

Policy Document

Millennium Development Goals Policy

Background

The Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) is the peak representative body of Australia's 17,000 medical students. AMSA believes that all communities have the right to the best attainable health. Accordingly, AMSA actively seeks to advocate on issues that may impact health outcomes.

In 2000, 189 countries signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration to "combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women" [1]. Following this, the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were agreed upon by all 191 United Nations member states, with the aim that they should be achieved by 2015.

Australia has formally agreed to support the MDGs and has committed financial and political resources to international partnerships in sustainable development. Australia's contribution to these global goals has been predominantly focused on the Asia-Pacific region, through programs managed by AusAID (the Australian Agency for International Development), as well as through the support of Australian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) engaged in international development work.

Australia's overseas development assistance budget is integrally linked to its contributions to the MDGs and global overseas development assistance is often tracked to assess efforts towards global partnership. Australia has yet to meet its 0.7% foreign aid contribution target [2]. In 2012, it was announced that part of this contribution would be redirected towards asylum seeker and refugee processes and programs in Australia [3].

Global progress on the MDGs has varied widely. Despite some targets having already been met, the *Millennium Development Goals: 2010 Progress Chart* highlighted that most areas of the world have experienced "progress insufficient to reach the target if prevailing trends persist" or even "no progress or deterioration [4]". Armed conflict, natural disasters and the global financial crisis have had significantly detrimental effects [5]. Where progress has been made, it has not been uniformly distributed between regions or within countries [5].

Many aspects of the MDGs, including the lack of focus on equity and human rights, have been heavily debated and often criticised [6]. These issues continue to be points of debate in relation to the post-2015 development agenda [6]. However, the current goals remain integral to the process of global development and resolution of significant inequities. As suggested by the Millennium Project's recommendations in 2006, the MDGs "must be at the centre of national and international poverty reduction strategies" [7].

Head Office
42 Macquarie St
Barton ACT 2600

Postal Address
PO Box 6099
Kingston ACT 2604

Phone +612 6270 5435
Fax +612 6270 5499
Email mail@amsa.org.au

Website www.amsa.org.au
Twitter @yourAMSA

ABN 67 079 544 513

As 2015 approaches, momentum to develop new goals has steadily increased. The outcome document of the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the MDGs began the drive towards a post-2015 development agenda through formation of a UN System Task Team and High Level Panel (HLP) for that purpose. The HLP has been closely aligned with an intergovernmental working group formed subsequent to the Rio+20 Conference in 2012, which was tasked with the development of a set of Sustainable Development Goals. Continued consultations on the post-2015 agenda are occurring with various stakeholders, including engagement with the general population through the UNDP, 'The World We Want' campaign.

Position Statement

AMSA believes that:

1. Every human being has a right to the highest attainable standard of health, regardless of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition;
2. The MDGs have represented, and continue to represent, an important opportunity to target factors that pose a barrier to achieving the highest attainable standard of health and contribute to health inequity on a global, regional, and local scale;
3. International action towards the MDGs both prior to and beyond 2015 is required to continue progress towards resolving global health inequities;
4. Australia's foreign aid should be aimed towards contributing to a coordinated global effort to achieve the MDGs and future goals in meaningful and sustainable ways; and
5. Development of a sustainable post-2015 agenda should continue with extensive consultation and collaboration with stakeholders worldwide.

Policy

AMSA calls upon:

1. Australian Medical Students and Medical Professionals to:
 - a. Engage in training and education opportunities relating to the MDGs and post-2015 goals;
 - b. Consider incorporating the MDGs in future health-related projects;
 - c. Endeavour to actively contribute to the global movement to eradicate poverty and eliminate health-related inequities;
 - d. Aspire to innovations in professional medical practice which will further achievement of the MDGs and post-2015 goals;
2. Medical Schools to include specific formal objectives in medical curricula relating to the MDGs, the social determinants of health and the impact of poverty reduction strategies on health globally;
3. Australian Commonwealth Government to:
 - a. Increase its foreign aid contribution to the target of 0.7% of Gross National Income;
 - b. Discontinue diverting Australia's foreign aid budget to programs and projects on the Australian mainland;
 - c. Augment its current regional assistance with further development efforts in regions which have experienced comparatively limited progress on many of the MDGs;
 - d. Prioritise those goals on which there has been limited progress thus far;
 - e. Aim to address the MDGs with interventions which are practical, efficient, empowering and yield sustainable outcomes;
 - f. Be cognizant of how the MDGs may relate to sections of the Australian population, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and simultaneously act towards reducing health inequity within Australia;

References

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Policy Details

Name: Millennium Development Goals Policy

Category: G – Global Health

History: Adopted, Second Council, 2013
Following a review and repeal of a similar policy adopted in 2009.