



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST: PRIORITIES RIGHT IN NEW AID PLAN

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), the peak body for Australian aid and development organisations, today welcomed the Government's Response to the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness.

ACFID lobbied for the establishment of the Review and argued that a clear purpose for the aid program, with helping poor people at its heart, is fundamental to effective aid.

"The new purpose of the program, focused squarely on helping people overcome poverty, brings clarity and focus. It stresses that it is in Australia's national interest to assist people in the developing countries that surround Australia - and beyond," said Marc Purcell, Executive Director of ACFID.

"In the end, the impact of Australia's aid will be judged by results on the ground. ACFID will produce an annual Progress Statement on Aid Effectiveness, assessing the extent to which the Government's major commitments in their Response are being implemented. This will be released on the anniversary of the Government's Response in July 2012."

"For the first time, we have a Whole-of-Government strategy for aid planning, budgeting and evaluation. Significantly, this will be signed off by Cabinet. If managed well this should bring predictability, sustained resourcing and a stronger impact on the ground from Australia's aid efforts," Mr Purcell said.

"There are currently more than 90 Federal and State Departments and Agencies that deliver Australia's aid. ACFID argued strongly that greater coordination and a clearer poverty focus is required for all Departments delivering aid.

"To this end, we welcome the announcement of a new Transparency Charter and an Independent Evaluation Committee which should deliver more information and create a better understanding of what Australian aid does, how it works, and what can be done to improve it.

"The proposed geographic focus of the Australian aid program is 'about right'. We should focus on the Pacific, Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where the need is great. But we also want to ensure that the Australian NGO role in India, where many of the world's poor still reside, is not overlooked.

"With a greater number of natural disasters occurring every year and larger numbers of people being affected, the increase in humanitarian funding is both sensible and necessary.

"We are very pleased that the Government has recognised the importance of civil society in building human development and expanding freedoms in communities. ACFID is looking forward to working with the Government on developing the proposed Civil Society Engagement Framework as soon as possible.

"Women make up more than 50% of the world's population. Human development can only occur if discrimination and inequality between men and women is addressed front and centre. We welcome the prioritisation of gender equality and will work with the Government on strategies to make a real difference.

"The success or otherwise of these reforms will hang on a strong, capable and well-resourced Government aid program - led by AusAID. The Review Panel makes it clear that increased funding for AusAID's internal capacity is vital. In next year's budget, this will need to be addressed," Mr Purcell concluded.

**MEDIA CONTACT: JOY KYRIACOU (02) 6281 9219 or 0412 084 782**

*ACFID is the peak council for Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working for the eradication of poverty through international development cooperation*

14 Napier Close Deakin ACT | p: +61 2 6285 1816 | f: +61 2 6285 1720 | [www.acfid.asn.au](http://www.acfid.asn.au)