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Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness Secretariat  
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To the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness Secretariat,

We submit the points below to the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness. Generally, we ask that in your review you prioritise the needs and interests of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. Specifically, we request that you recommend adjusting Australia's aid expenditure in order to:

- Achieve the Millenium Development Goals that are most lagging behind, such as goals 3, 4 and 5 (promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, and improve maternal health), especially in the poorest countries in our region, such as Timor-Leste, Afganistan, Bangladesh and the Solomon Islands.
- Prioritise those who, as a result of disability, HIV positive status, gender, ethnic minority, mental illness or other cause, are particularly marginalised.
- Empower local communities. Effective consultation, community ownership over projects, and employing local people instead of large Australian corporations to implement projects empowers communities to build the structures they need to prosper and is the most effective way to empower communities over the long term.
- Reduce the proportion of expenditure on high-paid Western consultants and 'technical assistance'. Although it has its place, such expenditure has consumed almost half Australia's aid budget, and we believe that this figure needs to drop significantly in order to move the emphasis to empowering local communities as indicated in the previous point.
- Increase the share of our aid delivered through NGOs to at least 10% of the aid budget. Additionally, we ask that you recommend that some of Australia's aid budget be invested in effective multilateral funds like the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS.

Furthermore, we request you recommend that Australia's aid program be adjusted in order to better engage civil society in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the aid program. This should include relevant groups in Australia as well as in each country and community affected by Australia's aid.

We also propose that AusAID should be established as a separate department with a Cabinet-level Minister for International Development, with improved transparency and accountability of the entire aid program such as the provision of up-to-date information about all funded aid activities to all stakeholders.

Finally, we request that Australia implement the Paris and Accra agreements on aid effectiveness, making aid more long term, more able to align with country systems and needs, coordinated with all other donors, and accountable to all beneficiaries.

Yours sincerely,

Grant Benvenuti and Christina Pitt.