

World Vision Australia submission to the Australian Multilateral Assessment Review

World Vision Australia welcomes the Australian Government's move towards greater transparency in its funding of multilateral aid agencies. As an organisation that works in both humanitarian and emergency, and development contexts, World Vision Australia has experience and ongoing partnerships with many of the multilateral organisations identified for review by the Australian Multilateral Assessment (AMA). Consequently, to the extent that we have information to share about these organisations, we also have lessons to learn and we therefore request that AusAID share with the NGO community the factors determining the AMA results at the conclusion of the review to help guide our own ongoing engagement with these organisations.

General Observations

World Vision recommends that the AMA be implemented taking into account Australia's aid plans for the next five years. This longer term perspective would involve consideration of not just the effectiveness of each agency but also the extent to which it helps Australia meet its aid program objectives, particularly its capacity to coordinate Australian aid with that of other donors in the same geographic or thematic area. In sum, multilateral organisations should be assessed on how they can meet Australian Government goals in each region over the next five years, complement Australia's bilateral aid and minimise the administrative burden on AusAID.

World Vision also recommends that the Australian Government consider greater levels of core funding to multilateral organisation. When compared with economies of a similar size, Australia provides a lower share of its multilateral funding as core funding and earmarks a higher proportion to fund specific projects. Whilst both types of funding are appropriate, core funding boosts predictability and enhances multilateral effectiveness by enabling investment in organisational capacity. Were Australia to increase its core funding as suggested, it is equally important that Australia leverage this investment into greater involvement and influence over multilateral management to ensure the resources are well spent. In this regard, World Vision would like to see multilateral organisations better explain how they arrive at decisions determining the types of projects they will fund and clarify how this funding may be accessed by NGOs. In our experience, many multilateral organisations are difficult to navigate and this creates obstacles to partnering with them on potential complementary projects in the field.

Donations to Multilateral Organisations in times of Emergency or Humanitarian Crisis

World Vision is hopeful that the results of this review will also guide Australian Government decisions on funding multilateral organisations in emergency and humanitarian situations. Of

particular importance in this regard are firstly, the rapidity with which the multilateral organisation can release funds and, secondly, its operational reach.

Our experience has been that UN agencies, in particular, can experience significant delays in allocating funds due to bureaucratic and administration processes, which can delay assistance at a time of critical need. Most UN agencies are not operational in the field and hence channel donated funds to NGOs, which deliver the bulk, around 80 per cent, of humanitarian assistance. World Vision has experienced delays of up to several months in the dispersal of these funds, which has prevented or reduced the amount of aid we were able to provide at the time of most need. Further, in many cases, UN agencies impose a transaction cost in administering these funds, which reduces the total amount provided to NGOs to fund their emergency and humanitarian work.

The second issue of relevance to allocating emergency funds, operational reach, was highlighted in Australia's initial response to the ongoing East Africa food crisis. Whilst World Vision welcomed the Australian Government's generous donation of \$57 million to the World Food Program (WFP), this decision did not appear to have taken into account the fact that the WFP is not operational in South Central Somalia, where the most vulnerable to famine/food insecurity are located. Whilst Australian aid was later also given to UNICEF, the only UN agency operational in this area, the quantum was much less.

From the public perspective, the selection process for allocating the East African emergency aid was unclear and we would encourage the Government to institutionalise greater transparency around the selection and funding of specific multilateral agencies in every humanitarian crisis. Whilst we recognise there is a pressing need for rapidity in these circumstances, it is at the same time vital that Australian contributions be directed to the most effective multilateral organisation in each case.

World Vision therefore welcomes the AMA as a mechanism for institutionalising greater transparency around the selection and funding of specific multilateral agencies in response to emergency and humanitarian crises.

Organisation Specific Observations

Global Partnership for Education

World Vision the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) as strongly aligned with Australia's development objectives and critical to Australia achieving its aid program goals for education. However, despite its important mandate, its effectiveness has been restricted by relatively low membership and an insufficient funding base. Hence, there is a strong case for Australia to increase its contribution to the fund and to encourage other countries to do likewise. As mentioned above, any increase in Australia's contribution should be leveraged to lobby for administrative reform, particularly with regard to the fund distribution mechanism and the need to streamline the World Bank's management of the GPE trust fund.

Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria

The Global Fund has been highly effective in working towards its goals and consequently greater funding for its work is essential. Its mission is clearly aligned with Australian commitments to achieve universal HIV, TB and malaria care and treatment by 2015, however, this goal will only be reached through increased investment.

Whilst there has been some recent criticism of the Fund, World Vision considers this to be an indication of its effectiveness and its impressive frankness about the challenges it faces rather than an indication of weakness. The Global Fund should be encouraged to maintain this degree of openness, which is far greater than that of many other bilateral and multilateral bodies.

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and World Health Organisation

These two multilateral organisations play an essential role in building better coordinated action around health issues at the country level. Importantly, they complement funding provided by the Global Fund, President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief and similar large donors by helping countries better manage these resources.

UN Population Fund and UN Children's Fund

These organisations play a vital role in achieving MDGs 4 and 5 relating to child and maternal health and mortality, and as such are strongly aligned with the Australian aid program's priorities. World Vision Australia believes funding should be significantly increased to these organisations to reflect their effectiveness and the imperative for greater action given the lagging progress of MDGs 4 and 5.

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