



China's humanitarian assistance activities in Africa

Brian Lucas
Research Consultant
4 March 2022

Question

What evidence is available about China's humanitarian assistance activities in Africa?

Contents

1. Summary
2. Data availability
3. China's humanitarian aid policy
4. AidData Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, 2000-2017
5. China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) announcements, 2018-2021
6. Financial Tracking Service (FTS), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
7. COVID-19 response, 2020-2021
8. Selected examples of humanitarian interventions

References

Appendix: CIDCA announcements reviewed

The K4D helpdesk service provides brief summaries of current research, evidence, and lessons learned. Helpdesk reports are not rigorous or systematic reviews; they are intended to provide an introduction to the most important evidence related to a research question. They draw on a rapid desk-based review of published literature and consultation with subject specialists.

Helpdesk reports are commissioned by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, & Development Office and other Government departments, but the views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of FCDO, the UK Government, K4D or any other contributing organisation. For further information, please contact helpdesk@k4d.info.

1. Summary

Chinese humanitarian aid in Africa in 2020 and 2021 was overwhelmingly dominated by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which included providing medical supplies and medical teams in 2020, and consisted almost entirely of providing vaccines in 2021. Chinese aid related to COVID-19 has reached nearly every country in Africa.

Prior to 2020, the majority of Chinese humanitarian aid activities in Africa were health-related (making up 74% of activities and 76% of funding), and included deploying medical personnel, constructing infrastructure such as hospitals, and contributing medical supplies, equipment, and drugs. The remaining spending was approximately evenly split between emergency food aid, long-term developmental food aid and food security, and other forms of disaster relief. Geographically, China's humanitarian spending in Africa has been concentrated in Angola, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uganda, which together accounted for 51% of humanitarian spending from 2000-2017. Most of Chinese humanitarian aid is bilateral (89%), although China has been increasingly contributing to multilateral organisations in recent years.

There is a lack of complete, consistent, and detailed information about Chinese humanitarian assistance (and Chinese development assistance more generally), as China does not participate in centralised global reporting systems to the same extent as many other donor countries. The most comprehensive and detailed source of data available is the AidData Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, which currently covers the period from 2000-2017 and brings together data from a variety of official and unofficial sources.

2. Data availability

There is a lack of complete, consistent, and detailed information about Chinese humanitarian assistance (and Chinese development assistance more generally), as China does not participate in centralised global reporting systems to the same extent as many other donor countries (Custer et al., 2021, p. 5; Hirono, 2018, p. 15; Kurtzer & Gonzales, 2020; Lin et al., 2016, p. 2) and does not publish complete reports on its activities comparable with the sorts of annual reports published by most other donor countries and agencies. Information about China's humanitarian aid is often unavailable even to some Chinese Government officials (Humanitarian Advisory Group et al., 2019, p. 6) and some information is only available in Chinese.

Many analyses of humanitarian aid rely on data from the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) operated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The FTS includes good data on multilateral flows, but much of China's bilateral aid, which makes up a large proportion of China's humanitarian assistance, is not reported (Kurtzer & Gonzales, 2020), so analyses based solely on FTS data are likely to underestimate China's humanitarian assistance. Estimates of spending on aid are also affected by inconsistent definitions: for example, one analysis of spending in 2010-2012 identified USD 56.7 million in humanitarian aid following one definition used by China that included only cash assistance and the dispatch of medical and rescue teams, but USD 241 million in humanitarian aid following a broader definition that included 'goods and materials' (Hirono, 2018, p. 17).

Three major projects, besides the FTS, attempt to fill this information gap and produce regularly-updated estimates of Chinese development assistance (Johnson, 2021; Johnson & Zühr, 2021), but only one (AidData) publishes data disaggregated to a sufficient level of detail to make it possible to identify humanitarian flows and flows to particular regions or countries:

- **AidData Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset** reports highly detailed information about Chinese development and humanitarian assistance from 2000-2017, which is discussed further in section 4 of this report (AidData, 2021; Johnson, 2021; Johnson & Zühr, 2021).
- **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Ogata Sadako Research Institute** produces annual estimates of total development aid flows, but does not disaggregate data (Johnson, 2021; Johnson & Zühr, 2021; Kitano & Miyabayashi, 2020).
- **China Africa Research Initiative, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University (SAIS-CARI)** produces annual estimates of China's foreign aid expenditure, but does not disaggregate data (Johnson, 2021; Johnson & Zühr, 2021; SAIS-CARI, 2022).

3. China's humanitarian aid policy

China defines humanitarian aid as including the short-term provision of food, goods, materials and personnel in times of emergency such as following natural disasters (Hirono, 2018, p. 3). It is a subset of broader development assistance, and is small in comparison, making up only about 1.7% of its overall foreign aid budget during the period 2010-2012 (Hirono, 2018, p. 17; State Council Information Office, 2014; UNDP, 2016, p. 1).

The majority of China's humanitarian aid is provided bilaterally, although the exact proportion is unclear because China's bilateral aid is under-reported in global reporting systems: estimates range from 'over half' (Humanitarian Advisory Group et al., 2019, p. 11), to 85% (Hirono, 2018, p. 19), to as much as 89% (see section 4 of this report). Some of China's aid to Africa is 'channelled bilaterally but framed multilaterally', through structures like the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative, the African Union, and multilateral development banks (Renwick, 2020, p. 3). China's emphasis on bilateral aid may be helpful in furthering economic ties and foreign policy interests, including promoting itself as a 'responsible power' (Hirono, 2018, pp. 7, 19–21; Renwick, 2020, p. 1), but does not appear to be directed disproportionately to resource-rich countries (Hirono, 2018, p. 20).

China's humanitarian aid focuses on disaster response rather than complex emergencies¹, and tends to be ad hoc rather than being governed by an overall strategy directing where, when, and how the country should provide assistance (Gong, 2021, p. 6; Hirono, 2018, p. 20; Humanitarian Advisory Group et al., 2019, p. 7). It is influenced by the will and interests of top leaders and a desire for quick impacts and favourable publicity (Gong, 2021, p. 6). China has historically engaged only to a limited extent with global humanitarian policy discussions (Gong, 2021, p. 6) although it has engaged with and contributed to multilateral organisations to an increasing extent in recent years.

China is an emerging donor, and there is a consensus in the literature that China's humanitarian aid, both globally and to Africa in particular, is still relatively small in scale compared with other donor countries (Gong, 2021, p. 6; Humanitarian Advisory Group et al., 2019, p. 7; Kurtzer & Gonzales, 2020; Renwick, 2020, p. 3). China is a significant humanitarian donor compared to

¹ A complex emergency is 'a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict, and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing UN country programme' (UNHCR, 2001).

non-DAC countries, but not compared to traditional Western donors or the wealthier Middle Eastern countries (Hirono, 2018, p. 17; Humanitarian Advisory Group et al., 2019, p. 7). One estimate placed Chinese aid at about 0.2% of total global humanitarian funding in 2014 and 2015 (Hirono, 2018, p. 17), and other estimates suggested that in 2017 (when Chinese humanitarian aid reported to international tracking systems reached a peak), Chinese humanitarian aid was less than 1% of total worldwide humanitarian spending that year (Gong, 2021, p. 6; Kurtzer & Gonzales, 2020), although these analyses likely underestimate bilateral flows. Spending on humanitarian assistance has been growing significantly, though not as quickly as GDP or overall development assistance; for example, the amount reported to international mechanisms, which is only a portion of total aid flows, grew from an average of USD 5.9 million per year in 2004-2009 to USD 48 million per year in 2010-2015 (Hirono, 2018, p. 15).

Chinese organisations other than the government have played increasing roles in humanitarian aid to Africa in recent years, and particularly since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic; these include civil society organisations, charities, the Chinese diaspora, community networks, and philanthropic foundations (Renwick, 2020, p. 3).

4. AidData Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, 2000-2017

The most comprehensive dataset available on Chinese development assistance is the AidData Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, a highly detailed dataset covering 13,427 development projects financed by Chinese government institutions and state-owned entities from 2000-2017 (AidData, 2021). AidData collects information about development assistance flows corresponding to the OECD definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Other Official Flows (OOF) from many sources, including grant and loan agreements, reports published by Chinese government agencies and state-owned banks, Chinese Embassy and Ministry of Commerce websites, news media sources, and data collected from host countries, all of which are cross-checked against each other to identify and describe activities (Custer et al., 2021, pp. 5–6). AidData is an academic research project that has been operating since 2004, led by William & Mary² with funding from USAID and several philanthropic foundations.

AidData uses OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System purpose codes³ to classify aid commitments. For the purposes of this report, activities were considered to be humanitarian if they were categorised in the dataset as: emergency response; health; developmental food aid or food security assistance; disaster prevention and preparedness; or reconstruction, relief, and rehabilitation. Spending in these categories makes up 1.6% of the total development assistance in the dataset, which is consistent with other estimates of Chinese humanitarian spending; for example, in the period 2010-2012, Chinese humanitarian aid accounted for 1.7% of total aid (Hirono, 2018, p. 17; State Council Information Office, 2014; UNDP, 2016, p. 1).

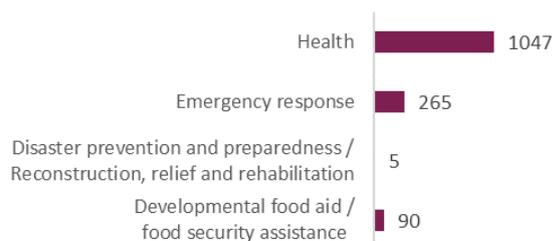
The vast majority of China's humanitarian projects from 2000-2017, both by number of projects (74%) and by total spending (76%), were health-related (AidData, 2021). These projects include providing medical personnel, constructing infrastructure such as hospitals, and contributions of

² <https://www.wm.edu>

³ See <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/dacandcrscodelists.htm> for further details.

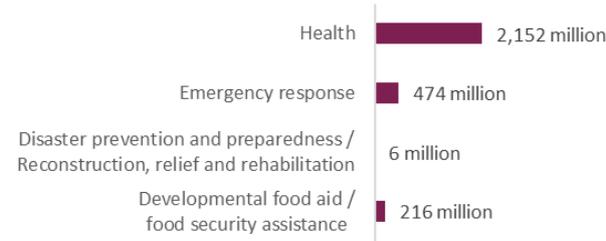
medical supplies, equipment, and drugs. Within the projects identified as other forms of ‘emergency response’ (making up 17% of total spending), nearly half (48%) consist of emergency food aid; the other half cover a range of other disaster relief activities including financial contributions for unspecified purposes. Long-term developmental food aid and food security are classified separately (8% of spending), and only five projects over the 18 years were classified as disaster prevention and preparedness or as reconstruction, relief and rehabilitation.

Figure 1: Number of humanitarian aid projects funded by China in Africa, 2000-2017



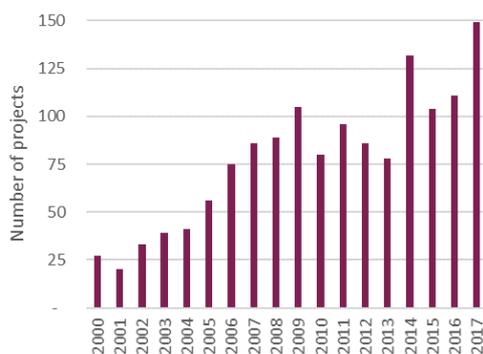
Source: Author's Own *Created using data from AidData, 2021*

Figure 2: Humanitarian spending commitments by China in Africa, US dollars, 2000-2017



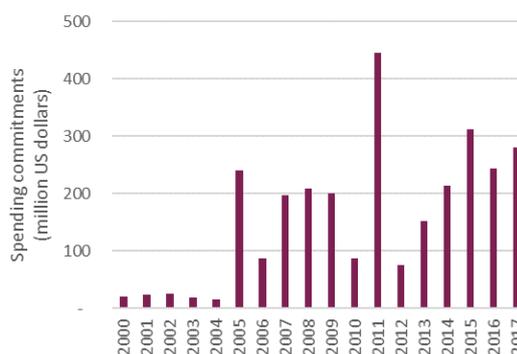
Source: Author's Own *Created using data from AidData, 2021*

Figure 3: Number of humanitarian projects funded by China in Africa, 2000-2017



Source: Author's Own *Created using data from AidData, 2021*

Figure 4: Humanitarian spending commitments by China in Africa, US dollars, 2000-2017



Source: Author's Own *Created using data from AidData, 2021*

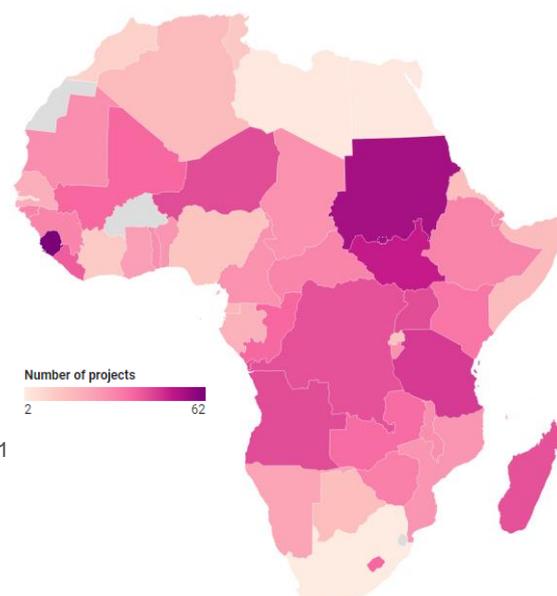
Geographically, China’s humanitarian spending in Africa has been concentrated in Angola, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uganda, which together accounted for 51% of humanitarian spending from 2000-2017 (AidData, 2021). Angola and China have close economic ties more generally: China is Angola’s main trading partner measured by both imports and exports, and Angola has been China’s largest or second-largest source of oil since 2006, at times providing as much as half of all of China’s oil imports (Jureńczyk, 2020, pp. 52–53).

Table 1: Number of humanitarian projects funded by China in Africa, 2000-2017, top ten countries

	Number of projects
Sierra Leone	62
Sudan	55
South Sudan	50
Tanzania	46
Angola	43
Niger	43
Uganda	43
Democratic Republic of the Congo	42
Madagascar	42
Liberia	40

Source: Author's Own *Created using data from AidData, 2021*

Figure 5: Number of humanitarian projects funded by China per country, 2000-2017



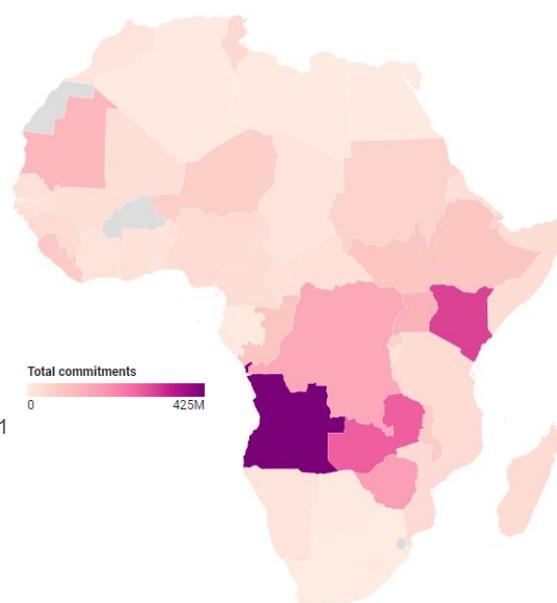
Source: Author's Own *Created using data from AidData, 2021* Map plotted using Datawrapper.de.

Table 2: Humanitarian spending commitments by China in Africa, 2000-2017, top ten countries

	Million US dollars
Angola	425
Kenya	304
Zambia	268
Zimbabwe	170
Democratic Republic of the Congo	147
Uganda	125
Mauritania	114
South Sudan	83
Congo	82
Ethiopia	80

Source: Author's Own *Created using data from AidData, 2021*

Figure 6: Humanitarian spending commitments by China in Africa, US dollars, 2000-2017

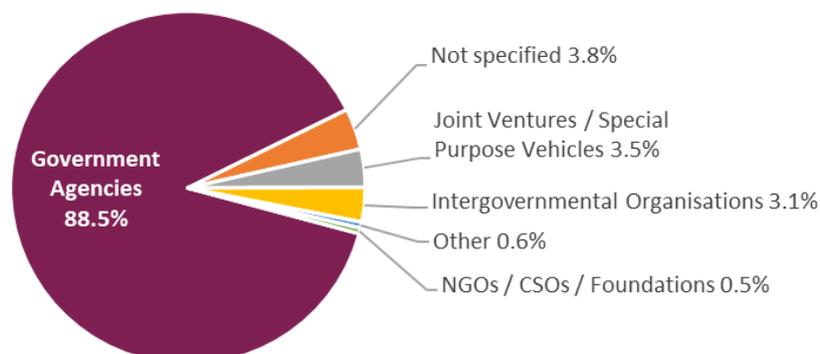


Source: Author's Own *Created using data from AidData, 2021*. Map plotted using Datawrapper.de.

The majority (89%) of China's humanitarian funding appears in the dataset as being directed bilaterally to government agencies, with only 3% being directed through multilateral organisations (AidData, 2021). This is consistent with other estimates: for example, an ODI report estimated

that in 2015, 85% of all of China's humanitarian funds were provided bilaterally (Hirono, 2018, p. 19).

Figure 7: China's humanitarian aid spending by recipient type, 2000-2017



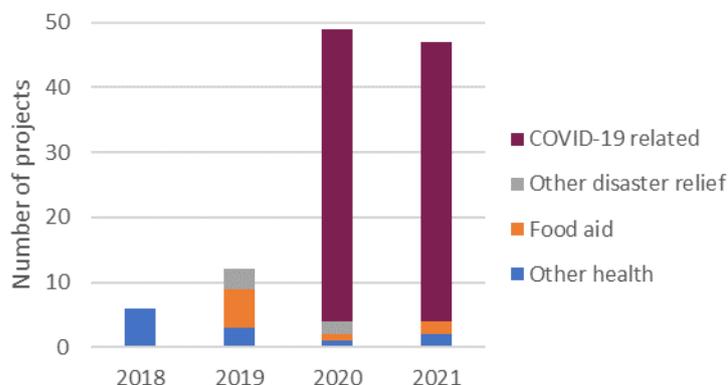
Source: Author's Own Created using data from AidData, 2021

5. China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) announcements, 2018-2021

The Chinese International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) was created in 2018 to improve the strategic planning, coordination, and management of China's foreign aid, and to distinguish more clearly between foreign aid and more commercially oriented financial flows (Cheng, 2019). CIDCA does not publish annual reports or similar documents that summarise China's international assistance efforts, but it does publish announcements in the style of press releases on its website describing its activities. These announcements generally describe activities without stating spending commitments, they have some overlaps, duplications, and repetitions (initiatives are often mentioned in more than one announcement), and they may not form a complete and comprehensive list of all of China's humanitarian work. For the purposes of this report, a rapid review was undertaken of all announcements published between the beginning of 2018 and the end of February 2022 in three collections on the CIDCA website (under the headings 'our work', 'cooperation', and 'emergency humanitarian assistance'). This constitutes a total of 378 announcements after removing obvious duplicates, of which 118 described humanitarian work taking place in Africa. A complete list of these announcements is provided in the Appendix to this report.

CIDCA's announcements indicate that Chinese humanitarian aid in Africa in 2020 and 2021 was dominated by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-related aid made up 92% of Chinese humanitarian aid interventions in Africa in 2020 and 2021; this consisted of providing medical supplies and medical teams to African countries in 2020 and almost entirely of providing vaccines in 2021. Other humanitarian aid from 2018 to 2021 included other health-related interventions (including responses to Ebola outbreaks as well as providing other health infrastructure, supplies, and personnel); food aid (including drought relief as well as COVID-related and Ebola-related food aid), and other disaster relief work responding to Cyclone Idai in 2019 (CIDCA, 2022).

Figure 8: Number of Chinese humanitarian interventions in Africa, 2018-2021, according to CIDCA announcements



Source: Author's Own Created using data from CIDCA, 2022

The majority of the interventions described in these announcements are described in bilateral terms; only ten interventions (8% of the total) mentioned a multilateral organisation in their titles (WFP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, and UN peacekeeping operations) (CIDCA, 2022).

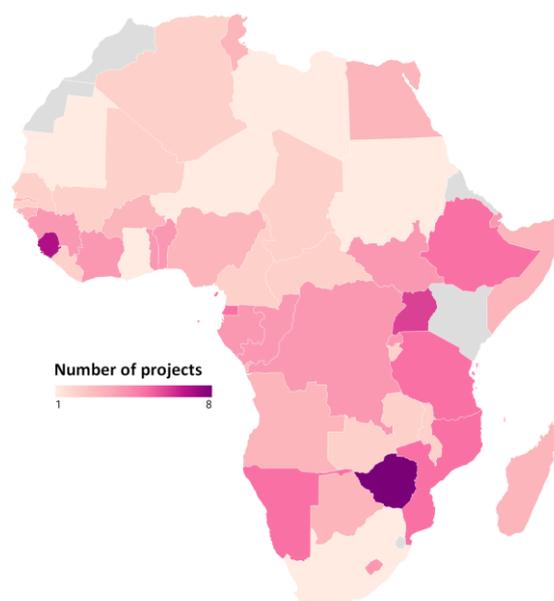
Geographically, China's reach in 2018-2021 was very broad due to deliberate efforts to provide COVID-19 relief in as many countries as possible. Forty-nine countries in Africa were mentioned in CIDCA announcements in 2018-2021 as receiving humanitarian assistance in this period (CIDCA, 2022).

Table 3: Number of humanitarian projects per country, 2018-2021, according to CIDCA announcements, top ten countries

	Number of projects
Zimbabwe	8
Sierra Leone	7
Uganda	6
Equatorial Guinea	5
Ethiopia	5
Mozambique	5
Namibia	5
Tanzania	5
Benin	4
Congo, Democratic Republic of	4

Source: Author's Own Created using data from CIDCA, 2022

Figure 9: Number of humanitarian projects per country, 2018-2021, according to CIDCA announcements



Source: Author's Own Created using data from CIDCA, 2022. Map plotted using Datawrapper.de.

6. Financial Tracking Service (FTS), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) manages the Financial Tracking Service (FTS), a global voluntary reporting mechanism for humanitarian activities (OCHA, n.d.). UN agencies, the European Union, and European Union member states have ongoing mechanisms for reporting to FTS (OCHA, n.d.), but data for other countries and organisations are incomplete. Much of China's bilateral aid is not reported to the FTS (Kurtzer & Gonzales, 2020); for example, the FTS shows no bilateral contributions from China since 2018, although China has announced many bilateral humanitarian activities since then (see section 5 of this report).

The FTS only reports financial flows, and contains minimal details about funded activities, so it is not possible to disaggregate flows by the type of work being undertaken. The dataset identifies recipient organisations, and for Chinese flows slightly less than half of the records in the dataset include the name of the plan or appeal that the flow was part of, but in many cases flows to multilateral organisations are shown only as general contributions to the organisation, so cannot be associated with particular countries.

Table 4: Global humanitarian spending by China reported to the FTS allocated to countries, 2000-2021, top ten countries worldwide

Recipient country	Million USD
Ethiopia	53.6
Kenya	41.9
Pakistan	23.2
Zimbabwe	14.5
South Sudan	14.5
Haiti	11.5
Djibouti	9.3
Cambodia	7.9
Somalia	7.5
Nigeria	7.3

Source: Author's own based on Financial Tracking Service (FTS) 2021)

<https://fts.unocha.org/donors/2976/summary/2021>

Data for 2021 are incomplete

Table 5: Global humanitarian spending by China reported to the FTS allocated to multilateral organisations, 2000-2021, top ten organisations (includes all aid spending, not disaggregated by recipient)

Recipient organisation	Million USD
World Food Programme	134.3
World Health Organization	39.0
United Nations Children's Fund	18.5
Central Emergency Response Fund	8.5
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	8.3
Ebola Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund	6.0
United Nations Development Programme	5.1
Food & Agriculture Organization	4.5
United Nations Population Fund	4.5
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	4.4

Source: Author's own based on Financial Tracking Service (FTS) 2021)

<https://fts.unocha.org/donors/2976/summary/2021>

Data for 2021 are incomplete

7. COVID-19 response, 2020-2021

China has been a significant contributor of medical supplies, equipment, personnel, financial assistance, and knowledge to more than 150 countries and international organisations around the world, including 53 countries in Africa as well as the African Union, as part of its response to COVID-19 (Kurtzer & Gonzales, 2020; Renwick, 2020, p. 2; State Council Information Office, 2021b, p. 31). Since the beginning of 2021, China has also been a major donor of vaccines to

countries around the world, including 50 countries⁴ in Africa as well as the African Union (CIDCA, 2022; State Council Information Office, 2021b, p. 31). China has provided supplies including test reagents, protective equipment, masks, eye protectors and ventilators to 53 African countries and the African Union, and deployed medical teams to 17 African countries (State Council Information Office, 2021b, p. 31). Other activities in China's response to COVID-19 include:

- China funded (USD 2 million) the construction of the headquarters of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, an African Union institution located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Renwick, 2020, p. 2; State Council Information Office, 2021b, p. 31).
- Chinese firms are engaging in joint vaccine production in Africa with local firms in Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria (State Council Information Office, 2021b, p. 31).
- In 2020, China donated or pledged USD 50 million to the WHO, USD 50 million to the UN COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) (making it the 15th largest government donor as of November 2021) and USD 10 million to the UN's global COVID-19 humanitarian response outside the GHRP (Morris et al., 2021, p. 55; State Council Information Office, 2021a, p. 36).
- In 2021, China pledged \$100 million to the Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment, making it the 15th largest government contributor of financial resources (Morris et al., 2021, p. 55).

Private sector philanthropy, a recent development in Chinese humanitarian aid, has also played a role in the response to COVID-19. In 2020, the Jack Ma Foundation⁵ and the Alibaba Foundation⁶ jointly donated '20,000 test kits, 100,000 masks and 1,000 medical use protective suits and face shields' to each of the 54 countries in Africa, as well as additional medical equipment including 500 ventilators, protective equipment, and other supplies, all of which was distributed in collaboration with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC, 2020b, 2020a; Ma, 2020a, 2020b).

China's COVID-19 aid has been consistent with its policy of providing humanitarian relief in natural disasters, and while donations have in some cases been directed towards countries that have signed Belt and Road Initiative economic partnership agreements or have otherwise supported commercial and developmental investments and strengthened friendly ties (Kurtzer & Gonzales, 2020), China's COVID-19 response has deliberately sought to engage with nearly every country in Africa, so in that sense has not shown preferential treatment.

8. Selected examples of humanitarian interventions

China undertakes a substantial number of humanitarian interventions in Africa: at least 118 interventions were identified in announcements from CIDCA between 2018 and early 2022, and 1,407 interventions were identified in the AidData dataset between 2000 and 2017. A small

⁴ The State Council Information Office's white paper on China-Africa cooperation states that 50 countries have received vaccines, while CIDCA announcements identify 47 countries.

⁵ <https://www.jackmafoundation.org.cn/>

⁶ <https://www.alizila.com/category/philanthropy-and-entrepreneurship/>

selection of recent interventions is briefly presented below to illustrate some of the activities that China is engaged in alongside its COVID-19 response described above.

- **Kenya food aid / drought relief, 2016-2022:** Kenya has suffered from a long-running drought beginning in 2014 leading to rising food insecurity from 2014-2016, a national drought emergency in 2017, and ongoing food stress, crisis, or emergency conditions persisting in various locations until the present day (Reliefweb, 2022). China has made regular donations of rice to Kenya since 2016, including 21,366 tons of rice worth USD 22.5 million in 2017 (Morangi, 2019) and a series of eight consignments between 2018 and 2022 totalling 11,835 tonnes worth approximately USD 12 million, the last of which was delivered on 14 February 2022 (Xinhua, 2022).
- **Sierra Leone food aid, 2021:** In mid-2021, the World Food Programme was undertaking food aid distribution in Sierra Leone to more than 100,000 people facing severe food insecurity largely as a result of rising food prices due to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 (WFP, 2021). China donated an unspecified quantity of rice in August 2021 via its South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund for distribution through the WFP relief efforts (CIDCA, 2021b). Agreements to provide similar food aid were also signed with Guinea-Bissau, Cameroon, and Uganda (CIDCA, 2021a).
- **Lesotho food aid, 2020:** At the end of 2020, all districts of Lesotho were in acute food security crisis affecting 766,000 people due to persistent drought, widespread poverty, and the impacts of COVID-19 (CIDCA, 2020d; WFP, 2020b, p. 1). China donated aid through the World Food Programme targeted at maternal and child health and nutrition, reaching 18,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women across four districts and 18,000 children across five districts, the latter amounting to 366 tonnes of food aid (CIDCA, 2020d; WFP, 2020a).
- **Tunisia hospital construction, 2020:** China funded the construction of a 246-bed hospital in Sfax province in Tunisia from 2016 to 2020; due to the ongoing pandemic when construction was completed in December 2020, the hospital was designated as a national centre for the care of COVID-19 patients (CIDCA, 2020c; Xinhua, 2020).
- **Cyclone Idai response, 2019:** In response to Cyclone Idai, which affected Southeast Africa in 2019, China provided humanitarian supplies to Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi, and deployed an international rescue team of 65 people to Mozambique (State Council Information Office, 2021b, p. 33). Work undertaken, in collaboration with UNDP and UNICEF, included repairing damage to housing, schools and clinics; reproductive health care activities including training for local health workers; provision of clean drinking water and emergency hygiene facilities; child protection activities; and strengthening surveillance of post-disaster diseases in cyclone-affected areas (CIDCA, 2019b, 2019d, 2020a, 2020b).
- **Namibia food aid, 2019:** At the end of 2019, Namibia was experiencing drought conditions that led to 430,000 people facing severe food insecurity across large portions of the country (IPC, 2020, p. 1). China donated an unspecified amount of food aid to Namibia through the World Food Programme in December 2019; additional government aid was channelled through the Red Cross Society of China, and Chinese residents in Namibia also donated approximately USD 140,000 towards drought relief (CIDCA, 2019c).
- **Somalia food aid, 2019:** Due to long-term drought alongside political and economic instability, more than 2.2 million people were facing critical levels of hunger in 2019 (WFP, 2019, p. 1). China donated 6,500 tonnes of food aid to Somalia, including rice,

corn, beans, vegetable oil and other food items, beginning with 2,000 tonnes of rice which arrived in June 2019, and provided funding to support the World Food Programme in purchasing additional food items locally (CIDCA, 2019a).

- **Ebola response, 2014-2018:** China provided emergency humanitarian aid worth USD 120 million⁷ to 13 African countries, including building laboratories and treatment centres, dispatching nearly 1,200 medical workers and public health experts to affected countries, and training approximately 13,000 local medical workers (Kurtzer & Gonzales, 2020; State Council Information Office, 2021a, p. 35, 2021b, p. 32). In 2018, China provided supplies, money, health experts, medicine and training to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, as well as the African Union (State Council Information Office, 2021b, p. 32).

References

- Africa CDC. (2020a). *Africa CDC receives third donation of medical supplies from Jack Ma Foundation, co-hosts global MediXChange webinar on COVID-19*. Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://africacdc.org/news-item/africa-cdc-receives-third-donation-of-medical-supplies-from-jack-ma-foundation-co-hosts-global-medixchange-webinar-on-covid-19/>
- Africa CDC. (2020b). *Jack Ma and Alibaba Foundations Donate COVID-19 Medical Equipment to African Union Member States*. Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://africacdc.org/news-item/jack-ma-and-alibaba-foundations-donate-covid-19-medical-equipment-to-african-union-member-states/>
- AidData. (2021). *AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 2.0*. AidData at William & Mary. <https://www.aiddata.org/data/aiddatas-global-chinese-development-finance-dataset-version-2-0>
- Cheng, C. (2019). *The Logic Behind China's Foreign Aid Agency*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/05/21/logic-behind-china-s-foreign-aid-agency-pub-79154>
- CIDCA. (2019a, June 18). China hands over food aid to Somalia in Mogadishu. *China International Development Agency*. http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2019-06/18/c_383495.htm
- CIDCA. (2019b, October 25). China signs cooperation agreement with UNICEF to provide humanitarian aid to Mozambique. *China International Development Agency*. http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2019-10/25/c_461505.htm
- CIDCA. (2019c, December 26). China provides food assistance to Namibia. *China International Development Agency*. http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2019-12/26/c_461508.htm
- CIDCA. (2019d, December 26). Launch ceremony held for China humanitarian assistance to Malawi. *China International Development Agency*. http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2019-12/26/c_461507.htm
- CIDCA. (2020a, January 21). China to provide health assistance to Zimbabwe. *China International Development Agency*. http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2020-01/21/c_461509.htm
- CIDCA. (2020b, July 23). South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund launches Cyclone Idai restoration assistance in Zimbabwe. *China International Development Agency*. http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2020-07/23/c_520265.htm
- CIDCA. (2020c, December 17). China, Tunisia sign hospital handover certificates. *China International*

⁷ An alternative estimate suggests that China's contribution was valued at USD 47 million, but this is likely to have underestimated the value of bilateral and non-reported aid (Humanitarian Advisory Group et al., 2019, p. 6).

- Development Agency. http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2020-12/17/c_575660.htm
- CIDCA. (2020d, December 30). China provides food assistance to Lesotho. *China International Development Agency*. http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2020-12/30/c_578519.htm
- CIDCA. (2021a, March 11). China, World Food Program sign deals to provide food aid to 4 African countries. *China International Development Agency*. http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2021-03/11/c_601642.htm
- CIDCA. (2021b, August 9). China provides food aid to Sierra Leone via SSCAF. *China International Development Agency*. http://en.cidca.gov.cn/2021-08/09/c_652133.htm
- CIDCA. (2022). *China International Development Cooperation Agency*. China International Development Cooperation Agency. <http://en.cidca.gov.cn/>
- Custer, S., Dreher, A., Elston, T.-B., Fuchs, A., Ghose, S., Lin, J. J., Malik, A. A., Parks, B. C., Russell, B., Solomon, K., Strange, A., Tierney, M. J., Walsh, K., Zaleski, L., & Zhang, S. (2021). *Tracking Chinese Development Finance: An Application of AidData's TUFF 2.0 Methodology*. AidData at William & Mary. https://docs.aiddata.org/ad4/pdfs/AidData_TUFF_methodology_2_0.pdf
- Financial Tracking Service (FTS) (2021) *Government Donor Snapshot* <https://fts.unocha.org/donors/2976/summary/2021>
- Gong, L. (2021). *The Belt and Road Initiative: Vehicle for China's Humanitarian Action?* S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PR210628_The-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-Vehicle-for-China's-Humanitarian-Action_V2.pdf
- Hirono, M. (2018). *Exploring the links between Chinese foreign policy and humanitarian action: Multiple interests, processes and actors*. Overseas Development Institute. <https://odi.org/en/publications/exploring-the-links-between-chinese-foreign-policy-and-humanitarian-action-multiple-interests-processes-and-actors/>
- Humanitarian Advisory Group, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Innovation Center for Risk Governance, & Zhang, D. (2019). *Positive Disruption? China's Humanitarian Aid*. Humanitarian Advisory Group. <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/positive-disruption-chinas-humanitarian-aid/>
- IPC. (2020). *Prolonged drought in Namibia drives over 400,000 people in to food crisis*. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IPC_AcuteFoodInsecurity_Namibia_2019Oct2020Sept.pdf
- Johnson, Z. (2021). *New Era? Trends in China's financing for international development cooperation*. SEEK Development. <https://donortracker.org/insights/donor-tracker-webinar-featuring-development-reimagined-chinese-development-policy-and>
- Johnson, Z., & Zühr, R. (2021). A New Era? Trends in China's financing for international development cooperation. In *Donor Tracker Insights*. SEEK Development. <https://donortracker.org/insights/new-era-trends-chinas-financing-international-development-cooperation>
- Jureńczyk, Ł. (2020). Analysing China's "Angola Model": A Pattern for Chinese Involvement in Africa? *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 42(2). <https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v42i2.73>
- Kitano, N., & Miyabayashi, Y. (2020). *Estimating China's Foreign Aid: 2019-2020 Preliminary Figures*. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/publication/other/20201214_01.html
- Kurtzer, J., & Gonzales, G. (2020). *China's Humanitarian Aid: Cooperation amidst Competition*. Center for Strategic & International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-humanitarian->

aid-cooperation-amidst-competition

- Lin, S., Gao, L., Reyes, M., Cheng, F., Kaufman, J., & El-Sadr, W. M. (2016). China's health assistance to Africa: opportunism or altruism? *Globalization and Health*, 12(1), 83. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-016-0217-1>
- Ma, J. (2020a). *Africa can be one step ahead of the coronavirus*. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/JackMa/status/1239581509125726210>
- Ma, J. (2020b). *Our second donation to 54 countries in Africa is on the way*. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/JackMa/status/1247014237303537664>
- Morangi, L. (2019, June 11). Kenya lauds China's food aid for communities in arid areas. *China Daily*. <http://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201906/11/WS5cff581ca3101765772308bf.html>
- Morris, S., Rockafellow, R., & Rose, S. (2021). *Mapping China's Multilateralism: A Data Survey of China's Participation in Multilateral Development Institutions and Funds*. Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/mapping-chinas-multilateralism-data-survey-chinas-participation-multilateral-development>
- OCHA. (n.d.). *What is the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) and How to use it?* United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). <https://fts.unocha.org/content/what-financial-tracking-service-fts-and-how-use-it>
- OCHA. (2021). China, Government of 2021. In *Financial Tracking Service*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). <https://fts.unocha.org/donors/2976/summary/2021>
- Reliefweb. (2022). *Kenya: Drought - 2014-2022*. Reliefweb. <https://reliefweb.int/disaster/dr-2014-000131-ken>
- Renwick, N. (2020). *China and Humanitarian Aid Cooperation* (Policy Bri). Institute of Development Studies. https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/15678/PB170_China_and_Humanitarian_Aid_Cooperation.pdf
- SAIS-CARI. (2022). *Data: Chinese Global Foreign Aid*. Johns Hopkins University. <http://www.sais-cari.org/data-chinese-global-foreign-aid>
- State Council Information Office. (2014). *China's Foreign Aid (2014)*. The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/08/23/content_281474982986592.htm
- State Council Information Office. (2021a). *China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era*. The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202101/10/content_WS5ffa6bbbc6d0f72576943922.html
- State Council Information Office. (2021b). *China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals*. The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/26/c_1310333813.htm
- UNDP. (2016). *China's Humanitarian Aid*. United Nations Development Programme. <https://www.cn.undp.org/content/china/en/home/library/south-south-cooperation/issue-brief--china-s-humanitarian-aid.html>
- UNHCR. (2001). *Coordination in Complex Emergencies*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/partners/partners/3ba88e7c6/coordination-complex-emergencies.html>
- WFP. (2019). *WFP Somalia Country Brief June 2019*. World Food Programme.

WFP. (2020a). *WFP and China support government efforts in strengthening food security in Lesotho*. World Food Programme. <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-and-china-support-government-efforts-strengthening-food-security-lesotho>

WFP. (2020b). *WFP Lesotho Country Brief December 2020*. World Food Programme.

WFP. (2021). *WFP Sierra Leone Country Brief August 2021*. World Food Programme. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP-0000131841.pdf>

Xinhua. (2020, December 11). Tunisian president inaugurates new hospital built with Chinese aid. *Xinhuanet*. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/11/c_139580487.htm

Xinhua. (2022, February 14). Kenya holds handover ceremony of Chinese food aid program. *Xinhuanet*. <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/20220214/a730b8d24a1248b6aa7e5ab89cd3ece5/c.html>

Acknowledgements

We thank the following experts who voluntarily provided suggestions for relevant literature or other advice to the author to support the preparation of this report. The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the opinions of any of the experts consulted.

- Jing Cai, Policy Analyst, Development Reimagined

Suggested citation

Lucas, B. (2022). *China's humanitarian assistance activities in Africa*. K4D Helpdesk Report 1114. Institute of Development Studies. DOI: [10.19088/K4D.2022.048](https://doi.org/10.19088/K4D.2022.048)

About this report

This report is based on five days of desk-based research. The K4D research helpdesk provides rapid syntheses of a selection of recent relevant literature and international expert thinking in response to specific questions relating to international development. For any enquiries, contact helpdesk@k4d.info.

K4D services are provided by a consortium of leading organisations working in international development, led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), with the Education Development Trust, Itad, University of Leeds Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), University of Birmingham International Development Department (IDD) and the University of Manchester Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI).

This report was prepared for the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and its partners in support of pro-poor programmes. Except where otherwise stated, it is licensed for non-commercial purposes under the terms of the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#). K4D cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information contained in this report. Any views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of FCDO, K4D or any other contributing organisation.

© Crown copyright 2022



Appendix: CIDCA announcements reviewed

The following are the dates and titles of CIDCA announcements related to humanitarian aid activities in Africa from 2018 to 2022 that were reviewed for the purposes of this report. They can be accessed on the CIDCA website at <http://en.cidca.gov.cn/cooperation.html>, <http://en.cidca.gov.cn/ourwork.html>, and <http://en.cidca.gov.cn/ehanews.html>.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Title of announcement</i>
28/01/2022	Tanzania receives more donation of COVID-19 vaccines from China
26/01/2022	Zambia receives 2nd batch of China-donated COVID-19 vaccines
22/01/2022	Ethiopia receives additional 2.2 mln doses of Chinese-donated COVID-19 vaccines
15/01/2022	Benin receives second batch of COVID-19 vaccines donated by China
22/12/2021	Zimbabwe receives latest vaccine donation from China amid 4th wave of COVID-19 pandemic
03/12/2021	Djibouti receives another shipment of COVID-19 vaccine donation from China
16/11/2021	China donates COVID-19 vaccines to Burundi
12/11/2021	2nd shipment of COVID-19 vaccine donated by China arrives in Guinea-Bissau
08/11/2021	Rwanda receives 2nd batch of COVID-19 vaccine from China
03/11/2021	Tanzania receives 500,000 Sinopharm vaccine doses from China
27/10/2021	Chinese COVID-19 vaccines boost Ethiopia's inoculation drive
25/10/2021	Uganda receives second batch of COVID-19 vaccines donated by China
23/09/2021	China-donated COVID-19 vaccines land in Burkina Faso
06/09/2021	China-donated COVID-19 vaccines, detection reagents arrive in Sierra Leone
26/08/2021	Ethiopia receives third shipment of China-donated COVID-19 vaccines
25/08/2021	China-donated COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Lesotho
25/08/2021	Togo receives 2nd shipment of COVID-19 vaccine donated by China
24/08/2021	China-donated COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Rwanda
13/08/2021	COVID-19 vaccine donated by China arrives in Zambia
10/08/2021	China's 2nd COVID-19 vaccine donation arrives in Mozambique
09/08/2021	China provides food aid to Sierra Leone via SSCAF
06/08/2021	China-donated COVID-19 vaccine arrives in Uganda
06/08/2021	China-donated COVID-19 vaccine arrives in Tanzania's Zanzibar
05/07/2021	Another batch of China-donated COVID-19 vaccine arrives in Comoros
28/06/2021	COVID-19 vaccines donated by China to Cote d'Ivoire arrive in Abidjan
04/06/2021	Chad receives donation of Chinese vaccines against COVID-19
24/05/2021	Gabon receives second batch of Chinese COVID-19 vaccine aid
30/04/2021	Second shipment of China-donated COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Guinea
28/04/2021	Togo receives China-donated Sinovac vaccines
28/04/2021	Botswana receives China-donated Sinovac vaccines
16/04/2021	Mauritius receives first batch of COVID-19 vaccines from China
02/04/2021	China-donated Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Ethiopia
26/03/2021	Angola receives COVID-19 vaccines donated by China
25/03/2021	China-donated COVID-19 vaccine arrives in Benin
22/03/2021	Comoros president welcomes medical experts and COVID-19 vaccine from China
22/03/2021	Zimbabwe receives 2nd shipment of COVID-19 vaccine aid from China
22/03/2021	China-donated COVID-19 vaccine reaches Djibouti
19/03/2021	Chinese government will donate 300,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to UN peacekeepers

18/03/2021 Namibia receives first batch of COVID-19 vaccines from China

17/03/2021 China-donated COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Gabon

15/03/2021 China-donated COVID-19 vaccine arrives in Republic of the Congo

15/03/2021 Sierra Leone receives China-donated COVID-19 vaccines

15/03/2021 China-donated COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Guinea

11/03/2021 China, World Food Program sign deals to provide food aid to 4 African countries

03/03/2021 China-donated COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Mozambique

03/03/2021 China-donated COVID-19 vaccines arrive in Algeria

01/03/2021 China-donated COVID-19 vaccine arrives in Egypt

25/02/2021 China's first batch of vaccine aid for Africa arrives in Equatorial Guinea

18/02/2021 Zimbabwe receives its first batch of COVID-19 vaccines from China

08/02/2021 China, UNFPA sign agreement to provide healthcare assistance to Botswana, Lesotho

18/01/2021 China, UNFPA sign agreement to provide healthcare assistance to Sao Tome and Principe, Gambia

30/12/2020 China provides food assistance to Lesotho

17/12/2020 China, Tunisia sign hospital handover certificates

23/07/2020 South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund launches Cyclone Idai restoration assistance in Zimbabwe

17/07/2020 China donates medical supplies to Madagascar

17/06/2020 2nd shipment of China donated medical supplies arrives in Equatorial Guinea

16/06/2020 Sao Tome and Principe thanks China for helping fight COVID-19

12/06/2020 China sends 2nd batch of medical supplies to Mozambique to help fight COVID-19

11/06/2020 China donates more medical supplies to Botswana to help fight COVID-19

02/06/2020 Chinese medical team arrives in Equatorial Guinea to help fight COVID-19

01/06/2020 Chinese medical experts arrive in Republic of Congo to help fight COVID-19

28/05/2020 China donates anti-pandemic supplies to Central African Republic to help fight COVID-19

12/05/2020 Chinese medical team arrives in Zimbabwe to help fight COVID-19

12/05/2020 China donates another batch of medical supplies to Djibouti to help fight COVID-19

11/05/2020 2nd shipment of Chinese medical supplies arrives in Egypt to help fight COVID-19

11/05/2020 China donates medical supplies to Zanzibar to help fight COVID-19

03/05/2020 China sends first shipment of medical supplies to Madagascar to help fight COVID-19

30/04/2020 Chinese medical experts arrive in Cote d'Ivoire to help fight COVID-19

28/04/2020 China donates COVID-19 medical supplies to Uganda

25/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies arrive in Angola to help fight COVID-19

25/04/2020 China hands over medical supplies to Gabon to help fight COVID-19

24/04/2020 Zimbabwean president: China's support and assistance to Zimbabwe are tangible

24/04/2020 China supports Nigeria's anti-virus fight with medical supplies

24/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies to help fight COVID-19 in Namibia

24/04/2020 China donates medical supplies to help Africa fight virus

23/04/2020 Chinese government donates anti-pandemic supplies to Liberia

23/04/2020 Medical supplies from Chinese government and Chinese-funded enterprises arrive in Senegal to help fight COVID-19

22/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies arrive in Sierra Leone

22/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies arrive in Togo to help fight COVID-19

21/04/2020 China donates medical supplies to Gambia

21/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies arrive in Cape Verde to help fight COVID-19

19/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies arrive in Guinea to help fight COVID-19

18/04/2020 Embassy in Mali hands over medical supplies to Mali government to help fight COVID-19

18/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies arrive in Sao Tome and Principe to help fight COVID-19

18/04/2020 Cote d'Ivoire thanks China for lending a helping hand in fighting COVID-19

17/04/2020 China hands over medical supplies to Tunisia

17/04/2020 Chinese government donates medical supplies to Burkina Faso

17/04/2020 China's first batch of medical supplies arrives in Cairo

17/04/2020 China sends another shipment of medical supplies to Nigeria

17/04/2020 Republic of Congo receives aid from China to fight COVID-19

17/04/2020 Chinese medical team arrives in Ethiopia

16/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies arrive in Equatorial Guinea to help fight COVID-19

16/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies arrive in Sudan to help fight COVID-19

16/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies arrive in Algeria to help fight COVID-19

16/04/2020 Chinese government donates medical supplies to Benin

15/04/2020 Second shipment of Chinese medical supplies arrives in South Africa

06/04/2020 Chinese medical supplies for 18 African countries arrive in Ghana

01/04/2020 Chinese embassy donates medical supplies to Malawi

17/03/2020 Chinese doctors help Tunisia fight COVID-19

21/01/2020 China to provide health assistance to Zimbabwe

26/12/2019 China provides food assistance to Namibia

26/12/2019 Launch ceremony held for China humanitarian assistance to Malawi

25/10/2019 China signs cooperation agreement with UNICEF to provide humanitarian aid to Mozambique

25/10/2019 China signs cooperation agreement with WHO to fight Ebola

23/09/2019 China provides food aid to South Sudan

18/09/2019 China, UNDP sign cooperation agreement under South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund

18/09/2019 China signs an agreement with WFP to provide emergency food aid to Namibia

18/09/2019 China signs agreement with WFP to provide emergency food aid to Zimbabwe, Mozambique

04/09/2019 China provides DR Congo with emergency supplies to fight Ebola

18/06/2019 China hands over food aid to Somalia in Mogadishu

15/04/2019 China provides emergency food aid to three African countries

22/03/2019 Chinese Ambassador to South Sudan attends handover ceremony of anti-malaria drug

28/06/2018 [Chinese Medical Teams] China helps Sierra Leone build center for disease prevention, control

15/06/2018 [Chinese Medical Teams] Chinese doctors help improve Uganda's healthcare status quo

12/06/2018 [Chinese Medical Teams] China provides 6-mln-USD medical aid to Libya

04/06/2018 Humanitarian aid worth 1m dollars offered to Congo to fight Ebola

25/04/2018 [Chinese Medical Teams] Chinese team hunts down malaria in Comoros

18/04/2018 [Chinese Medical Teams] Chinese medical staff helps in Mauritania
