

## Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness

This submission by RedR Australia addresses:

**Scope of the Review point (a)**     Structure of the aid programme ----- A case for additional emphasis on disasters and emergencies as a sector or component of Australian aid.

**Scope of the Review point (c)**     Efficiency and effectiveness ----- A case for aid funds to support provision of people in response to emergencies and disasters.

- *General commentary*
- *RedR Australia recruitment, selection, training, preparation, deployment and support --- the pathway and system of entry onto the Standby Register.*
- *RedR Australia recruitment and training --- Philosophy and key principles*
- *What does personnel mobilisation cost the Australian Aid programme?*

**Scope of the Review point (d)**     AusAID's structure for future emergency aid delivery.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. RedR Australia is most willing to appear before the Review to elaborate if needed.

Alan McLean  
CEO

1 February, 2011

# **SUBMISSION TO INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF AID EFFECTIVENESS**

## **BY REDR AUSTRALIA**

### **SCOPE OF THE REVIEW POINT (A)**

#### **STRUCTURE OF THE AID PROGRAMME ----- A CASE FOR ADDITIONAL EMPHASIS ON DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES AS A SECTOR OR COMPONENT OF AUSTRALIAN AID.**

RedR Australia notes that:

- The Australian aid programme has a primary focus on development action.
- Successive governments have delivered aid via the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).
- Around the world, development initiatives are seriously compromised and sometimes destroyed by circumstances of natural disaster and conflict, when emergency humanitarian relief action becomes critical to save lives and assist in rehabilitation in its broadest sense.
- Australia has demonstrated its emergency humanitarian concerns with tangible responses, and it is assumed that Australia will do so in future.
- By most assessments, population growth, especially in zones of high vulnerability, coupled with more frequent extreme weather events associated with climate change, will lead to increased calls for international humanitarian assistance in the years ahead.
- Australia has committed itself to the humanitarian assistance coordination mechanisms of the United Nations, as the only viable international means of addressing the most urgent needs including shelter, medical and health care, food, water and sanitation in crisis situations, which may include pandemics.
- Direct Australian funding or material support to the official UN agencies, however necessary, worthy and effective, will always be delivered at field level by those UN agencies. Therefore field performance by UN agencies needs to be of the highest standard. Australians can contribute.
- All humanitarian aid is delivered ultimately by people, in multilateral contexts, bilateral programmes, or NGO action supported by the donors of the Australian community and sometimes the Australian government. Those people must be capable and properly prepared for the tasks.
- There are opportunities for Australia to lift the proportion of aid which enables the mobilisation of the best people for the humanitarian response.
- There is a case to consider whereby assistance to community enterprises experienced in mobilisation of people is more efficient, more cost effective and more diplomatically sensitive than a government-operated scheme delivered on public service lines.

**SCOPE OF THE REVIEW POINT (C)****EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS ----- A CASE FOR AID FUNDS TO SUPPORT PROVISION OF PEOPLE IN RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS**

RedR Australia respectfully submits that the placement of experienced, capable Australians who have been carefully-selected, professionally-prepared and supported for field action following natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies is a highly efficient, effective and accountable component of the Australian aid programme, having regard to:

1. The best interests of victims of natural disasters and emergencies.
2. The essential coordination of international relief action, in accordance with endorsed United Nations practices, when Australian deployments are mobilised on behalf of UN agencies.
3. The highly-regarded, practical, technical and professional Australian contributions which have been independently reported in the past.
4. The strategic interests of Australia being regarded as a positive international citizen via the field humanitarian contribution of Australians.
5. Australian interest in supporting the United Nations, in terms of UN relief efforts being as effective and efficient as possible. (A logical complement to Australia's direct donation of funds to those UN agency programmes.)
6. Australian geo-political interest, both in neighbouring countries and further afield when other factors warrant consideration.

Accepting that natural disasters are certain to impact more severely on greater numbers of people in years ahead, it is proposed that:

7. Established programmes with mandates which deliver personnel into emergency relief as described should be enhanced in their capability to do so through provision of additional official aid funding.
8. This should be done in a more systematic fashion than in the past, to enable deployment programmes to operate in a more stable environment to plan and conduct their work.
9. Recruitment and preparation need to be systematic, planned, and rigorous to be effective, and cannot be compromised by insecurity of the necessary funding base. Australian nominations cannot be made to UN agencies subject to AusAID funding decisions, which might take 7-10 days. (Other names submitted without conditions will always be more attractive to the agencies while Australians are overlooked. Australia misses out on the chance to be effective.)
10. Every effort should be made to ensure that like-type Australian programmes providing personnel are complementary, not in competition. (RedR Australia has declined to include medical personnel within its programme, leaving that discipline to others.)
11. AusAID should enhance its ability to understand that NGOs delivering personnel to the field face complexity within the overall discipline of emergency international aid, complexity which calls for flexibility and speed in decision-making.
12. With that understanding should follow streamlined practices designed to enhance opportunities for Australians to be mobilised.

13. AusAID should note that programmes as described are among the most transparent forms of aid, as virtually all expenditure is undertaken within Australia, and data relating to the numbers of Australians mobilised each year and their aggregate months of field service (quantity), and the impact of their contributions (quality), are readily available.
14. The six steps of the “people response” are recruit, select, train, prepare, deploy and support. Each step needs to be professional for the quality outcomes desired ---- support to victims, strengthening of UN agency endeavours, placing Australian contributions into the international arena, enhancement of reputation as responsible global citizen, etc.

### ***General commentary***

AusAID has recognised the calibre of personnel within the RedR Australia Standby Register, regularly requesting RedR nominations to fill “technical expert” functions within bilateral or official Australian responses to recipient countries. The RedR Australia International Assignment Service has found suitable people, some of whom have been mobilised, while others have been stood down for reasons of altered decision-making on Australian participation.

Although detailed statistics are not available, there is a growing tendency for UN agencies and major international NGOs to offer direct contract engagements to people who have progressed through the RedR Australia process. Far from being concerned that “our” people have been “poached”, the view is that this reflects favourably on the RedR system. People activated in this way, sometimes for higher level responsibilities, remain humanitarian contributors and they remain Australians.

Anyone undertaking assignments in development contexts, or in disaster and emergency response should have a professional orientation to safety and security within a wider set of preparations. This is a fundamental obligation of care to the individual, in circumstances where aid delivery has become generally more hazardous despite the raft of international law, protocols and agreements.

AusAID has recognised the quality and practicality of the RedR Australia Training Service by enrolling selected staff in relevant courses, and by engaging RedR Australia trainers to deliver training to Australian mission staff abroad.

Other Government sectors have recognised the value of RedR training. The Australian Medical Assistance Team (known as AusMAT), which commenced in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, is now a regular buyer of the RedR Training Service. The (AusAID funded) Volunteers for International Development (VIDA) scheme buys RedR Australia services both prior to placement of volunteers and after they return from the field.

While some major Australian NGOs with mandates in development (usually the main mission) and disasters (secondary mission when needed) fund and operate their own Training Units, this is not practical for all NGOs. The workable alternative is to buy this training from a respected provider. RedR Australia offers its Training Service, at favourable rates, to all Australian NGOs in the aid sector, and NGOs nominate their people to attend when resources and other factors permit.

Attendance by trainees with NGO backgrounds contributes to the richness of the course, as other trainees may be drawn from government, had former roles in the military, or significant previous field experience. Variety of background of trainees is a component of training quality and outcomes.

Ongoing subsidy of RedR Australia by AusAID to deliver a comprehensive, practical sequence of training has multiple beneficiaries, including the Australian government.

RedR Australia has welcomed the loosening of former geographic boundaries which restricted RedR Australia ability to nominate personnel for operations. Humanitarian need respects no boundaries and it behoves Australia to provide urgent help whenever it possibly can. Attention to Haiti and Cote d'Ivoire was most welcome and may not have been initiated in former years under tighter restrictions.

RedR Australia has welcomed the opportunity to mobilise people with the objective of mitigating impact before a threatened disaster. This is a "common sense" approach in those few circumstances which allow early action, such as planning evacuations ahead of a likely volcanic eruption, preparing sites ahead of anticipated influx of displaced people, advising on pre-disaster planning.

RedR training, in its intent and its delivery, has elements of Disaster Risk Reduction and disaster impact mitigation.

RedR Australia has a formal Memorandum of Understanding with each of **UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and World Food Programme.**

The arrangements have applied for more than a decade, giving RedR Australia official status as a Standby Partner offering selected individuals to field roles within the UN agency response mechanisms.

(Others with similar status include Canadem, Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian Refugee Council, Irish Aid, Swedish organisations MSB and SDC HA, the Icelandic Department of Foreign Affairs, French NGO Veolia, and the communications company Ericsson. RedR Australia ranks third over recent years in terms of numbers deployed to the field each year.)

The UN agencies have advised AusAID via diplomatic channels that:

- Australian personnel have an excellent reputation in terms of selection, preparation, professional contribution, and other team-oriented performance in the field,
- significantly more people identified via RedR Australia processes are both desired and needed by the agencies in the years ahead, and
- if the official Australian aid programme can increase the funding for additional RedR Australia provision of deployees, the UN agency programmes will be the better for that provision.

RedR Australia is a trusted and proven humanitarian partner to those agencies.

The World Health Organisation has approached RedR Australia to consider a similar formal agreement in terms of public health programmes, logistics for the movement of medical supplies, cold chain functions, and associated responsibilities such as data management.

***RedR Australia Recruitment, Selection, Training, Preparation, Deployment and Support ---  
The pathway and system of entry onto the Standby Register.***

1. RedR Australia strategically informs selected professions of the opportunity to become involved in international humanitarian disaster and emergency relief. Extensive use is made of professional associations, their journals, newsletters and speaking forums. Returnees from the field and their experiences are central to the strategy.
2. When enquiries to join the RedR Standby Register come forward, an application form and curriculum vitae are requested and studied, for the experiences and skills which we know to be sought by United Nations agencies dealing with disasters and emergencies. An initial telephone interview seeks further details on motivations, anticipations, ability to detach from professional positions for this work, time spent in developing countries, etc.
3. A frank assessment of prospects is provided. If all remains in order, an applicant is advised of two compulsory core courses delivered by the RedR Australia Training Service, and invited to enroll. Others are advised that they are welcome to enroll, but that their experience might more realistically be brought to the attention of other Australian aid agencies, sometimes in the development sphere. The prospect of re-application to the Register in future years is mentioned.
4. Two compulsory live-in courses *Essentials of Humanitarian Practice* (5 days) and *Personal Security and Communications* (4 days) proceed, with RedR training staff attentive for any signs of characteristics, attitudes and behaviours which may be at odds with sound performance in the field. Sexism, extremism, lack of tolerance, isolationism, lack of team orientation, etc., are clear signs. Challenging and interactive adult learning techniques can be quite revealing. The training is challenging by design because the field environment is similar.
5. Applicants sometimes withdraw from the process having experienced both courses, for reasons of self-determination. Others are helped to understand why the disaster field environment may not be for them, and counseled in relation to worthy additional experience to be gathered, opportunities via other agencies, etc.
6. Pleasingly, others thrive within the training. A final face-to-face interview is then conducted and should this prove successful, the applicant furnishes RedR with referee contact points, verification of qualifications, police record checks and online security training certificates. Their names are added to the official Standby Register. If RedR Australia exercises its right to decline, sensitive explanation is given.
7. When UN agencies call for nominations for roles with specific terms of reference, RedR Australia staff notifies the Standby Register personnel seeking expressions of interest from those suitably qualified and able to deploy under the specific terms. Positive responses are then analysed.

8. If suitable Register responses are received, RedR Australia staff select a “short list”, putting those names and CVs to the relevant UN agency. The UN agency headquarters generally seeks comment from its field office. Sometimes RedR Australia nominations are chosen, sometimes not. UN agencies have other sources of staff.
9. If a RedR Australia person is selected, the mobilisation process then commences, addressing a series of inter-connected steps: pre-departure briefing, medical check, visa, travel details, contract, etc. Deployment proceeds with a further sequence of administrative support from RedR Australia’s International Assignment Service.
10. On return from the field, a systematic and detailed debriefing process is applied, including medical and psychological clearance.

RedR Australia **recruits and selects**. We **train and prepare**. We **deploy and support**.

### ***RedR Australia recruitment and training ---- Philosophy and key principles***

The delivery of humanitarian assistance after disasters and emergencies is complex and complicated. Even with the best possible planning and maximum field coordination by key players, it is clear that more people will face more crisis situations more often in the decades ahead. It follows that more trained people will be needed to respond.

RedR Australia takes the position that people whose lives are shattered by natural disasters, or imperiled by manmade emergencies or health crises, deserve the best possible assistance. Help should be provided by people carefully selected based on experience in their field, professionally prepared and trained for the task, and in all senses ready for the sometimes-rapid mobilisation to respond to those crises.

RedR Australia’s training programme is influenced by a range of factors and a number of interested parties. Its dominant theme relates to the real-world application of emergency humanitarian relief.

Combining academic considerations of aid provision with the practical reality of the various theatres in which aid is delivered, the training programme is informed by over 15 years of experience. Training includes the sharing of real-world experiences of people who have already been active and effective at field level.

RedR Australia training identifies the major factors associated with aid delivery. It strives to equip people with knowledge, skills and attitude to maximize their subsequent effectiveness and efficiency. It endeavours to provide situational awareness of elements of safety, security and personal well-being, as components of best possible performance in the field. All trainees need and deserve this awareness, not least in respect for their families.

Through the training programme RedR introduces participants to internationally-accepted humanitarian standards for food, water, shelter space, etc, and their application in the field.

Training recognises that few if any emergency relief programmes follow a textbook or a script. Our methods of delivery incorporate practical scenarios, simulations and role-plays within adult styles of participatory learning, to develop trainee flexibility. Surprise elements in courses require adaptability and judgement, in consultation with team members.

Strong attention is given to value systems, professional integrity, appropriate behavior, and the importance of positive relationships and communication in sensitive situations with complex cultural expectations. Gender awareness and child protection are prominent themes.

Training highlights the reality of operating side-by-side with aid officials of the host nation, which retains its sovereign authority, including responsibility for security of foreign nationals. Courses address the international nature of teams mobilised from outside the host nation, their different levels of preparation and experience.

In response to rapidly-changing field factors, including security concerns, the training components are subjected to regular evaluation, review and revision, both course-by-course and in an overview context.

### ***What does personnel mobilisation cost the Australian aid programme?***

#### **Phase 1. Recruitment and selection**

Selection of the most appropriate personnel is critical to ultimate contribution at field level. Selection needs to be in the hands of people experienced in field operations, with skills in choosing personnel based on a blend of qualifications, skills, experience and personnel attributes. Knowledge of the profiles which UN agencies are seeking is also vital.

#### **Phase 2. Training and preparation**

As outlined above, the training component contributes to selection of personnel, and has operated on the basis of practical orientation to field circumstances, including high emphasis of safety and security aspects. This is not academic theory delivered in a lecture room.

To improve eligibility for UN agency selection to the field, there is some careful investment in capacity development training for selected individuals.

#### **Phase 3. Deployment and support**

Successful contribution in the field is determined by a complex range of factors (mostly under UN agency influence), but includes the vital “Melbourne-end” support. The RedR Australia International Assignment Service is a small unit which handles the administration of each assignment, is available to the deployees at all times, supervises their return and any consequences arising from the deployment. Travel bookings and visas, communication with the UN agencies, health checks, insurance provision, salary payments, and superannuation are included in the detailed check-list of support functions.

Ratio of administrators to field personnel in the RedR Australia system is very modest, compared to ratios for international service by Australian Federal Police and the Australian Defence Force.

### **Permanent phase of communication**

The Standby Register may only have around 30 people in field action at any given time, but everyone on the Register needs to be kept “involved and interested” if the system is to be maintained. Again, the funding expended on the communication component is very modest, and would be enhanced immediately if additional funds became available.

### **AusAID contributions**

In 2007-2008, the AusAID contribution totaled \$2.89 million. In 2008-2009, it was \$4.23 million. In 2009-2010, it was \$3.17 million. The variation is explained by the number of “major” disasters annually, when some of the extra Australian Government responses are channeled through RedR Australia.

Funding enables deployments, subsidises approved training courses, and subsidises some of the administrative components. Around 65 deployments of three to six months arise annually, with focus now on aggregate months of delivered field service per year.

Naturally audited figures are available, but as a guide, a six-month deployment will cost \$95,000 to \$100,000, depending upon location. Subsidy of the associated selection and training may be in the order of \$15,000 to \$20,000 per person, and the individual may undertake multiple deployments via RedR Australia or other networks.

Funding is the only limitation on more Australians being deployed. A resource of carefully-selected, professionally-prepared people is presently under-utilised.

## **SCOPE OF THE REVIEW POINT (D)**

### **AUSAID’S STRUCTURE FOR FUTURE EMERGENCY AID DELIVERY.**

- Government funding support to community-based humanitarian mobilisation of people in future needs Government structures and processes better-resourced than in the past if any claims to rapid, effective Australian response to disasters and emergencies are to be valid.
- AusAID’s Humanitarian Emergency Response section is insufficiently resourced to do the tasks expected of it now, and would need major enhancement to be effective and efficient if Australia aspires to quality provision of timely response to more emergencies in future.
- It is no longer appropriate to address disaster response as if some form of temporary variation from the AusAID mission or mandate on development. (That case is well demonstrated in AusAID response on behalf of Australia to the Pakistan flood crisis in 2010. So much of the overall aid programme was compromised as “all available hands” were required to respond.)
- There may even be a case for considering a name change to AusAID ---- Development and Disaster Response.

**Footnote:**

If the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness would be interested in an analysis of RedR Australia practices, and how RedR has given advice when requested by those charged with responsibility to create the **Australian Civilian Corps** scheme, this might be provided more appropriately in person at an appearance before the Review panel.

*RedR Australia is a humanitarian organisation whose mission is to relieve suffering in disasters by selecting, training and providing competent and effective relief personnel to humanitarian relief agencies worldwide. Having commenced in 1993, RedR Australia is now recognised by the United Nations aid agencies as an official Standby Partner for provision of personnel, and for the conduct of training activity to prepare for emergency and disaster response.*