



Australian aid being unloaded in Myanmar in response to Cyclone Nargis, 2008.

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5 reasons the world's poor should factor in your vote

Aid for the world's most poor, vulnerable and oppressed is not only the right thing to do as a blessed nation, but it's the smart thing to do, Matt Darvas from Micah Australia writes.

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When you cast your vote at the polls in May, it's unlikely you would be considering the world's poor as a factor in who you vote for.

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But as those who belong to a Heavenly Kingdom and are exhorted to 'seek justice and defend the oppressed' (Isaiah 1:17), considering the competing parties' policies towards bringing justice and empowerment for the poor (both at home and abroad) is a vital task.

Here are five reasons why it's worth factoring the poor into your vote:

1. The poor are made in His image

As Christians, we believe that everyone is created in the imago dei, and holds immeasurable value in our creator's eyes. That age-old question – 'who is my neighbour?' – therefore requires us to look beyond our own backyard and 'tribe', to those who are marginalised and suffering – yet are still created in His image.

Most of us recognise that by way of simply being born in Australia – we are extremely blessed and that comes with a mandate to help those who have not been born here.

Being faithful to the Lordship of Jesus therefore means using what it is God has given us to prioritise love of neighbour, standing up for justice for all people

because they are stamped with God's image.

2. We are blessed to be a blessing

The 2018 Credit Suisse's annual Global Wealth Report showed that Australia has overtaken Switzerland to record the highest median wealth in the world.



Most of us recognise that by way of simply being born in Australia – we are extremely blessed and that comes with a mandate to help those who have not been born here.

(I believe this remains true, whilst we must also hold in tension that not all Australians experience this blessing. This is particularly difficult for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for whom Australia's 'blessing' bares in many ways the injustices of their pain of loss.)

3. We are called to consider those whose voice is not being heard

The world's most vulnerable citizens will not get a vote in this election. But the actions of our government when it comes to foreign policy, will have significant consequences for them.

And when it comes to Australian Aid, a little bit also goes a long way. If you're earning \$88,000 a year, your tax (of \$20,500) contributes around \$158 to Australia's Foreign Aid budget, the equivalent of just 4 hours of your year's work.

The same can be said for those living in Australia who are disadvantaged and marginalised – many of these voices are not being ‘heard’ by our politicians and it is up to us to ensure they are.

‘Speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves’ is a mandate given to us as believers. As we exercise our democratic rights, it’s important to consider those who don’t have those same opportunities.

4. Helping those overseas is a smart move for our long-term interests

Aid and development are in our self-interest. When you help develop nations – they can become your future trading partners.

Take the benefits of aid on trade alone, where economic modelling from The Australian National University (ANU) has found that every additional \$1 spent on Australian foreign aid in Asia has resulted in \$7.10 in Australian exports.

5. A more peaceful and prosperous region is good news for Australia

To be effective in promoting peace, stability and security in our region, Australia needs both hard and soft power. We need to invest in our defence, but also in our diplomacy and tools of influence, and one of the most effective tools we have to shape our place in the world is the Australian aid program.

Development strengthens fragile nations. And strong education systems can counter the rise of disenfranchisement and desperation that often starves those who would try to ferment unrest and extremism in weak nation states.

And when it comes to Australian Aid, a little bit also goes a long way.

If you’re earning \$88,000 a year, your tax (of \$20,500) contributes around \$158 to Australia’s Foreign Aid budget, the equivalent of just 4 hours of your year’s work.

But that \$158 is enough to keep alive two Syrian refugee children who are living in refugee camps!

We are blessed with the right to a political voice. Use it wisely this election.

Matt Darvas is Campaign Director for Micah Australia.

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