

January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Mr Sandy Hollway, AO  
Chair  
Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness  
GPO Box 887  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Australia

By email: [submissions@aidreview.gov.au](mailto:submissions@aidreview.gov.au)

### Submission

Dear Mr Hollway

I wish to submit that Australia's contribution to sustainable development through its aid program should include a significant investment in leadership development.

We would argue that the development of ethical (principled and practically effective leadership) is essential to the task of creating sustainable communities within which human beings can flourish.

Indeed, we would argue that there is a need for a revised model of development assistance in which there is far greater investment in the creation of leadership networks; both within developing countries and across the wider geopolitical region which Australia inhabits with other nations. It is our contention that interventions, in support of human development, will be (at best) sub-optimal if not matched by an equal investment in good leadership.

We note that Australia currently funds a number of programs that carry the word 'leadership' in their title. While these programs offer valuable opportunities for education in Australia, we do not think that scholarship programs (and similar) provide the kind of well-structured, experiential learning that is required for true leadership development to occur.

In the absence of well-structured leadership programs, we believe that much of the investment in aid and sustainable development will be ineffective (and even counter-productive). In some cases, the absence of good leadership undermines other program elements and at its worst, a failure to develop resilient, local leaders will result on waste and at worst, new levels of dependency (both being inconsistent with the promotion of sustainable development).

There are two structural features of any program that are required to ensure that the investment in leadership pays the necessary dividends in human development. First, leaders must be formed in the company of other members of their society – creating a ‘chain’ of inter-personal accountability and mutual support based on common experience. Second, leadership effectiveness is increased when national ‘chains’ of leaders establish links with similar formations in other countries with common or related challenges and interests. The intersection of national ‘chains’ (forming a matrix or network) allows each individual to draw on an expanding base of support. While important differences (based on culture, political interests, etc.) will remain, the program outlined below is designed to provide a rich and powerful suite of common experiences that not only develop leadership capacity but also provide a series of common ‘reference points’ within the physical, intellectual and emotional fields of experience. In turn, this reinforces a sense of interpersonal accountability between members of each group undertaking the program.

It should be noted that while the development of bonds between people within countries and on a regional basis should be an important objective for any program, the principal purpose should be to develop the personal and group effectiveness of those who undertake the program. The success or failure of any program will be evident in what participants DO while on the program and in subsequent years.

As noted above, we have in mind something quite different to the more common programs that are offered to current or potential leaders. While scholarship programs, ‘track 2’ dialogues and exchange programs can all play an important role as part of a broad suite of initiatives, we would argue that Australia needs to invest in a regional leadership program that is specifically designed around the principal objective of developing each participant’s capacity for effective individual and collective leadership.

While it has long been realised that people-to-people contact can assist in the formation of better relationship across cultural, religious and political ‘divides’. It is only now becoming clear that a specific focus on leadership development can deliver special ‘dividends’.

The need for such a regional program of this kind was recently noted at the ASEAN – Australia New Zealand Dialogue conducted in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 8-9 December, 2010. The report of the dialogue notes the call for an ‘ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand leadership program’ – an initiative that might help deepen understanding and networks of relationships at elite level.

St James Ethics Centre has extensive experience in developing and running such programs and I would be happy to provide further information should this be of interest to the panel.

Yours sincerely

