

AEC and AusAID Partnership Agreement

Introduction

- 1) The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) share a history of working together on issues of common interest. The purpose of this agreement is to recognise shared strategic priorities, acknowledge agency strengths, and establish partnership principles and cooperation arrangements to enhance the partnership between AusAID and the AEC.

Partnership Principles

- 2) The partnership will be governed by the following principles.
 - a) The relationship of the agencies will be one of equal partnership, valuing the contribution each agency can make to the achievement of common goals; and respecting each agency's responsibilities.
 - b) The partnership will be underpinned by mutual respect, professionalism, integrity, cooperation, the sharing of ideas, and open communication.
 - c) In the light of:
 - AusAID's responsibility for managing Australia's overseas aid program; and
 - The AEC's responsibility, set out at paragraph 7(1)(fa) of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, "to provide, in cases approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, assistance in matters relating to elections and referendums (including the secondment of personnel and the supply or loan of materiel) to authorities of foreign countries or to foreign organisations",

the agencies will work collaboratively to identify and agree shared strategic priorities for Australia's engagement on international electoral issues. This will involve setting joint objectives and recognising the comparative advantage of each agency.

Shared Strategic Priorities

- 3) AusAID and the AEC will work together to help citizens better participate in their democracies, through:
- a) providing targeted technical assistance to support electoral processes in foreign countries, with a focus, wherever possible, on individual and institutional capacity building within electoral management bodies and related institutions;
 - b) enhancing electoral and civic education as part of Australia's overall governance assistance, primarily in promoting and supporting the conduct of free and fair elections;
 - c) highlighting the importance of electoral issues within the region;
 - d) acknowledging the importance of ensuring timely support to development partners throughout the election cycle;
 - e) acknowledging the importance of fostering, in the electoral field, institutional links, twinning and regional networks;
 - f) undertaking joint research and analysis, including assessing experiences from both AusAID and AEC perspectives to build up a documented bank of lessons learned;
 - g) recognising the AEC's role as the first point of advice for AusAID in assessing electoral issues, and for accessing expertise both within the AEC and through third-party partners;
 - h) collaborating on the design of electoral assistance programs to ensure that simple designs meeting required quality standards are produced expeditiously;
 - i) consulting on the choice of key staff to be deployed on electoral assistance programs; and
 - j) increasing opportunities for mutual staff development, for example through the use of joint working groups, secondments and shared training opportunities.

Agency Skills and Strengths

- 4) Each agency brings different skills and strengths to the Partnership.

AusAID's strengths lie in:

- a) the provision of development policy advice drawing on a deep knowledge and understanding of developing countries in our region and the long-term aspects of development;
- b) management of Australian development cooperation programs focussed on achieving growth, stability and effective governance;

- c) analysis and understanding of the poverty impact of assistance in governance reform;
- d) knowledge of the social, economic and political context in developing countries, including machinery of government, at the national and sub-national level;
- e) experience in improving service delivery, standards and policies in developing countries and expertise in management of cooperation programs with these objectives;
- f) well-established networks and relationships with partner governments, civil society organisations and research and professional associations in developing countries and Australia; and
- g) extensive overseas infrastructure and delivery systems.

The AEC's strengths lie in:

- a) the depth, within the organisation, of experience with and knowledge of all elements of electoral processes and electoral assistance, which is readily accessible to AEC and AusAID officers in the field;
 - b) its internationally recognised expertise on a wide range of electoral policy and program aspects, including, in particular, the conduct of electoral processes in transitional, post-conflict and peacekeeping environments;
 - c) providing policy advice and incorporating lessons learned from Australia's experience both domestically and internationally on electoral matters;
 - d) building the capacity of electoral administrators, strengthening electoral management institutions and supporting the administration of electoral events;
 - e) well-developed networks with international electoral and democracy agencies and other electoral management bodies in other countries; and
 - f) extensive networks with individual experts and electoral professionals with highly specific skills and experience.
- 5) The partnership will recognise the responsibilities of other agencies as appropriate.

Coordination Arrangements

- 6) Dialogue at a senior and operational level will identify opportunities for broader cooperation, including joint analysis in areas of shared interest and deepening staff links, through exchanges or collaborative work. Engagement at an operational level will be ongoing, and the responsibility of the International Services Section of the AEC, and the Building Demand for Better Governance Unit of AusAID.

- 7) Both agencies agree to meet at least annually early in the calendar year at the Senior Executive level to identify strategic issues of common interest and to set priorities for cooperation and joint work. Either agency will be able to seek further meetings at this or other levels if necessary.
- 8) Both agencies agree to ensure that relevant information is provided to the other party.
- 9) Both agencies agree to ensure information on points of contact on specific issues is provided and regularly updated to facilitate effective engagement.



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