

Aid Buzz (April 10): The civilian presence in Afghanistan | 2012-13 budget and the 0.5% commitment | AusAID's multilateral assessment | and more

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Increased civilian presence in Afghanistan?

The Sydney Morning Herald [reported](#) that the Federal Opposition's Defence Spokesman attacked AusAID's presence in the country as "extremely low," arguing that he "would want to see our civilian commitment increased dramatically." This echoes [last year's comments](#) by former chief of the army Peter Leahy that Australia was relying too heavily on its Defence forces and pursuing "half a strategy in Afghanistan."

The aid program in Afghanistan is [estimated](#) to total \$165.14 million for 2011-12 and the [aid review](#) forecasts a growth rate (combined with Pakistan) of 2010-11 figures by a further 40% by 2015-16, a significant increase. The challenges of increasing the civilian presence in a conflict zone have been [highlighted](#) by the recent serious wounding of AusAID worker David Savage in Afghanistan, the first civilian casualty in the conflict. Stephen Smith has now [called for a review](#) of aid worker protection in light of the tragic incident.

Will the Government break its 0.5% commitment?

The Oaktree organisation has [launched a national campaign](#) to pressure the Labor Government to maintain its 0.5% commitment by 2015-16 stating that "right now, the Labor Government is considering breaking this promise." This comes as the Government has [confirmed its commitment](#) to bringing the federal budget back into surplus, even if that means spending cuts. In a [recent interview](#), Prime Minister Gillard did not rule out aid cuts but had high praise for the aid program and maintained that the Government was "committed to the Millennium Development Goals." The budget will be announced sometime in May.

Meanwhile, newly released [data](#) from the OECD show that worldwide aid fell by 3% in 2011 after adjusting for inflation, and that Australia has become the 10th largest donor.

AusAID's multilateral assessment

AusAID has released its [Australian Multilateral Assessment report](#), which "provides comprehensive

evidence of the effectiveness of the Australian aid program's multilateral partners and their relevance to Australia's interests." Based off of its [UK equivalent](#), the information in the AMA will be used to ensure AusAID getting value for money from our multilateral funding. Overall UN agencies have [come out poorly](#), with the World Bank, World Food Program and GAVI Alliance found to be providing good value for money. Stay tuned to Devpolicy as we will be reporting more on the AMA in an upcoming blog.

In brief

AusAID is [conducting a survey](#) as part of its review of the 'Adviser Remuneration Framework', now entering its second year and looking for submissions of recommendations on any improvements to the policy.

Dr Seth Berkley, CEO of the GAVI Alliance (GAVI), [visited Australia](#) in March. Dr Berkley gave a presentation at the ANU, summarised [here](#). A video will be made available in the coming week [here](#).

March 22 marked [World Water day](#). Here is AusAID's [summary](#) of some of the major activities they are working on in water and sanitation and [here](#) a blog from Adam Laidlaw, CEO of WaterAid Australia.

March 24 marked [World TB day](#). The day draws attention to an area of [particular focus](#) for Australia, especially in the Torres Strait region - the topic of a Devpolicy forum on May 23rd (details to follow).

The 'Australia-Philippines Development Cooperation Program Statement of Commitment 2012-17', was [recently signed](#) by the respective governments, providing a roadmap for the next five years of the [\\$120 million per year](#) program.

Two of the "[missing evaluations](#)" of AusAID's Office of Development Effectiveness ([ODE](#)) have now been released: the Philippines country evaluation, and the evaluation of AusAID's engagement with civil society.

AusAID has [signed](#) a new strategic partnership agreement with the World Bank to support its operations in Vietnam, providing \$58 million to the Bank's investment and advisory program in the country over the next five years.

Toll has [suspended](#) its joint venture partnership agreement with a Cambodian firm to operate the railways being restored in a \$145 program partially supported by AusAID. The ADB reported that the suspension was for one year due to refurbishment delays and slow construction. Toll has made no official comment.

AusAID has [committed](#) \$1 million in emergency funding to the worst hit areas of Fiji after devastating floods swept the country.

Minister Carr [promises](#) more aid and fewer sanctions for Burma "proportionate with democratisation on the ground."

World Vision has [released](#) a new video showcasing everyday Australians views on overseas aid.

In recent weeks the oaktree foundation has conducted launches around the nation for its 2012 '[Live Below the Line](#)' Campaign.

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