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## Aid That Wins Hearts and Minds?

by [Tania Barnes](#) November 01, 2010

For years, some analysts have argued that foreign aid—while well intentioned—accomplishes little in the way of winning hearts and minds. But a new study by the World Bank argues that may not always be the case.

Five years ago, after a massive earthquake devastated parts of Pakistan, American relief workers rushed to the scene to deliver \$510 million worth of aid. In 2009, the study's authors, Jishnu Das and Tahir Andrabi, returned to the site of the destruction and found an interesting correlation: the closer people were to the fault line, the more apt they were to express a positive attitude toward Americans and other foreigners. Those attitudes have remained remarkably stable over time.

The study's conclusions run counter to the widespread view that the image burnishing accomplished by foreign aid is necessarily short-lived. The question is more crucial than ever after devastating floods affected 20 million Pakistanis in late July. While America's image in the region is at a historical low point, it has poured nearly \$400 million in aid money into the country post-flood, more than any other nation. U.S. officials would surely be happy to see local pockets of goodwill cropping up as a result.

But there is reason to doubt that the aid will have the same effect today as it did in 2005. Jas and Andrabi attribute the increased trust post-earthquake to what they call "boots on the ground"—face-to-face interaction, as opposed to the government-to-government aid that is currently the U.S.'s predominant mode of funneling funds to Pakistan. Das has also noted elsewhere that the more the U.S. seems to be explicitly setting out to win hearts and minds, the less successful it is likely to be.

That may be the critical difference between the disasters of 2005 and 2010: Pakistanis today have gotten wise to U.S. motives for giving aid and are far more suspicious of hidden agendas, according to Molly Kinder, a senior policy analyst at the Center for Global Development. Indeed, media coverage in Pakistan makes this connection explicitly; rarely is U.S. aid mentioned in a newspaper article without a reference to "hearts and minds" alongside it. Add to that the U.S.'s escalating drone campaign in northwest Pakistan (so much for "hidden" agendas), and it's likely that any goodwill gained from aid relief will be drowned out by drone attacks and a dimmer-than-ever view of U.S. policies.