

## **DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS STEERING COMMITTEE (DESC) TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Background**

The Australian Government has committed to increase Australia's official development assistance (ODA) to 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2015-16. Building and sustaining an effective aid program at this level will require an even more rigorous approach to issues of quality and performance.

The Development Effectiveness Steering Committee (DESC) assists to strengthen the effectiveness of Australia's development assistance. The DESC will strengthen the coordination of the aid program and play an advisory role to the Government on major ODA strategy and budget proposals. The DESC is chaired by the AusAID Director General and comprises deputy secretaries of central agencies and two members of AusAID senior management.

A major role for DESC will be to advise on the operations of the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE). The ODE contributes to improved aid effectiveness by monitoring the quality and evaluating the impact of AusAID and, as appropriate, other Australian Government agencies' ODA programs. The ODE publishes an Annual Review of Development Effectiveness; evaluates country strategies, policies and programs; undertakes reviews and periodic spot checks of performance monitoring systems; builds capacity within the Australian aid program to apply sound aid management principles; and advises on the development of new country strategies.

### **Scope**

The DESC will focus on four themes.

#### **i) Effectiveness.**

The DESC will:

- advise on ODE priorities, including its forward program of evaluations and approach to performance assessment.
- consider reports on performance assessment and major evaluations and reviews undertaken by AusAID and international agencies, including responses to key findings and recommendations in existing and future programs.
- guide the Annual Review of Development Effectiveness, including its themes and content.

**ii) Whole of government country and regional strategies.**

The DESC will consider and comment on major whole of government development strategies, focussing on:

- shaping and ensuring coherence of the whole of government approach.
- analysis of the implementation of the previous country strategy and the incorporation of lessons learnt.
- the adequacy of performance frameworks in articulating Australian Government development objectives and the means in which performance can be assessed.

**iii) ODA budget strategy.**

- The DESC has a formal role in providing advice on ODA eligible funding proposals. DESC advice will be focused on effectiveness, coherence and prioritisation of ODA-related expenditure proposals.

Central agencies will continue to provide advice directly to ministers on budget-related issues.

**iv) Implementation of policy priorities.**

The DESC will:

- review and comment on implementation of AusAID budget measures.
- comment on future priorities for implementation attention.

**Membership of DESC**

The DESC will consist of the following members:

- Director General, AusAID (Chair)
- Deputy Secretary, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Deputy Secretary, Treasury
- Deputy Secretary, Department of Finance and Deregulation
- Deputy Director General, AusAID
- Chief Economist, AusAID

The DESC will co-opt as required representatives of other Departments intending to carry forward significant ODA-related Budget submissions.

Assistant Director General, ODE and Principal Adviser, Development Effectiveness will attend the DESC meetings in an advisory capacity. Subject to availability, appropriate security clearances and on the basis there are no conflicts of interest, other internationally recognised experts will be included on the Committee following DESC consideration.

### **DESC Support**

The ODE will provide advice to the DESC on the adequacy of country strategies and ODA budget proposals. This advice will focus on the application of lessons learnt often based on reviews conducted by the ODE itself, and on the adequacy of performance frameworks.

The AusAID Office of the Director General (ODG) will provide secretariat support for the DESC.

### **Development Effectiveness Working Group**

Preliminary work prior to DESC meetings will be conducted by a Development Effectiveness Working Group (DEWG). The DEWG will comprise representatives of AusAID and the Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Treasury and Finance and Deregulation. The DEWG will draw in representatives of other government departments as appropriate to the items under consideration.

The DEWG will be convened by AusAID in advance of DESC meetings and/or as required to:

- Provide working-level coherence to the whole of government approach
- Where appropriate, provide relevant input into papers to be presented to the DESC to assist the decision making process of the DESC.
- Advise on the future work program of the DESC, including meeting schedules, agenda items and priority focus areas.

The AusAID Office of the Director General (ODG) will provide secretariat support for the DEWG.