REVIEW INTO AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

SUBMISSION

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DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE



1. INTRODUCTION

Australia's development cooperation¹ is a key tool in ensuring sustainable, just, and inclusive societies – a goal that benefits Australians and our neighbours in Asia and the Pacific alike. This submission outlines IWDA's recommendations for the purpose, principles and priorities for implementation of Australia's development cooperation program. To inform the recommendations of this submission, IWDA conducted a survey of our partner organisations and their networks across Asia and the Pacific. The results of this survey are presented at the conclusion of this submission, and inform IWDA's recommendations. This submission is complementary to the joint submission made by IWDA along with ActionAid Australia, CARE Australia, Oxfam Australia and Plan International Australia.

2. A PURPOSEFUL AND PRINCIPLED INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROGRAM

2.1 Australia's contribution to a flourishing and peaceful region

In today's interconnected world, the interests of all nations are inextricably linked. Trade, movement of people and capital, climate change, and innovations in technology and communications have created unprecedented levels of interconnectedness and interdependence amongst nations.² While strides have been made in reducing poverty, inequality between and within nations has grown.³ The gendered dimensions of this inequality are stark: Oxfam reports that the combined wealth of the 22 richest men is now the same as that of all the women in Africa.⁴ There are also shifts within the development paradigm as emerging donors break the dominant assumption that development funding and expertise flows in one direction, with new models creating opportunities for mutual learning on common challenges.⁵ These factors represent a new context for international development cooperation and present a fundamental challenge to the ways in which it has historically been conceived. In this context, the purpose of Australia's development cooperation should be grounded in the shared interests of communities and societies.

IWDA recommends that the purpose of Australia's development cooperation be to contribute to a flourishing and peaceful region for all by addressing poverty and inequality, advancing gender equality, and strengthening human security.

Realising this aim is not possible without tackling the underlying structures that hold back progress toward gender equality. This is because States with lower levels of gender equality tend to have higher likelihoods of inter- or intra-state violence, higher levels of perceived or actual corruption, and lower trust in Government.⁶ A 2018 report from the World Bank estimates that if all women earning an income today were paid as much as their male counterparts, the collective benefit would add \$160.2 trillion to the global economy over their lifetimes.⁷ Put simply, States with higher levels of gender equality are safer, wealthier and more democratic. Australia has a strong track record on gender and human rights, both through the development program and our representation on international forums such as the Human Rights Council and Commission on the Status of Women. The international development cooperation policy review presents an opportunity to build on this record by centring gender equality as part of the core purpose of Australia's efforts.

A flourishing and peaceful region will not be possible without prioritising gender responsive climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience. Australia has signed on to the Boe Declaration which identifies climate change as "the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific." People living in Asia and the Pacific are five times more likely to be hit by a natural disaster than those living in other regions, and the region lost more than \$USD1.3 trillion in assets between 1970 and 2016 due to natural disasters. The increasing frequency, severity of storms, salination of groundwater, rising temperatures and sea levels are already having an impact on the region and will continue to intensify in coming years, posing a threat to regional stability. Australia's new development cooperation policy provides a critical opportunity to integrate climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience across the program, ensure just and sustainable transitions for communities and economies, and ensure we can continue to be a development partner of choice in the Pacific.

Additionally, it will be critical to understand and address the interplay between climate change, gender equality and regional stability, and ensure implementation of the women, peace and security agenda through Australia's international development cooperation program. A recent report has found that the impacts of climate change



are increasing gender based violence (GBV), as "tension and competition over scarce resources in and between communities, households and industries amplifies normative, discriminatory and exploitative gender inequalities, giving way to a rise in GBV as a means of control and reinforcement of power imbalances." At the interpersonal level, financial stress and lack of access to the necessities of life can exacerbate intimate partner violence, while exposing women to greater risk of sexual assault as they have to travel greater distances to source food and fuel. At a systemic level, experience from other regions has seen sexual exploitation used as a weapon of war in conflicts that have been triggered by resource scarcity, exacerbated by climate change. The Asian Development Bank has identified poor performance on gender equality as a key commonality amongst the 9 of 14 Pacific nations it classifies as fragile, and identifies this as a potential threat to regional stability. In contexts such as Bougainville, which has recently voted overwhelmingly for independence, it will be critical to ensure the links between gender inequality, climate change and security issues are understood, and that a holistic approach to GBV and women, peace and security is taken to ensure that women can contribute actively to sustaining peace.

Recommendation: Adopt as the new purpose for Australia's development cooperation program: To contribute to a flourishing and peaceful region for all by addressing poverty and inequality, including gender inequality, and strengthening human security.

<u>Recommendation:</u> Prioritise gender responsive climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience across Australia's development cooperation policy in order to strengthen human security across the region.

<u>Recommendation</u>: Prioritise implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, with consideration to the links between gender inequality, climate change and regional stability.

3.2 Principles for implementation: people centred, values aligned, catalytic & transformative

To support the achievement of a flourishing and peaceful region for all, IWDA recommends three principles to guide implementation of the development cooperation program: people centred, values aligned, and catalytic and transformative.

People centred: Placing people at the centre of Australia's development cooperation efforts is the best way to ensure that it addresses the multifaceted needs of individuals caught in cycles of poverty and inequality. This includes basing our policies on poverty measurements that go beyond the household level, such as the Individual Deprivation Measure, in order to identify the circumstances of individuals and the intersecting forms of marginalisation they experience. This can help Australia to better target funding and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of development cooperation efforts. To be successful, this focus on improving the lives of individuals must be complemented by interventions that address social norms and attitudes at the family, community and societal level. Finally, a people centred approach will enable Australia's development cooperation to build the people-to-people links that build familiarity, affinity and allegiances across the region and further entrench the drivers of peace and security.

Box 1: Individual Deprivation Measure

As part of an international research collaboration, IWDA engaged with more than 3000 people in 6 countries with lived experience of poverty to understand what matters most to them in defining poverty. While money mattered, people identified deprivations in many other aspects of their lives that were keeping them poor. The Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM) is an innovative new, gender-sensitive measure of multidimensional poverty. It is a ground-breaking measure, developed to assess deprivation at the individual level across many dimensions of poverty.

The IDM asks questions based on 15 key areas of life – including access to food, education and political voice – building a comprehensive understanding of poverty.

Because it is measured at the individual level, the IDM can be disaggregated by sex, age, disability and geography – providing valuable insight into the experiences of social groups and communities.

The IDM's detailed data supports governments to unpick the complexities of poverty, enabling better targeting of resources and more effective policy creation.



Values aligned: The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper states that "[a]II government policies, including our foreign policy, must give expression to, and be formed on the basis of, the values of our community" and goes on to identify the shared Australian values of "political, economic and religious freedom, liberal democracy, the rule of law, racial and gender equality and mutual respect." Civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations, are both a means to further these values and an expression of the values themselves, but space for civil society is shrinking. CIVICUS report that 6.15 billion people are now living in countries where space for civil society is obstructed, repressed or entirely closed. Fundamentalist ideologies are leading a backlash against the rights of women and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, through the undermining of international agreements on gender and sexual rights. To counter these trends and further the values outlined in the White Paper, Australia's development cooperation program should invest in: strong and sustainable civil society; good governance of nations and the international rules based order; and equality, including gender equality.

Catalytic & transformative: Supporting people to create lasting, positive change in their own lives and the lives of others should be central to the ethos of Australia's development cooperation. This means targeting investments towards the human development challenges that are holding back progress, and investing strategically in mechanisms that can deliver transformative impact. For example, a 2012 study demonstrated the transformative potential of women's rights organisations in changing policy and attitudes towards violence against women. The study of 70 countries over four decades found that feminist civil society was the critical factor in countries adopting progressive policy (more important than factors such as the ideology of the government or number of women in parliament) and catalysed enduring change through the "institutionalisation of feminist ideas in international norms."²¹

Implementing development cooperation with a catalytic mind-set also requires use of new modalities for delivery, and investments that create or sustain collective action. Looking to new forms of finance beyond aid, while understanding and holding steadfast to the critical role of Official Development Assistance (ODA) within the broader financial system, Australia's development cooperation program should aim to build the architecture and systems that can catalyse future investment. New modalities of contracting, procurement, collaboration, and financing can modernise our approach, while allowing us to better reach the grassroots women's rights organisations who are most effective at driving change. Finally, it can recognise the catalytic potential of data to illuminate issues and inform a virtuous cycle where effort and resources are focused for impact.

<u>Recommendation</u>: Implementation of the new aid policy should be guided by principles which include: people-centred, values-aligned, catalytic, and transformative.

<u>Recommendation</u>: Utilise multidimensional, gender sensitive poverty measurement tools such as the Individual Deprivation Measure to inform and better target new development cooperation programs.

3. POLICY PRIORITIES AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Australia has established a reputation as a global leader in particular areas of development cooperation, such as gender equality and disability inclusive development. Evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of existing initiatives such as the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, which a review found to be one of DFAT's best performing programs, delivering 18.2% of DFAT's results for just 2.7% of the overall budget.²² Australia's development cooperation program should continue to invest in these modalities with a proven ability to deliver impact. At the same time, we need to be willing to try new things in search of positive outcomes and look for ways to modernise our approach. These investments should include bold new models of finance that have the potential to catalyse further outcomes in gender equality, particularly in the Pacific.

IWDA's recommendations below identify three policy and performance priorities that give effect to the purpose and principles outlined in the section above, and which would ensure Australia's development cooperation program can remain a leader in gender transformative development.



3.1 Strengthen overall performance on gender equality

No country in the world is yet on track to achieve gender equality by 2030, the target established by the Sustainable Development Goals.²³ From health, education, employment, freedom from violence, and political representation the world is failing to deliver its commitments to women and girls. In the face of such persistent and pervasive inequality, it is critical that Australia dedicates a portion of our development cooperation efforts directly towards these shortfalls. At the same time, we need to ensure that all Australia's development cooperation investments are considered for their impact on gender equality. For example, investments in infrastructure are often designed without gender considerations in mind, however infrastructure can make a significant impact on gender equality by reducing the time women spend collecting water and cooking fuel and freeing up time to take on paid work.²⁴

This approach, known as the twin track approach, is supported by existing measures such as the current aid program performance target that "[m]ore than 80 per cent of investments, regardless of their objectives, will effectively address gender issues in their implementation." While this target has yet to be achieved, there is good evidence that it has been effective in supporting DFAT to increase its capacity to conduct gender analysis, and has ensured that new investments are designed with gender considerations in mind. To strengthen Departmental accountability, we recommend the target be maintained with a commitment to increase to 85% by 2023. Change takes time; maintaining and progressively lifting the target allows for improvements to be retained and increased.

In addition to the 80% *performance* target, complementary *investment* targets (measured against internationally comparable standards) would strengthen the implementation of a twin track approach. The OECD DAC gender marker, which measures the proportion of a nation's ODA directed toward programs that list gender equality as a primary or secondary objective, is the best available internationally comparable measurement for gender equality in aid. On this measure, Australia ranks amongst the top 10 OECD donors,²⁷ but countries such as Canada have committed to targets that set them on far more ambitious path.²⁸ The W7 group of women from G7 nations has called on nations to strengthen their efforts and increase the proportion of funds directed towards dedicated gender equality initiatives, recommending a target of 20% to investments with gender equality as the primary objective, and 65% as a secondary objective, by 2025.²⁹ Given Australia's global ranking, an ambitious and world leading target is within reach and would place us at the forefront of global efforts, while further supporting progress towards the existing performance target.

<u>Recommendation</u>: Maintain the existing performance target that more than 80% of investments effectively address gender equality issues in their implementation, and commit to raising the target to more than 85% by 2023.

Recommendation: Introduce complementary investment targets, measured against the OECD DAC gender marker, that 20% of Australia's aid budget is dedicated to investments that list gender equality as their primary objective and 65% to those that list gender equality as a secondary objective (85% overall).

3.2 Invest in women's rights organisations

Diverse women's rights organisations (WROs) deliver the most effective outcomes for women because they are firmly rooted in local communities, contexts, needs and experiences, and can reach women in marginalised communities, enabling those without power and status to have a voice to advocate for basic rights. In conflict-affected countries, engaging with local WROs and their networks and ensuring that women participate in democratisation, peacebuilding and development processes is key to the success of those processes and to the larger women, peace and security agenda. It is also critical to recognise that women are not a homogenous group and may experience intersecting forms of marginalisation on the basis of their age, ethnicity disability, sexuality, gender identity or other factors. Reaching diverse women will require diverse strategies; support to WROs that represent diverse communities, and support for partnership and collaboration with other organisations that are led by the people they serve, such as Disabled People's Organisations and youth-led organisations, are critical to ensuring inclusive and locally led development.

Despite this, WROs receive less than 0.36% of development cooperation assistance worldwide.³² Australia is currently performing above the OECD average, dedicating 1.24% of ODA and ranking seventh for its funding to



women's organisations overall.³³ Australia has a significant opportunity to unlock an additional \$130 million per year in funding for women's rights organisations by increasing our contribution to just 5% of bilateral allocable ODA.³⁴

Recommendation: Unlock an additional \$130 million for women's rights organisations annually by committing 5% of Australia's development cooperation towards women's rights organisations.

3.3 Modernise the modalities of Australia's development cooperation program

Mobilising additional funding towards gender equality initiatives and women's rights organisations in this way would present Australia with an opportunity to improve existing funding mechanisms and explore new models with the potential to create transformative impact towards gender equality. In line with the principle of catalytic and transformative development cooperation advanced above, Australia can use its ODA to contribute to and leverage a growing pool of gender focused capital. At the same time, we need to modernise existing funding mechanisms to ensure the 'how' (funding modality) and the 'who' (delivery partners) are aligned with the 'what' (the change we seek).

This is critical, because there is a dire need for accessible, flexible funding for women's rights organisations, particularly in the Pacific. The most recent and comprehensive study of the financial state of women's rights organisations globally found a median annual income of just USD 20,000, and reported that most organisations were reliant on short-term project support rather than long term flexible funding.³⁵ Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) has been a significant and valuable investment by Australia towards gender equality in the Pacific region, however just 15% of *Pacific Women* funds went directly to Pacific NGOs and regional organisations.³⁶ While this figure should be contextualised in the broader ecosystem of Pacific women's rights organisations (for example, some organisations do not have the capacity or desire to service the high levels of compliance required on DFAT grants), it is critical for Australia to prioritise funding modalities that aim to maximise the funding available for grassroots women's rights organisations.

This can be achieved by raising the proportion of funding that is directly accessible to local women's rights organisations, while also utilising values-aligned intermediaries and partnerships to reach a greater range of organisations across the funding ecosystem. An example of this kind of partnership is the DFAT funded We Rise Coalition. We Rise is a partnership between the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), femLINKpacific and IWDA, which aims to work with the women's movement to influence regional commitments to reflect Pacific women's human rights. Each partner has an explicit role in the Coalition's efforts, identified through collective decision-making and a fit for purpose partnership model. Among other activities, IWDA leads Coalition monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) and program management, while FWRM lead anti-sexual harassment policy reform and advocacy, and femLINKpacific ensure the voices of rural women are represented in advocacy concerning women's rights policy reform and implementation. Coalition partners also work collectively to mobilise women's rights activists from across the Pacific to influence regional and global policy instruments to reflect women's human rights. This model offers opportunity for direct, core support to local organisations at scale, while simultaneously taking a strengths based approach to partnership and enabling greater collective action.

Finally, there is a clear need for bold new models of finance that will catalyse further outcomes in gender equality. In line with the principle of investments that are transformative and catalytic, Women's Funds – which disburse flexible funding to women's organisations and movements – are one such model that support women's rights organisations to create meaningful, lasting change in their societies. Government investments into Women's Funds can also play a key role in catalysing additional investment from other sectors – for example the Canadian government's \$300m investment into the Equality Fund in 2019 has already generated an additional \$100m from philanthropic groups.³⁷

Recommendation: Modernise Australia's development cooperation to ensure funding modalities that are aligned to program goals, increase direct funding to local women's rights organisations, and utilise values-aligned partnership models to reach a broader range across the NGO ecosystem.

<u>Recommendation</u>: Explore catalytic funding models such as Women's Funds which can increase the accessibility of funding to local women's rights organisations and catalyse greater investment in gender equality.



SURVEY RESULTS

IWDA works with partner organisations across Asia and the Pacific to advance and protect the rights of diverse women and girls.

To inform our submission to this review we conducted a survey to understand the views of our partners and their networks on the key development challenges facing the region, and priorities for Australia's development cooperation program.

PURPOSE OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

92% believe that Australia's development cooperation should aim to reduce poverty and inequality. Given the choice, zero respondents felt the primary purpose of aid should be to promote Australia's national interest, with 4% each selecting "stimulate economic growth" and "stabilise geopolitics."

CHALLENGES FACING THE REGION

96% of respondents selected **gender equality** amongst the biggest challenges facing their country, followed by a lack of **social protection** for marginalised and vulnerable groups (92%) and poverty (79%). 71% included **climate change** as a top challenge.

When it came to infrastructure, Pacific respondents were twice as likely to identify a need for **local infrastructure** (such as local roads, markets and community buildings) over major infrastructure like ports and highways.

When it comes to the biggest challenges to gender equality, violence against women, women's political participation, and sexual and reproductive health and rights emerged as the top priorities for women in the Asia Pacific region.

IWDA SURVEY: KEY STATS

PACIFIC, 61%

SOUTHEAST ASIA, 39%

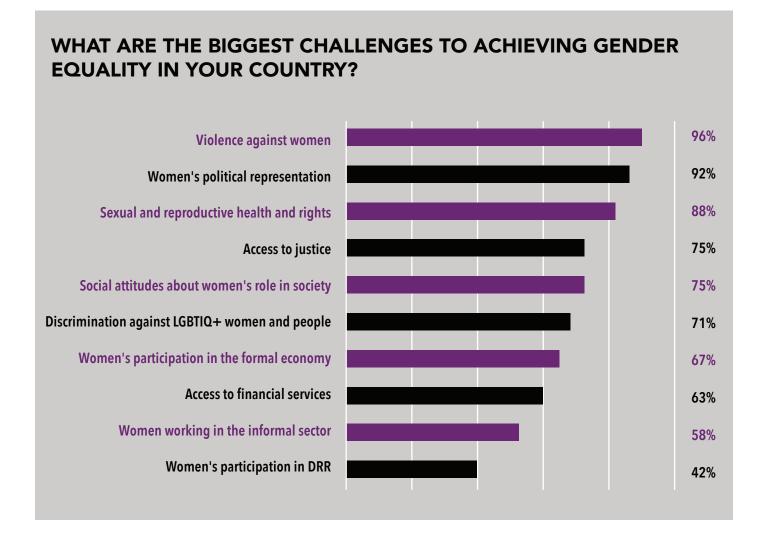
28 responses across 6 countries

92% think Australia's development cooperation should aim to reduce poverty and inequality

selected gender inequality amongst the biggest challenges facing their country

Respondents identified a **GREATER NEED** for local infrastructure over major ports and highways.

"With the Climate Crisis a priority for the Pacific, the question would be on how the Australian Aid program would consider this within an evolving framework"



WHAT WOULD A SUCCESSFUL AUSTRALIAN AID PROGRAM LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

When asked what a successful Australian aid program would look like, answers clustered around three priority themes:

- Development should be locally led, and supported by strong partnerships with local governments and civil society. All aid investments should be designed in consultation with local government, women's rights organisations and affected groups of people.
- Australia should ensure accessible funding for local women's rights organisations and support deep, long term partnerships.
- 3. Prioritising gender equality and social inclusion as key goals. This includes securing the human rights of the most marginalised in society (including LGBTIQ+ people), applying the twin track approach of targeted gender investments and integrating gender across all priorities, and ensuring access to healthcare and other social protections.

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1300 661 812 www.iwda.org.au

PO Box 64, Flinders Lane, VIC 8009 Australia Level 1, 250 Queen Street, Melbourne

Tel: +61 3 8373 2500

Email: iwda@iwda.org.au

ABN 19 242 959 685

