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# ACFID Analysis: Performance of Australian Development Cooperation 2024-25

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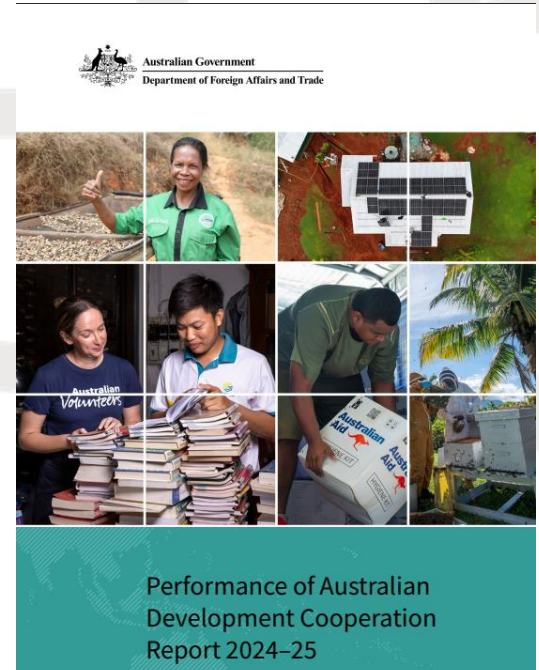
# Contents

- Welcome and Acknowledgement
- Introduction and Context
- Key Takeaways
- Tier 1, 2 and 3 Results
- Deeper Dives
- References



# Introduction

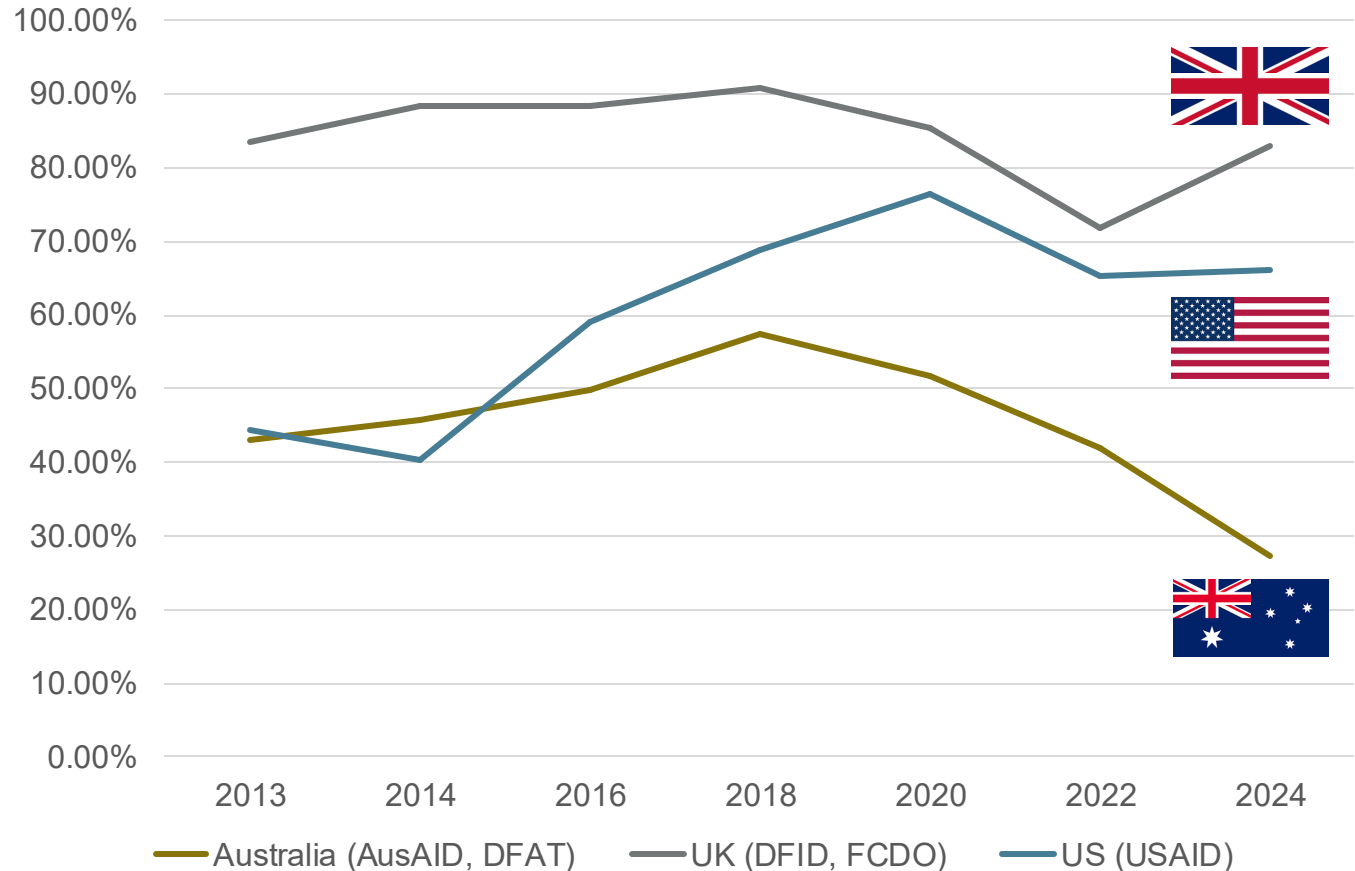
- The International Development Policy (IDP), launched in 2023, introduced a new results and accountability framework for Australia’s aid program.
- The IDP includes a formal commitment to publish an annual PADC report to track performance and transparency of the development program.
- PADC uses a three-tier indicator system to report on:
  - **1. Indo-Pacific development context (economic, social and political)**
  - **2. Australia’s contribution to development (directly attributable results)**
  - **3. ‘How we work’ (operational approach to design, delivery and management)**
- Other components include an aid transparency portal (AusDevPortal, launched in 2024) and the inaugural Biennial Perceptions Survey (conducted in 2025 with results published in 2026).



Source: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

# Context

- Earlier, program-wise performance (up until 2018-19) and country and region-wise aid performance reports (from 2019-20 to 2022-23) were published by DFAT. **Since 2022-23, PADC provides a system-wide assessment, which is a significant improvement.**
- Most donors track results—but Australia now systematically tracks delivery quality and partner perceptions, which is less common. **Tier 3 (“how we work”) is a notable innovation compared to many multilaterals.**
- **Australia’s performance in the Aid Transparency Index slipped from ‘Fair’ in 2013-2022 to ‘Poor’ in 2024, ranking 48 out of 50 countries.**
- Australia resumed reporting to the IATI in 2024 and has **improved the quality of OECD reporting and internal statistical capacities.** DevPol’s 2025 Transparency Audit reports Australian aid transparency has improved since 2022.



Source: Compilation from Publish What You Fund

# Key Takeaways

## Achievements

- Meeting the 2023 IDP commitment on completing the Biennial Perceptions Survey.
- Significant improvements to transparency through data downloads and searchability on AusDevPortal.
- Increases in investments addressing gender equality increasing from 79% to 81% this year, meeting the 80% target.
- Significant increase in investments addressing disability equity from 51% to 60%, meeting the first-year baseline target under IDEARS.
- Clearer tracking of funding flowing to local partners, particularly through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

## Areas of Improvement

- Sharp drop in support to improve food security from 1.5 million (2023-24) to 816,319 people (2024-25), and to drinking water access, from over 2 million (2023-24) to 764,399 people (2024-25). Given growing insecurity, there is an urgent need to reverse this decline.
- While the \$1.3 billion climate finance commitment (2020-25) was met, ensuring investments are not inflated with tagging as a secondary objective to meet the 80% target by 2028-29 will be important.
- In the perceptions survey, the Pacific, with the largest share and presence of Australian ODA, gave the lowest scores (83%), while South Asia, which receives a modest share, reported the highest (90.5%).
- Greater transparency on AusDevPortal on who does what in a program, and how much of the program addresses policy objectives such as climate change.

# Tier 1: Indo-Pacific development context



## Key Trends

- **Significant increase in disaster events in the Pacific and Southeast Asia.** Indicator for impact of disasters revised from cost of displacements to internal displacements, which is more suitable.
  - *The 2023-24 PADC reported noted that limits to data availability mean that current cost estimates of disasters do not accurately reflect the Pacific as being one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world.*
- **Marginal improvements to the Gender Gap Index score for the Pacific and Southeast Asia – the first reversal in the downward trend since 2018.**
- **DFAT continues to use the proportion of people living under the World Bank poverty line** as the indicator for poverty in the region, which provides very wide ranges which are difficult to interpret.
  - *Both 2023-24 and 2024-25 PADC reports noted that the World Bank poverty line only serves to ‘capture the monetary aspects of poverty and [does] not account for the significant multidimensional aspects of poverty, such as access to good nutrition, essential health services and clean water and sanitation’.*
  - ***The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) could be used as an additional indicator or as a replacement. What are the factors that are preventing such a revision, despite the caveat?***

## Tier 2: Australia's contribution to development



### Key Trends - Building effective and accountable states

- **Decrease of \$65 million in direct financing to partner governments** relative to 2023-24.
- **Eightfold decrease in women entrepreneurs provided with financial and/or business development services**, explained as a return to expected levels following a peak in 2023–24, driven by a large-scale financial inclusion initiative that reached over 3 million women microentrepreneurs.
- **Increase of \$53 million in additional private funds leveraged to support sustainable development.**
- **Twofold increase in organisations supported to strengthen accountability and/or inclusion.**
- Minor increases in people reached through new or improved social protection programs (by \$11m), ODA funding to women's equality organisations (by \$21m), and capacity building support to organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) by 318.

## Tier 2: Australia's contribution to development (*continued*)



### Key Trends – Enhancing state and community resilience

- **Sevenfold increase in infrastructure projects** supported that meet internationally agreed quality standards (due to AIFFP?), paradoxically accompanied by a **decrease of nearly 5,000 in the number of local people accessing jobs** created by new infrastructure projects (due to smaller projects?).
  - *Explained as the result of a correction in the classification of voluntary labour in community infrastructure development projects previously included in Timor-Leste. However, it is unclear what the correction was, and whether there were other factors driving the decrease.*
- **Decrease by almost half in people supported to improve food security**, and by **more than half in people supported to use basic or safely-managed drinking water services**, relative to 2023-24.
- **Increase by more than double in people supported to improve adaptation to climate change and resilience to disasters**. Increase in total value of such investments (by \$141 million). Increase in the number and value of investments promoting/delivering nature-positive outcomes (by \$58 million).
- **Decrease of nearly 3 million** in couple-years (the amount of **contraceptives** required to protect one couple from unplanned pregnancies for one full year), relative to what was provided in 2023-24.

## Tier 2: Australia's contribution to development (*continued*)



**Key Trends** – Generating collective action on global challenges, and connecting partners with Australian and regional architecture

- **Increase in people provided with emergency assistance in conflict and humanitarian crisis situations from 8.5 million in 2023-24 to 9.8 million in 2024-25.**
- **Decrease by almost 700 in completions of Australia Awards scholarships**, and a 2.5x decrease in alumni participated in mutual collaborations between their country and Australia after completion of an Australia Awards long course.
- While there was an increase by nearly 100,000 in completions of TVET or work-related training, there was a **decrease in Pacific Australia Labor Mobility (PALM) workers from 33,193 in 2023-24 to 30,835 in 2024-25.**
  - *A new measure was introduced in the 2024-25 PADC report – annual total remittances (nearly \$543 million). No similar figure for 2023-24 is available, however between 2022 and 2025, PALM scheme workers sent home around \$1,460 per month, amounting to nearly \$1.7 billion in total.*

# Tier 3: How we work



## Key Trends

- 90% investments satisfactory (across **effectiveness and efficiency** IMR criteria), up from 85% in 2023-24. *Target: 85%*
- 81% investments effective in addressing **gender equality**, up from 79% in 2023-24. *Target: 80%*
- 78% completed investments satisfactory in effectiveness and efficiency FIMR criteria, down from 80%. *Target: 70% (target included in 2023-24 PADDC report but left out in 2024-25)*
- 95% eligible new investments valued at over \$3m have a **gender equality** objective, down from 100% in 2023-24. *Target: 100%*
- 60% investments effectively addressed **disability equity** in implementation, up from 51% in 2023-24. *Target: 60% by 2025-26 (new target introduced in 2024-25 and currently on track, slated to rise to 70% by 2030)*

## Tier 3: How we work (*continued*)



### Key Trends

- 48% of all new bilateral and regional investments valued at over \$3m had a **climate change objective**. *Target: 50%* (New target introduced in 2024-25 and currently short by 2%, target slated to rise to 80% by 2028-29)
- Regular partner dialogues with partners have continued. **Number of dialogues were not reported in either 2023-24 or 2024-25 PADC reports, and as such, there is no mechanism to verify this.**
- 12 country and regional DPPs were finalized in 2025, up from 8 in 2024, bringing the total to 20. However, the 2023 IDP set no specific target for the number of DPPs to be finalised, and progress against this is highly contextual and not set against a metric. The Performance and Delivery Framework (PADF) committed that all DPPs will be progressively rolled out during 2024 and finalised by the end of 2024 – this target has not been met. **Recommend releasing a target list of country/regional DPPs with corresponding month and year of intended completion and publication on the DFAT website, for greater transparency and accountability.**
- Results of the Inaugural Biennial Perceptions Survey (BPS) were published. While this commitment was met, reporting standards were inadequate. Since this is intended to serve as the baseline, **recommend publishing the questionnaire that was provided to respondents to improve the interpretation of results.**

## Tier 3: How we work (*continued*)



### Key Trends

- The **AusDevPortal** saw **significant improvements to data downloadability and its search function** in 2025. The publication of the Publish What You Fund Aid Transparency Index was delayed from mid-2026 to November 2026. Following its resumption of IATI reporting in 2024, Australia's ranking is expected to improve.
- **Decrease in number of subcontracts and grants awarded by managing contractors to local organisations**, from 2,987 in 2023-24 to 2,977 in 2024-25, but an increase in their total value from \$671 million in 2023-24 to \$690 million in 2024-25. However, the scope of what constitutes local organisations is not provided in either PADC report or on the PERFORMS dashboards for 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- Minor increase in total value of ANCP grants (from \$142.2 million in 2023-24 to \$142.4 million in 2024-25), and no change in the number of ANGOs (59) supported to deliver projects with over 2,000 local partners (number of ANGOs reported in 2023-24 but omitted in the 2024-25 PADC report as it drew on the most recent 2023-2024 dataset).
- The **number of ANCP projects reduced from 382 in 2023-24 to 373 in 2024-25** (according to data from the November 2025 ANCP Annual Reflections which was not included in the 2024-25 PADC report). **53% of allocated ANCP funding (amounting to \$75.5 million) was provided to local partners in 2024-25.**

## Tier 3: How we work (*continued*)



### Key Trends

- **Decrease in both the completion rate of bilateral investment designs that included local participation from 72% in 2023-24 to 58% in 2024-25, and evaluations that included local participation, from 74 % in 2023-24 to 67% in 2024-25.** DFAT noted the number of bilateral designs and evaluations is relatively small and there is a limited pool of sector-specific technical skills. It aims to meet the target of 80% by 2026 by a) embedding local personnel requirements into TORs, b) promoting knowledge of the benefits of local expertise through training and briefings, and c) better tailoring design and evaluation team procurement processes.
- **34.5% of allocated funding (\$14 million) to the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) was channeled to local and national actors in 2024-25, up from the pilot reporting figure of 28% of allocated funding (over \$6.5 million) in 2023-24.**
- **42.9% of allocated funding funding (\$17.2 million) provided to local Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies in 2024-25.** A new system was established in 2025 to track humanitarian funding to local actors in 2025, and collected 2024-25 data for \$401 million of the \$674 million budget for humanitarian assistance, of which 29% (\$117 million) flowed through local partners.
- **The 2025 Review of the Quality and Use of DFAT Evaluations was published based on a sample of evaluation plans completed in 2024-25 without elaboration on progress against its recommendations.**

# Deep dive #1: Climate change objectives



## Key Issues

- According to AusDevPortal data, out of the 1472 investments listed, 350 investments are tagged with a climate objective (23.7%). These investments include those under \$3 million, and provide a more comprehensive picture of performance on climate objectives above the threshold (i.e., 48% new bilateral and regional investments valued at over \$3 million having a climate change objective).
- Of these, 231 adaptation projects are tagged as climate-significant (15.6%), while 72 are climate-principal (2.65%). There is a **need to increase the prioritisation of climate-principal projects in Tier 2 objectives to ensure that results are not inflated with tagging as a secondary to meet the 80% target by 2028-29.**
- Australia uses project-level reporting to the OECD, known as ‘Rio markers’, to report the extent to which a development program is addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation. Climate-significant are projects where adaptation or mitigation is explicitly stated but not the fundamental driver or motivation, and climate-principal are projects where adaptation or mitigation is explicitly stated as fundamental in the design of, or motivation for, the activity.
- **While Australia claims 100% of the value of climate-principal projects when reporting on its climate finance levels, it does not publicly disclose the percentage claimed for climate-significant projects, apart from the default 30% when it is not possible to calculate the actual proportion of spending that is climate-related (Wood and Leng, 2025).**

# Deep dive #2: AusDevPortal



## Key Issues

- **DFAT has made significant improvements to the AusDevPortal search function** – it is now easier to search for specific strings e.g. "Coalitions for Change" in double quotes brings up the specific program and not investments that mention 'coalitions', 'for', and 'change' anywhere in the program description and indicators, which in the past led to hundreds of results to wade through. This is a significant step in improving transparency.
- There have been **significant improvements to the exportability of AusDevPortal data** to Excel spreadsheets to support academic research and inquiry and improve the searchability of investment-level data in aggregate.
- **The AusDevPortal does not provide percentages for each objective (OECD policy marker)**, i.e. how much of ODA is used to support specific areas such as climate change, gender equality, and disability inclusion. Since percentages are applied to calculate the climate change adaptation and mitigation values of DFAT investments in Australia's climate finance figures, there is a need for transparency on this front.
- **Project-wise percentage breakdowns exist for spend by sector groups and can be extended to objectives (OECD policy markers) as well.**

# Deep dive #3: Publish What You Fund



## Key Issues

- The Aid Transparency Index is based on the transparency of IATI reporting by donors. **The last time Australia was ranked was in 2024, when it received a ‘Poor’ rating.** In 2026, due to lack of donor funding, Publish What You Fund has moved to a paid accreditation model, compromising its role as a global public good.
- In 2018, when Australia received a ‘Fair’ rating, it was advised by Publish What You Fund to **improve the comprehensiveness of its publication to the IATI Registry and make more information available in an open and comparable format.** This objective has still not been adequately met – the data files uploaded by Australia to the IATI Registry, uploaded to in 2024 and 2026 to the Data.gov.au platform, are in the .xml format that are relatively inaccessible and not translatable into the .xls format.
- **Australia was also advised to work towards collecting and publishing performance-related information.** Though IMR scores were released on the AusDevPortal and the 2023-24 PADDC report has been uploaded to the IATI, performance data does not appear to have been supplied to IATI in a format that enables comparability.
- To demonstrate the impact of transparency on development work, **Australia was advised to promote the use of the data they publish: internally, to promote coordination and effectiveness; and externally, to explore online and in-person feedback loops,** including at country-level. It is unclear what progress has been made against this, and whether mechanisms were created to sense-check and verify data with external stakeholders.

# Deep dive #4: Biennial Perceptions Survey



## Key Issues

- Conducted between August and September 2025, the BPS sought opinions from 235 respondents in 17 countries, the majority of which were almost neatly split between the Pacific (41%) and Southeast Asia (40%).
- 86% were overall satisfied with Australia's performance as a development partner, with nearly half the respondents 'very satisfied'. **The Pacific, which has the largest share and presence of Australian ODA, gave the lowest scores (83%), while South Asia, which receives a modest share, reported the highest scores.**
- **83% respondents reported Australian programs as effective** - government representatives reported the highest perception rates of effectiveness. While Australia is perceived to perform fairly well on alignment of assistance with partner priorities, collaboration with local partners, and long-term commitment and flexibility, it **needs to improve local capacity building, coordination and coherence across programs, and predictable, long-term funding.**
- The **PADC report did not include the questionnaire that was provided to the respondents**. Without this, it is difficult to interpret the results and contrast against future surveys, as this will serve as the baseline (Hill, 2026).
- **59% respondents would approach Australia first in urgent need, with a claim this is well ahead of other bilateral partners**, with the Pacific showing the highest preference. Australia is 'rated better than most partners for regional commitment, responsiveness, and transparency', however, without transparency on the questionnaire and comparable data on other bilateral donors' preferability, this is impossible to verify.

# Deep dive #5: Managing contractors and localisation



## Key Issues

- The number of sub-contracts and grants with local organisations entered into by managing contractors, and the value of payments made through these subgrants and grants, remained relatively stable relative to 2023-24.
- 4,443 local personnel, subcontractors and staff were engaged by managing contractors, up from 4,263 in 2023-24. Notably, **\$70.3 million were provided directly to more than 555 women’s equality organisations and institutions**, and to more than 1,500 organisations representing people with a disability.
- There is a distinction, however, between the Tier 3 indicator on the ‘use’ of local actors in design, delivery and evaluation, and the wider objective of ‘empowerment’ of local actors. Locally engaged staff do not occupy the senior positions they once did within AusAID, even up to Counsellor-level appointments, administering large portfolios worth hundreds of millions of dollars. This reinforces **the need for measures that capture not just increased levels of local staffing, but those that illuminate the level of decision-making and spending authority** of LES at Posts, and of local personnel and subcontractors employed by managing contractors.
- On the AusDevPortal, there is a **need for transparency on the precise roles of implementing partners**, including for programs led by managing contractors, distinguishing between the lead agency and subcontractors. Without this, it is not possible to understand which agencies are engaged on different technical functions or aspects of the DFAT program cycle. **Implementing partners can be tagged against their specific functions, i.e. design, implementation and evaluation.**

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