
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL BUDGET 2021-22

PRE BUDGET SUBMISSION

28 JANUARY 2021

TREASURY

IWDA INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY

1. INTRODUCTION

International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) is an Australian-based organisation, resourcing diverse women's rights organisations primarily in Asia and the Pacific, and contributing to global feminist movements to advance our vision of gender equality for all.

IWDA welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the 2021-22 Federal Budget. We call on Australia to meet the challenge of COVID-19 through increased engagement in our region and to:

1. Ensure COVID-19 response and recovery promotes gender equality, disability and social inclusion
2. Fund the future of gender equality in the Pacific
3. Secure strong foundations for disability inclusion
4. Fund the intersection of gender equality and climate justice
5. Allocate funding to the most effective delivery partners
6. Renew DFAT's systems and capabilities to manage effective and transformative international development programming

The 2021-22 Federal Budget comes at a critical moment for COVID-19 response, recovery and reset in the Indo Pacific region and beyond. The UNDP Human Development Report has noted that for the first time in 30 years human development is on track to decline in 2020.¹ The impacts of COVID-19 are deeply gendered, and any response to the pandemic – both the immediate response and longer term efforts – must take into account the ways in which the pandemic is impacting diverse women and girls across health, economic and social dimensions.

This is a turning point for Australia's international development program, providing an opportunity bring our value-add and capabilities to support a COVID response, recovery and reset that delivers a more equal and inclusive region.

2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Mandate gender, disability and social inclusion analysis of all country and regional response plans and new funding initiatives across Australia's international development program.

Recommendation 2: Commit a minimum of \$304m over 8 years for *Pacific Women Lead* in order to build on the momentum established by *Pacific Women* and ensure that COVID-19 response and recovery contributes to progress on gender equality.

Recommendation 3: Allocate 20 per cent of funding within *Pacific Women Lead* to feminist movement strengthening and research.

Recommendation 4: Increase the central disability allocation to \$14m in FY21-22 with a 1.5 per cent CPI increase over the forward estimates.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that the new \$1.5 billion climate finance commitment over five years is additional to the existing international development budget.

Recommendation 6: Commit funding for Women's Rights Organisations working at the intersection of gender equality and climate justice, including supporting diverse women leaders to participate in climate and disaster risk reduction institutions and advocacy at all levels.

Recommendation 7: Increase funding for ANCP to \$150m in FY2021-22, to account for CPI and the increased demands on programs during COVID-19 response and recovery.

Recommendation 8: Boost Australia's impact on gender equality by committing 5% of Australia's international development cooperation budget towards women's rights organisations and institutions.

Recommendation 9: Increase the staffing portfolio of DFAT in Canberra and at Post with a focus on development and gender expertise.

Recommendation 10: Increase the predictability, transparency and flexibility of ODA by reintroducing multi-year budgeting and allowing funds to be rolled-over between financial years.

¹ UNDP 2020a, UNDP 2020b

3. MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF COVID-19 THROUGH INCREASED ENGAGEMENT IN OUR REGION

The COVID-19 crisis is unparalleled, and its implications touch on every aspect of society. While the immediate humanitarian, health and economic shocks are most obvious, the long-term social and economic implications may, in many cases, be even more severe than the direct impacts of the virus itself. COVID-19 has demonstrated that in effect, poverty and marginalisation are themselves comorbidities, increasing exposure to, and risks of, the virus for individuals and their communities.

As state revenue falls or plateaus the demand for social protection and public services will increase, and countries in our region will look to Australia for support. In this context, holding on to decades of improvements in global development outcomes and continuing to build on them is critical. Australia must support both the immediate response and recovery, as well as long-term development needs so that people and countries in the region can reset post-COVID in ways that enable them to better manage the impacts of crises in the future.

3.1 ENSURE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PROMOTES GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The social and economic implications of the COVID-19 crisis are deeply gendered in nature. Times of crisis tend to amplify existing inequalities, and women's over-representation in part-time and insecure work – coupled with the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work performed by women, underpinned by deeply ingrained social and gender norms – renders them particularly vulnerable to economic shocks.² At a more fundamental level, COVID-19 has exposed and exploited the existing inequalities in all societies – including along gender lines. This highlights the critical importance of ensuring all COVID-19 response and recovery interventions are informed by intersectional gender analysis. But rather than merely attempting to offset these inequalities, this moment of crisis provides an opportunity to radically transform the social and gender norms, as well as the structural and material inequalities, which underpin poverty and marginalisation. Far from being separate issues, transforming gender inequality and other forms of marginalisation is critical to ensuring societies are designed to withstand and flourish in a future that may increasingly be marked with pandemics and other types of disruptions.

In recognition of this, DFAT's policy framework *Partnerships for Recovery — Australia's COVID-19 Development Response* has made "protecting the most vulnerable, especially women and girls" a cross-cutting action for the Whole-of-Government international response.³ While protection is an important first step, it addresses the symptoms of gender equality rather than the causes. To ensure Australia's international development is contributing to transformative outcomes, all areas of COVID-19 response and recovery – including country and regional response plans as well as new funding initiatives – must be informed by gender, disability and social inclusion analysis, and seek to challenge the power relations, systems and norms that underpin gender inequality and other forms of marginalisation.

Recommendation 1: Mandate gender, disability and social inclusion analysis of all country and regional response plans and new funding initiatives across Australia's international development program.

3.2 FUND THE FUTURE OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE PACIFIC

The Australian Government has demonstrated a clear commitment to gender equality in the Pacific region, including through the flagship program Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*). *Pacific Women* represents a commitment of \$320m over the 10 years from 2012-2021, supporting programs advancing gender equality and the rights of women and girls at regional and country levels.

² ILO 2018, pp 20-21

³ DFAT 2020b

In 2020, DFAT confirmed in Senate Estimates their intention for the new program – tentatively called *Pacific Women Lead* – to be “on a scale commensurate with the original *Pacific Women* program.”⁴ A high-level design process commissioned by DFAT will lay out the “direction, goal, objectives, outcome and operating model for the new program,” aligned to *Partnerships for Recovery* and drawing on the findings of the six-year evaluation and consultations with Australian and Pacific civil society groups.⁵ This will be followed by a full design and transition process over 2021, with the new program planned to commence in 2022. DFAT have set an initial timeframe of 5 years, with the potential for an extension to 8 years.⁶

To fulfil the commitment to a program of commensurate scale to *Pacific Women*, DFAT must commit upfront to a minimum of \$304m in funding over 8 years for *Pacific Women Lead*. This figure has been calculated based on the average annual expenditure for *Pacific Women*, plus an annual CPI increase of 1.5 per cent. In addition, it includes a loading to address the short and medium term impacts of COVID-19, proportionate to the increase in ODA in FY2020-21 to support COVID-19 response and recovery.⁷

COVID-19 has the potential to significantly undermine progress towards gender equality in the Pacific. Women in the Pacific perform four times more unpaid care work than men, an imbalance which is being increased by the pandemic, further impacting on women’s ability to engage in paid work.⁸ Already high rates of gender based violence have been exacerbated, with reports indicating significant increases in women accessing violence response services.⁹ Pacific women’s rights organisations have pivoted to address the impacts of COVID-19 in their communities, and will need continued support and funding to do so as these impacts play out over the coming years. In this context, it is critical to dedicate additional funding to *Pacific Women Lead* to ensure that decades of progress on gender equality do not backslide.

Recommendation 2: Commit a minimum of \$304m over 8 years for *Pacific Women Lead* in order to build on the momentum established by *Pacific Women* and ensure that COVID-19 response and recovery contributes to progress on gender equality.

Evidence shows that women’s rights activism and movements are the key drivers of legal and policy change to address women’s human rights and gender inequality. Research over three decades (1975-2005) in 70 countries found the mobilisation of autonomous feminist movements is more effective in combating gender based violence than the wealth of nations, political parties, or the number of women politicians.¹⁰

Recommendation three of the *Pacific Women* six-year evaluation states: “Australia’s future support to gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Pacific should continue to include a comprehensive approach including women’s leadership, economic empowerment, ending violence against women and increasing agency as outcomes.”¹¹

Pacific Women has supported Pacific-led collective action through initiatives such as the We Rise Coalition; Shifting the Power Coalition; Balance of Power; Gender Equality Theology; Pacific Girl and the Fiji Women’s Fund. All of these initiatives have bolstered local action to change the harmful social norms that underpin and perpetuate gender inequalities. These are Pacific owned and led initiatives that are not only creating positive change within communities, but also strengthening the capacity of civil society to engage with governments and hold them accountable to the commitments they have made at national, regional and international levels.

To maintain and build on the momentum for Pacific feminist movements and Pacific-led research generated by *Pacific Women*, the new program should dedicate 20 per cent of its funding towards feminist movement

⁴ Commonwealth of Australia 2020

⁵ DFAT 2020a

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Howes 2021

⁸ Addati et al. 2018 pp. xxx

⁹ UN Women 2020; Eastern Highlands Family Voice et al. 2020

¹⁰ Htun and Wheldon 2012

¹¹ Tabualevu, Cordeiro, and Kelly 2020

strengthening and feminist research. These funds should go to Pacific women's rights organisations, including through values aligned intermediaries, where appropriate.¹²

Recommendation 3: Allocate 20 per cent of funding within *Pacific Women Lead* to feminist movement strengthening and research.

3.3 SECURE STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION

The Australian Government must secure strong foundations for disability inclusion throughout Australia's international development and COVID-19 recovery programs, by increasing its central disability allocation to \$14m in FY21-22 with a 1.5 per cent CPI increase over the forward estimates. It is vital that DFAT has sufficient core departmental budget for staff and associated support costs to enable the effective implementation, monitoring and advocacy supporting *Development for All 2015-2021*, *Partnerships for Recovery* and national COVID-19 response plans. Increasing the central disability allocation is critical as it lays the foundation DFAT relies upon to deliver its mandate for disability inclusive development and thereby building stronger and more effective development and COVID-19 response programs. The proposed annual \$14m budget is a modest increase on the FY2020-21 budget with additional funds to be put towards the global development and implementation of disability inclusive data that is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, ground-breaking work to advance accessibility across the Pacific, contributing to the development of sign languages in the Pacific, and implementing the *Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016-2025*.

Recommendation 4: Increase the central disability allocation to \$14m in FY21-22 with a 1.5 per cent CPI increase over the forward estimates.

3.4 FUND AT THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

Australia's region is facing significant consequences as a result of climate change. Global heating, for which Pacific countries are minimally responsible, has caused significant loss and damage to communities and livelihoods.¹³ The Pacific is confronting unpredictable weather patterns, rising sea levels and temperatures, higher frequency and severity of storms, increasing salination of the groundwater, and severe air pollution.¹⁴ The 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security, signed by Australia alongside other Pacific Island Forum States, identified climate change as "the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific."¹⁵

IWDA welcomes the Government's recent announcement of \$1.5 billion over five years in climate finance through the international development program. To ensure countries in our region can effectively respond, recover and reset post-COVID, this funding should be new and additional to the current international development budget.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that the new \$1.5 billion climate finance commitment over five years is additional to the existing international development budget.

Women and girls face disproportionate climate risks as a result of discriminatory gender norms and structures. For example, changes to natural resources increase the labour demands of gendered activities such as subsistence farming and collecting food, fuel and water.¹⁶ 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

¹² Values-aligned intermediaries are organisations which are aligned to the change that they are funded to create; in the case of gender programming, this means demonstrating organisational commitment to feminism, the human rights of women and girls and to lessening power imbalances inherent in funding relationships. For more information see: IWDA 2020, pp 12-16

¹³ IPCC 2018

¹⁴ Weir, Dovey, and Orcherton 2017

¹⁵ Pacific Islands Forum 2018

¹⁶ Terry 2009 p 3

have to travel greater distances to source food and fuel.¹⁷ Evidence also demonstrates that in the aftermath of natural disasters, rates of violence increase against women, non-binary people, and people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

Gender-responsive climate change prevention, mitigation and adaptation requires promoting under-represented voices in traditional and formal arenas, giving due consideration to indigenous knowledge and explicitly including the concerns of women. Indigenous women have long played a central role in environmental knowledge management, including ways in which communities have traditionally responded to environmental challenges.²⁰ Women and girls are at the forefront of organising their families and communities to withstand extreme events, yet they are most likely to be excluded from formal positions of leadership within community and national governance structures.²¹ Women, especially women from marginalised groups, are underrepresented in all formal decision making bodies from the local to multi-national level—including within climate change policy development.²² In the face of these challenges, Australia's international development budget should support diverse women's rights organisations working at the intersection of gender equality and climate justice, to enable diverse women and girls to connect for collective advocacy, learning and solidarity.

Recommendation 6: Commit funding for Women's Rights Organisations working at the intersection of gender equality and climate justice, including supporting diverse women leaders to participate in climate and disaster risk reduction institutions and advocacy at all levels.

3.5 ALLOCATE FUNDING TO THE MOST EFFECTIVE DELIVERY PARTNERS

The Australian NGO Cooperation program has been deemed as one of DFAT's most effective programs, delivering 18.2 per cent of the international development program's results for just 2.7 per cent of all ODA funding.²³ In the context of COVID-19, ANCP programs have been able to pivot effectively to community education, preparedness and response across a wide range of areas.

Covalima Community Centre (CCC), through its partnership with IWDA and supported by ANCP funding, has been implementing the Rural Women's Development Project since 2017, which aims to empower women across the Covalima district of Timor-Leste to participate in decision-making and leadership within their families and communities. When COVID-19 hit, ANCP funding supported CCC to pivot to COVID-19 response, joining the COVID-19 district taskforce in Covalima, distributing hygiene kits and educating the public about social distancing, handwashing and the use of face-masks. CCC have also integrated advocacy about the gendered dimensions of the pandemic into their outreach activities, including around the risk of gender based violence and the increased demand on women to perform unpaid care. These awareness raising activities have been coupled with practical services, connecting survivors of violence with appropriate services and conducting practical training for women and their male partners that aims to encourage more equitable sharing of domestic labour and household decision-making.

Funding to ANCP was \$133.5m in FY2020-21, a modest increase on the previous year. In the context of ongoing need in COVID-19 response and recovery, ANCP funding should be increased by 10 per cent on top of CPI to \$150m.

Recommendation 7: Increase funding for ANCP to \$150m in FY2021-22, to account for CPI and the increased demands on programs during COVID-19 response and recovery.

¹⁷ Castañeda Carney et al. 2020

¹⁸ Dwyer and Woolf 2018

¹⁹ Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 2016

²⁰ Mcleod et al. 2018

²¹ Damon, Williams, and Barker-Perez 2020

²² Eastin 2018; UNISDR, UNDP, and IUCN 2009

²³ Office of Development Effectiveness 2015, pp 13

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.²⁴ As representatives on the ground, local WROs provide legitimacy, access to marginalised communities, and the ability to identify and adapt to evolving contexts.²⁵

Despite this, funding to women's equality organisations and institutions receive less than 0.39% of development cooperation assistance worldwide.²⁶ Funding that goes directly to WROs is likely to be even lower, as the above figure incorporates ODA supporting machineries of government, such as national offices for women, alongside grassroots women's organisations. Despite its commitment to gender equality, Australia dedicates less than 1% of its ODA to women's rights organisations and institutions, ranking eleventh of OECD DAC members in this regard.²⁷

WROs are held back in what they can achieve by a lack of funding, and particularly core and flexible funding.²⁸ As identified by the Office of Development Effectiveness, providing long-term core funding allows civil society organisations to invest in their own capacity in order to become agents of change.²⁹ Australia has a significant opportunity to boost our impact on gender equality by increasing our contribution to WROs to just 5% of bilateral allocable ODA, unlocking an additional \$120 million per year in funding for gender equality.³⁰

Recommendation 8: Boost Australia's impact on gender equality by committing 5% of Australia's international development cooperation budget towards women's rights organisations and institutions.

3.6 RENEW DFAT'S SYSTEMS AND CAPABILITIES TO MANAGE EFFECTIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

A skilled, effective and well-resourced department is critical to ensuring effective delivery of Australia's international development program. However, an independent review of DFAT since its integration with AusAid in 2013 found that there had been a marked deterioration of skills and systems for managing development programs.³¹ The review noted a corresponding increase in the proportion of functions outsourced to managing contractors via facilities. A separate independent review of this model found that "far from enabling DFAT staff to adopt a less 'hands-on' approach, facilities require intensive and ongoing DFAT oversight, engagement and management of both the development content and delivery process."³² This finding further underscores the need for investment in development expertise within DFAT. DFAT's own assessment of its progress on gender mainstreaming over recent years has noted limitations in its capacity to provide technical support on gender, indicating a need for greater investment in both dedicated and mainstreamed gender expertise within the Department.³³ Additionally, the trend towards localisation, including greater management of programming at Post and increased funding going directly to local organisations, will require increased investment in development and gender capabilities at Posts and in Canberra.

Recommendation 9: Increase the staffing portfolio of DFAT in Canberra and at Post with a focus on development and gender expertise.

²⁴ Derbyshire et al. 2018a, 7; IWDA 2018; Klugman et al. 2014

²⁵ Derbyshire et al. 2018b

²⁶ Calculated by the proportion of CRS sector code 15170: funding to women's equality organisations and institutions against total bilateral allocable aid. OECD 2020

²⁷ OECD 2020

²⁸ Miller and Jones 2019

²⁹ Office of Development Effectiveness 2014, pp 32

³⁰ Calculated from OECD reported figures and converted from USD93m, as per exchange rate at 22/01/2021. OECD 2020

³¹ Moore 2019

³² Pieper 2018

³³ DFAT 2019

Transparency and predictability are critical pillars of development effectiveness, as outlined in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation.³⁴ Studies indicate that unpredictable or volatile delivery of aid reduces its effectiveness, impeding the ability of implementing partners to engage in longer-term transformative change.³⁵ The shift away from multi-year budgeting for Australia's international development program has had a significant impact on the predictability of ODA, hampering development efforts. Reintroducing multi-year budgeting, and allowing DFAT to roll-over funding between financial years, would significantly improve Australia's performance against the Busan Partnership and ensure greater development effectiveness.

Recommendation 10: Increase the predictability, transparency and flexibility of ODA by reintroducing multi-year budgeting and allowing funds to be rolled-over between financial years.

³⁴ OECD 2011

³⁵ OECD DAC 2011

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