Released: Australian Governmentâ??s response to the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness

Description

Tweet

The â??Independent Review of Aid Effectivenessâ?? and the Governmentâ??s response were released on 6 July 2011 by Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd, in an official launch at Parliament House, followed by a Ministerial Statement to Parliament. For an overview, see this page on the AusAID website

Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness:

- Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness (Executive Summary and full publication) [Aid Review website]
- Part 4: Managing for Effectiveness, includes Chapter 16: Managing for Results, includes Part B: Performance Management and Evaluation (5 pages)

  Commissioned in November 2010, this was the first independent review of the aid program in 15 years. It made 39 recommendations to improve the program

Australian Government response:

- An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real differenceâ??delivering real results (Executive Summary and full publication)

The Government has agreed (or agreed in principle) to 38 of the recommendations. Including that the agency develop a three-tiered results framework for reporting on agency-wide performance.

See also

- Annex A: Response to Independent Reviewâ??s recommendations [PDF 514kb], being specific responses to each of the 39 recommendations
- An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real differenceâ??Delivering real results Questions and Answers

RD Comment: The following section on Independent Evaluation is of particular interest [underlining added]:

ii) Independent Evaluations

â??AusAIDâ??s Independent Completion Reports and Independent Progress Reports are another key part of its Performance Management and Evaluation Policy.

Under current guidelines, a report must be completed for an activity every four years, either during its implementation (a progress report) or at completion (a completion report). Reports are required for projects above $3 million and are meant to be made public. They are independent in that they are done by individuals not involved in the project. Typically, but not always, they are written by nonâ??AusAID staff.

By international standards, this policy is thorough. For example, at the World Bank, independent completion reports are done only for a sample of projects

But a study of AusAID evaluation reports commissioned by the Review Panel found that implementation of AusAIDâ??s evaluation policy is patchy:
â?¢ Of 547 projects that should have had a completion or progress report in 2006â??10, only 170 were recorded as having been done.
â?¢ Of the 170, only 118 could be found.
â?¢ About 26 per cent of the completion and progress reports were assessed to be too low quality to publish.
â?¢ Only about 20 have been published on the AusAID website.

Clearly, the policy is not being fully followed. Other problems were also evident. None of the 118 completion or progress reports reviewed provided an unsatisfactory rating. This raises questions of credibility. In comparison, 20 per cent of World Bank projects are rated unsatisfactory by its independent evaluation group.

There is also a structural issue with the policy: AusAID program managers must approve the publication of an independent report. This risks conflicts of interest and long delays in publication. The low rate of publication suggests these problems may be occurring.

Independent completion reports, when done and published, can be very useful. For example, the completion report on the first phase of the Indonesia Basic Education Project is in the public domain and helped to inform recent public debate about the second phase of the project (AusAID 2010b). In contrast, several useful completion reports have recently been done for the PNG program, but only one has been released.

Given the problems described above, it is not surprising that the Review Panel has seen little evidence that these reports inform and improve aid delivery.â??

Tags

1. aid effectiveness
2. AusAID
3. Reports
4. results

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