

# International Society for Human Rights – Australia

**Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness Secretariat  
GPO Box 887  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Australia**

## **Submission to *Aid Review 2011***

The International Society for Human Rights – Australia (ISHR-A) is an organization which as well as being active in championing a wide range of human rights issues and advocacy for refugees combines this with a range of small development and emergency relief projects overseas.

In partnership with a number of like-minded groups we have been supporting projects in Afghanistan, Flores, Indonesia, East Timor, Haiti, Kenya, Thai-Burma Border, Cambodia, India and Vietnam. In most cases these projects have a community development focus on education, health and clean water/sanitation. In each case we have direct contact with the group in those countries who are delivering the aid and have regular reports of their activities. We also endeavor to keep in contact with the relevant ethnic communities in Australia and seek their advice when appropriate.

We believe that our activities are an efficient and effective way of delivering development assistance to communities. Our programs also fall within the millennium goals which form part of the underlying principles of AusAid and the federal Government's approach to aid globally. Our experience indicates that the support of small groups like ours will enhance Australia's delivery of overseas aid in unique ways at a community level also engendering rapport and respect for Australia.

As all our work is voluntary and we do not have any full-time employees we find the procedures required by AusAid to apply for grants unnecessarily onerous and bureaucratic. We have always acknowledged the need for full accountability for any money raised publicly and this clearly also applies to taxpayer money. We would also question the ability of any organization to operate completely without risk in some of the areas mentioned above but always try to minimize any risk to projects.

We would ask that consideration be given in the review to assisting organizations such as ours by

1. Clarifying the requirements for organizations to gain DGR status. Recent changes in the rules that we operate under have made it unclear whether organizations that have held this status as PBIs can still claim tax deductibility if they spend most of their aid budget overseas. We have been given conflicting advice on this. DGR status, which we have held since 1995, allows us to raise money by public donations in ways that would otherwise become unavailable.

2. A system of **simplified grants** for small projects would be of great benefit to us. Standard simplified forms could be developed for application, reporting and accounting.
3. A **matching grant scheme** could also be an option so that bona fide groups who can demonstrate their ability to raise funds for a given project could apply for a similar amount of money to meet the requirements of the project.
4. Accountants should be made available to organizations that are required to provide auditing of their accounts. The expense of having accounts audited can be an onerous one for small groups such as ours. Such a move would increase accountability across the 'aid' budget and could result in a more efficient sector.

Yours Sincerely

Marie Gerrard  
President

27 January 2011