

My name is Emmanuelle Emile-Blake and I'm a mother of three.

I am heartened by the government's invitation for submissions for the White Paper on Foreign Policy.

Why? Simply because I am so very grateful to be living in Australia and was able to see my own children thrive and make it to adulthood. I strongly believe that Australia has a major role to play in supporting people living in developing countries have the same chance at life.

I have no doubt that a well targeted overseas aid program can achieve this and should play a fundamental role in Australian Foreign Policy.

Not so many years ago Australia along with a few other wealthy nations gave financial aid over a substantial period of time to South Korea, which use to be one of the poorest nations. Without our aid South Korea would not be thriving as it is today. So successful was this aid program that South Korea is now an economic powerhouse and has an education and health system that is the envy of many countries. In addition South Korea is now in a position to pay it forward and has become a donor country and is now helping poorer nations move out of poverty.

If we can do it for South Korea we can replicate this success for other countries who are just as needy and just as worthy.

However, firstly our overseas aid program needs to be fully funded to represent at least 0.7% of GNI. Tragically due to savage cuts to the aid budget this target has never been met. This trend needs to be reversed immediately and the government needs to stop using the excuse of being in debt to avoid our global responsibilities. Countries like the UK have a much higher debt level than Australia but have stuck to their commitment and have reached the 0.7% of GNI target. Children are dying from preventable diseases and we need to put our own problems into perspective.

Secondly access to health programs, free education and microfinance are essential and I believe targeting girls will be the way forward for the majority of these countries. Invest in girls and we will change the world. We need to create, promote and prioritise opportunities for girls and women living in poor countries.

In addition it's more than evident that people living in poverty are also the most vulnerable to climate change and developed countries like Australia have a responsibility to help countries who don't have the resources to meet the challenges that they are now facing.

We also have to stop mining coal and selling it to other countries as this is only adding to the problem of global warming. A sustainable future relies on our transition to renewable energy and green technologies. We should be supporting developing countries to follow this same path. Australia is part of a global community. We can choose to be part of the problem or part of the solution.

I also believe access to health, education and microfinance will result in stronger economies, give rise to more democratic processes within countries and contribute to a more politically stable world. Supporting other countries would also foster cross cultural friendship and understanding. The world is in desperate need of peace and this would be a good starting point.

Finally the government needs to celebrate and share the successes of our overseas aid program so that the general public are more aware of the difference our contributions are making throughout the world and I know there are many. This way people would be proud of our role in ending poverty and would be more supportive of our overseas aid program. Why is this not already happening?

I hope to see our overseas aid program grow and flourish, because I believe the end of poverty is achievable. We have the public support but are lacking the political will to make it a reality. Don't lose this opportunity!

Emmanuelle Emile- Blake

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