

**Paper Title:** Foreign Aid and Compliance with Public Health Orders in the time of COVID-19: Evidence from Pakistan

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**Abstract:**

The relevance of foreign aid to developing countries has been resoundingly upheld in the current pandemic; many countries, including Pakistan, have actively sought fiscal and technical support from their allies to enhance government response to the disease. However, the cooperation of the public and their willingness to abide by public health orders is affected by their perception of foreign aid and the donors who support the recipient government's relief efforts. Existing research shows that information about foreign aid can shift perceptions of governance (Dolan 2020; Dietrich, Mahmud and Winters 2017) and subsequently affect individual-level support of programs and willingness to comply with government orders. This paper asks whether information about foreign aid funding affect individual-level support for public programs? Is this effect conditional on the identity of the donor? Furthermore, does it, as a cross-domain spillover, affect individuals' willingness to comply with covid-19 related public health orders? I ask these questions in the context of Pakistan where the roll out of a stimulus payment program, titled Ehsaas was a key component of the government's response to the pandemic. Using a survey experiment, I find that informing individuals about the foreign aid funding source of the stimulus payment program does not affect individuals' support for it, which remains overwhelmingly high. I do find an increase in individuals' willingness to comply with public health orders, which appears to be driven by an increased perception of government credibility in the reporting of covid- 19 cases. However, despite prior evidence of anti-Americanism (Burzstyn et al 2019) in Pakistan, there appears to be no backlash effect for individuals informed about support from the U.S. Finally, Ehsaas recipients are more likely to comply with public health orders, indicating that the program is successful at partially addressing the poor's vulnerability to the pandemic.

**Keywords:** Foreign aid, South Asia, Political Economy of Development