

February 1, 2011

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

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

### **Re: Submission to the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness**

To the Secretariat,

The Global Poverty Project commends the Australian Government and AusAID on its decision to conduct an independent review of aid effectiveness, and welcomes the opportunity to make a submission.

The Global Poverty Project is an education, communications and campaigning organisation that seeks to increase the number and effectiveness of people taking action to combat extreme poverty.

As an organisation that is deeply engaged in conversations with the Australian public about aid and development, we believe that our submission offers an insight into the questions, concerns and aspirations of the tens of thousands of Australians we speak with each year about fighting poverty. This submission is based on an analysis of the questions, comments, ideas and feedback we have received from the more than 25,000 Australians who we have engaged through our *1.4 Billion Reasons* live presentation in the last 18 months.

We propose the following points in response to the terms of reference of the review:

#### **Structure of the Aid Program**

- **Health, Education & Governance.** The Australian public want an aid program that is focused on delivering real results for the world's poorest. They value the quality of health, education and governance in our country, and see these as building blocks to support countries to fight poverty. Given the size of the Australian aid program, it would be wise to focus our efforts on just a handful of sectors in which we have a comparative advantage, and a successful history. We believe that health, education and governance are well suited as these focus areas.
  - *Health.* As Australia seeks to scale up the financial size of its aid program, it must take considerations of absorptive capacity seriously, and make significant investments in proven and effective multilateral instruments. GAVI is regularly noted as one of the most effective aid recipients, and Australia should make a

significant commitment at the forthcoming pledging conference to support GAVI's work to save 4.2 million lives in the next five years.

- *Governance.* Weak governance and corruption is the number one concern of the Australian public when it comes to the barriers in fighting poverty. AusAID has an opportunity, through increased support for the ANCP and NGOs in recipient countries to significantly strengthen civil society and build capacity. Further support for multi-stakeholder governance initiatives – such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and the Natural Resource Charter – are encouraged, as is an ongoing dialogue and program of action to enlist the support of Australian companies working in recipient countries to uphold and promote good governance.
- **Finish the Job on Polio and Measles.** AusAID has previously cited the eradication of polio from the Western Pacific as one of its greatest successes. We wholeheartedly agree, and in tough economic times, we encourage AusAID to focus on areas where clear 'wins' can be demonstrated to the public. Polio and measles offer this opportunity, with both diseases having a realistic chance of being eradicated in the coming years.
  - *Polio* is a disease that has left a legacy in Australia following the epidemics of the 1950s, scarring thousands for life, yet its global caseload has been reduced by 99% in the past 30 years. It was Australians involved in Rotary who started the worldwide push to eradicate polio a generation ago, and in 2011, we have the opportunity to finish the job. The Polio Eradication Initiative is just \$810m short of having sufficient funding to eradicate polio at the time of writing, and a \$50m contribution from Australia – the announcement of which could be timed to coincide with World Polio Day and Perth hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in October – would be a huge step towards bridging this funding gap.
  - *Measles* has had its death rate reduced by 78% since 2000, with worldwide coverage approaching levels that make imminent eradication possible. Australia can support the global push to contain and then eradicate measles by making a significant investment to GAVI.
- **Focus on Poor People, not Poor Countries.** Across the country, we hear loud and clear from working Australians that poverty is about people, not countries. Andy Sumner's recent paper for IDS, the New Bottom Billion, captures this sentiment perfectly, and we encourage AusAID to focus its work on poor people, not just poor countries. 72% of the world's extreme poor live in middle-income countries, and our program should respond to this reality, balancing investments accordingly.
  - *Regional middle-income countries.* Focusing on poor people is particularly pertinent to our nearest neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region, several of whom have recently or will soon graduate to middle-income status. Australia has developed significant expertise in many of these countries, and should continue to focus on providing aid where necessary and effective.

## Coordination of the Aid Program

- **Complete Transparency of Activities & Outcomes.** In the absence of information to the contrary, the Australian public make assumptions about the effectiveness or otherwise of Australian aid. AusAID should take a radical approach to transparency,

and publish in full the tenders, contracts, progress, impact and evaluation reports funded by Australian aid. Australia should follow and extend on the example of the US [foreignassistance.gov](http://foreignassistance.gov) website, providing simple graphical tools that allow data to be interrogated by the public and the development sector. The Office for Development Effectiveness should enforce this directive, and work to provide public-friendly summary reports alongside the annual statement to Parliament.

- **Locals not expats.** The Australian public sees that aid is about capacity-building, and enabling locals to lift themselves out of poverty. In our work with the Australian public, we are regularly challenged with serious questions about the sustainability and effectiveness of the over-utilisation of expatriate staff, and especially the use of consultants and contractors. To the greatest extent possible, the Australian aid program should reflect the public's desire, and the evidence base for investing in locals in preference to expatriates.
- **Long-term outcomes, not short-term outputs.** We encourage AusAID to focus on the long-term outcomes – three, five years and beyond – of aid programs, rather than the outputs too often used in announcements and reporting. The Australians we speak to understand that development is often slow and complex, and are dissatisfied with having the aid program being explained to them in terms of money spent and things built. Although a focus on outcomes may make project and program design slower and more costly, it will result in better development outcomes, and greater eventual value for money for Australian taxpayers.
- **Aid is about poverty alleviation - and should be coordinated by AusAID.** We believe that a strong, centrally coordinated AusAID is vital to having an aid program that is focused on poverty-alleviation. The contrasting examples and effectiveness of DFID in the UK and USAID provide ample evidence of the importance of this. The Australian public sees aid as a contribution by citizens to global goods, and as such, do not want to see aid used for security or diplomatic purposes. In particular, we recommend that AusAID is given control of Australian contributions to the World Bank, and that reporting and decisions on all ODA are made through AusAID and the responsible Minister.
- **Public support is more than communications.** In speaking to the Australian public about aid, we have found strong support for fighting poverty, but many questions about aid effectiveness and corruption. The Australian public have very few channels for engaging with issues of aid and development – most contacts are the result of charity advertising and news reports, both of which tend to focus on the negative and the need. AusAID must do more to counteract this unbalanced view of development, and should focus greater resources on community engagement – with grants/funds tied explicitly to a battery of development awareness and attitudes indicators that build support not for AusAID and bilateral aid, but for the notion of Australia as a global citizen and the importance and possibility of fighting extreme poverty.

Yours Sincerely,

Simon Moss, on behalf of the Global Poverty Project Australia