

Aid Buzz (October 6): Rudd addresses the UN | AusAID partnership with World Bank | Dollar for Dollar deal for Africa

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Rudd criticises FAO, calls for global education fund

Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd [addressed the United Nations Assembly in New York on September 22](#). In a wide-ranging speech covering the international financial crisis, the growth of the Asia-Pacific, refugees and the challenges facing the Middle East and North Africa, Rudd devoted significant attention to international development and aid issues, including food security and education.

The foreign minister directly criticised the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for "failing fully to meet its mandate to the poor of the world", pointing to a lack of direction at the organisation and unsustainable administrative overheads. Rudd threatened to "comprehensively review" [Australia's funding to the FAO](#) if it did not improve its performance. He also called for the World Trade Organisation's Doha Round to address agricultural and food market distortions.

Education was another area addressed in the speech, with Rudd voicing support for the formation of a Global Fund for Education to close the \$16 billion gap in education funding around the world, stating that Australia would be happy to donate. World Vision's Tim Costello [applauded Rudd's message](#) — even though it was [delivered to a relatively small audience](#).

Dollar for dollar deal for Horn of Africa crisis

While in New York, Rudd also [spoke at](#) the Ministerial "mini-summit" on the Horn of Africa famine and [announced Australian funding](#) for those affected by the monsoon flood disaster in Pakistan. Australia is currently the [fourth-largest country donor](#) to the relief efforts in the Horn of Africa and has committed more than \$128 million to the crisis.

This week Rudd announced more support with a [dollar-for-dollar deal](#) in conjunction with 15 Australian NGOs. Through this initiative, the government will [match every dollar](#) donated to the famine appeals being run by AusAID-accredited NGOs between October 5 and November 30.

AusAID signs new partnership with World Bank

AusAID has [signed a new Partnership Framework](#) with the World Bank to bring more aid and expertise into the Asia Pacific region.

Rudd announced the agreement during his visit to New York along with World Bank President Robert B. Zoellick — and it even included [diplomatic Vegemite jokes](#).

The partnership is [focused on](#) future cooperation in assisting developing countries in areas such as the environment, natural resources and disaster prevention, as well as encouraging private sector investment and development.

Planning and consultation on the agreement took place during Zoellick's visit to Australia in August.

Rudd announces more PNG funding

Fresh off the back of his New York trip, Rudd jetted to Papua New Guinea, where he [announced a \\$40](#)

[million contribution](#) to an \$80 million Asian Development Bank project to boost rural health services in the country.

The project will deliver 32 new community health centres and refurbish 128 others, as well as provide housing for health centre workers.

In addition to the project contribution, Australia will contribute a [further \\$24 million](#) to fund medical supplies and vaccines for the clinics.

Rudd also took the opportunity to [take a swipe](#) at the opposition for its relations with PNG when it was in government. Rudd's response followed comments from his opposition counterpart Julie Bishop that the Australian relationship with PNG should be based on economic and strategic partnerships rather than aid.

Allegations of Cambodia NGO crackdown on Australian project

The Cambodian government is continuing to push forward on its new law that could [restrict the activities of NGOs](#). While the government has been working on the third draft of the legislation, it has allegedly been targeting advocacy groups speaking up for people being forced to relocate to make way for a railway project, which is partly funded by AusAID and run by the Australian company Toll Holdings.

There have been [allegations](#) that a consultant from the Asian Development Bank, which is jointly funding the rail project with AusAID, asked Cambodian authorities to take action against the NGOs advocating for the displaced persons. The ADB has firmly denied the rumours. AusAID's deputy director James Batley told Radio Australia that they had encouraged the government to work "constructively" with the NGOs involved.

Australian Multilateral Assessment calls for submissions

Submissions are [now open](#) for the Australian Multilateral Assessment, which will assess 42 multilateral organisations on their poverty orientation and impact, capacity to make a difference, value for money and alignment with Australian aid objectives.

The government committed to the review under the recent Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness. Findings are expected to be available in [early 2012](#).

China public sector linkages defy aid phase-out

Despite pledging to phase out its aid to India and China in the period 2011-2015, AusAID has decided to include China in its next round of the [Public Sector Linkages Program](#) (PSLP).

High priority will be given to linkages programs that engage with China on issues where there is a clear link between Australia's national interest and China's development challenges, such as climate change and economic and fiscal reform.

Given that the projects can take up to 36 months to complete and will be assessed from 2012, it brings the end date of these new linkages awfully close to that 2015 phase-out deadline.

Economic shock prediction for Afghanistan in 2014

According to AusAID, Afghanistan will suffer a massive economic shock when international forces hand over security arrangements in 2014.

[Speaking to Radio Australia](#), Assistant Director General for AusAID Catherine Walker said that the withdrawal of international forces could see a drop of up to 30 percent in the country's GDP. Walker said that, as part of the overall growth of the country's aid to Afghanistan, Australia would be stepping in to try to assist financially during the withdrawal period.

In other news, Afghanistan's new ambassador to Australia has called for young Afghans to return home [to help their country rebuild](#), even for short periods of one or two years. Nasir Andisha suggested that a volunteering scheme to facilitate the return of skilled young people could be supported by the Australian aid program.

ACFID to hold annual conference

The Australian Council for International Development will hold its annual [ACFID Council](#) event this month in Canberra. The theme is "Gamechangers: 21st Century Development Effectiveness". The event, which will run from October 13-14, includes the organisation's annual general meeting.

Seminars will cover people-centred development, civil society, new media and other innovations in the sector.

In Brief

- Heads of Palestinian law schools have been [touring Australian universities to gain insights into the constitutional legal system](#). AusAID has also funded 50 scholarships for Palestinian postgraduate students to study law and public administration in Australia.
- The Office of Development Effectiveness at AusAID [has begun a review into policy dialogue](#).
- The AFL is hoping to further expand the popularity of Aussie Rules football in Papua New Guinea [by forming a taskforce](#), which includes DFAT and AusAID representatives as well as Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Affairs Richard Marles. Plans include increasing sports scholarships and rolling out new football programs that assist with development issues.
- AusAID has partnered with Solomon Islands NGO Kastom Garden Association [to improve farming and nutrition](#) through a \$2.53 million program.
- Residents of Manila will benefit from disaster risk data from an [aerial survey funded by AusAID](#), which will be used to formulate disaster reduction plans.
- Seasonal workers from the Pacific coming to Australia could pay less tax on their earnings, if [proposed legislation goes ahead](#).
- China has reportedly told the US that it will [go its own way on development assistance](#) in the Pacific and does not support combined efforts.