

country-to-country basis. We have also seen an increase in our multilateral assistance envelope through our commitments to the international financial institutions, as well as important expenditures on humanitarian assistance and food aid. In terms of the scope of this study, the official government-to-government assistance ("traditional aid") is most revealing in determining the geographical distribution of our assistance.

From the 1960s on, Canada has traditionally been a "dispersionist" donor, i.e., not just targeting a few countries.<sup>29</sup> Policy decisions made in the last few years have seen a tightening of the core group of recipient countries, all of course being made in a shrinking budgetary environment. Given the present government cutbacks, and envisaged belt-tightening in the near future, development assistance can be expected to suffer further cuts. In this environment, further tough decisions about individual recipient countries should and can be expected.

As Boone has noted, in a few cases aid has actually contributed substantially to economic growth. In looking at the Canadian aid experience over the last ten years, an interesting story can be ascertained. In Table 1, a list of Canada's top ten aid recipients in selected years over the last two decades is presented. Some countries are nearly ever-present, whereas others were dependent on political issues of the day or something else. Some countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, India and Pakistan have been major recipients of Canadian development assistance over the last two decades, by virtue of their population size and historical aid profile. Others, such as Ghana, Mali and the Phillipines have resurfaced in the 1990s as their governments commenced political and economic reform. Some of the countries above have experienced strong growth, while others have been caught in the low-growth trap. Clearly, Canadian aid by virtue of the small totals involved did not have a major effect on these growth patterns. But Canadian aid has been better directed as of late, both in terms of the geographic distribution and its composition. Are there any further lessons which could illuminate our approach?

Without meaning to sound deterministic, and given that the stated aim of our assistance programme is to reduce poverty, several points can be made. First, countries with good growth records generally have the right kind of policies (structural adjustment, liberal tariff regimes, democratization, etc.) and aid works

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<sup>29</sup> For an excellent detailed discussion of "The Choice of Bilateral Aid Recipients", see David Morrison's chapter by that name in Cranford Pratt, ed., Canadian International Development Assistance Policies: An Appraisal, McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston, 1994.