



about Australia

international aid

- Australia's international aid program focuses on practical ways to help developing countries reduce poverty and encourage sustainable development. The program also responds quickly to help vulnerable populations when natural or other disasters strike.

Most of Australia's aid is provided to the Asia-Pacific region, which has 800 million people living in poverty. Although this is two-thirds of the world's total poor, the region receives less than one-third of total world aid flows. Australia also provides aid to countries in Africa and the Middle East, working mainly through international and non-government organisations (NGOs).

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), an autonomous agency within the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio, administers the aid program. AusAID works with developing countries to identify their needs and develop the most effective ways of addressing them. AusAID has representatives in 19 countries around the world.

The Australian Government believes Australia should be a leader on development issues and we are working with developing countries, particularly in the Pacific and Asia, to realise the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Australia's aid program invests heavily in education, health systems, water and sanitation, combating disease, and climate change adaptation.

In addition to government spending, the Australian public is generous and responsive when it comes to giving. Between 2002 and 2006, private donations to aid and

key facts

- Australia currently provides around \$3.2 billion a year in official development assistance, equating to 0.3 per cent of gross national income in 2007–08.
- Australia's aid program has a strong focus on poverty reduction.
- Government will increase its aid to 0.5 per cent of GNI by 2015–2016 in line with its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals.
- Australia provided \$1 billion to Indonesia for reconstruction after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.
- Australia will contribute \$872.5 million in 2007–08 to address the challenges of stability and prosperity in PNG and the Pacific.
- Australia will contribute \$1 billion towards efforts to halt and reverse the spread of HIV in our region by 2010.

development NGOs increased by an average of 15.8 per cent. In 2006, the Australian public donated \$724.94 million to aid and development work through Australian NGOs.

Australia is one of the 189 member states of the United Nations which have pledged to work towards the MDGs. The Goals provide

a clear vision for halving extreme poverty by 2015. They set milestones so that Australia's aid program remains focused on, and achieves, a real reduction in poverty.

Australia is providing aid to help address extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development.

In practical terms, there will be greater investments through the Australian aid program in key MDG sectors—health, basic education, water and sanitation, and the environment and climate change. For example, the Australian Government intends to dramatically increase aid funding for water and sanitation by \$100 million in 2009–10 and \$200 million in 2010–11. In particular, aid funding for sanitation initiatives will be given attention. The Australian Government is committed to providing \$150 million over three years to assist countries in our region adapt to the likely impacts of climate change.

Education

Australia is investing heavily in education, with a major focus on achieving universal primary education, equipping people with the basic skills for further studies or success in the labour market. Our aim is to help get 10 million more children into school, and improve the quality and relevance of education for another 50 million children in the Asia–Pacific region. In East Timor, for example, Australian aid has reopened around 980 schools, including 500 primary schools.

Australia funds a number of scholarships which provide educational, research and

professional development opportunities to support growth in the Asia–Pacific region and build enduring links at the individual, institutional and country levels.

Gender equality and empowering women

Gender equality is an essential element of the aid program. Investment in health and education for women and girls yields some of the highest returns, including reduced maternal mortality, better educated and healthier children and increased household incomes. The aid program has also increased investment in maternal and reproductive health and the role of women in decision-making. The elimination of violence against woman is a priority for the aid program.

Health

Australian development assistance in health is focusing on the health needs of women and children, supporting countries to address health problems, strengthening health systems and ensuring systems can reduce regional vulnerability to HIV and emerging infectious diseases, especially malaria. As part of this significant investment in people in our region, Australia will also focus on assisting people with disabilities.

Disability

There are clear links between poverty, blindness and disability in the developing world. In many poor communities, people who are blind and living with a disability are among the poorest of the poor. The Government is committed to addressing the issues facing people with disabilities in

developing countries through Australia's aid program and has already committed \$45 million over two years to fight avoidable blindness in East Asia and the Pacific. It has also placed a high priority on the development of a broader policy on disability in development to provide practical support to people living with a disability.

Combating diseases

Australia's aid program is tackling HIV, malaria, tuberculosis and potential pandemics. Australia is also helping to improve health services in developing countries, strengthening national health systems.

Through the aid program, \$1 billion has been committed to fight the spread of HIV in the region, where an estimated five million people are already infected. Australia is also spearheading an international effort to reduce the incidence of malaria in the Pacific.

Australia has committed \$100 million over four years to combat avian influenza and other emerging infectious diseases in East Asia and the Pacific.

Environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation

Australia has committed \$150 million over three years from 2008–09, to assist countries in our region assess and adapt to the likely impacts of climate change on their coastal communities and infrastructure, their agricultural sectors and their health systems. This includes support for establishing a Pacific Climate Change Centre to utilise Australian technical expertise in the region to strengthen climate resilience.

Australia's existing programs will continue, including the long-standing Pacific sea level and climate monitoring program and Australia's contribution to the Least Developed Countries Fund for adaptation work in the world's most vulnerable countries. Climate change adaptation will be a high priority for the aid program in the years ahead.

Water and sanitation

Clean water and effective sanitation is essential to economic growth and poverty reduction. Our development assistance program has decades of experience implementing water and sanitation assistance in the Pacific and Asia. While activities must be tailored to individual country circumstances, there are common challenges. These include the need for:

- ensuring access for the poor
- maintaining existing infrastructure
- involving user groups in the development and operation of water services.

The aim of Australia's water and sanitation assistance is to help reduce poverty and raise living standards in developing countries by promoting efficient, equitable and sustainable water delivery and sanitation services.

Our assistance reflects the principle that water and sanitation is fundamental to economic and social wellbeing. It builds on the lessons from Australia's domestic and international experience and tailors activities to individual country circumstances. It also builds on existing policies on gender and development, poverty reduction and governance.

Over the past five years, Australia has invested about \$50 million each year on water and sanitation activities, primarily in the Asia–Pacific.

Terrorism

Australia is fighting the war on terrorism effectively here in our own region by helping to build the capacity of developing countries in the Asia–Pacific to respond effectively to terrorist and other transnational security threats through support for:

- strengthening police, immigration, border, port security, quarantine and customs controls to combat the illegal movement of arms, money, people and illegal substances
- drafting and enacting legislation to combat transnational crime such as money laundering, human trafficking and terrorism
- improving law and justice systems
- promoting peace building, conflict prevention and reconstruction in conflict-affected areas.

Humanitarian aid

Australia has a long and proud tradition of providing rapid and generous support for communities affected by humanitarian crises, both regionally and globally. Australia has effectively supported international responses to natural disasters in East Timor, Papua New Guinea, the Pacific Islands and Indonesia as well as making major contributions to humanitarian relief efforts in Africa, Asia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Australia's humanitarian ethos was highlighted after the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004, when it provided \$1 billion to Indonesia for reconstruction and development projects. Australia continues to make a real impact in helping tsunami survivors to re-establish their communities and livelihoods. More recently, Australia provided support to the Papua New Guinea Government following the 2007 floods

in Oro Province, which affected approximately 130 000 people.

Australia makes contributions to organisations which have extensive experience in humanitarian and relief operations. This includes support to international organisations, such as the United Nations and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and to Australian non government organisations, including CARE, Oxfam and World Vision. For example, in 2007 Australia provided \$66.3 million through the UN World Food Program for approximately 124 000 tonnes of food aid to people in crisis in countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and in Africa.

How the aid program works—aid partnerships

The Australian Government works increasingly in partnership with multilateral organisations and development banks in the delivery of the Australian aid program. Multilateral organisations extend the reach of Australia's aid programs because their size enables them to undertake projects on a scale that would not be possible for individual donors such as Australia. By working in partnership with these organisations, AusAID is also able to access their expertise and networks.

The Australian Government, through AusAID, competitively contracts aid work to Australian and international companies. These companies use their expertise to deliver aid projects and often train local people to continue the projects long after the contracts end. AusAID directly monitors projects.

AusAID also works in partnership with other organisations that share our focus on reducing poverty. AusAID funds NGOs such as

World Vision, Oxfam, CARE and the Australian Red Cross to deliver aid programs at the local community level and to help people in emergencies.

Australian NGOs are an essential part of the aid program, mobilising public support and voluntary contributions for aid. They often have strong links with community groups in developing countries and have expertise in meeting people's basic needs. NGOs deliver just under five per cent of Australia's aid program on behalf of the Australian Government.

Australia provides funding through the United Nations to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and to the United Nations Development Programme for their work in developing countries. Australia also contributes to poverty reduction programs set up by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Volunteering for development

Australian volunteers play a vital role in the fight against poverty. The Australian Government has provided support to Australian international volunteers since the 1960s. Since then, the government has provided funding to place more than 12 000 volunteers with organisations in developing countries, matching their expertise with the needs of the organisations.

AusAID works with three volunteering organisations, Australian Business Volunteers, Australian Volunteers International and Volunteering for International Development from Australia to engage volunteers for both short and long-term engagements throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

The Youth Ambassadors for Development program places skilled young Australian volunteers aged 18–30 on short-term assignments between 3–12 months in developing countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The program offers young people the opportunity to contribute to development while learning about other cultures.

Volunteers work with Australian organisations and their overseas counterparts in a broad range of areas, including health, environment, rural development, gender, governance, justice, education and infrastructure development. They actively contribute their skills and expertise to international development, and at the same time, gain an increased understanding of the development needs of our neighbouring countries and broaden their experience by living and working in a cross-cultural environment.

Note: Unless otherwise stated, all dollar amounts are in Australian dollars.

Further information

Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)
www.ausaid.gov.au

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
www.dfat.gov.au

Last updated April 2008

Satellite imagery © Commonwealth of Australia, Geoscience Australia, ACRES.
Western Australia coastline.

