



AUSTRALIAN
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ACFID Response to Overseas Aid (Millennium Development Goals) Bill 2013

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Overseas Aid (Millennium Development Goals) Bill 2013

About ACFID

ACFID unites Australia's non-government aid and international development organisations to strengthen their collective impact against poverty. Our vision is of a world where gross inequality within societies and between nations is reversed and extreme poverty is eradicated.

ACFID's purpose is to provide leadership to the not-for-profit aid and development sector in Australia in achieving this vision and to fairly represent and promote the collective views and interests of our membership.

Founded in 1965, ACFID currently has 121 members and 5 affiliates operating in more than 100 developing countries. ACFID's membership expends \$1.38 billion on humanitarian and development activities and raised \$871 million from 1.9 million Australian households (2011/12). ACFID's members range between large Australian multi-sectoral organisations that are linked to international federations of NGOs, to agencies with specialised thematic expertise, and smaller community based groups, with a mix of secular and faith based organisations.

Introduction and overall comments

Importance of MDGs and Australia's commitment to ongoing development work

ACFID welcomes the introduction of a Bill to enshrine Australia's commitment to funding overseas aid into the future. Australian aid saves lives and lifts people out of poverty. It also ensures a safer, more stable and prosperous world for everyone. Australian aid tackles regional diseases and health problems. It creates economic opportunities for poor people and it is good for Australian business.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were created in 2000 as a 15 year action plan to eradicate extreme poverty. The eight tangible goals aim to address the needs and rights of the world's poorest by 2015 and articulate the social, economic and environmental advances that are required to achieve sustainable gains in human development.

As a framework for development, the MDGs have directed global resources and improved development coordination which has had a positive impact for some of the world's poorest people. Rates of extreme poverty have fallen, the incidence of both tuberculosis and malaria has significantly dropped, more children are enrolled in school and the gap between enrolment of girls and boys has been considerably narrowed.¹ Progress has also been made on combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases. ACFID members working in HIV response have noted that MDG 6 initiated international momentum towards achieving the targets and has since resulted in the creation of the Global Fund to fight AIDs, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the 2011 adoption of the United Nations Political Declaration on HIV and AIDs.

¹ C Kenny and A Sumner, *More money or more development: what have the MDGs achieved?* Centre for Global Development Working Paper 278, December 2011, p.24

While progress has been made on a number of goals, there are goals that remain unmet. Goals on maternal mortality are far from being met, hunger and nutrition remain challenges, the number of people living in slums globally continues to grow, and goals on reaching gender equality remain unfulfilled.² Further while progress has been made on alleviating global poverty, aggregate figures used to track those achievements mask growing inequalities both between and within nations. There is work to be done to reach the targets set in 2000 on reducing global poverty and Australian aid has a critical role to play.

Recommendations

Part 2 – United Nations targets for official development assistance.

A Bill requiring Australia to meet the United Nations targets for official development assistance would be welcomed by ACFID. Such a bill should have the effect of ensuring greater predictability of Australia's aid and increase the effectiveness of aid planning and results. Better planning produces an environment that enables aid to empower recipients, and assists in moving the world's poorest and most vulnerable out of extreme poverty.

ACFID is pleased that the Bill supports the scale up of overseas development assistance to 0.7% of Gross National income (GNI) by 2020 and believes that this target can be achieved. The United Kingdom reached 0.7% goal this year through gradual annual increases, despite its own economic problems and uncertainty.

ACFID supports the Bill's timetable of 0.5% of GNI to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) by 2015/16, noting the earlier multi-party commitment to reaching that target by 2014/15. ACFID urges that Australia's aid program continue to work with, and scale up its support to, Australian Non-Government Organisations (ANGOs). ANGOs bring particular strengths to the aid program as some of them have been working in international aid and development for more than 60 years, and they are effective in reaching disadvantaged groups that governments sometimes fail to reach and where government-to-government aid is not possible. Further, by working in partnership with ANGOs the Australian aid program retains the link to the Australian public, who support ANGOs through volunteering with them and providing donations to their overseas work.

Part 3 – Independent Commissioner on Aid Effectiveness

Rather than creating an Independent commissioner on Aid Effectiveness, ACFID supports making the Office for Development Effectiveness fully independent, reporting directly to the Minister responsible for International Development. Benchmarks for results should be articulated to ensure that Australian aid is effective at moving people out of poverty. ACFID recommends that AusAID remain a statutory agency reporting to the Minister responsible for International Development.

² United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report*, 2012