



Submission No 10

**Review of Australia's Relationship with the  
Countries of Africa**

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**SUBMISSION TO JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE**

**INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COUNTRIES  
OF AFRICA**

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**Summary**

This submission proposes a modest increase in Australian government aid to Africa. Specifically, Australia should include Rwanda amongst selected African countries, in the remit of the Australian Business Volunteers scheme. This action would enable Australian volunteers with specific expertise required in Rwanda, particularly its public sector, to bring this expertise and experience to build the capacity of Rwanda and in particular enhance Rwanda's economic development and governance.

**Background**

The Australian Business Volunteers (ABV)

ABV is an international development agency that sends volunteers to developing countries of the Asia Pacific region. ABV assists developing countries in the region to reduce poverty by developing the capacity of local organizations, which it achieves through the transfer of workplace skills. ABV supplies highly skilled volunteers to listen, suggest, advise, train and mentor clients.

Volunteers provide their services free of charge but ABV meets their other reasonable costs. ABV is funded by AUSAID.

ABV's terms of reference do not provide for volunteers to work in Africa.

Rwanda

Rwanda is a small country in Central Africa which is recovering from its traumatic past. Despite its tragic history Rwanda has set itself on a path of internal reconciliation amongst its peoples and a goal of lifting these people from poverty. It has, with help from the international community but mainly from its own efforts, made remarkable progress, but there is a very long way to go.

Rwanda is one of the world's poorest countries. On the UN Human Development Index it ranks 165/179 countries ie below East Timor.

David Wheen's Involvement with Rwanda

Economic growth is a priority and the Rwandan government, following work it did jointly with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD),

has determined that a vital contributor to this growth is to attract and retain foreign investment. An element of an attraction package is to have a migration framework whereby Rwanda can attract skilled foreign workers. Rwanda is investing heavily in educating and training its own population but it will be some time until it can supply the labour market with all the skills it needs.

As a former officer in Australia's Immigration Department I was engaged in 2007 by UNCTAD to work with the Rwandan Immigration Service to initially develop a migration policy and subsequently plan the implementation of the new policy. I made 3 visits to Rwanda for UNCTAD and a fourth visit was made as a volunteer.

On these visits it became increasingly clear that capacity building within the public sector was a high priority if Rwanda was to achieve the high goals it has set for itself.

In partnership with the Rwandan Director General of Immigration and Emigration (DGIE) my wife and I have developed a program to contribute to building the capacity of the DGIE's staff. Our objective is to find ways to expose staff to new work and life experiences to inform and stimulate their learning and to give them new skills which would make them more effective in the workplace.

.The program currently has a number of elements

- A study tour to Australia by a senior DGIE officer. Through the generous assistance of the Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) the officer visited the Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) over a six week period in Nov/Dec 2009. The officer's fares and living costs were met by an Australian NGO, the Indigo Foundation, which is active in the Congo and Uganda.
- Accessing and tailoring training materials, developed by DIAC and others, for use in Rwanda. The most relevant material is that which DIAC has developed for Pacific Islands immigration services.
- Exploration of post graduate study opportunities both in Australia and elsewhere.
- Visits by experienced Australian public sector trainers to Rwanda to deliver training programs which will meet needs which have been identified by the Rwandans. These trainers are volunteering their services and meeting their own travel costs. A pilot program will be run in the first part of 2010 and if successful will continue later in 2010. Further detail in Attachment A.

## **Proposal**

The Australian government has in recent times extended access to Australian Development Scholarships to Rwanda (10 for 2010). This is applauded. However the number of scholarships which can be awarded or the number of study tours abroad by Rwandans is necessarily limited.

My proposal goes to the fourth element above ie finding a way to support Australian experts to share their knowledge and skills with Rwandans. To make a notable impact across a range of fields it is desirable for Australian experts to be able *to spend time in Rwanda* training, advising and generally working with the locals in

transferring knowledge and skills. In the words of the Rwandan Director General of Immigration and Emigration “the idea of the services of skilled trainers is very important because we can cover as many people as possible” and provide training in a context which is relevant to the locals.

I consider that an extension of ABV’s brief to include Rwanda (and other selected African countries) would enable Australia to make a modest but still valuable and sustainable contribution to Rwanda’s development. Other government schemes which provide opportunities for Australians to bring skills to developing countries, eg Australian Youth Ambassadors, could also be have their briefs expanded to include Rwanda but I do not have sufficient knowledge of the these schemes to formally propose this.

In extending the remit of the ABV I also propose that its brief give adequate priority to enabling volunteers to work within the public sector. ABV’s current emphasis is on the private sector.

In Rwanda a capable public sector is vital to the country’s future and although Rwanda hosts many NGOs and international agencies few actually work within government agencies building the capacities of the staff in those agencies. This is a gap which ABV volunteers could contribute to filling.

I have been associated with the DGIE since early 2007 and there are a number of attractive features of my professional association.

The capacity building project is one which is owned by the DGIE and they are intimately involved in its planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The work being done is what they identify as a priority and they have committed resources to work closely with me.

On the basis of work done since 2007 there is clear evidence that the DGIE has been able to make sustainable improvements in its performance and quality of service. For example, in 2009 the DGIE won the annual award for innovation in public administration from the All Africa Institute of Public Administration for its online entry visa and earlier that year the DGIE won the Rwandan President’s award for improvement in the quality of service to customers by a public sector agency.

Although my work has been with one Rwandan government agency I am confident other agencies would welcome the opportunity to have skilled Australians work with them.

I recognise that extension of the ABV to include Rwanda would come at an additional cost unless savings could be found elsewhere. Apart from fares, other costs of individual projects in Rwanda would not be dissimilar to similar projects in Asia.

## **Conclusion**

Foreign Minister Smith said on 27 January 2009 that “Australia should be part of Africa’s future in areas where our expertise and experience can make a positive contribution”. An area where we can make a real contribution is in enhancing the

quality of public administration and there are Australians with experience and skills willing to do this. A cost effective way of facilitating this would be to enable the ABV to include Rwanda, and other selected African countries, within its brief.

11 December 2009

## **CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE RWANDAN DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION**

Rwanda has a small immigration agency (the Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration – DGIE) and we have been working with them to build the capacity of their staff. To date priority has been to develop a policy and legislative framework and tools to effectively implement the new policy. Much progress has been made on these elements.

A key element of this capacity building is to provide training and development opportunities for staff of the DGIE. To make an impact on numbers of staff we need to undertake intensive training in Rwanda.

In partnership with the DGIE we have identified priority needs (see below) which are not able to be met from local training resources. We have developed a pilot program and Australian public sector trainers will deliver four weeks of training in the first part of 2010.

The initial emphasis is on the development of public administration skills, not technical immigration expertise. The Rwandans have agreed to pay a daily allowance which would meet reasonable living costs of the trainers for the pilot but trainers will volunteer their own time and meet other costs eg fares and insurance.

### **EXAMPLES OF PRIORITY TRAINING NEEDS**

- Leadership, management and innovation
- Communication- with clients, stakeholders and colleagues
- Business writing
- Time management
- Working in teams
- Professional/ethical behaviour
- Negotiation skills/working with challenging clients
- Good decision making
- Project management
- Managing change
- English language