

General Information Release
24 November 2010

Joint ASPI-FDC Research Report:

**The Nexus Between Australian National Security and
the Australian Official Aid Program**

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) and the Foundation for Development Cooperation (FDC) will produce a joint ASPI-FDC Task Force Report on the nexus between Australian national security and the Australian official aid program. Noting the recent announcement of the independent review of the effectiveness of Australian official aid, which is to conclude its work by April 2011, ASPI and FDC intend to complete their joint research report by early March 2011, so that it may also inform the deliberations of the panel overseeing the independent review.

To assist in the production of this joint research report, and to ensure maximum practitioner and expert input, ASPI and FDC propose to convene a blue-ribbon Task Force to contribute to the content and focus of the final report. The Task Force will consist of around ten members from a cross-section of leading Australian organisations which have an interest in, or can substantively contribute to, the production of the report.

The research, deliberations and final research report will examine the future of Australia's aid program from a national security perspective. Three issues warrant particular attention: 1) AusAID's

ASPI: Level 2, Arts House, 40 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600
Tel: (61 2) 62705100 Fax: (61 2) 6273956
Web: www.aspi.org.au

FDC Head Office: FDC House, 137 Melbourne Street, South Brisbane, Queensland, 4101, Australia
Tel: (61 7) 3217 2924 Fax: (61 7) 3846 0342
Email: info@fdc.org.au Web: www.fdc.org.au

position within the government's national security decision-making framework, 2) opportunities to advance Australia's national security interests as a by-product of effective international development programs and 3) the future role of civilian agencies in stabilisation missions and other complex security environments. Each of these points is discussed below.

1. Elevating development to become a central pillar of Australia's national security policy

Australia is surrounded by the developing states of the Asia-Pacific. Failure to achieve significant political, economic, social and environmental progress in our region will have a direct impact upon Australia's long-term security. Hence, the many forms of support that we provide our near neighbours, from poverty alleviation to assistance in creating stronger governmental institutions, are closely aligned with our national security interests.

Australia's experience in the last decade is that AusAID is increasingly called upon to participate in complex international operations involving extensive military-police-civilian cooperation (e.g. Afghanistan, Bougainville, Iraq, Solomon Islands and East Timor). AusAID's budget now supports other agencies such as the Australian Federal Police, as in East Timor, and the Asia-Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence supplements AusAID in promoting effective civil-military-police engagement in conflict situations. The agency's central role in whole-of-government activities across the security-development spectrum necessitates a rethinking of its position within formal decision-making processes.

To ensure our development policies are implemented effectively, Australia should examine whether to give international development a more prominent place in our national security policy framework in order to achieve greater cohesion across government. The ASPI-

FDC joint research report will examine a number of options for government:

- What are the current points of intersection of the stated aims of Australia's aid and national security objectives? And to what extent should these shared objectives be made explicit?
- Should the government establish an interagency policy committee on international development to set priorities, facilitate decision-making where agency positions diverge, and coordinate development policy across the executive branch?
- Should international development be given a dedicated ministerial portfolio?
- To what extent are security improvements in target countries influencing the nature and effectiveness of subsequent aid projects?
- Should the government create separate AusAID representation within the national security framework?
- Should the government create an Australian Global Development Council, comprised of leading members of the philanthropic sector, private sector, academia, and civil society, to provide high-level input relevant to Australia's development program?
- To what extent are Australia's development experts conscious of national security issues and developing country security determinants?
- Will the humanitarian objectives of Australia's aid program and its effectiveness be improved or weakened or neither by closer integration with Australia's national security objectives?

2. Development dividends: the geographic focus of our aid program and Australia's national security interests

A stable, peaceful and prosperous international environment, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, is a key national security interest for Australia. The work of our development program is intricately linked to these aspirations. By helping our near neighbours alleviate poverty, achieve broad-based economic growth

and democratic governance, and successfully emerge from crisis, disaster or conflict, Australia can deliver a number of security dividends for itself and the region.

Australia's aid program continues to focus the majority of its effort on countries in our immediate region, concentrating programs in partner countries and sub-regions that have the best chance of producing development gains, but it also invests significant funds via multilateral development agencies. But given the significant increase in Australia's aid budget over the next five years, the government faces a serious question: should Australia's development program be extended to new areas of the globe where our strategic and security interests can be advanced? Or should we spend the contents of this enlarged aid purse on our near neighbours?

The ASPI-FDC joint research report will consider the geographic scope of Australia's aid program, exploring initiatives that complement Australia's national security priorities. Themes for discussion will include both specific countries/regions and program types (counter-terrorism and deradicalisation, reconciliation and conflict alleviation, security sector reform and so on).

3. Fostering the integration of capabilities needed to address complex security environments

Australia will continue to seek an enhanced level of interagency cooperation in managing complex security challenges. In order to achieve this objective, the government will need to develop a coherent strategic vision to identify and grow necessary government capabilities, earmark appropriate resources across agency boundaries, and integrate activities in target countries.

Civilian-military teams in Afghanistan and elsewhere have enjoyed a measure of success in enhancing local security, conducting small-scale reconstruction efforts, and strengthening nodes of governance. Despite these initial successes, observers within and outside of

government have highlighted areas in need of improvement if parallel/integrated civilian-military operations are to be effective.

The government will need to cultivate relevant civilian expertise so that AusAID programs can deliver post-conflict stabilisation assistance in difficult environments. This includes the ability of civilian agencies to maintain, mobilise, and deploy necessary resources and skilled personnel for a variety of operations in conflict areas.

In this section, the ASPI-FDC report will explore a variety of questions including:

- What are the 'next steps' to improving the performance of civilian agencies in conflict prevention and post-conflict stabilisation?
- What is the appropriate balance between the civilian and military involvement in non-permissive environments?
- What are the positive examples of the recent and current aid program effectively shoring up Australia's national security?

A preliminary discussion paper will be prepared by mid-December 2010.

It is expected that the final research report will be read at the highest levels of the Australian Government, will serve as an important input to the forthcoming independent review of the effectiveness of Australia's official aid program, and will inform the thinking of organisations involved in aid and security issues.

Further details are available from:

Peter Abigail, Executive Director, ASPI, Co-Chair Task Force – PeterAbigail@aspi.org.au

Craig Wilson, Executive Director, FDC, Co-Chair Task Force – craigwilson@fdc.org.au

Anthony Bergin, Director of Research Programs, ASPI, Member of Task Force – AnthonyBergin@aspi.org.au

Mélanie Aubé, Senior Operations Officer, FDC, Task Force Coordinator – melanieaube@fdc.org.au