

1GOAL: EDUCATION FOR ALL YOUNG AMBASSADORS' SUBMISSION TO INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF AID EFFECTIVENESS

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Dear Panel,

In October 2010 we travelled to Uganda as Young Ambassadors of the 1GOAL:Education for All campaign as guests of ActionAid Australia and ActionAid Uganda. We saw for ourselves the struggle for Education for All in one of the poorest countries in the world. We learnt a huge amount about the challenges that the communities we visited face. We learnt a lot about how they work together to overcome those challenges and also how aid, in various forms, can help with that.

We hope that sharing some of those lessons with you will make a small but significant contribution to your work.

Our key findings relevant to your Terms of Reference are:

- It all starts with the recognition that education is a basic human right – helping communities realise the power of this fact really seems to work in getting improvements happening.
- Programs that are community based – run by children, parents and local activists like those we met - and which are long term are successful in getting children into school, getting them through school and improving the quality of that schooling.
- The government has the responsibility to deliver universal quality free public education. Aid can help to empower communities to demand that from them and it can help resource the poorest governments to deliver it.
- Amazingly large numbers of young children still don't go to school, only go occasionally or have very low quality education when they do go. Australia's education aid focus has to help these children first – sending the lucky few to Australian universities is a waste of money compared to the effectiveness of delivering basic education to these many.
- Girls are the ones missing out more than anyone. We met so many strong women working hard for their communities but met so many amazing girls who were unlikely to finish primary school because of lack of money, getting married early, early pregnancies and lots of other social issues. Aid would be most effective when girls are given the priority, and can then follow the footsteps of inspiring women leaders.
- Children must be participants in the projects. We found young children participating in the monitoring of attendance as part of local CSO empowerment programs in Uganda – attendance was on the rise. Empowering the children to claim their rights is a very effective approach.

Lessons from Uganda

We visited with ActionAid Uganda, local CSO groups KADEFO (Kalangala District Education Forum) and Makarere Women's Development Association, Local Government in Kalangala District, local and national office bearers of The Ugandan National Teachers Union (UNATU), Federation of Education NGOs of Uganda FENU, and students and teachers of four primary schools, one in Kampala and three on the Ssesse Islands in Kalangala District. It was a very thorough field trip over two packed weeks.

These visits gave us insights into the development challenges and how aid impacts on these challenges.

The following lessons are those most relevant to the listed scope of the review:

Geographic Focus:

Australia's aid contribution to East Africa is less than 5% of the aid budget, whilst some of the neediest communities in the world – like Bufumira in Kalangala – are desperate for more assistance.

ActionAid Australia's engagement with Uganda had met with a lot of enthusiasm. With the Australian aid budget increasing we believe more money should be found to assist these communities in Uganda and East Africa.

The impact that assisting these communities via a human rights approach – like that we saw in Kalangala – is a very cost effective way of having a lasting effect. We believe that if Australia is interested in getting results investing long term solutions, building the capacity of the community in partnership with the community in the poorest countries is a great option.

Sector Focus:

We know through our involvement in the 1GOAL campaign that over 69 million children still do not go to school, and that the Australian Government supports the Education for All Goals. We were proud to see Kevin Rudd announce Australia's focus on education at the 1GOAL event at the MDG summit in New York in 2010.

The focus on education is great but, from the perspective of effectiveness, we want to see a much bigger focus on basic education – meaning early childhood and primary education – not on university scholarships.

We wonder how effective it is to give the lucky few in poor and not so poor countries an Australian university education (doesn't that money go to Australian universities?) is measured? Shouldn't that aid money be used overseas to help those most in need?

Helping governments deliver quality basic education should be the overwhelming focus – particularly to girls – and the impact should be and can be measured.

Costs and benefits of different forms of aid:

Our meetings with FENU and UNATU opened our eyes to how important the contribution the international community makes is to multilateral aid to help education. The 1GOAL campaign has been pushing for more support of the EFA –Fast Track Initiative. When we were talking to teachers and local government officials in Uganda they told us of lots of examples where good national education policies were not implemented because of lack of money. Australia can effectively assist governments to follow through on good policy by continuing to contribute to the Fast Track Initiative.

Effectiveness:

The communities that we visited know a lot about aid and its effectiveness. They are not PhDs or bureaucrats but they know what works in their communities. We met with Peter who is a local from the Ssesse Islands in Lake Victoria. Peter is one of the lucky few who went to secondary school and he has now returned to help educate communities about the importance of education, that it is their right and help organise them to claim that right from their government. Peter's efforts and those of his organisation KADEFO (supported by ActionAid Uganda) is changing attitudes towards education and making the longest term positive change that outlives building a school and that is more important even than having highly trained teachers. This is the effective kind of aid intervention that Australia should do more to support.

Assistance with infrastructure is also important but without community engagement in the design and implementation of building projects they will be doomed to fail.

Finally, helping women and girls enjoy their rights to a good education will make the biggest change for the wellbeing of their communities. At Bufumira Primary School we met dozens of girls who were dreaming the same dreams we have of being doctors or teachers but the headmaster, Mr Livingston, told us that almost all of these girls will not even go to secondary school. For Australia's aid efforts to be effective and deliver real results a genuine focus on gender equity is vital. We know that if even half the amazing girls of Bufumira got a good education the community would be changed for the better, forever.

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