

# Saudi Arabian Humanitarian Aid in Crises Management Periods

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## Abstract

Saudi Arabia is among the first countries in the world to develop global programs for providing humanitarian aid of relief to communities stricken by natural and manmade disasters or regions severely impacted by catastrophic wars. The government of Saudi Arabia provides such humanitarian aid through the auspices of the United Nations and other official organizations such as the World Bank and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The Saudi humanitarian support is not limited only to Arab and Muslim countries, but is extended internationally regardless of nationality and cultural differences. Saudi Arabia does not merely provide humanitarian aid for recovery from natural disasters, but also supplies donations in the form of cash or developing projects to developing countries, impacted by critical disasters such as drought and poverty. Saudi Arabia performs or provides free medical assistance for children in various parts of the world and has earned the characterization “Kingdom of Humanity” due to these initiatives. The present study summarizes the contributions of Saudi Arabia to humanitarian relief. The study entailed the use of available data collected from various sources that have been used in former research for the period of (2005-2015).

## Keywords

Humanitarian Aid, Kingdom of Humanity, Crises Management, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Top 20 Governments and United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

## 1. Introduction

Saudi Arabia plays significant and active roles in providing humanitarian aid and relief assistance to impoverished communities, particularly during and after critical and catastrophic natural disasters or other extreme exigencies. The Kingdom continues to fulfill this commitment of international aid contribution by

supporting organizations such as NGOs and International Health Organizations.

As one of the top twenty global economies, Saudi Arabia is one of the most dominant countries in the Arab and Islamic world and among the most influential countries internationally in helping promote developments, which enhance the global economy. The wealth of the country enables it to contribute to such international aid and to specific support of projects, which contribute to the socio-economic construction of the less-developed countries.

Historically and out of necessity, the organization and distribution of humanitarian aid and resources became institutionalized endeavors. Specifically, in July 1944, 730 delegates representing 44 Allied nations met in Bretton Woods in New Hampshire, United States, to sign the Bretton Woods Treaty for the purpose of regulating the international monetary and financial order after the conclusion of World War II (Toye & Markwell, 2008). The main terms of the agreement to achieve this goal were to form two organizations, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which is today part of the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to serve as permanent international bodies. The initial task of these two institutions was the restoration of Europe (Dahish, 2006). The IBRD was created to speed up Post-War 2 reconstruction, to aid political stability, and to foster peace. This was to be fulfilled through the establishment of programs for reconstruction and development.

Subsequently, Saudi Arabia as a sovereign state, also assumed humanitarian aid responsibilities through its own initiative and through concerted institutionalized efforts by maintaining representation in multiple international agencies and organizations. The establishment of regional institutions is another example of Saudi Arabia's involvement in fostering developmental projects. The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) was established by the Saudi Development Fund (SDF) to fund, finance and contribute to the development of Islamic countries.

Due to its humanitarian support and achievements, Saudi Arabia has been deservedly called the "Kingdom of Humanity." The present paper summarizes the role of Saudi Arabia in providing international humanitarian aid for poor countries in the Arabic and Islamic states, as well as in the rest of the world, during and after natural disasters and catastrophic wars during the period from 2005-2015.

The following questions are framed in order to analyze the contribution of the Kingdom in providing international humanitarian assistance.

1. Is Saudi Arabia consistent in providing international humanitarian aid?
2. Is Saudi Arabia among the top 10 government contributors of international humanitarian assistance?
3. Is Saudi Arabia providing donations for official development assistance to the needy nations?
4. What is the position of Saudi Arabia in contributing to international humanitarian assistance among other Gulf States?

## 2. Literature Review

Review of published literature indicates that in 2008, about 400 natural disasters

affected adversely approximately 220 million people (Selvaretnam et al., 2011). The intensity of those disasters had a negative impact on individuals as well as on the economies of the stricken areas. Reportedly, 3.4 billion people still live in regions that are exposed to such dangers (Dilley et al., 2005) between 1992 to 2003, the total quantity of relief for disasters and other contingencies reached \$2.5 billion dollars. Between 1980 to 2003, emergency loans given by the World Bank towards relief for disasters, amounted to about \$14.4 billion.

Humanitarian assistance is a response to critical disasters and can be classified into two phases (Selvaretnam et al., 2011). The first phase of assistance is to provide food supplies, medications and necessary items to communities inflicted by a catastrophe, thus helping to alleviate the post-disaster consequences on the affected population. The second phase of assistance is to provide aid to stricken communities for the reconstruction of basic infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals.

Stromberg (2007) noted that donors who provide humanitarian relief usually share the same language with the country donated to, while other countries are rarely recipients. Also, he emphasizes that humanitarian assistance is an obvious variable that could promote partnerships in terms of exchanges trade among countries. But this should not be held as a condition; aid should be given to any country stricken by a natural disaster that is beyond its capability to recover alone, regardless, language, ethnicity or religion.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia does not limit its local humanitarian aid to its geographical boundaries, but extends its international aid regardless of cultural barriers, religion, race, and ethnicity, to all people who suffer poverty or losses from natural disasters. Stipulation of aid to support the less developed and poorer nations reveals the expression of core human values of human beings (Humanity Kingdom, 2016). Anderson (1999) underlines the values of international aid for helping others in need. Furthermore, he emphasizes that “the world is a better place because when some people suffer, other people who are able to take actions to help lessen that suffering do so” (p. 2). In his description of the circumstances surrounding aid workers and their mission, he suggests that improvement is required in many areas of critical and conflict-accentuated humanitarian assistance-notwithstanding the complexity of the issues and circumstances in which the aid is provided.

The distribution of aid from Saudi Arabia to recipients is done through agencies of the United Nations. Anderson (1999) points to information gathered from the local Capacities for Peace Project, noting its importance in enhancing a collaborative effort with international and local organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, the Saudi Fund Development, the Islamic World Bank, European and other agencies, to provide necessary aid for needy people. Currently, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia occupies a key position as one of the major players at the international level and as a huge contributor and donor to all major programs for humanitarian aids. Multiple examples show the noble principles demonstrated by efforts to support other states: Specifically, the Kingdom is the prima-

ry donor and provider to the World Food Programs. The total donations and hard cash contributions have reached \$1,541,500,000 (USD). The current value of these donations to the United Nations Organization for the Arab Gulf Program has been estimated to be over 787 million dollars. This program provides assistance to the poorest countries in the world. The program is also funded and supported by the following international institutions: the World Health Organization and Food and Agriculture, the International Labor Organization, the World Food Program, UNESCO, the Program for the Disabled, UNDP, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development and Population Activities Fund. However, the contributions that Saudi Arabia has made to this program represent approximately 90 percent of the total allocated resources (Humanity Kingdom, 2016).

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia's government has aided the efforts of the Palestinian refugee relief agency by providing \$4,500,000 every year to the relief fund from the Agency's budget (Humanity Kingdom, 2016). These contributions have provided considerable relief to Palestinian refugees and illustrate Saudi Arabia's commitment to aiding struggling people across the globe. Saudi Arabia has provided humanitarian aid for the Islamic Center for Technical and Vocational Training and Research in Bangladesh, which amounts to more than 22,615,000 Saudi Riyals (approximately \$60,004,000 in USD). Also, in 1993, the total amount of aid relief to Afghan refugees was 671 million Saudi riyals (approximately, \$202,933,333 USD).

According to Arab News (2015a) during the last four decades Saudi Arab has been the most generous state in terms of humanitarian assistance and development. The government has contributed more than \$115 billion to more than ninety states all over the world.

Minear (1991) pointed out that the Saudi government provided the Sudanese government with aid after their 1988 floods. The Riyadh Newspaper (2009) also indicated that Saudi Arabia sent a delegation to Khartoum, including the Director of International Relations of the Saudi Red Crescent Authority, Dr. Muhammad Yusuf, and Al-Suwaidi provided significant assistance. Their efforts and those of the Saudi Red Crescent Society contributed greatly to the stability of the situation in that country. According to Arab News (2004) the Saudi government also provided humanitarian aid of 40 million Saudi riyals (approximately \$10.7) to Darfur region. The aid includes 70 tons of foodstuff, water treatment, and medicine. Furthermore, the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) has donated SR2.5 million as an emergency assistance to the local residents of Darfur.

Furthermore, the Saudi Arabian government supported and provided humanitarian aid to the United States government when the disastrous hurricane Katrina struck, specifically donating more than \$250 million for relief projects as an expression of sympathy (Penix, 2006). Based on the United Nations reports, Penix stated that "Saudi Arabia donated a total of \$272.7 million to alleviate natural disasters in 2005" (p. 1). Moreover, Hassan (2006) stated "Saudis donated

more than \$600,000 to Habitat for Humanity for 25 homes built on the 11,800 block of Green Mesa in northeast Houston. The donations not only helped build homes for hurricane victims in Houston but also for 150 homes in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Through Habitat for Humanity, each family was able to buy a house at cost and with a zero-interest loan” (p. 1).

According to the [Saudi Press Agency \(2005a\)](#), Saudi Arabia’s assistance to the 2004-tsunami victims is an ongoing effort. The assistance included the distribution of tents and other items to assist victims during the post disaster period. The Saudi Red Crescent built five health care centers, costing more than \$250,000, a mobile clinic costing \$800,000 and established a hospital, costing \$900,000.

The Saudi financial fund assistance was provided through the Saudi Red Crescent for many projects in Indonesia, specifically in the Aceh Besar District. According to [Daily News \(2005\)](#), Saudi Arabia provided more humanitarian aid by raising its relief assistance to \$30 million to alleviate the tragedy and disaster impact of the tsunami. At that time it was indicated that the assistance would be coordinated with the UN agencies, so it could be delivered and distributed in a timely fashion as a humanitarian relief.

Furthermore, the Arab Gulf Program for Development donated \$100,000 to the Philippines as relief aid to the victims of storm ([Arab News, 2013](#)). [Saudi Press Agency \(2005b\)](#) reported that Saudi government contributed by 75 tons of relief aid which comprises of tents, blankets and medical equipment to the victims of tsunami in Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Maldives. According to [Saudi Press Agency \(2005c\)](#) the Saudi total relief assistance to the Asian countries, which were hit by tsunamis and earthquakes, reached more than 260 million Saudi riyals (approximately \$69,333,333 USD) including the King Farad’s donation, Crown prince and prince Sultan.

As stated in an article entitled “[Donation from the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia](#)” (2011), the Saudi government also provided humanitarian aid to Japan in response to the earthquake disaster that hit the country in 2011, by supplying Japan with oil products worth the equivalent to \$20 million.

Another side of humanitarian aid is related to the medical field and is performed in response to calls of parents who have conjoined twins. Saudi Arabia truly deserves to be called the “Kingdom of Humanity,” given the fact that it has provided medical assistance to conjoined twin operations for children from all over the world ([Humanity kingdom, 2016](#)). For the past 20 years and as a part of its humanitarian program, Saudi Arabia responded positively to many requests from 18 countries, including the Philippines, Poland, Malaysia, Sudan, Morocco, Egypt, Yemen, and Iraq, to separate more than 94 sets of conjoined twins. These surgeries were performed successfully and free of charges by skillful physicians at King Abdulaziz Medical City ([Arab News, 2016](#)).

In addition, the government of Saudi Arabia continues to provide free health care, drinking water and ice for all pilgrims during the yearly “Hajj” (pilgrimage), and “Umra,” regardless of the individuals’ origin.

In summary, Saudi Arabia is committed to providing humanitarian assistance to the populations of all countries that have needs. This assistance not only includes the Middle East, but also other countries as well. According to the [Library of Congress \(2006\)](#), in 1974 Saudi Arabia introduced “the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) that provided grants and loans to developing countries” (p. 14). This type of aid is given to Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries, of which 68 countries have been reported to benefit.

According to the Saudi government, this aid equals 6 percent of the country GDP. Specifically in the year 2000, the Saudi government provided aid to countries as follows: \$1 billion in loans to Iraq, \$307 million to Palestine, and \$153 million to Pakistan for earthquake relief ([the Library of Congress, 2006](#)).

[UNRWA \(2011\)](#) reported that Saudi Arabia, represented by the same SFD fund, contributed US \$ 71.5 million to be used for building refugees’ homes in Gaza and Rafah. Saudi Arabia also donated \$10 million as a humanitarian aid for Palestinian refugee camp for rebuilding Naher el-bared, which was destroyed during the war in 2007. Another \$10 million contribution was provided through the UNRWA in developing various programs in education and healthcare in the West Bank and Gaza. In addition, [BBC Worldwide Limited \(2009\)](#) reported that then Kingdom sent more than 10 tons of medical relief supplies to assist the citizens in Gaza.

[The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia \(2006\)](#) in Washington, D.C. announced its support for Lebanon in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1701. This aid will be continued to provide aid and funding to rebuild Lebanon and carry out some projects for Palestinian refugees and victims of war.

[Al-Khaleej \(2008\)](#) Newspaper reported that Saudi Arabia provided 213 million in Jordanian Dinars (approximately \$300,203,050 USD) for aid to support Jordan. According to the [BBC Monitoring Middle East \(2007\)](#), Saudi Arabia also helped Pakistan during a recent earthquake disaster by distributing more than 230,000 blankets, 150,000 beds and thousands of tents. This assistance to Pakistan for humanitarian relief amounted to 4million Saudi Riyals (approximately \$1,066,666 USD). According to [Arab News \(2015b\)](#) Saudi Arabia increased monthly financial assistance for Palestine from \$14 million to \$20 million until it became \$240 million per year at all levels. This aid is used to support the Palestinian budget in financial crisis.

As reported by [U.S. Newswire \(2011\)](#), Saudi Arabia also launched a campaign for relief for people in Somalia by gathering \$5.3 million in donations as humanitarian assistance for those in that country suffering from the effects of famine and drought. Additionally, the Jeddah Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) contributed to Somalia \$350 million dollars for anti-starvation humanitarian aid. Similarly and in participation with the World Food Program (WFP), the government of Saudi Arabia pledged \$50 million as humanitarian assistance for Somalia of which \$10 million was provided in cooperation with World Health Organization (WHO).

Furthermore, [Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Affairs \(2012\)](#) and [Saudi Press](#)

Agency (2012) reported that Saudi Arabia sent the first humanitarian aid to the Republic of Tunisia in the wake of cold weather that hit the country. The relief assistance comprised of 108 tons of food supplies, medicines, tents and other relief material. Also, according to the Canadian Press (2010), and as a part of humanitarian assistance program, Saudi Arabia provided a donation of \$50 million as a relief to assist the Haiti government to overcome the consequences of the devastating earthquake that hit the country in 2010. Also, Sadikhova (2010) points out that Saudi Arabia also sent humanitarian aid of \$242 million to Pakistan to help those affected by flood disasters which paralyzed most of the cities and villages in that country. The assistance package helped the victims of floods who lost their homes, included tents, medicine, and thousands of tons of food.

Saudi Arabia has worked tirelessly to sustain its reputation as the “Kingdom of Humanity”. More recently, the Kingdom established the King Salman Center for Humanitarian Aid and Relief (KS Relief) for humanitarian works in 2015. KS Relief has donated about US \$1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in order to support Palestine and Syrian refugees. The center has also provided relief for the Yemeni population in the current conflict through UN agencies. Saudi Arabia has long term collaboration with UNRWA and is among its largest donor for humanitarian aid. UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty (UNRWA, 2016). UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. As a result, the UNRWA Program Budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services, operates with a large shortfall. UNRWA encourages all Member States to work collectively to exert all possible efforts to fully fund the Agency’s Program Budget. UNRWA emergency programs and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals (UNRWA, 2016). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is pleased to contribute to such a noble cause.

### 3. Methodology

The design of this study involved the use of already available secondary data. Secondary data refers to data that was collected for other purposes. The methodology for data collection consisted of locating the data, evaluating the data and verifying the data. The secondary data used in this study was collected from different sources for the period of 2005-2015. In evaluating the data, the original sources of data were scrutinized, assessing the theoretical and conceptual model that were used in the primary data collection, the variables that were used, the operational definition of the terms and the data collection strategy and the quality control measures employed, the data coding, data entry and data analysis procedures and the factors that influenced the study. The critical assessment contributed to enhancing the validity and reliability of the secondary data used in the study. The secondary data sources were verified to ensure proper docu-

mentation, the correct number of observations and cases, the correct number of variables, the correct coding scheme and the possibility of reproducing the original summary statistics.

The data analysis method used involved integrating a “research questions” driven approach and the “data driven” approach and employing the strategy of aggregation and disaggregation of data in the light of the research questions of the present study. The conclusion was drawn from the analysis of the data.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

Although the incidents in which Saudi Arabia has provided national and international humanitarian aid are many (see the literature), the specific data being discussed here is in terms of money donated.

Research question 1: Is Saudi Arabia consistent in providing international humanitarian aid?

The data were gathered from different sources in order to support the research questions that Saudi Arabia has been consistently providing humanitarian aid to the world. **Table 1** shows that from 2005 to 2008 the humanitarian assistance was constantly increasing in amount but dropped in 2009 until 2013. The figure has increased in year 2014 which is the highest among the period shown in the table and then slightly decreased in 2015.

The literature review discussed in the earlier section is reporting consistent support provided by Saudi Arabia to the countries who suffered with natural disasters on humanitarian ground. As reported by [Reliefweb \(2010\)](#) and [Binder, Claudia, & Julia \(2010\)](#) Saudi Arabia donations to the Haiti Flash Appeal reached \$50 million which, according to Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), made Saudi Arabia the biggest third donor to the

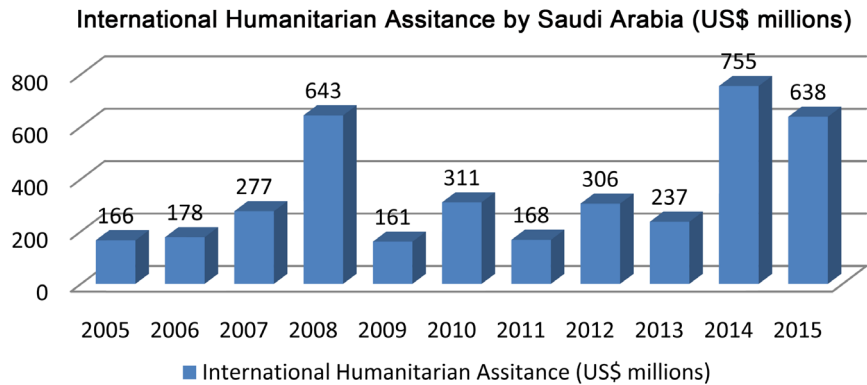
**Table 1.** International humanitarian assistance by Saudi Arabia, 2005-2015.

Year	International Humanitarian Assistance (millions US \$)
2005	166
2006	178
2007	277
2008	643
2009	161
2010	311
2011	168
2012	306
2013	237
2014	755
2015	638

Source: Development Initiatives based on OECD DAC, UN OCHA FTS, UN CERF, IMF WEO and UNSCEB data.



UN humanitarian response to the earthquake in Haiti. This abundant, immediate contribution reflected Saudi Arabia leading role as a supporter for UN humanitarian efforts for the people around the world despite of nationality, religion and race.



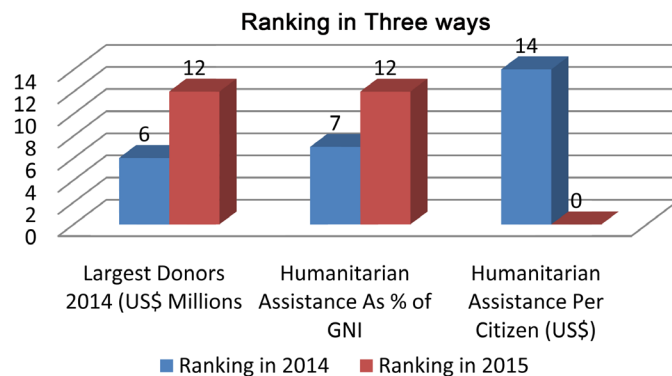
Research question 2: Is Saudi Arabia among the top 10 government contributors of international humanitarian assistance?

Due to the Kingdom’s continuous contribution, it received 6th rank among the 20 largest government contributors to international humanitarian assistance in year 2014 and 12<sup>th</sup> in year 2015 (see **Table 2**). The data on humanitarian assistance per citizen for year 2015 is not available.

**Table 2.** Saudi Arabia ranking among top 20 government contributors of international humanitarian assistance in three different ways, 2014 and 2015.

Contribution to International Humanitarian Assistance	Ranking in 2014	Ranking in 2015
Largest Donors 2014 (US \$ Millions)	6	12
Humanitarian Assistance as % of Gross National Income (GNI)	7	12
Humanitarian Assistance per Citizen (US\$)	14	n/a

Source: Development initiatives based on OECD DAC, UN OCHA FTS, UN CERF, IMF WEO and UNSCEB data.



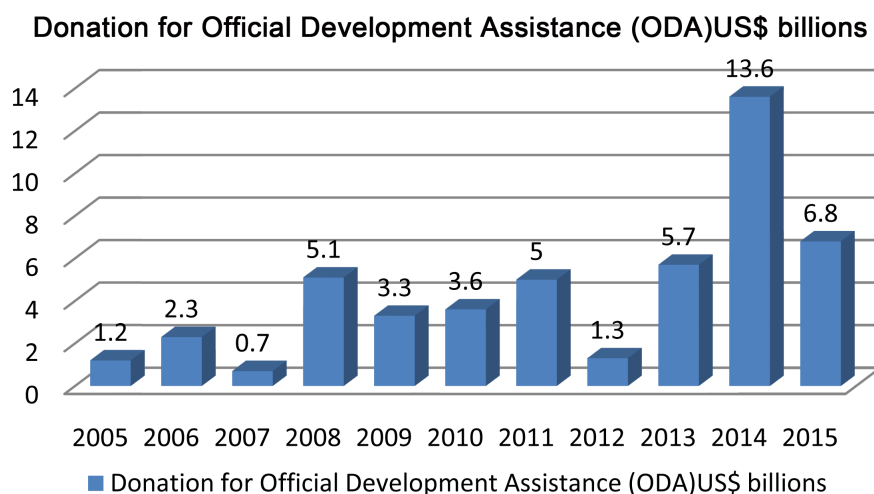
Research question 3: Is Saudi Arabia providing donations for official development assistance to the needy nations?

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has also been contributing in terms of giving donations to countries for developmental initiatives as well. **Table 3** shows the amount spent on official developmental assistance.

**Table 3.** Donation for official development assistance.

Year	Donation for Official Development Assistance (ODA) US \$ billions
2005	1.0
2006	2.0
2007	1.6
2008	5.0
2009	3.1
2010	3.5
2011	5.1
2012	1.3
2013	5.7
2014	13.6
2015	6.8

Source: Developmental Initiatives based on OECD DAC data *OECD (2017)*, Net ODA (indicator). doi: 10.1787/33346549-en (Accessed on 10 May 2017) Current prices Net disbursement (<http://stats.oecd.org/>).



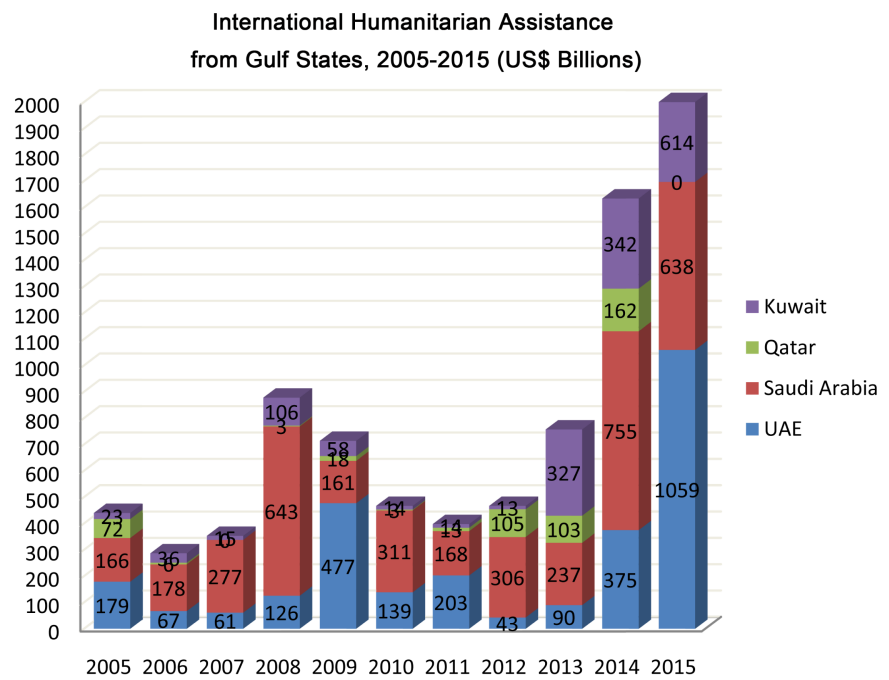
Research question 4: What is the position of Saudi Arabia in contributing to international humanitarian assistance among other Gulf States?

**Table 4** compares the kingdom with other Gulf States in terms of amount contributed for international humanitarian assistance. In 2014, the Kingdom has played a leading role in international humanitarian assistance among other Gulf States (see the Graph below).

**Table 4.** International humanitarian assistance from Gulf States, 2005-2015 (US \$ Billions).

Year	International Humanitarian Assistance from Gulf States, 2005-2015 (US \$ Billions)			
	UAE	Saudi Arabia	Qatar	Kuwait
2005	179	166	72	23
2006	67	178	6	36
2007	61	277	0	15
2008	126	643	3	106
2009	477	161	18	58
2010	139	311	3	14
2011	203	168	13	14
2012	43	306	105	13
2013	90	237	103	327
2014	375	755	162	342
2015	1059	638	n/a	614

Source: Development Initiatives based on UN OCHA FTS data. (Global Humanitarian Assistance reports 2015 and 2016) & (Global Humanitarian Assistance, n.d.)



International Humanitarian Assistance from Gulf States, 2005-2015 (US\$ Billions).

### 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adheres to its commitment towards the international community in regards to humanitarian assistance and relief as a response to critical incidents such as natural disasters and war crises. There-

fore, the Kingdom has become one of the primary leading states for donations and for providing aid worldwide. Thus, Saudi Arabia persistently makes every effort to sustain its reputation as the “Kingdom of Humanity”, based on its noble work in the field of donations and contributions for the sake of humanity in general. From this perspective, international aid is considered as an obligation for rich countries to adhere to their initiatives and commitments to provide aid to those countries in urgent need for assistance, particularly during conflict crises and natural disasters. All financially rich countries in the world have an obligation to contribute to the rescue of victims of natural disasters, other tragedies, wars, and to help save lives in general, but particularly innocent individuals such as children, women and the elderly. As illustrated by the present study, such critical incidents that required disaster relief, and humanitarian aid included Hurricane Katrina in USA, the tsunami in Indonesia, the recent disastrous earthquake in Japan, wars in Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and in several other countries in Africa.

As a final point, Saudi Arabia is considered as the main producer and supplier for oil internationally and it has emerged globally as the largest donor of humanitarian work out of Western countries. Thus, the Kingdom contributes in various forms of aid, either for disaster relief or for funding of projects for countries in need. Establishing King Salman Center is such a noble initiative that serves and supports UN agencies in critical incidents. In all international forums, Saudi Arabia has kept all of its commitments and responsibilities towards the world community, in the Arab world as well as at the international level. In spite of such significant efforts, poverty, deprivation and the need for rehabilitation following natural disasters can be reduced but cannot be eradicated worldwide. Humanitarian aid can ameliorate the consequences of natural or man-made disasters, but the mitigations of the outcome of the natural disasters or wars entail continuous efforts and cooperation from the international community, NGOs, and UN agencies. Based on this discussion, international relief should be granted as a humanitarian assistance to the nations in need, since the goal is to provide support to those suffering in critical situations.

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