

The Australian Coalition for Education and Development (ACED)

Submission to the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness

01.02.11

The Australian Coalition for Education and Development is a new* coalition of development agencies and teachers unions that have come together to co-ordinate our efforts to better promote awareness in the Australian public of education as an overseas development issue, and more effectively advocate with government for improvements to aid policy regarding education, specifically commitments made to achieve Education for All.

We are a member of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). The GCE is a civil society movement that aims to end the global education crisis. Together we hold governments to account for their promises repeatedly made to provide Education for All. The GCE's mission is to make sure that governments act now to deliver the right of every girl, boy, woman and man to a free quality public education.

ACED believes that the whilst AusAID describes Education as the flagship of Australia's aid efforts and that overall spending and projected increases in that spending are welcome there is room for improvement in the effectiveness of that spending.

Noting some of the foci of the review we submit the following suggest from the perspective of a number of diverse organizations working in the education sector:

Appropriate geographic focus of the program/low vs middle income countries

Australia's education aid effort ought to be more needs based. Australia contributes a great deal to middle income countries such as Indonesia – much of this investment is welcome – however ACED believes a more needs based approach would represent a more effective contribution from Australia to achieving MDGs 2 & 3 as well as the 6 EFA goals. This would mean a significant increase in support for Sub-Saharan Africa either bilaterally or via multilateral institutions such as EFA-FTI.

Different forms of aid/role of NGOs/bilateral vs multilateral

ACED welcomes the current reform of the FTI governance and urges the Australian Government to continue its constructive engagement with the FTI. FTI represents one of the most effective ways of channeling Australia's education aid dollars to those communities most in need and so deliver the greatest benefit for investment in terms of achieving agreed goals under the MDGs and EFA agreements.

ACED see national governments as the primary duty bearers in relation to the right to a quality education. As such we endorse efforts that can be shown to effectively increase the capacity of governments to deliver on that responsibility. Accordingly we encourage AusAID to increase support for multilateral relationships that ensure that financial assistance to recipient countries does not replace investment in education from existing budgets but increases capacity to deliver EFA goals.

* Formed on 12 Jan 2011 and so only able to contribute this relatively brief submission.

We recognise the important role played by the NGO sector in mobilising community awareness of rights to education and facilitating the improved realization of those rights by building the capacity of communities as a grassroots level to ensure that resources earmarked for education are properly dispersed. And that the results are monitored and evaluated to guide policy improvement. We urge AusAID to explore further opportunities to support ANGOs and INGOs working from a Human Rights Based Approach on community capacity building and advocacy to enhance the capacity of civil society to hold governments accountable. This represents a key element of an exit strategy for education aid in the long term.

ACED believes that there is far too heavy an emphasis on scholarships. We question the effectiveness of this program in achieving agreed education development goals. We note that there is little or no real effort to measure the effectiveness of this spending on achieving these goals and urge the Government to redirect much of this spending to basic education programs and, to a lesser degree, in country tertiary support. The evidence from many countries of the impact of education indicates that the greatest benefits to both individuals and in broader economic terms are from completion of basic education, which we define as being early childhood, primary and early secondary, and non-formal education for adults. Therefore, in the coming years, it will be important for the Australian Government to increase the proportion of Australian aid for education to basic education.

Aid effectiveness

ACED note the efforts of AusAID to target girls education. We underline the need for the panel to understand that focusing on women's and girls' education addresses those most in need and is an effective way to not only meet agreed education development goals but also see significant improvements in other development indicators. More work needs to be done in targeting girls and particularly in the most marginalized communities, and recommend that coming increases in the basic education aid budget explicitly target girls education.

Transparency is a cross sectoral concern and ACED share the concerns of those who are campaigning for greater transparency of actual expenditure and planned expenditure in both donor and recipient countries.

Recipient states can best insure public confidence in the management of EFA by establishing participatory methods for education budget monitoring whilst donor states must lift transparency standards through international agreements such as the IATA.

Contact: Jon Edwards (ACED Coordinator)
ActionAid Australia
69-71 Parramatta Road
Camperdown NSW 2050
02 9565 9137
Jon.edwards@actionaid.org
