



# Contracting for Development: The Role of For-Profit Contractors in U.S. Foreign Development Assistance

*Ruben Berrios*

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## **Contracting for Development: The Role of For-Profit Contractors in U.S. Foreign Development Assistance** Ruben Berrios

Development assistance, long seen as a giveaway to developing countries, is, according to Berríos' assessment, actually a giveaway to large for-profit U.S. contractors. Berríos shows that a small but influential number of contractors continue to be awarded most of the contracts, both in value and number, despite their average or substandard performance.

Berríos documents the commercial considerations that drive U.S. development assistance. The increasing delivery of development aid in the form of contracts has led contractors to increase their weight and influence on USAID's programs. As Berríos contends, the reasons for giving aid often have little to do with helping other countries, because, instead, it ends up mainly helping U.S. firms.

Little is known about contracting for development. The contracting process is often neither open nor competitive. Despite the talk of restructuring, USAID continues to award contracts that are unfavorable to the agency. Berríos documents the practices of private sector contracting, how they compete for USAID contracts, how they fit into the stated aims and needs of the agency, and what their performance evaluations say upon completion of contracts. Berríos also provides a sweeping review of U.S. development assistance policies, the trend toward privatization, the rhetoric about reinventing government, and the issue of past performance. A controversial assessment, this will be of interest to scholars, researchers, and policy makers involved with U.S. developmental strategies.

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