharing its expertise in these areas, Türkiye can enhance human development and strengthen its global position. Key strategies include utilizing institutions like TİKA and the Maarif Foundation in education, implementing Türkiye's health models in other countries, integrating technical cooperation with infrastructure projects, and expanding renewable energy initiatives. Moreover, sharing agricultural techniques and contributing to food security, cultural heritage preservation, and tourism will foster international collaboration. In migration management, addressing root causes such as poverty will help manage migration flows. Türkiye can also enhance digitalization and environmental sustainability by sharing expertise and best practices. Strengthening public-private sector-NGO cooperation, establishing development banks, and enhancing coordination platforms will ensure more effective aid delivery. Prioritizing demand-driven assistance and regional cooperation with international organizations, especially in Africa, will promote long-term development. Ultimately, Türkiye's strategic, sectoral approach will increase its influence in international development cooperation.

Ethics Committee approval was not required for this study.

The authors declare that the study was conducted in accordance with research and publication ethics.

The authors confirm that no part of the study was generated, either wholly or in part, using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.

The authors declare that there are no financial conflicts of interest involving any institution, organization, or individual associated with this article. Additionally, there are no conflicts of interest among the authors.

The authors declare that they contributed equally to all processes of the research.

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