a. The structure of the program, noting in particular:

The appropriate geographic focus of the program, taking into account partner country absorptive capacities

Whilst I don't doubt that the work that I and my colleagues are doing is improving the skills of Indonesians, these skills of are limited value until the overarching issues of corruption and poor governance are addressed. As an example of the size of the problem here, the NGO that I work with is spending their energy building relationships with non-Indonesian funding sources as they feel that is the only way of getting a reliable and consistent form of income. Government money is usually 'taxed' at all stages between the grant approval and its actual arrival in the organisation's bank account (assuming it does arrive at all…).

Volunteering, by its nature is very much a 'bottom-up' approach to change. This can only work in this country if it is supported by a range of visible 'top down' activites such as:

- Paying locally-engaged staff at the Embassy in Jakarta, an appreciatively higher wage than average, but very strictly applying the Australian Public Service code of ethics. Making Australia an employer of choice, but also one that does not tolerate any sort of graft, puts pressure on other countries to do the same.
- Providing Australian experts in the fields of governance, law-enforcement and related areas to work in Indonesian departments and organisations. These experts should not be volunteers, as volunteers simply don't have the necessary status and to be honest, don't command the recognition that a fully-paid 'expert' would have.

The appropriate sectoral focus of the program, taking into account Australia's area of comparative advantage and measured development effectiveness results

Widespread poverty is probably the single-biggest health and welfare issue facing Indonesia. Preventable diseases, such as those resultant from high levels of smoking, poor nutrition, poor sanitation, unsafe drinking water and poor road safety are high. High levels of poverty are also related to high levels of under-employment, failing infrastructure and high levels of graft and corruption in the legal, government and justice systems. As stated above, taking a bottom-up approach only can only have limited impact in this sort of an environment. We need to find ways of supporting and encouraging the changes needed in this country – an end to widespread corruption, an increase in the average wage, a national health system, a safety net for the poorest and most disadvantaged, a good education for all children (including girls who often miss out due to financial reasons) and the rebuilding and improvement of basic infrastructure like clean water, roads and electricity.

The relative focus of the aid program on low and middle-income countries

No comment against this TOR.

The relative costs and benefits of the different forms of aid, including the role of non-government organisations and the appropriate balance between multilateral and bilateral aid funding arrangements.

No comment against this TOR.

b. The performance of the aid program and lessons learned from Australia's approach to aid effectiveness.

To be honest, a number of my volunteer colleagues feel as though our role here is only partly about making real change, with a large component about building relationships between Australia and Indonesia (as we call it the 'trophy volunteer'). Whilst AusAID were very clear about the relationship building component of our assignments, it does make me and others angry to think that we gave up our homes, our families & friends and our well-paid jobs to come here only to find that the job 'wasn't really as described', 'was poorly thought out' or 'just seems like an excuse to get a trophy volunteer into the office'. I know that not all assignments are like this, but the fact is, a lot of them are. I will make more specific comments in relation to this against the next TOR.

c. An examination of the program's approach to efficiency and effectiveness and whether the current systems, policies and procedures in place maximise effectiveness.

My comments are provided against the various stages of a volunteer placement.

Identifying the role for volunteer filling

Approaches need to be improved with the identification and specification of volunteer roles. It should not be acceptable to 'take the first 3-6 months for them to get to know you before you can start doing real work'. It should not also be acceptable to get here and discover that the job specifications are 'now old so no longer relevant' or 'were drafted by someone who has since left so now we don't know what to do with you' or 'expect that you will have good Indonesian Language skills so we wont need to provide you with language support'. All these situations are real.

Pre-departure briefing and information

The text below is taken directly from my feedback to AVI in the first assignment report.

The most useful parts of the three days were:

- *the talk about development history and objectives;*

- *the talk from the psychologist; and*

- *the talk from the nurse.*

The reason I (and my partner) found these the most useful were because they were experts in their field giving us good, practical information about our assignments and the sorts of expectations we should have.

The other benefit we got from the briefing was meeting our fellow travellers.

To be blunt, I found the facilitated sessions not especially helpful in preparing us for our assignments. Whilst adult learning processes do draw on the expertise and experience in the room (of which there was an enormous amount), I don't think this is an appropriate format for such an important pre-departure briefing. At this stage we really needed experts to tell us what we needed to know, not for us to discuss hypothetical situations.

Given your experience in country to date, is there any additional information you would recommend for inclusion in the pre-departure briefing?

- *More time with returned volunteers from our destination countries. Whilst the dinner was enjoyable, it was not the appropriate format to gain information from the experienced volunteers. The very noisy restaurant and limited ability to move also made it next to impossible for the volunteer to talk to anyone other than the one or two people closest to them, with the others straining to hear.*

- *Information on the reality of living on the amount of money allocated to a volunteer. Whilst we have found food and transport to be within our budget (though by transport I mean mostly walking, using the very un-safe Angkotts and microlets, and very occasionally a taxi), the amount allocated for housing is significantly less than the reality. In order to avoid transport costs and time, we chose to live within walking distance of my work. Now we don't live in a high-class part of Jakarta by any means, but to rent a basic 3-bedroom house with NO furniture and NO built-in storage, was $5k per annum. In order to furnish it with the absolute basics such as bed, kitchen utensils, plastic bbq chairs, a cheap plastic table, plastic shoe racks (our main form of storage, other than clothes drying racks),, water dispenser, towels, the cheapest tv available etc. cost us a further $2k. This makes our house costs total about $7k when the amount allocated is $2.5k. We will never get this money back. It might be OK for a young, single person to live in a single room in a family home, but its not OK for us as a mature couple. Had we known that we would be this much out of pocket it certainly would have been a deal-breaker. .*

- *Information on the reality of transport whilst on assignment. As mentioned above, we have no transport of our own (as we simply cannot afford to buy a car, and we are not experienced bike riders) so are left with walking and public transport. In Jakarta the main transport which is affordable on our salary is the microlet. This is incredibly unsafe – I have been in a microlet which had 17 people in it (we were in first, so did not voluntarily get into something that overcrowded). Here is a picture of a microlet.*

   These have no seat belts, travel with the door open, have no padding (other than the other passengers) and are often driven by under-age drivers who spend their time counting their money (yes, whilst driving) and smoking. They do not travel fast, but that does not mean we are not put at risk on a daily basis. This is certainly not good enough for Australians in Australia, so I don't see why it should be the case for us overseas. At the briefing we were told not to take risks, but what option do we have?? Sit in out house all day ?? we certainly cant afford taxis. Again, information on this would certainly have been a deal-breaker for me.

- *More time should have been spent in small country-specific groups talking about the particular issues with our destination country. I know we received documentation in the briefing packs, but this does not prepare you for example, about how to find a house, the appropriate way to respond to beggars or the fact that you can only withdraw the equivalent of $150 a time from the local ATMs (making it a very costly to access your allowance).*

- *I really wanted to hear about the things that go wrong on assignments i.e. the 'not wonderful' reports you get back on your evaluation sheets. I understand why you would only want to send Ausaid the 'good stories' but you really should be telling the potential volunteers what the 'bad stories' are. Information such as drop-out rates and reasons seemed to be avoided, with the focus very much on dealing with 'manageable' and 'solvable' situations. This does not provide a fair picture of what we are heading into.*

- *For those of us going into an assignment where we need to speak the second language in the workplace, more emphasis should be placed on (and more ongoing support given for) the need for ongoing language training. Strategies for communicating with people of a second language (and no workshops – please!, I want information from experts) until your own skills are at an acceptable level would have been very helpful.*

- *A significant omission in the pre-departure briefing was the lack of recognition of the equally-important but different role that NSPs play. In particular, there was nothing in the program especially to address their needs and concerns. For most NSPs, their inclusion in day 2 was of no value to them, so this could have provided the ideal opportunity to address their issues.*

Information and support on arrival

At all stages we were told that the first three months are the most difficult in a posting – both from a personal and work point of view. This is certainly true. Sadly, however, there is little pro-active support provided. Whilst the AVI in-country team have been very helpful when called upon, it would have assisted us through the real danger period if we had received:

- A weekly or fortnightly phone call – just to see if there was anything we needed help with
- A person we could contact for more routine, but for newcomers, stressful things like "how do we buy water?", "what do we do when beggars follow us home?", "how can I get from A to B on public transport?" and 'I need help to find somewhere to live". Not having good language skills meant that otherwise simple things were very difficult. We very nearly returned home at this point.

I also think that in countries like Indonesia, particularly where you are working in an NGO or other largely non-English-speaking environment, we should have the option of Australian-government-funded ongoing language lessons. Language is a real barrier in my day-to-day work and takes an enormous toll on your potential productivity (and feeling of doing something worthwhile).

Also on the topic of language, it is common for volunteers to be asked to teach English as part of their role. There are no resources available for this (either in the form of books, lesson plans or funding to obtain such things). We all bumble along with what we can find on the internet or simply make up ourselves.

d. The appropriate future organisational structure for the aid program, including:

AusAID's organisational structure for aid delivery

I am not familiar with the current structure, but I do support the combining of agencies such as AVI add VIDA, as I think this will bring a sharper focus to our aid activities and avoid some of the duplication that occurs. I also think there is a need to improve the coordination between AusAID-funded aid activities and those undertaken by line agencies. As an example of where this has broken down, one of the AVI volunteers spent over a year in a placement successfully setting up a program where local Indonesian teachers went to Perth for 4 weeks to get hands-on experience in an Australian school. This was done on a shoe-string budget and was incredibly demanding on the volunteer. Only weeks after hearing about this volunteers' experience I saw an article in an Australian newspaper regarding an Australian Government program that was already doing the same thing and was sending a new batch of teachers across to Australia.

I would also like to say, that as an AVI volunteer, I have no idea who are where the other non-AVI AusAID-funded volunteers in my area are, and who they are working with. It is possible we could help each other with our assignments, but I will probably never know.

Arrangements for the coordination of ODA across the public service
No comment against this TOR.

Coordination of Australia's ODA with other donors and institutions.
No comment against this TOR.

e.   The appropriateness of current arrangements for:

Review and evaluation of the aid program, including an examination of the role of the Office of Development Effectiveness and options to strengthen the evaluation of the aid program
No comment against this TOR.

The management of fraud and risk in the aid program.
No comment against this TOR.

f.   Additional comments

For all the reasons outlined above, and the fact that you need 'buy-in' from the recipient for aid to work, I would like to suggest the following as a better approach to aid provision in Indonesia

1. The receiving Indonesian department/organisation sends one of their staff to Australia for 3-6 months.
    o   This person would need a reasonable level of English (obtaining language skills could be funded by the Australian Government).
    o   The person would be supported by an Australian department/organisation during their time in Australia.
    o   The person would see they system working 'as a whole' and could then, together with their mentor, develop a plan to implement appropriate solutions in Indonesia.
2. The Indonesian person would then return to Indonesia, with new skills and a plan to implement in Indonesia.
3. Their Australian counterpart would accompany them person back to Indonesia and spend 3-6 months there helping them to implement the plan.
    o   The Australian would be on their usual salary, enabling them to easily find accommodation, hire a driver (to avoid the need to use unsafe public transport) and it would also give them the status 'expert' as opposed to 'intrepid traveller'.

I believe this approach would give Australia far better value for money than the system in place now because:

1. Australian volunteers won't spend the first 3-6 months building their credibility before they can start doing 'real work' – they come into the organisation as the expert.
2. Volunteers don't struggle with trying to explain complex concepts and systems in either basic English or poor Bahasa Indonesia (whilst at the same time trying to figure out how the Indonesian system works before they can suggest any improvements).

3. The Indonesian counterparts gets to see first-hand how the system works, and he/she can play a real role in choosing those parts of the system that they know will work in Indonesia.
4. The Australian no longer needs to struggle with language as well as other cultural challenges. Also, the Indonesian gets to learn English, which will enable them to get a better-paying job in their own country.
5. The Indonesian gets to see that a non-corrupt and accountable system can work. To make real change in Indonesia requires pressure from all areas.