International Development Policy Submission

Who we are:

We make this submission as Church-based network of eleven overseas aid and development agencies committed to empowering people and providing avenues for them to overcome injustice and poverty. We work closely with our churches and in-country partners to strengthen civil society. Our reach and impact are demonstrated by the following figures (2017).



A NETWORK REACHING OVER 3,800,000 PEOPLE

WORKING IN OVER 50 COUNTRIES



61% OF THOSE REACHED ARE WOMEN AND GIRLS

75% OF STAFF ACROSS OUR AGENCIES ARE FEMALE



$2,695,000 RAISED FOR HUMANITARIAN APPEALS

WORKING ON THE GROUND IN 507 INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

We welcome the opportunity presented by this review to recognise the crucial role of human-centred development in reducing poverty and promoting economic prosperity. Our collective experience in development work across many countries and contexts, in partnership with local faith groups and communities, has informed two recommendations that we see as critical to a new International Development Policy.

The purpose of Australia's International Development Policy should be *to build a peaceful and prosperous world by promoting rights-based, human-centred development for people and communities who are most vulnerable to the impacts of poverty, injustice, disaster or conflict*.

Recommendation 1: Ensure that the primary purpose of the new policy is to achieve human-centred development, as a lens across all development cooperation programs.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen relationships with and leverage the potential of faith-based organisations.

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church agencies network

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Recommendation 1: Ensure that the primary purpose of the new policy is to achieve human-centred development, as a lens across all development cooperation programs.

As broader foreign policy objectives are considered, this should mean recognising that it both reflects Australia's values and is in our national interest to pursue the following priorities:

1. *Inclusive* prosperity that leaves no one behind – with particular investment in and focus on ensuring that opportunities reach people at risk of marginalisation including women, youth, people with disabilities, displaced people, and ethnic and religious minorities;

2. *Social* stability that is rooted in strong social capital in local communities, and an open civil society space that allows all people to actively participate in and contribute to social, religious, political and economic life; and

3. *Community* resilience that empowers families, communities and nations to be prepared and able to withstand the shocks of conflict, economic instability, climate change and natural disasters.

These priorities align not only with broader foreign policy goals, but also Australia's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an integrated approach to achieving sustainability for all.

Practically and programmatically, these priorities should be realised through a focus on localisation, targeted global programming, and a social-inclusion lens, especially to all infrastructure and trade investments. These priorities can be further strengthened by mitigating the drivers of social dislocation and forced migration through integrating responses to climate change and disaster resilience into all programming, strengthening our protection focus, and broadening programming for displaced people.

Example 1 – Gender and Disability Inclusion: The work of Australia's internationally recognised disability-inclusion and women's empowerment programming is evidence that when human development is placed at the centre of programming, policy and frameworks, it yields significant results for people living in poverty.

The aid program's focus on people with disabilities has made a tangible impact on the lives of people with a disability, facilitating access to assistive devices, improving access to education and supporting people with disabilities to achieve financial independence. Australia has demonstrated welcome leadership on gender and reducing gender-based violence through initiatives including its focus on Preventing Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment and the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development.

Given the significant gender inequality and barriers faced by people with disabilities in developing countries, and our commitment to ensuring inclusive development under the SDGs, Australia should continue its leadership role in ensuring gender equity and the needs of people with disabilities are mainstreamed across all aid investments.

Localisation

Australia's approach to development cooperation should be founded on principles of partnership and mutuality and give priority to local partners.

A new policy and its implementation should recognise and respect the inherent strengths and dignity of the communities and nations with whom it partners in line with evidence supporting the effectiveness of greater localisation. This includes responding to the human development concerns of local communities, which often include health and education Greater investment in local actors would be consistent with Australia's

commitments to the Grand Bargain and recognise the burdens on local communities of under-development and protracted crises.

Example 2: Our work through the Australian-Government funded **Church Partnership Program (CPP) in Papua New Guinea** is evidence that when you put people and communities first, results follow. This program has seen churches improve their delivery of crucial health and education services, especially in rural and remote areas, as well as delivering on a broad range of activities in support of gender equality and social inclusion, peace and prosperity, and disaster risk reduction, which no amount of bridges, ports or roads could achieve without local community involvement.

The CPP is just one example of how as church agencies we are on the frontlines of international development. Our local church partners and faith communities are often the first responders to disasters. Moreover, in a development context, where local governments are unable to provide services, church partners and faith communities are often responsible for delivering health, education and other social services. In Papua New Guinea, for example, churches provide 50% of health and 40% of education services across the country.

The CPP3 Mid-Term Review "noted that, for a relatively small investment, CPP has a multiplier effect across the development sector. This is through emphasis on capacity building, cross-learning and, increasingly, on policy engagement. CPP has also helped the seven PNG churches to access additional funding sources." The 2013 Independent Review (of CPP) highlighted some key achievement areas: that CPP was relevant and effective; that it leveraged existing church capacities; that there were positive changes occurring within churches; that it was increasing church capacity; and that CPP was promoting better dialogue and collaboration.

Targeted global programming

Current and emerging global threats require collective global action. Constraints on the development budget present challenges in balancing bilateral and global investments. A bilateral focus on the Indo-Pacific regions makes targeting proven global investments in key pillars of human development (such as health and education) essential to meet Australia's national interests in security, stability, prosperity and resilience.

Effective multilateral organisations and NGOs extend the reach and impact of Australia's efforts to parts of the world in greatest need, demonstrating that while we are generous and effective neighbours in this region, we also contribute globally to poverty reduction, thereby increasing stability and security.

The Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) is a long-standing, innovative and flexible global mechanism, directly attributable to the Australian Government, with many agencies investing in projects both in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. "The ANCP delivers strongly on results; in 2013–14 ANCP represented around 2.7 per cent of the aid budget and delivered 18.2 per cent of outputs reported in the Department's aggregate development results."[1] It extends Australia's presence and reinforces our commitment to human development. ANCP allows the Australian community to directly engage with Australia's international development program through their support for ANCP projects, providing a vital sense of people-to-people links. Global programming can also be strengthened by targeting and expanding proven program like ANCP and the Australian Humanitarian Program (AHP) to ensure the coverage of long-term reconstruction and displacement activities in the context of the humanitarian to development continuum.

[1] https://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/Documents/ode-brief-evaluation-australian-ngo-cooperation-program.pdf

Social Inclusion and Infrastructure

As our aid program shifts its focus to the Pacific and pursues greater investment in infrastructure, human-centred development must remain the key focus. The highly flawed Cambodia railway program, a recent Australian-aid-supported ADB infrastructure program that did not adequately account for human-centred development, is clear evidence that infrastructure programs without this focus will not deliver on intended outcomes.[2]

Where the government invests directly in economic infrastructure, it should integrate targeted programs ensuring projects are gender-sensitive, disability-inclusive and seek and respect local community voices - particularly marginalised groups in those communities. We also recommend integrating climate and natural disaster-resilient features into the planning, design and implementation of infrastructure activities to help ensure that community assets are sustained. A successful model in the Pacific and one which should be extended is *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women)*.

Climate Change

We acknowledge the recently released *Climate Change Action Strategy: Tackling Climate Change through Australia's Development Assistance Program 2020-2025.* Australia cannot achieve its three priorities of stability, prosperity and resilience without addressing climate change as the single greatest threat to human security in our region. It is a risk multiplier (increasing conflict, insecurity, instability and displacement). Listening and responding to partner priorities and concerns is fundamental as Australia seeks to build partnerships in the region: our partners have identified tackling climate change as their highest single priority. This was demonstrated by the strongly articulated messages from the leadership and members of the Pacific Conference of Churches to the Australian Government during the recent *Voices For Justice* gathering in Canberra.

The new policy must underline the importance of taking action in line with our commitments under the Paris Agreement, SDGs and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Australia must be actively part of a united global approach to climate finance and doing our fair share including contributing to global mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund. Australia, based on our economic capability and historical responsibility for emissions, should aim to contribute around 2.4% of total international climate finance of which half should come from public funding, and ensuring the transparency and accountability of such funding.[3] Enhancing local CSO access to adaptation funding is essential, and means that funding is not just provided at government-to-government basis - an effective example is the Community-based Climate Change Action Grants program.[4]

Refugees and Internally Displaced People

A human-centred development approach also means addressing the threats posed by natural and man-made events through supporting disaster risk reduction, protection, preparedness and prevention. In line with the Sendai Framework, DFAT should support ANGOs to work with in-country partners and local communities as well as host government stakeholders to promote genuine community participation to plan and prepare for disasters by implementing disaster risk reduction measures.

[2] https://devpolicy.org/australian-aid-and-cambodias-troubled-rail-project-20130210/

[3] https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/ACFID_Budget_Analysis_2019_FINAL_EDIT_4April.pdf and http://bit.ly/38RsCU4

[4] https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/community-based-climate-change-action-grants-independent-review-2016.pdf

Notwithstanding a focus on our region, we recommend continuing to work in high-risk conflict areas. Australian NGOs have the capacity to manage risk; the most vulnerable should not be ignored because programming can be difficult or risky. Good humanitarian and development work contribute to stability in nations facing complex crises and reduces displacement. Working with refugees internationally provides opportunities to fast-track education and vocational skills, support conflict resolution, and use interfaith dialogue to address the rising number of refugees, internally displaced people and people on the move.[5]

Recommendation 2: Strengthen relationships with and leverage the potential of faith-based organisations.

Deep partnerships that respect and seek complementarity with key civil society actors are crucial to ensuring that Australia's international development efforts are focused on human development, work with and strengthen local institutions and leadership, and build a robust and resilient basis for sustainable social stability, inclusive prosperity and community resilience. Faith communities – particularly established churches and the institutions of other faiths – are critical among civil society actors, providing leadership, spiritual and moral teaching, and practical service provision. Churches and other faith based organisations recognise all aspects of wellbeing - physical, spiritual, emotional and social. Christian churches play a unique role in societies – both in Australia and in partner countries, particularly in the Pacific – that enable them to make a distinctive contribution to sustainable human development.

Overseas the Church is often a trusted community leader capable of addressing underlying beliefs and attitudes to produce sustained behavioural change and social transformation, and of fostering and developing local leaders. Australian Government-supported Gender Equality Theology in the Pacific has led to Church leaders speaking out publicly about violence against women. As noted above, churches deliver primary services in remote communities where government service delivery is often weak or non-existent, making the churches not only significant civil society actors, but also key components of social infrastructure. The Church Agencies Network - Disaster Operations (CAN DO) consortium is funded by the Australian Government's Australian Humanitarian Partnership. In CAN DO's 2018 PNG earthquake response, church teams travelled to high-conflict areas inaccessible to UN and government teams, providing food, water, sanitation, health services and trauma counselling to over 51,000 people. [6] This role is complemented by the important role of other NGOs with a faith basis, by the institutions of other faiths, and – particularly in our Asian neighbours – by multi-faith initiatives.

Local churches, congregations and parishes in Australia are also among the most globally engaged community-level institutions and have strong and long-standing people-to-people links with communities throughout the world.[7]

As such, churches – along with other faith-based organisations and the institutions of other faiths – are strategically significant partners for Australia's international development cooperation efforts. In order to deepen these relationships and leverage the potential for greater collaboration, it is important to base ongoing consultation and action on mutual understanding of the distinctive roles of government, churches and other faith actors.

Within the new policy, DFAT should:

[5] See UN Global Humanitarian Overview 2020 p.13

[6] CAN DO PNG EQ Response – AHP Final Report

[7] 88% of Australian churches have links with developing countries Citation: Sterland, S. (2014) Support for People in Developing Countries by Australian Churches, NCLS Research Fact Sheet 14026.

1. Develop a set of Faith and Development Partnership Principles which establish a shared understanding and meaningful basis for strategic engagement, mutual partnership and collaboration. A useful model for this is the United Kingdom's Faith Partnership Principles.
2. Establish a Faith and Development Advisory Group including representatives from Christian churches, other faiths, and relevant faith-based development actors to advise on development and other international policy and program issues. The group should be clearly established within the governance and oversight arrangements for the development portfolio. It may include both Australian and regional representatives and provide a strategic conduit for consultation on policy priorities, program implementation, and community engagement.
3. Work with the Faith and Development Advisory Group to co-design initiatives and programs to leverage the distinctive strengths of faith communities and networks, and those of the Australian Government to deliver significant human development outcomes and deepen Australian community engagement with development and international people-to-people links.

Guided by a new International Development Policy, Australia has the opportunity to address the world's most pressing challenges. We look forward to continuing to work with the Government, our constituencies, and our local partners, towards a more just and sustainable world for all.

Recommendation 1: Ensure that the primary purpose of the new policy is to achieve human-centred development, as a lens across all development cooperation programs.

1.1: Australia should continue its leadership in ensuring gender equality and the needs of people with disabilities are mainstreamed across all aid investments.
1.2: Australia's approach to international development should be founded on principles of partnership and mutuality and give priority to local partners.
1.3: Target and expand global investments in proven programs like AHP and ANCP to ensure the coverage of long-term reconstruction and displacement activities in the context of the humanitarian to development continuum.
1.4: Government investment in economic infrastructure should include targeted programs to ensure that all projects are gender and protection-sensitive, disability-inclusive, integrate climate resilient features, and reflect the views of local communities. Consideration should be given to extending the *Pacific Women* program.
1.5: Australia should renew its commitment to the Paris Agreement, SDGs and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, respond to Pacific and Asian partner priority to tackle climate change and, based on our economic capability and historical responsibility for emissions, and Australia should aim to contribute around 2.4% of total international climate finance from government and private sources.
1.6: The Development Cooperation program should support Australian NGOs to work with in-country partners, local communities and host government stakeholders to promote genuine community participation to prepare for disasters by implementing disaster risk reduction measures, including supporting enhanced local CSO access to adaptation funding.
1.7: To address the global refugee crisis, Australia should continue to support work in high-risk areas, strengthen its focus on protection and durable solutions in protracted situations and broadening programming for displaced people.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen relationships with and leverage the potential of faith-based organisations.

2.1: Developing a set of Faith and Development Partnership Principles
2.2: Establishing a Faith and Development Advisory Group
2.3: Working with this Faith and Development Advisory group to co-design initiatives and programs