



Australian Government
AusAID

Better education

A POLICY FOR AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT
ASSISTANCE IN EDUCATION

SUMMARY

www.ausaid.gov.au



Foreword

In the 2006 White Paper on the Australian Government's overseas aid program I emphasised the need for improved policies and actions by both developing and developed countries if collectively we are to rid the world of poverty.

Better education provides the detailed policy basis for Australia to work closely with its partner countries to improve their education systems, one of the most important elements of a stable and prosperous country.

Children and youth are a country's greatest resource. They are the key to building a better future. Yet without an education, these same people can contribute to social instability and violence, leading to the quick and devastating erosion of a nation's hard-earned gains.

As a father of four, I fully understand the value of a high-quality education for the next generation. Children must leave school with the knowledge and skills to secure their own future and to contribute positively to their society. Countries need skilled workforces to generate economic growth and educated citizens to demand the best from their governments.

I am struck by the lost opportunities for so many children in the Asia-Pacific region who do not go to school. One-third of the children who are out of school in the world today live in our region. And unfortunately girls are almost twice as likely as boys to be denied the opportunity of education.

Australia is committed to doing more to help the young people of our region. And this commitment is matched by the Australian Government's decision to triple its support for education so that 60 million more boys and girls can have a better future.

We will work with our other partners and build on past Australian contributions, such as the creation of 330,000 new junior secondary school places in Indonesia. We will continue to assist in times of crisis, as we did following both the tsunami and the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan.

In assisting our neighbours we can draw on our own experience in creating one of the best education systems in the world. We can offer specialist assistance in English language teaching and in vocational and technical education, fields in which we are an international leader.

Australian assistance must lead to sustainable improvements that deliver benefits over the long term. We must also keep a clear focus on improving efficiency, reducing wastage and combating corruption. The education challenge faced by this region is everyone's responsibility.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alexander Downer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Hon. Alexander Downer, MP

Minister for Foreign Affairs

BETTER EDUCATION

Education is key to creating, applying, and spreading new ideas and technologies which in turn are critical for sustained growth; it augments cognitive and other skills, which in turn increase labor productivity. The expansion of educational opportunity is a ‘win-win’ strategy.¹

Investing in people through education and health is one of the four themes of the Australian Government’s 2006 White Paper *Australian Aid: Promoting Growth and Stability*.

Better education provides the detailed policy guidance for tripling Australian support for education systems through the aid program. This is in addition to ongoing support for tertiary scholarships and the new Australia–Pacific Technical College.

Australia’s objective for education is to assist developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development by giving more girls and boys in the Asia–Pacific region a better education.

Our aim by 2010 is to assist developing countries increase by 10 million the number of children attending school and to improve

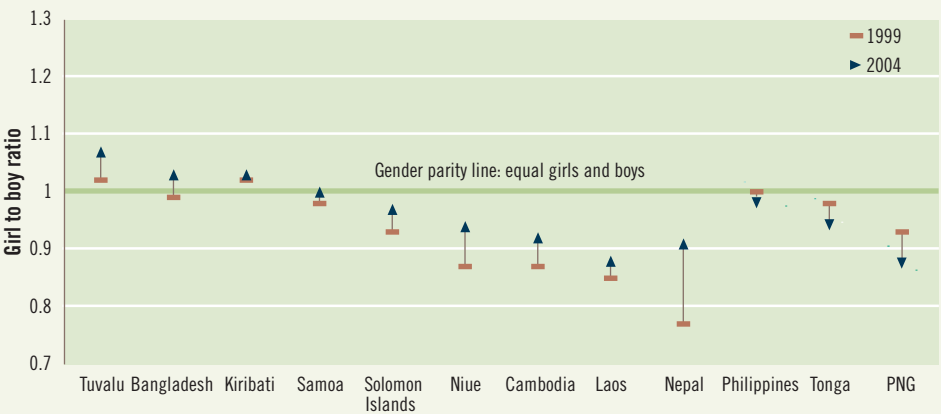
the quality of education for an additional 50 million children.

While the focus of our support will depend on the diverse needs of partner countries, the priorities of the Australian aid program are to:

- > improve the **functioning of national education systems** to enable more girls and boys to complete primary school and progress to higher levels of education
- > improve the **relevance and quality of education**, including in vocational and technical education, so that students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for life and productive employment.

Universal primary education and gender parity at all levels of education are Millennium Development Goals. While there has been some progress towards meeting these goals, 77 million children remain out of school worldwide, of whom one-third are in the Asia–Pacific region. Most countries in the region are some way from providing all children with primary schooling and enrolments at secondary level are generally very low. Globally there has been an improvement in gender parity yet inequality for girls remains an issue – of the region’s 26 million children out of school, 16 million are girls.

GENDER DISPARITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS, ASIA–PACIFIC REGION, 1999–2004



Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, UNESCO, Paris, 2006, Annex Table 5

In many parts of the world, an enormous gap persists between the numbers of students graduating from school and those among them who master a minimum set of cognitive skills. Any policy aimed at pushing net enrolments towards 100% must also assure decent learning conditions.²

Getting girls and boys to attend school is only part of the challenge. There is concern across the region that education systems are not providing students with the skills needed for productive employment. In some countries under-educated and unemployed youth may contribute to instability and violence, eroding development gains.

International experience highlights key lessons for future donor support for education:

- > The full benefits of education are only realised if schooling is extended to all children within the population.
- > Weak education performance is generally due to underlying problems with resources, structures and incentives rather than simply a lack of technical capacity.
- > The focus should be on improving learning achievements, as completing school will not necessarily provide children with the basic skills for poverty reduction.
- > Aid will be more effective when it is coordinated with all other investments in the sector.



ABOVE: A student at a government primary school in Rangpur, North-West Bangladesh. In recent years Bangladesh, with support from donors including Australia, has increased the number of girls in primary school to achieve gender parity. This is an important milestone on the path to equity in access to education.

PHOTO: AusAID, Peter Duncan-Jones

Better education takes into account these lessons and provides a strategic framework for improving the effectiveness of Australia's education assistance. The central focus is on helping partners build effective education systems. There is a dual emphasis on improving the governance of the systems and on strengthening the quality and efficiency of service delivery.

Governance is critical. Australia will work with key public and private organisations to improve policy capacity and strengthen administrative systems, such as government financial management systems. At the community level we will support measures that increase family involvement in school management and raise demand for greater transparency and accountability in service provision.

Lack of resources for service delivery is a major constraint to improving education outcomes for children. Our support will contribute to filling the estimated US\$7 billion financial gap required globally each year to meet international education goals. Assistance will focus on increasing the availability and quality of teachers, classrooms and learning materials.

Australia will also collaborate with partners to meet specific regional education needs such as labour market skills shortages, English language skills development and improvements in education quality in Islamic schools in Indonesia, South Asia and the Philippines.



ABOVE: A policy of using local materials in school construction and teaching has reduced the cost of elementary education in Papua New Guinea. PHOTO: AusAID



ABOVE: Improving governance and combating corruption are crucial to delivering better education services in our partner countries. PHOTO: Valerie Haugen

THE IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON EDUCATION

Corruption in the education sector reduces the resources available for schooling, limiting access and driving down quality, as well as reducing public confidence and demand. Key areas susceptible to corruption are:

- > **planning and school management** – including manipulation of finances
- > **procurement and distribution** – particularly nepotism in awarding contracts for supply of school materials and fraud in contract execution
- > **student selection and exam results** – including bribery for admission to a particular school or academic institution, and exchange of money or other favours for good grades
- > **teacher management, personnel systems and professional misconduct** – particularly in the filling of vacancies, transfers and promotions
- > **accreditation of schools and other academic institutions** – including the payment of fees and other bribes to achieve accreditation or formal recognition.

Increased effectiveness of our aid will be achieved through improving the performance orientation of our initiatives, including through greater sectoral analysis, increased alignment with partner governments' plans and systems, and improved performance reporting. We will also increase engagement and dialogue with governments in the region and with other donors, and will improve the coherence of aid policies by integrating anti-corruption and gender equality measures into our education initiatives.

NOTES

- 1 World Bank, *Achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015: A Chance for Every Child*, World Bank, Washington DC, 2003, p. 1.
- 2 UNESCO *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2005*, UNESCO, Paris, 2004, p. 17.

Strategic framework

OBJECTIVE	TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO REDUCE POVERTY AND ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BY GIVING MORE GIRLS AND BOYS IN THE ASIA–PACIFIC REGION A BETTER EDUCATION.
AIM	BY 2010 TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES INCREASE BY 10 MILLION THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL AND TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR AN ADDITIONAL 50 MILLION CHILDREN.

WHAT AUSTRALIA WILL SUPPORT

HELPING EDUCATION SYSTEMS DELIVER	
IMPROVE THE GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improve policy capacityStrengthen government systemsHelp partners to develop sustainable information systemsSupport social accountability measuresSupport anti-corruption measures in education programs and introduce codes of conduct
STRENGTHEN SERVICE DELIVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhance the availability and quality of resources such as teachers, classrooms and learning materialsTrial innovative ways to encourage children to complete their educationSupport health initiatives within schoolsSupport the re-establishment of schooling following emergencies and build domestic response capacity
MEETING SPECIFIC REGIONAL NEEDS	
IMPROVE VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL TRAINING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assist partners to reform their vocational and technical education systemsEstablish the new Australia–Pacific Technical College
SUPPORT ISLAMIC EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assist in improving the quality of education in Islamic schools
IMPROVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improve the teaching of English in schoolsSupport English language initiatives through informal education tools, such as the media

INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AID

STRENGTHEN PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Incorporate more detailed sector analysis in country program education strategiesAccelerate a shift to more sector programs with greater alignment to national education plans and strategiesImprove performance reportingSeek policy coherence, particularly with the AusAID gender policy
COMBAT CORRUPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Integrate anti-corruption measures in education programs
ENHANCE REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase policy dialogue with partner governmentsEnhance harmonisation with other bilateral donors, UN agencies and international development banksStrengthen whole-of-government approaches

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT AUSTRALIAN AID

More information about the Australian Government's overseas aid program is available online at www.aisaid.gov.au

Australian Agency for International
Development (AusAID)
GPO Box 887
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia
Telephone +61 (0)2 6206 4000

MAY 2007

COVER IMAGE: *On the morning of Sunday 26 December 2004 a severe earthquake in the ocean off the coast of northern Sumatra caused tsunamis (tidal waves) that devastated communities in countries in the Indian Ocean. Australia acted immediately to provide assistance, including deploying 15 Australian school teachers to the Maldives to assist the Ministry of Education to re-open schools in time for the start of the new school year. This grade 1 school girl was able to resume her education at ThaaJudeen primary school in the Maldives because of the help provided by Australian volunteers and the Australian Agency for International Development. PHOTO: AusAID*

www.aisaid.gov.au