

To the Independent review panel of aid effectiveness

Submission by Keith Stebbins

Introduction: I went to PNG at the end of 1970 and returned to Australia at the end of 2008. I worked initially as a primary school teacher in Hanuabada, then as a lecturer at Port Moresby and Madang Teachers Colleges, Among other positions I was Assistant Secretary for the Dept of Community and Family Services from 1980-83, and worked in Education Headquarters in Curriculum Policy and Planning. For the last 10 years I worked on Education AID projects in PNG. I was the Team Leader of the Basic Education Development Project when I left at the end of 2008. From 1999 to 2002 I was the Gulf Program manager for the BEICMP project where I worked with local school communities, the missions, the Local Level Governments, and the Provincial Education office to construct 30 double classrooms; 4 libraries; 14 teachers houses; 1 Admin block, 2 septic toilet blocks; a school fence. All classrooms were supplied with water tanks, desks, shelving, and cupboards. I worked in all parts of the province. Along with the infrastructure a series of capacity building activities were carried out in areas such as school management and infrastructure maintenance.

During the time in the Gulf province my office became the defacto Education office as I had working photocopiers, fax and phones. I was also able to offer assistance with land and sea transport during my three years in the Gulf province.

Key outcomes of my AID work in PNG that I hope are part of future AID policy direction:

1. To always have as a key objective a better education for all the children. In this way PNG will have better educated citizens in the future.
2. To be a good 'neighbour' and not to interfere in my PNG education counterparts responsibilities, but to give assistance when asked;
3. To model 'accountability, transparency, gender equity, honesty and integrity in all AID project activities.
4. To involve the community in all decision making (bottom up planning) and where applicable in construction of school facilities. (NB. Where there were potential problems Rotary teams worked with the local community in two communities – Terapo and Hawabango.)
5. To provide quality buildings and school furniture to all the schools that were in need of additional classrooms, teacher's houses, etc. NB. Many desks were made in the community.
6. To build on community strengths and to celebrate the successful completion of project activities.
7. To strengthen the competency and confidence of all the education officers I worked closely with in the Gulf Province.

I had a great sense of pride when the Catholic Bishop in the Gulf Province at the opening of school buildings in the remote highlands of the province stated that he wished all AID projects were carried out in this above manner.

Photo below is of Nick Warner, Chris Haiveta and the Bishop opening one of the Kanabea Primary School classrooms in 2002. The parents and children had provided the timber slats for the walls. The local mission carpenter had constructed the kitset building frame flown in to the remote mountain site.



The Bishop blessing a double classrooms constructed at Kanabea Primary School.



Opening celebration drama. This classroom at Kanabea was clad with colour bond.

Keith Stebbins