

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## The Poorest People Will Pay for the Coalition's Aid Cuts

Micah Challenge says the Coalition's plans to cut \$625 million from this year's overseas aid budget represent a devastating blow to the global poor and breach of trust with the Australian public.

The Government confirmed over the weekend how it plans to reduce aid by \$625 million below the amount already budgeted for this year. While funding is being cut across all regions and programs in this year's budget, the areas to receive the deepest cuts are Sub-Saharan Africa, global environmental programs and emergency and humanitarian relief.

"We're not surprised, but we're extremely disappointed that the Government has decided to proceed with cuts to this year's overseas aid budget," said Ben Thurley, Political Engagement Coordinator for Micah Challenge Australia.

"Over the past few months, thousands of Micah Challenge supporters have raised their voices and urged the Government to reverse this decision because of the devastating impact it has on poor people and communities for whom this funding had been committed by the Australian Government," said Mr Thurley.

According to Mr Thurley, the Coalition has decided to ignore these calls as well as ignore the very real needs of the poorest people in our world.

"We welcome the Government's focus on aid effectiveness, but the truth is that clarity and predictability of funding are essential ingredients for effective aid and without them the capacity of our aid programs is undermined. Cuts of this size reduce the ability of Australia's aid to help save lives, educate children and build security and stability in our region and beyond," said Mr Thurley.

The aid cuts, which were announced on election eve and confirmed this weekend (19 weeks after the Coalition's election victory) will make Australia's aid program \$107 million smaller than it was in 2012-13.

"This is the first time Australian aid has gone backwards since the year 2000, which is an uncomfortable reality in light of Prime Minister Tony Abbott's statement in September that the Coalition was 'not cutting foreign aid, just simply reducing the rate of growth'," said Mr Thurley.

"Not only is it unacceptable as a wealthy nation that we pull back on generosity towards our global neighbours, but it is highly disconcerting to have our Prime Minister's trustworthiness called into question in this way."

According to Mr Thurley the \$625 million cut to this year's aid budget represents 11% of the 2013-14 aid budget (a cut of almost 4% on last year's budget). Aid to sub-Saharan Africa has been cut by 41% – from \$224.9 million in the budget to a revised level of \$133 million. Aid to regional and global climate change and environmental sustainability programs has been cut from actual expenditure in 2012-13 of \$91.6 million to \$0.5 million. Aid to humanitarian and emergency relief and for refugees has been cut by 22% – from \$339.6 million in the 2013-14 budget to a revised level of \$264.2 million.

**Ben Thurley, Micah Challenge's Political Engagement Coordinator, is available for interviews.**

## MEDIA RELEASE



Please also refer to his blog for further background analysis:

<http://www.micahchallenge.org.au/blog/n/harsh-aid-cuts-and-an-unhappy-new-year-140120>

**Media Enquiries:** Angela Owen – Media and Communications Coordinator, Micah Challenge

Ph: 02 9356 8500 | M: 0422 985 288 | E: [angela.owen@micahchallenge.org.au](mailto:angela.owen@micahchallenge.org.au)

*Micah Challenge is a global movement of Christians speaking out against poverty and injustice in support of the Millennium Development Goals. In Australia, more than 50 aid and development agencies, as well as churches, schools, groups and individual Christians endorse the campaign. [www.micahchallenge.org.au](http://www.micahchallenge.org.au).*