

# Developing Nations

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## AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN DEVELOPING NATIONS FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*We live in a world where...*

- 980 million people live on less than \$1 a day
- 72 million children of primary school age are not in school – 57 percent of these are girls
- An estimated 10.1 million children die before the age of five each year
- Half the population of the developing world lack basic sanitation
- Over half a million women die each year from treatable and preventable complications from pregnancy and childbirth
- The number of people dying from AIDS increased to 2.9 million in 2006

The fight against poverty may appear daunting but the efforts arising from the Millennium Declaration in 2000 shows what can be done when the world works together to solve a global challenge. The Declaration gave rise to the establishment of eight Millennium Development Goals targeting key indicators of development, including extreme poverty and hunger, education, gender equality, child mortality, and disease control.

Progress against these goals has been encouraging but more needs to be done if we are not to fall short of achieving the Goals by 2015.

The Australian Government has committed to spending 0.7 percent of Gross National Income on overseas development assistance (ODA), yet did not set a timeline for when this level of spending would be reached. Our level of ODA as a proportion of Gross National Income is currently 0.3 percent.

## Our Action Plan

- Explicitly adopt the Millennium Development Goals as a benchmark for ensuring the aid program is directly focused on the sustainable reduction of poverty.
- Increase Australia's ODA by 0.1 percent of Gross National Income each year until we reach the 0.7 percent target.
- Conduct biennial reviews of the contribution of Australia's aid program to the Millennium Development Goals.

*“The Millennium Development Goals are a test of our capacity to work together to solve common challenges.”*

**Senator  
Natasha Stott Despoja  
Spokesperson on  
Foreign Affairs**



Other ACTION PLANS are available online at  
[www.democrats.org.au](http://www.democrats.org.au)

Last updated 5/09/2007

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- Focus development resources intensively on high-priority nations, with the intent of achieving a more rapid and sustained improvement in economic and social conditions, including:
  - Basic education
  - Water and sanitation
  - Basic health
  - Availability of micro-credit
  - Climate change limitation and adaptation.
- Support further cancellation of developing country debt.
- Lobby for the resumption of multi-lateral talks aimed at the further reduction of trade barriers.

## The Issues

The Australian Government's in-principle commitment to increasing aid expenditure to 0.7 percent of Gross National Income extends all the way back to a 1975 United Nations General Assembly resolution but was more recently affirmed at the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico.

The Government's commitment to this target is more lip service than genuine, stating that 0.7 percent remains the target but aid spending will be determined by our "...capacity to assist and other priorities for Australian Government expenditure."

Australia has not yet set a timeline for the achievement of that spending level, unlike five countries that have already met that level and 16 that have committed to reach it by 2015. Australia's ODA as a proportion of Gross National Income is currently 0.3 percent, significantly below even the OECD average of 0.46 percent.

This stands in stark contrast to the generosity of Australians, who are the second most generous amongst the 22 OECD countries when it comes to private giving. This corresponds with growth in the number of people who approve of official development assistance and who feel that Australia should spend more on aid.

Australia is experiencing one of the longest periods of economic growth in our history. The Government has been able to consistently deliver multi-billion dollar surpluses. If we cannot afford to increase aid spending to the internationally-agreed level now, when can we?



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