

There are a number of the Aid review questions where volunteering for development makes a distinctive contribution as I will briefly canvas in this submission. Dr Peter Devereux Drpeterdevereux@gmail.com

How can Australia best utilise its national strengths to enhance the impact of our development program and address multidimensional vulnerabilities?

Australian volunteers utilise their professional expertise and personal passion and cultural interest to contribute to the development progress in diverse ways that are quite different and distinctive to the official aid program and its public and private staff. They do this both overseas and on return to Australia or when volunteering remotely.

How should the new policy reflect the Government's commitments to build stronger and more meaningful partnerships in our region, founded on mutual trust and respect and shared values of fairness and equality?

The new policy should build on past bridges and relationships created by Australian volunteers all over the world. It can do this by fostering more South South and South North to Australia exchange of skills and experience. Many Agenda 2030 SDG themes provide fertile ground for this for example SDG 13 climate action where Australians can learn of the impacts of their greenhouse emissions on the livelihoods of those vulnerable to sea level rise in the Pacific. Connecting more strongly and funding United Nations Volunteers can also further this goal.

What lessons from Australia's past development efforts should inform the policy? What is Australia seen to be doing comparatively well?

The Australian Volunteer Program provides many lessons of effective people to people development that brings mutual learning and understanding on both sides not just transfer of technical expertise. The Australian community wants to engage more directly with the development program but it has increasingly been dominated by large organisations and businesses which has minimised the contribution of grassroots connections and relationships. Global education was an important part of the aid program until relatively recently and made a big impact in schools and the community and provided an avenue for former volunteers to share their experience. This good experience should be recreated as part of the new policy so Australians learn about the importance of connecting with our region for peace security and mutual benefit.

How should the performance and delivery systems be designed to promote transparency and accountability, as well as effectiveness and learning in Australia's development assistance?

Having more everyday citizens engaged with the aid program through the Australian Volunteer Program promotes transparency and accountability because Australians that do it see things as they are first hand and make links and bring their connections and knowledge home to share with others. They also provide a model of learning that emphasises mutual and experiential learning rather than just transfer of knowledge.

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This is a short submission simply to fly the flag for the value of Australian volunteering for development. I would welcome the opportunity to talk to the Development Policy review team to explain more. The review would learn much by talking to more everyday Australians who have volunteered overseas. There is now myriad evidence to back up this approach including the following small sample:

Peter Devereux (2010) International volunteers: cheap help or transformational solidarity toward sustainable development see <https://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/3551/>

<https://www.australianvolunteers.com/our-resources/evaluation-and-research/>

https://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1404268/AVI-Theory-of-Change-Report.pdf

<https://forum-ids.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Volunteering-for-Climate-Action.pdf>

<https://forum-ids.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-for-Development-and-Responding-to-Climate-Change-Cliff-Allum-Peter-Devereux-Rebecca-Tiessen-Benjamin-Lough-IVCO-2022-Think-Piece.pdf>

Dr Peter Devereux was co-chief investigator on the longitudinal research study of Australian Volunteers 2019-2022. He is on national and international volunteer research committees including the Forum Research, Policy Practice and Learning group and coordinates the Western Australian SDG Network. He is an elected council member of the Banksia ward of the Town of Victoria Park. He is also Deputy Convenor of the One World Centre Management Committee and a member of the Work that Reconnects Steering Group focused on Active Hope. Peter has focused on volunteering for development and sustainability policy, research and practice for 30 years. Previously he worked for the United Nations Development Program in United Nations Volunteers which made him a powerful advocate for Agenda 2030 and the SDGs from when they were being developed. Having launched his international career as Lecturer in the Universidad Centro Americana and NGO environmental adviser in Nicaragua. He is passionate about bringing his international development, sustainability and cross cultural understanding to his teaching, research, civil society engagement and Local Government Councillor role. Along with his partner Leigh Dix they have volunteered long term in Nicaragua, Fiji and Myanmar.