

Development Aid and Solidarity Work: East and West German Health Cooperation with Low-Income Countries, 1945 to 1970

Walter Bruchhausen, Iris Borowy

Summary

Between 1949 and 1989, both the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the West and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the East, engaged in health-related relations with low-income countries in the global South. The strong position of the churches in West Germany and the dominant position of the state in the East provided the preconditions for diverging international health activities, as did differences in ideology and economic status. Activities entailed similarities (an initial focus on clinical therapy and material donations) and differences (in scale, composition of actors and conceptualization). Programs evolved gradually, reacting to circumstances rather than a master plan. By the late 1960s, international health assistance was mainly organized as a component of “development aid” in the FRG, while regarded as “solidarity” in the GDR, in both cases designed to spur changes in recipient countries according to the respective Northern models as components of a perceived direct, global East-West confrontation.

Keywords: Federal Republic of Germany; German Democratic Republic; health development aid; health solidarity assistance; humanitarian emergency assistance

Walter Bruchhausen, RWTH Aachen University, Institute for the History, Theory and Ethics of Medicine and University of Cologne, Institute for the History and Ethics of Medicine (walbruch@uni-bonn.de); Iris Borowy, Shanghai University, College of Liberal Arts (BorowyIris@i.shu.edu.cn)