



acfid

POSITION PAPER: Millennium Development Goals Review

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POSITION PAPER: MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS REVIEW

“If we form strong global partnerships, if we support what works, if we back people of vision and action - we can meet the MDGs.”
Helen Clark United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator

Ahead of the [Millennium Development Goals \(MDG\) Review Summit](#) in New York on 20-22 September 2010, ACFID calls for a greater focus on equity and accountability by donors and developing country governments to ensure aid and development assistance make measurable differences in improving the lives of the poor.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

ACFID recommends the Australian Government:

1. announce a clear timetable for accelerating growth in the Australian Aid Budget to the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI)
2. develop a Strategic Framework collaboratively, with key stakeholders including Australian NGOs, to position AusAID to manage the growth in the Aid Budget more effectively
3. create an up to date, publicly accessible database of aid activities, modelled on the system used by the Canadian government aid agency CIDA
4. take a lead within the Asia and Pacific regions to encourage the provision of adequate levels of coordinated aid by all donors to each developing country
5. support pro-poor growth, promote inclusive economic development by focussing on interventions to reduce inequity in society
6. support the introduction of a small (0.05%) tax on all global financial market transactions – the ‘Robin Hood tax’ - as a means of raising revenue to help fund development assistance and climate change adaptation
7. through the G20, actively pursue mechanisms to ensure low-income countries have effective tariff and duty free access to developed country markets
8. develop a mechanism within the AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness to monitor the impact of development programs on the rights and well-being of the poorest 20% in focus communities
9. develop a comprehensive human rights policy, which explains how human rights standards should be used to design, deliver, monitor and evaluate programs
10. urge keeping the number of goals to a minimum, but address cross-cutting issues by restructuring the indicators
11. create the position of Ambassador for Women’s Rights to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in our region
12. provide 5% of aid funding to support civil society engagement in the planning, implementation and monitoring of development programs to ensure effectiveness

13. increase funding for the government's strategy 'Development for All: Towards a disability-inclusive Australian aid program 2009-2014'
14. promote the inclusion of our neighbours' voices in negotiations of a post-2015 framework, particularly from the Pacific
15. advocate at the Review Summit for a clear international consultation process for broad global consultation on post 2015 architecture
16. advocate for a restructure of MDG indicators to better address gender, disability and climate change

A. CONCERTED ACTION TO 2015: FOCUS ON EQUITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO COMMUNITIES

ACFID and its member organisations are working to increase pressure on the Australian Government and elicit concrete actions to reach the MDGs by 2015¹.

Maintaining momentum and focus on achieving the Goals before the target date of 2015 was emphasised by UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Helen Clark during a visit to Australia in February this year².

In considering how Australian action can be targeted in the four remaining years to 2015, ACFID recommends all efforts be underpinned by considerations of equity and accountability to focus communities – ensuring an inclusive process.

Accountability to focus communities

More and better aid

Donor countries, including Australia, need to rapidly increase their development assistance to meet existing commitments. This aid should be long-term, predictable and transparent as agreed in the Paris Declaration³. Effective development assistance has a catalytic effect, promoting sustainable change in alleviating global poverty.

The following arguments on accountability made by World Vision International in their submission to the civil society consultation for the MDG+10 Summit (Luke and Nowlan, May 2010) are pertinent:

1. Australia needs to deliver on the commitments it has already made to promote development and achieve the MDGs;
2. better coordination and cooperation focussed at the country level is required.

The single most important commitment that Australia can make to help achieve the MDGs would be to *announce a clear timetable for accelerating growth in the Aid Budget to the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI)* - **Recommendation 1**. Working to this end, the

¹ ACFID's position paper has been developed further to the Australian Government Consultative Forum held at Parliament House on 11 June 2010. Our position incorporates input from a number of our member agencies (participating organisations listed at page seven), in addition to the work of other development peak bodies, including Bond - whose position paper outlining recommendations to the European Union is available at Bond: Millennium Development Goals.

² Clark called again for new energy more recently, in her [Opening Address](#) to the Lowy Institute Conference '[Advancing Innovative Development and Aid Strategies in the Asia-Pacific](#)' Sydney, 17-18 June 2010.

³ The Paris Declaration, endorsed on 2 March 2005 at the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) meeting, commits adhering donors, including Australia, and developing countries to increasing the effectiveness of aid. Over one hundred ministers, heads of agencies and other senior officials committed their countries and organisations to continue to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of monitorable actions and indicators.

Make Poverty History Campaign (MPH) is the major MDG awareness-raising program run by Australian NGOs (more information is available at [Make Poverty History](#)). The strong public support that the MPH campaign has helped to create has encouraged Australia's political leaders to recommit strongly to the Goals. ACFID believes that MPH has been partially responsible for achieving the largest single increase in Australian Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2005, and securing the commitment by the incoming Labor Government to 0.5% of GNI by 2015.

The capacity of the Australian development program needs to be greatly strengthened to ensure it can effectively manage the increase in scale. *ACFID recommends that a Strategic Framework is developed collaboratively, with key stakeholders including Australian NGOs, to position AusAID to manage the growth in the Aid Budget more effectively - Recommendation 2.* This Framework should be underpinned by research and development and involve ensuring the quality of aid is communicated well to the public. ACFID recognises the important role of civil society organisations and private philanthropy – by individuals and the corporate sector. Australia could play a leadership role in mobilising the business sector to harness private sector innovation in development initiatives.

To assist our political leaders and the Australian community to scrutinise the Aid Budget more closely, ACFID recommends improved transparency in the budgeting of Australia's aid program. MDG reporting needs to be more accessible. *An up to date, publicly accessible database of aid activities, modelled on the system used by the Canadian government aid agency CIDA, should be created – Recommendation 3.*

Donor and developing nations need to accelerate the implementation of their aid effectiveness commitments under the Paris and Accra⁴ agreements. The monitoring of progress against these commitments needs to be strengthened and reported annually. Greater coordination between donors is critical. *ACFID recommends Australia take a lead within the Asia and Pacific regions to encourage the provision of adequate levels of coordinated aid by all donors to each developing country - Recommendation 4.*

As agreed in Paris and Accra, development needs to be focused on supporting the plans and systems of developing countries. It is imperative that Australia and other donors support country-led development, based on broad national consensus and with strong mutual accountability. Australia should support an annual review of progress, chaired by the focus country.

Moreover, economic development plays an important role in maintaining progress towards the MDGs. As the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) highlight in their [Policy Messages on Pro-Poor Growth](#), sustaining economic growth is central to effective, long-term poverty reduction strategies. But it is imperative this growth is pro-poor and inclusive – a pace and pattern of growth in which poor women and men contribute, participate and benefit. Development must be ecologically, socially and economically sustainable. Helen Clark has also emphasised the need to foster more balanced and inclusive models of economic growth. To have greatest impact on poverty and hunger, growth must be employment intensive, gender-sensitive and have a specific focus on agriculture. Measuring development through increases in Gross Domestic Product is inadequate. *The Australia development program should support pro-poor growth, promote inclusive economic development - Recommendation 5.*

History shows that increases in development assistance and faster economic growth, while important, are not sufficient preconditions for meeting the MDGs. ACFID stresses the importance of developing a global partnership for development - focusing on creating the conditions for fairer international governance through addressing trade, debt and technology

⁴ The Accra Agenda for Action is an international agreement that aims to highlight the need for specific reforms in the aid sector to achieve improved aid effectiveness and is designed to complement the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The statement by the Australian Government delegation, made in Accra in September 2008, confirmed an overarching commitment to the Accra Agenda for Action reforms.

issues. This is also the call of Dr. Arjun Karki of LDC Watch⁵, who brought their campaign 'No MDGs without Least Developed Countries' to the UN General Assembly on 13th April.

Fairer international governance

To complement aid and help fund development assistance and climate change adaptation, *ACFID recommends the Australian Government support the introduction of a small (0.05%) tax on all global financial market transactions - the 'Robin Hood tax' - Recommendation 6.*

Moreover, ensuring trade agreements adopt a pro-poor approach is critical to achieving the MDGs. A global trade deal which works for poor people in poor countries is part of efforts to enhance progress towards the MDGs. *Through the G20, Australia must actively pursue mechanisms to ensure low-income countries have effective tariff and duty free access to developed country markets – Recommendation 7.* ACFID recommends Australia align itself more with developing countries' needs, to pressure on developed countries such as the United States, Japan and those of the European Union to cut agricultural subsidies.

Equity

Australia can also do more to focus on the impact of inequality within countries on progress. ACFID stresses the argument of Professor Jan Vandemoortele (2010), that the critical condition to achieving the MDGs by 2015 is reducing disparities within countries. He demonstrates that inequity at the national level has slowed progress in many countries. AusAID research on progress on the MDGs in the Pacific, for example, reveals disparities in different sectors of the community ([Tracking development and governance in the Pacific](#)). Given the vulnerability of the poorest to global market shocks and climate change, to sustain achievements towards the MDGs, key national statistics must be adjusted to demonstrate impact on the poorest 20 per cent of the community. *ACFID recommends the AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness develop a mechanism to monitor the impact of development programs on the rights and well-being of the poorest 20% in focus communities - Recommendation 8.*

A human rights-based approach ensures development programs focus on recognising the human rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups. *ACFID recommends AusAID develop a comprehensive human rights policy, which explains how human rights standards should be used to design, deliver, monitor and evaluate programs – Recommendation 9.* ACFID's 2009 publication '[Millennium Development Rights](#)' demonstrates how a human rights-based approach strengthens sustainability, accountability and effectiveness of MDG-related strategies. Vulnerable people are often invisible yet it is an obligation to respect their rights, given Australia's commitment to international mechanisms such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

To strengthen the effectiveness of the MDGs in making measurable differences to the lives of the poor, *ACFID recommends restructuring the indicators for MDGs - Recommendation 10.* Gender equality for example is very narrowly defined, and should be identified under each of the goals. Similarly for disability and climate change – which impacts on least five MDGs directly.

Improving opportunities for women and girls is a powerful driver to MDG progress across all of the Goals. Gender-inclusive programming is central to the achievement of the MDGs. AusAID's [Gender Equality Guidelines](#) is a key tool in working towards the MDGs. Australia's policy commitment should however be reflected in resourcing – both within AusAID and to build expertise in the broader development sector. Australia can play a leadership role in this

⁵ A global alliance of national, regional and international civil society organisations (CSOs), networks and movements based in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and supported by civil society from development partner countries

area as it has done in the past. *ACFID recommends the Australian Government create the position of Ambassador for Women's Rights to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in our region – Recommendation 11.*

At the recent Australian Government Consultative Forum, participants identified a number of groups who may experience higher levels of poverty and face injustice, these include:

- people with a disability - recognised as being the poorest of the poor,
- Indigenous peoples,
- the rural and urban poor,
- women, girls and in particular women without access to reproductive technologies,
- forced migrants and those in areas emerging from conflict.

One of the most effective means of addressing marginalisation is strengthening civil society engagement – all development management bodies should develop strategies to promote the participation of people with a disability, women, children and youth in the planning, implementation and monitoring of programs for which they are the focus. In order to better identify and address the special needs of the most vulnerable communities and people, Australian NGOs emphasise their participation - they must be given a seat at the negotiating table. Development partners such as Australia can assist by supporting inclusive development planning which takes into account the perspectives of the poor and marginalised within the focus society. Strengthening civil society enables citizens to better hold their governments accountable. *ACFID recommends Australia provide 5% of aid funding to support civil society involvement in the planning, implementation and monitoring of development programs to ensure effectiveness - Recommendation 12.* Greater involvement of civil society in development debates and planning, both in-country and in Australia, is critical to improving aid effectiveness. The “Beyond Basic Needs” paper produced by the UK’s prestigious Overseas Development Institute (ODI), for example, recognised high levels of participation and responsibility as one of the strengths of Australian NGOs approaches. It is also an agreed aid effectiveness principle to which Australia has committed under the Accra Agenda for Action.

Australia’s position at the MDG Review Summit in New York could include specific perspectives in relation to disability inclusive programming and working with Indigenous peoples. Australia is at the forefront of effectively working with people with a disability, we are in a position to play a leadership role and advocate internationally for better practice in this area. *ACFID recommends the Australian Government increase funding for the strategy ‘Development for All: Towards a disability-inclusive Australian aid program 2009-2014 – Recommendation 13.* The success of the Avoidable Blindness Initiative is another example of Australian leadership.

Notwithstanding Australia’s difficult and complex history in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the link between community development programming nationally and internationally is clear. A strong lesson from the implementation of Indigenous programs in Australia is the importance of community involvement and ownership. Australia can work to promote and protect Indigenous knowledge, and some innovative work in this area may have regional and international applications.

B. START PREPARING NOW FOR AFTER 2015

In focussing global efforts to alleviate poverty beyond 2015, ACFID recommends

1. an inclusive process and
2. maintaining the clarity and accessibility of the Goals.

Process

Stakeholders, observers and analysts have voiced many concerns and criticisms of the MDGs. To address these, the voices of the poor and marginalised must be given primary importance in the development of a successor framework. It is critical that donor countries, including Australia, engage in a genuine partnership with developing countries to establish any post 2015 architecture. To improve local ownership of the MDGs, ACFID considers Australia should advocate for the longer consultation period recommended by [Jan Vandemoortele and Enrique Delamonica \(2010\)](#).

As our UK counterpart, [Bond](#), have highlighted, international institutions and processes need to be reformed in order to respond to the challenge of ending poverty and inequality. It is possible to initiate structural reform now. Given our closest neighbours are developing countries, Australia's role in the MDG Review Summit in New York should include actively pursuing a broader decision making base for international governance.

ACFID welcomes the announcement of a Special Ministerial Meeting to be held in Indonesia, 3-4 August. At fora such as these, *ACFID recommends Australia use its influence to promote the inclusion of its neighbours' voices in negotiations of a post-2015 framework, particularly from the Pacific - Recommendation 14*. It is important to listen to developing countries to identify lessons learned - what has worked well and can be replicated - as well as what can be improved. Small-island states have been identified amongst the poorest countries and Australia has a particular contribution to make by creating space for dialogue and in urging other countries to include their voices and encourage dialogue, both with partner governments and communities. To make the Review Summit action oriented, the voices and advocacy of civil society is also required.

ACFID recommends Australia advocate at the Review Summit for a clear international process for global consultation on a successor framework to the MDGs - Recommendation 15. We recommend this negotiation is initiated by the UN Secretary General in 2010/11 and led by a high-level task force. Efforts must be made to ensure regional and gender balance in the make-up of this taskforce, with representation from policymakers, academia, development practitioners, civil society and the media. The body must consult widely, particularly in developing countries, and report to the UN General Assembly in 2013 to allow debate and consensus to form by 2015.

MDG purpose and structure

Advocates correctly state that areas such as the environment, human rights, disability and gender are neglected in the current MDG structure. However, overloading the existing eight goals will undermine the simplicity and associated effectiveness of the MDGs. ACFID considers that one of the strongest features of the MDGs is their capacity to be understood intuitively and communicated easily with the general public. To maintain this strength, *the Australian Government should urge keeping the number of goals to a minimum – 'less is more'* - **Recommendation 16**. The restructure of the MDG indicators outlined above (Recommendation 10) would help respond to the demands to add further Goals.

The following member organisations provided input to ACFID's position:

AngliCORD

Assisi

Australian Volunteers International

Burnet Institute

Care Australia

International Women's Development Agency

Micah Challenge

Opportunity International

Oxfam

TEAR

Save the Children

UnitingWorld

Vision 2020 Australia

World Vision Australia

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