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My submission is directed towards Australian aid effectiveness with respect to meeting Millennium Development Goal 7 (Ensure environmental sustainability). This is the one MDG that specifically refers to the long standing and growing problems posed by inexorable urbanisation. It is my contention that improved aid effectiveness would flow from the establishment, within AusAID, of an urban regeneration unit or suitably named office that could as its main function coordinate the many separate MDG initiatives that relate directly to the cities in the developing world.

It is hardly controversial to underline the importance of the primate cities in the developing countries of Asia/Pacific. Indeed, a yardstick of national social and economic health is the condition of the main cities where the majority of the MDG issues are focused. Achieving MDG goals only makes sense after all if their collective improvement can be demonstrated in a material raising of the standard of living. It is in the cities where this improvement is crucial if overall national wellbeing is to be achieved (Connell and Lea 2002). My inspection of the Annual review of Development Effectiveness 2009 (AusAID 2010) has revealed almost no specific mention of aid delivery in the cities.

I would like to draw the Committee's attention to the following statement I made (in conjunction with Dr Paul Jones) three years ago when reviewing progress towards urban reform the island Pacific. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community conducted its own investigation of MDG progress in 2004 but had little to report about MDG 7. "whilst information is available for SPC member countries on water and sanitation conditions, no records have been returned with regard to the slum dwellers. Yet strategies to overcome the former are inseparable from the latter and the tendency by international agencies to marginalize urban concerns and the consequent assumption that urban poverty is somehow less serious than rural poverty has been identified" (Jones and Lea 2007, p. 474).

As we stressed in our report "... the future for many Pacific island states is an urban one, though this fact has yet to be reflected in most national economic development plans and policies" (Jones and Lea 2007, p. 491).

References

AusAID (2010) Annual Review of Development Effectiveness 2009: Improving Basic Services for the Poor, Canberra: Office of Development Effectiveness, AusAID.

Connell, J. and J.P. Lea (2002) Urbanisation in the Island Pacific: Towards Sustainability, London Routledge

P. Jones and J.P. Lea (2007) 'What has happened to urban reform in the island Pacific? Some lessons from Kiribati and Samoa', Pacific Affairs, 80, 3, pp. 473-91.