Essay Topic: What are the key reasons for why international development programs and support do not always *effectively* reach those beneficiaries most in need? What core readings, selected readings, and/or golden oldies/case study readings support those reasons you list? Provide reference to the specific readings for which you are touching on (author, and/or title).

Almost all of the countries that were less developed in the 1970s have not improved their situations much since then. Despite billions of dollars in support, the people most in need have not received it because of problems on both the giving and receiving ends. I will illustrate these problems through discussions of gender, poor governance, and lack of understanding.

Perhaps the most serious reason aid does not reach those most in need is because of gender discrimination and disparities. The current state of women in most less developed countries is less than favorable. According to Haslam et al., 70% of the poor in less developed countries are women, and according to Seitz, 80% of the world’s hungry are women and children. In the Allende story, the author demonstrates how women bear the burden of taking care of their families in difficult economic times. While women are vital to the success of their family units, patriarchal attitudes in many LDCs prevent them from participating in public life. It is often difficult for women in these countries to have economic self-sufficiency or even to have jobs at all. Because they are less visible in society, women are also less likely to receive aid. Micro loan programs have enjoyed limited success with empowering women, but often men control the money even though a loan is in a woman’s name. This negates the purpose that the money was lent for.

A second reason aid does not effectively reach people in need is because of bad governance and corruption. Having good institutions makes a big difference in terms of economic growth. For example, many countries in Asia have strong governments and rule of law. Countries such as China and South Korea have enjoyed economic success, but African countries that lack institutions such as effective police, judiciary, healthcare, and schools have had economic stagnation. When foreign aid goes directly to bad governments, it ends up filling the pockets of corrupt officials instead of reaching those it was intended for. Often, this corruption is embedded in the culture. For instance, Jessi shared a story in class about how a USAID-funded project she was working on was delayed because the country’s officials could not understand that they were unable to receive bribes for okaying the project.

The final reason aid does not effectively reach those in need is because of a lack of understanding between those giving and receiving aid. Many NGOs are based in the West and have only a vague idea of what locals want or need. When projects go ahead before this information is collected, disaster ensues. In the presentations on The Idealist, we learned that Jeffrey Sachs started a maize growing project in an area where no one liked to eat maize. Cultural divides also cause problems, such as NGOs want to focus on topics that are taboo in the local culture, such as sex education. NGOs can also experience push back when they openly express views contrary to local culture, such as that women should work outside the home.

As I have shown, problems on the giving and receiving ends of international development programs cause it to go awry. However, development aid can still be effective. One way to improve the efficiency of aid is to avoid going through corrupt governments. Instead, aid can go through local NGOs which are more focused on improving the lives of the local population. Western governments and NGOs will probably also want to monitor and work with the local NGOs to ensure honest use of their money. A solution such as this would also solve problems in the lack of understanding category because local NGOs would have a better idea what is appropriate for the context. Unfortunately, discrimination against women is a persistent problem, and it has no easy solution. Perhaps investing more in programs for educating girls would help, since educated women will have more of a voice in family and social life. Nevertheless, development programs have much to improve upon if they are going to reach those most in need.