

Australian Council for International Development

Submission on Australia's New International Development Policy



AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT



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Photo: ChildFund in Cambodia is working to support children to develop their full potential.
Photo: Khun Pisey/ChildFund Cambodia.



SECTION 1: PREFACE

Development Cooperation at the Heart of Australian Foreign Policy

A fracturing world order and the intensification of competition between great powers has resulted in a more challenging geopolitical environment for Australia. The extent to which Australia can become an international partner of choice, sitting at the heart of a network of relationships, will determine Australia’s capacity to navigate it.

ABOUT ACFID’S SUBMISSION

ACFID would like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, the Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Hon Alex Hawke MP, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for the opportunity to provide input into the new development cooperation policy and performance framework.

ACFID’s submission consists of four parts.

Section 1: Preface – this section proposes that development cooperation be at the heart of foreign policy and sets out how Australia’s development cooperation program needs to refocus for it to be successful.

Section 2: Proposed Strategic Framework for Australian Development Cooperation Policy – this section presents ACFID’s proposed strategic framework for the new Development Cooperation Policy.

Section 3: Investment and Delivery Criteria – this section presents ACFID’s proposed approach to how the new Development Cooperation Policy should be implemented.

Section 4: Key Implementation Challenges and Solutions for Government – this section outlines ACFID’s proposed solutions to implementation challenges the Government will face in adopting a new Development Cooperation Policy.

ACFID’s 121 members and 26 affiliates are supported by 1.5 million individual Australian donors, who in 2017-18 donated \$846m to ACFID’s members. With the generous support of the Australian public and in close partnership with the Australian Government, ACFID’s members deliver 3,485 projects in 86 countries around the world, investing \$1.27bn.

ACFID has drawn together their long established and in-depth experience of working with people and communities around the world to create this submission. Since the announcement of the review, ACFID has consulted with over 250 staff from within its membership.

To ensure ACFID’s submission is aligned with partners within the region and informed by the wider Australian foreign policy community, ACFID has drawn upon a consortium of leading foreign policy experts (‘ACFID External Reference Group’).

A list of ACFID’s members is at **Annex 2**.

Details of the ACFID External Reference Group are at **Annex 3**.

ACFID recommends reading this submission in conjunction with the submission on humanitarian action authored by ACFID’s Humanitarian Reference Group and the submission on a new performance framework authored by the Research for Development Impact Network and ACFID’s Development Practice Committee.

The Foreign Policy White Paper defines this capacity as critical, emphasising the importance of “strengthening and diversifying partnerships across the globe”. A principled and well-designed Development Cooperation Policy and Program, sustained through long-term partnerships, is amongst the most critical tools of Australia’s foreign policy. It can earn Australia a reputation as a deeply invested, consistent and respectful friend.

Australia has a 70-year history of successful development cooperation and has shared its considerable expertise and experience in areas such as gender equality, disability inclusion and humanitarian action. In doing so, Australia has built strong relationships. However, Australia has faltered.

In recent years, international development has seen sustained reductions and a shift to short-term issues management. This decline must be re-balanced towards long-term planning and investments befitting positive and productive international relationship-building.

This re-balance means focusing upon effectively fulfilling the long-term development goals of our partners and measuring our success by it. Only by doing so can Australia build deeper partnerships, greater trust and become a partner of choice.

To do this, ACFID proposes that the Government’s new Development Cooperation Policy distinguish itself from the past through a sharper focus on the following:

FOCUS ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

The Australian Government’s intent and the desire of the Australian people is to live in a peaceful, prosperous and cooperative region. Substantial Federal funds are dedicated to building economic, military and security partnerships to fulfil that intent and desire.

The Development Cooperation Policy’s contribution should be investing in human development and poverty alleviation and resolutely focused on the people and communities of Australia’s partner-nations. This will address the root causes of challenges which undermine a peaceful, prosperous and cooperative region.

As the epitome of the fair-go, this is also where the program derives its public legitimacy. In a nationally representative YouGov poll commissioned by ACFID in December 2019, 59 per cent of people said Australia’s international aid to poor countries should primarily serve the poorest people and those most in need, as opposed to the 34 per cent who said it should primarily serve Australia’s interests.



CORONAVIRUS AND INDO-PACIFIC HEALTH SECURITY

Shifting disease patterns and pandemics represent a direct risk to Australia's strategic and commercial interests given the extensive trade, business, and tourism ties with the region. Damaging changes in infectious disease transmission patterns, such as malaria, will also be driven by the effects of climate change.

The coronavirus issue has again raised the wide-ranging impacts of infectious diseases. The \$300m Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security announced as part of the development cooperation program in 2017 has been prominent in building the region's resilience to health security challenges. However, underinvestment in disease prevention remains a significant regional challenge and Australia has reduced overall total health ODA investment from over \$800m in 2014-15 to \$562.5m in 2018-19.

Substantial reinvestment in health systems strengthening at a country-level and improving population health outcomes through access to basic healthcare, improving diagnostic capacity and training provision to increase medical skills and expertise is required to pursue cost-effective, preventative measures to ensure regional health security.

PRIORITISING THOSE FURTHEST BEHIND

The number of people living in extreme poverty and those vulnerable to economic shocks remains high. In the Asia-Pacific, over 300 million people still live in extreme poverty and 915 million live above \$1.90/day but below \$3.20/day. New and overriding factors, such as climate change, growing inequality, social and economic marginalisation and gender-based violence also threaten to undermine the gains that have been made.

In response, Australia must prioritise those furthest behind and create inclusive, resilient communities where people of all ages and identities are free from extreme poverty, marginalisation, exploitation, abuse, hunger and sickness. Rather than a focus on wealth generation, the program must address multiple drivers of poverty at household and individual level, particularly the gendered nature of poverty, and should reach those who are displaced and living in situations of conflict and disaster.

ESTABLISHING CONTEMPORARY PARTNERSHIPS

Our partners want deep and sustained partnerships with Australia defined by mutual respect, mutual accountability and local ownership. This requires Australia move from an 'aid' program to a 'development cooperation program'. This reformulation raises the importance of people-to-people and community links which stand the test of time and create solidarity between Australia and its partner nations.

It is our position that Australia establishes tailored 10-year development cooperation agreements with partner-nations. As whole-of-government and whole-of-society strategies, they will set our engagement for development impact.

Australia's contemporary partnership approach must also recognise and value the different and complementary role of all actors involved in development. In doing so, it should support and resource the creation of partnerships of non-state actors. Track II diplomacy through the generation of NGO, business, church, education and trade union links will be fundamental to Australia's success in the Asia-Pacific region.



AUSTRALIAN NGOs DELIVER THE MOST INCLUSIVE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PROGRAMS

The 2018 Office for Development Effectiveness (ODE) report on the 'Development for All' strategy evaluated performance of implementing partners in recent humanitarian responses for disability inclusiveness. The evaluation found that NGO partners performed 'markedly better than other implementing partners'.

An example of this is CARE Australia in 2015, who analysed how different Nepalese society members, including people with physical and mental disabilities were affected by the earthquake. This rapid analysis enabled CARE Australia to understand and anticipate the issues which survivors were facing, and then design assistance that effectively addressed these issues. The subsequent evaluation report found that all agencies 'conveyed a strong commitment to inclusion, and a willingness to understand how to strengthen current practice'.

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP ON ADDRESSING RISING ILLIBERALISM AND CLIMATE CHANGE

ACFID identifies rising illiberalism and climate change as areas where Australia will need to pursue more active regional leadership. The freedoms of people, particularly in South East Asia are in decline and the effects of climate change threaten to undermine all development gains, especially amongst Pacific Island states. The Australian Government can distinguish itself by focusing significantly more energy and resources on civil society and climate change.

In response to rising illiberalism, we propose the Australian Government pursue a series of investments for a cooperative region. This should include civil society strengthening, inclusive and transparent governance and the rule of law.

On climate change, Australia should enhance its commitment to mainstreaming climate change in the development program by ensuring 90 per cent of all new aid investments programs over \$10 million incorporate climate change risk, impacts and opportunities.

Action on climate change does not hinder development but supports it, and smart climate solutions promise to benefit health, gender justice, energy access, jobs and prosperity. Country programs should also show how climate change is considered in the design of new programs and in Aid Investment Plans and additional new funding should be included to adequately address climate change.



DIALOGUE AND DISSENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Government of the Netherlands through their “Dialogue and Dissent” Policy Framework, is investing in activities that create space for dialogue and dissent. Through entering into up to 25 strategic partnerships with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the Dutch Government supports and strengthens CSO lobbying and advocacy in low to middle income countries as an essential role for holding Government and companies to account, and a way for CSOs to contribute to inclusive growth and development and help reduce inequality.

INCREASING BUDGET TRAJECTORY

A new ambitious policy must be matched with an increased bipartisan budget trajectory. Australia has underinvested in foreign relations and development cooperation. Bipartisanship is crucial so the trajectory lasts beyond electoral cycles, making Australia a consistent partner.

Over time, DFAT has suffered funding decline which should be halted and reversed. It is ACFID’s position that DFAT should coordinate Australia’s total development efforts, but it must be adequately resourced to do so and given the same level of priority as seen in the creation of the Office of the Pacific. This ambitious policy reset indicates that DFAT, and other government departments, will face a capability test to deliver the new policy, which must also be accounted for.



BUILD ON THE SUCCESS OF THE PACIFIC WOMEN SHAPING PACIFIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (PACIFIC WOMEN)

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. 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 which aim to maximise the funding available for grassroots organisations.

Pacific Women continues to show success in local ownership, flexibility across cultures, playing to Australia’s strengths, reaching those furthest behind, creating strong partnerships and links, using evidence-based decision-making, and coordination across government and society.

The Government should ensure that any new investments build on the successes and lessons learned through Pacific Women, as part of a commitment to long-term thinking, building on a program that continues to demonstrate success. In doing so, the government should:

1. Increase activity ownership by local NGOs and prioritise funding modalities which aim to maximise the funding available for grassroots organisations;
2. Balance the activity portfolio; and
3. Leverage the potential of the program by communicating the success story of the program, both within Australia and in partner countries.



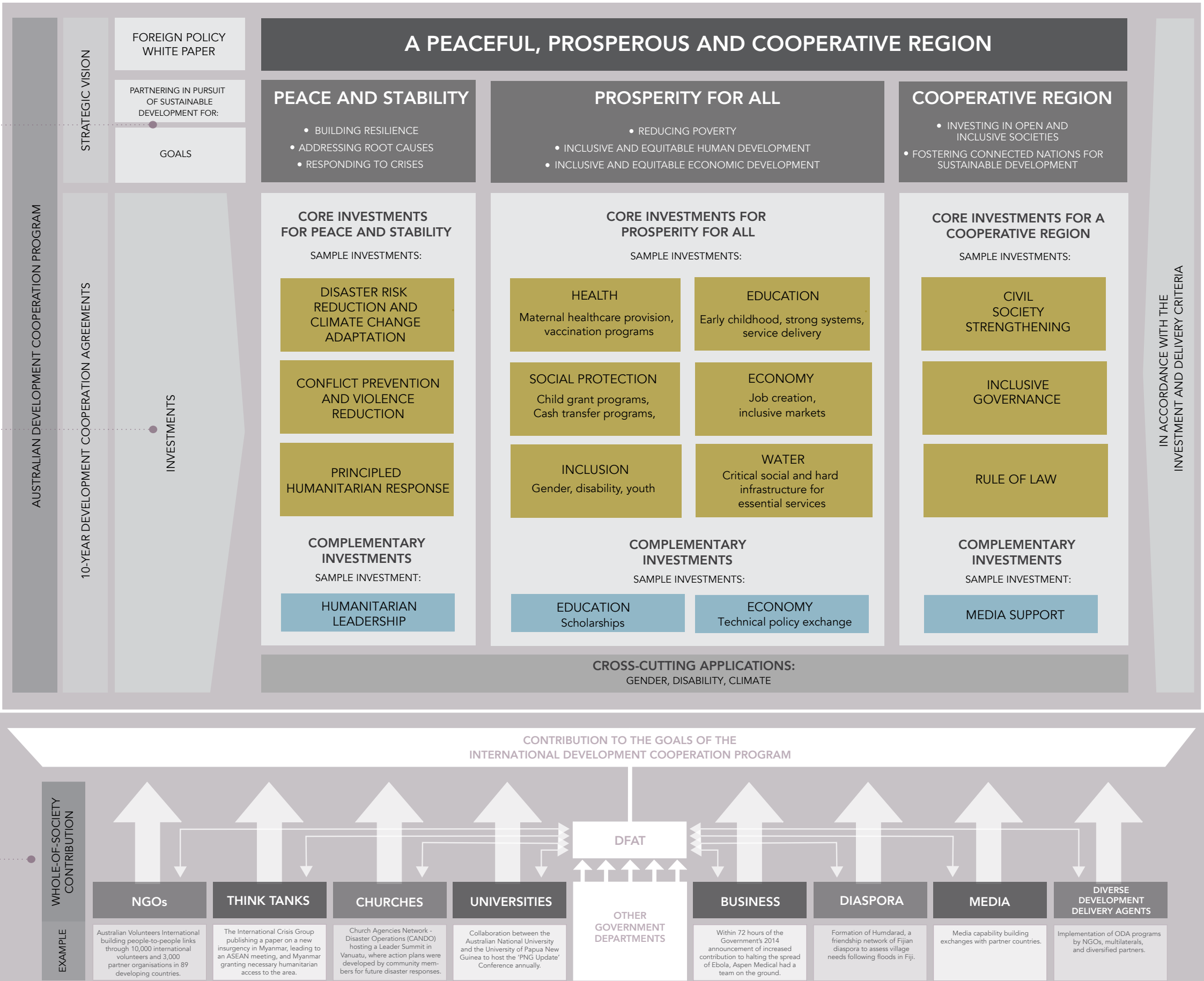
A boy at City Mission Farm in Papua New Guinea learning various vocational skills. Photo: Ness Kerton/ The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

SECTION 2:

1
PURPOSE OF
THE POLICY

2
CORE INVESTMENTS
AND COMPLEMENTARY
INVESTMENTS

3
LEVERAGING
CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY



SECTION 2:

Proposed Strategic Framework for Australian Development Cooperation Policy

This section presents ACFID's proposed strategic framework for the Australian Development Cooperation Policy.

Key features of ACFID's proposed strategic framework for the Australian Development Cooperation Policy are:

1 PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The proposed purpose of the Australian Development Cooperation Policy is:

Partnering in pursuit of sustainable development to achieve peace and stability, prosperity for all, and a cooperative region.

This is consistent with the Australian foreign policy goal of creating a peaceful, prosperous, and cooperative region – as outlined in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper.

Establishing partnerships at the foremost level of the policy recognises their importance to development effectiveness and the ambition for Australia to become a deeply invested, consistent and respectful partner in the Asia-Pacific region.

As set out in the strategic vision and goals of the diagram, the Australian development cooperation program's contribution to *peace and stability* means building resilience, addressing root causes and responding to crises.

The Australian development cooperation program's contribution to *prosperity for all* means reducing poverty, attaining inclusive and equitable human development; and inclusive and equitable economic growth.

The Australian development cooperation program's contribution to a *cooperative region* means investing in open and inclusive societies and fostering deep connections between nations to achieve sustainable development.

Beyond our region, Australia's humanitarian program has a global focus, and is allocated based on need, irrespective of where that need arises.

2 CORE INVESTMENTS AND COMPLEMENTARY INVESTMENTS

The new strategic framework demonstrates Australia's commitment to investing heavily in the core areas that are foundational to human development. Complementary investments also achieve development impact dividends but are allocated a smaller proportion of the overall budget.

Cross-cutting applications of gender, climate change, and disability will ensure we continue to play to our strengths and recognise the potential for climate change to undermine all development gains.

Balanced portfolios of investment across core and complementary areas are developed in partnership with country partners based on:

1. Supporting partner countries to meet their SDG ambitions;
2. Focusing on achieving impact for those furthest behind;¹ and
3. Investing within Australia's comparative advantage and playing to our strengths.

3

..... LEVERAGING CONTRIBUTIONS FROM AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

In both design, delivery and selection of delivery partners, the program is ambitiously diverse, bringing the best of Australia to the fore and engaging deeply with Australian society. This diversity drives innovation and creates closer community-to-community links between Australians and other communities in the region.

Barriers to becoming delivery partners are removed for innovative, small or expert agencies. A contract readiness fund equips Australian civil society organisations and social enterprises to become DFAT delivery partners.

This approach to development is supported and resourced, with DFAT coordinating whole-of-government efforts, including 'beyond-ODA' activities.



UK INVESTMENT AND CONTRACT READINESS FUND

In 2012, the UK Government created the Investment and Contract Readiness Fund (ICRF). The fund helped charities and social enterprises acquire the skills to raise investment and compete for public service contracts. Managed by Social Investment Business, the fund was a huge success, helping to unlock £233m in investments and contracts for charities and social enterprises. A new Australian equivalent would help achieve whole-of-society enagement in the Development Cooperation Program.



THE AUSTRALIAN NGO COOPERATION PROGRAM

The ANCP is a unique DFAT investment. ANCP members contribute \$1 for every \$5 received from the Australian Government. The ANCP has a 40-year track record and longevity as a civil society partnership that brings results and lasting impact and enables testing of innovative responses to long term problems.

This program continues to improve and add value to the Australian Government's bilateral programs. Ongoing presence of Australian NGOs in-country mean ready-made partnerships and community level knowledge and response. The program fosters unparalleled people-to-people linkages, supporting Australia's development program's reach into pockets of marginalisation and exclusion that would likely otherwise remain unreachable.

DFAT's own evaluation of the ANCP corroborates the effectiveness of the program's approach. The 2015 review described the ANCP as "one of the best performing programs," delivering 18.2 per cent of DFAT's aggregate development results for only 2.7 per cent of the overall development program spend. These results represent a clear opportunity to leverage greater investment in the resourcing of NGOs to deliver outcomes for Australia's development program.

Investment and Delivery Criteria

This section presents ACFID’s proposed approach to how the new Development Cooperation Policy should be implemented.

A high performing development cooperation program thinks and invests according to the following criteria:

LISTEN FIRST

Australia listens to and invests in understanding the needs of its partners as the foundation of good development.

Development cooperation only works if it is led by developing countries and partners. Australia highly values the different and complementary role of all actors involved in development and establishes partnerships which enable outcomes that are driven by peer nations’ development aspirations.

In accordance with the internationally endorsed Busan Principles,² (a set of principles, commitments and actions that offer a foundation for effective co-operation in support of international development), Australia diversifies its relationships, respects south-south assistance, prioritises local delivery partners, and develops and maintains flexible partnerships open to risk-sharing and local adaptation.



PACIFIC WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Australia should support a regular dialogue mechanism between civil, military and police stakeholders in the Pacific region on WPS which:

- Actively promotes women’s leadership in peace and stability in the region;
- Supports leadership of local civil society and women’s organisations in the dialogues; and
- Focuses the dialogues on improving understanding and cooperation between the different stakeholders on WPS.

CREATE BALANCED PORTFOLIOS

Australia creates balanced portfolios across the development cooperation program.

Australia invests proportionate to development needs, recognising that core development investments should be the primary focus of the development cooperation program (as set out in Section 2), but that each country requires a different mixture of investments to achieve their sustainable development aspirations.³

Australia’s investments are Asia-Pacific focused, and prioritise generating outcomes for the bottom 60 per cent of the population by income in the Pacific, and the bottom 40 per cent elsewhere.⁴ This ensures that people are moved from extreme poverty to sustainable livelihoods and that the development cooperation program delivers value for money in sustainable development terms.

A diverse range of actors are engaged to deliver the program, harnessing the unique strengths from Australian society. Australia maintains strong connectivity between development and humanitarian efforts, ensuring a balanced portfolio of investing for those most in need whilst retaining the flexibility to respond to urgent and sustained humanitarian crises wherever they occur.⁵

THINK LONG-TERM

All program decisions are made with a long-term vision, guided by development partnership agreements.

Australia recognises that the development goals of our partner nations are long-term, best served by consistent support and long term-strategy setting.

Australia is committed to contributing to the long-term development goals of our partner nations and recognises that this commitment is key to the effectiveness of the Australian development cooperation program and its ability to achieve effective and permanent change and enduring relationships in the region. (See discussion below on proposed 10-year development cooperation agreements and approach to flexibility in the program.)

PLAY TO OUR STRENGTHS

Australia continues to build on its strengths by investing in gender equality and disability inclusion as cross-cutting focuses.

The improvement of gender equality in partner countries through the program creates safety and prosperity and more democratic states.⁶ The inclusion of people with disabilities (about 15 per cent of the world’s population)⁷ as active participants in development processes benefits families and communities, reduces the impact of poverty and contributes to prosperity.⁸

Australia carries forward its reputation as a leader in these areas – recognising that gender equality and disability inclusion are essential to success in all development efforts and require ongoing targeted investment. A new ‘Development for All Strategy to 2030’ is created as part of driving long-term disability inclusivity and the performance target that over 80 per cent of investments effectively addressed gender equality issues in their implementation, is raised to 85 per cent by 2023. To achieve this, Australia increases its investment for gender and disability related programmes and strengthens evaluation frameworks for how gender and disability is integrated by partner organisations.



FEMILI PNG – THE GLUE CONNECTING SURVIVORS TO CRITICAL SERVICES

Violence against women and girls is a fundamental violation of human rights and a global health problem, with social and economic costs to individuals, communities and nations. In many Pacific Island nations and Timor-Leste, the prevalence of violence is more than twice the global average.

Femili PNG was created in 2013 with Australian support to strengthen coordination of services and in doing so improve outcomes for survivors. Through this focus, the NGO has taken an innovative approach, placing the needs of survivors at the centre, rather than services, and driving the delivery of coordinated access and response through strong, established relationships with partner service providers. This approach allows Femili PNG to take on high-risk cases that would otherwise fall through the cracks of regular service delivery mechanisms.

Since opening in Lae in 2013, Femili PNG has trained other organisations in case management, and in September 2018 opened a new office in Port Moresby. Femili PNG has been described as ‘the glue between the police force, courts, health systems and women’s shelters’.



STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

Australia recognises climate resilience, sustainable environmental management and biodiversity conservation as the foundation of long-term economic and social development.

Australia goes beyond traditional environmental safeguards to effectively address climate change and environmental risks while seeking opportunities to make positive environmental and climate impacts. Australia prioritises initiatives and models, such as innovative green infrastructure approaches, ecosystem-based resource management, and nature-based disaster risk reduction solutions, that deliver social, economic and environmental benefits. Mainstreaming environmental sustainability and climate change action builds on Australia's strengths in inclusive development. As outlined above, Australia should enhance its commitment to mainstreaming climate change in the development program by ensuring 90 per cent of all new development investments over \$10 million incorporate climate change risk, impacts and opportunities.



AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS PROGRAM – A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

The Australian Volunteers Program has existed since the 1960s. It is delivered by AVI in consortium with Cardno and the Whitelum Group. In 2017-18, the program enabled 1,097 Australians to volunteer in 723 organisations in 26 countries.

Since 2013, the program has focused on improving disability inclusion across programs by increasing the allocation of volunteers to assignments that focus on disability and inclusion, and increasing the participation of volunteers who have disabilities.

The volunteers program supported volunteer assignments seeking to mainstream inclusion, disability inclusiveness training and a specific small grants initiative for disability inclusion. The program also trialled the use of shorter volunteer deployments to promote the participation of people with a disability, and facilitated a Disability Empowerment Skills Exchange, where Australians living with disabilities were able to share knowledge and skills with Disabled Peoples Organisations in Fiji and Laos. Between 2012-13 and 2016-17, the percentage of new assignments for volunteers with disabilities increased from 10 per cent to 18 per cent.

UNDERSTAND WHAT WORKS, DO WHAT WORKS

Australia invests in what works using evidence-informed decision making.

Evidence-informed decisions are essential to development impact and high-quality policy and programming. High-performing, value-for-money programs and partnerships that have proven effectiveness will continue to be supported. Budget reallocations will be determined by informed, accurate, and easily-accessible evidence to ensure a holistic and balanced approach to programming.

BE TRANSPARENT

Australia commits to ensuring transparency and accountability by regularly publishing informative reports on the program and engaging in open and accountable governance processes.

Transparency and accountability to local communities, the Australian public and development partners is a cornerstone of our development efforts, including areas of decision making, budget, and allocation.

Australia enhances the publicly available information on the development program and implements more open and accountable governance processes and feedback loops for monitoring the performance of the development program. (See discussion below on *Bilateral Advisory Committee oversight of 10-year Development Cooperation Agreements*).

Australia continues in its commitment to the International Aid Transparency Initiative Principles and places a particular focus on accountability to local partners and communities.



FAMILY PLANNING AUSTRALIA WORKING TO PREVENT CERVICAL CANCER IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable and treatable forms of cancer if detected early and effectively. However, screening is not routinely available in most Pacific nations. In the Solomon Islands, women are dying at up to 11 times the rate of Australian women.

During 2015-18, with the support of ANCP funding, Family Planning Australia worked with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) to develop a cervical cancer screening and treatment pilot program.

By 2018, screening services were being provided at 11 sites in the Solomon Islands. As a result of the success of the pilot, the Solomon Islands MHMS agreed to scale up the program in 2019-20 towards national implementation. This significant national scale-up of the program will save lives, improve health outcomes, and contribute to the nation's achievement of the SDGs.

TELL THE STORY

Australia commits to proactively and effectively communicating about the development cooperation program.

The support of the Australian people underpins backing for effective and dynamic development cooperation.

The policy and performance framework is accompanied by a strategic communications strategy and resources which engages the public on the quality and impact of the Australian development cooperation program. Its impact is measured by public opinion polling.

An Australian development cooperation parliamentary program, similar to the ADF Parliamentary Program, builds on the long-standing, people-to-people links and educational exchanges between Australia and its neighbours.⁹



NEW ZEALAND PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has refreshed its understanding of public perceptions of international development by commissioning extensive research. Its purpose is to inform a communications and outreach strategy that builds public engagement. In implementing a new strategic communications campaign, Australia should comprehensively re-examine Australian attitudes.



UK DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

DFID's Communications Division's objectives (2013) determine how the Department communicates to the UK public. It seeks to:

- Demonstrate to the public UK government support is saving lives and giving the world's poorest countries the chance to lift themselves out of extreme poverty for good;
- Improve the UK public's understanding that development creates a safer, more stable and more prosperous world for British people and British business; and
- Demonstrate that the UK government is investing effectively and efficiently to achieve results and progress.

It strictly prioritises these areas to achieve this:

- Economic development: ending aid dependency through jobs;
- Unlocking the potential of girls and women; and
- Leading in emergencies

To effectively communicate Australia's development cooperation program, DFAT requires the following elements: a strategic communications strategy which includes, direction, planning, prioritisation and a system of measurement and evaluation. This must include regular public opinion polling.

A woman who has received training and support from the Technical and Vocational Education and Training program. Photo: Connor Ashleigh/ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



Key Implementation Challenges and Solutions for Government

This section outlines ACFID's proposed solutions to implementation challenges the Government will face in adopting a new Development Cooperation Policy.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION BUDGET

Challenge the Government is facing:

Australia's ODA budget is at its lowest level in history. The repeated reductions and reprioritising of ODA undermines its effectiveness and its value to building Australia's relationships – a key foundation of Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper.¹⁰

Bolstering assistance to the Pacific region without increasing the overall budget impacts lives and Australian relations in strategic areas of the world such as Pakistan.¹¹ South East Asia remains critical to Australia's peace and prosperity, yet the current budget does not allow the Government to maintain critical development investments where needed.

As the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance grows, so too does the gap between funding required and funding received, with Australia delaying commencement of humanitarian funding committed to in the Foreign Policy White Paper.

*Solution for the Government:*¹²

Following the recommendation from the 2019 bipartisan report of the Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade,¹³ the Australian Government should establish a timeline of five years maximum, for increasing Australia's development cooperation funding to 0.5 per cent of GNI, and ten years for an increase to 0.7 per cent. This should be enshrined in legislation, in line with our global counterparts.

The Australian Government should urgently meet Australia's commitment to funding humanitarian action of \$500 million per year (as outlined in the Foreign Policy White Paper) and scale up to meet our fair share of global humanitarian assistance to be at a minimum, \$696 million per year¹⁴ as outlined in the submission to the New International Development Policy from the ACFID Humanitarian Reference Group.

All new policy and project proposals should be funded with new budget. Reprioritisation of ODA should not be ad-hoc, but instead done according to clear and transparent investment criteria which

includes development needs and aspirations of partner countries, evidence of positive impact over the long term, and consistent with the purpose of the new Development Cooperation Policy. Re-prioritisation of ODA spending should be undertaken transparently and based on evidence.

INVEST IN PEOPLE AS CRITICAL TO REGIONAL RESILIENCE

Challenge the Government is facing:

As highlighted in DFAT's Incoming Government brief, 'Increasing illiberalism, including rising human rights abuses, democratic backsliding and closing space for civil society risk impacting on the prosperity and stability of states in the region'.¹⁵ Further, the State of Civil Society Report 2019¹⁶ shows civic space is closing and only 3 per cent of the world's population are living in countries with where their fundamental rights are protected and respected.

At a time where there is an acute need to re-orient the development cooperation program towards generating strong and enduring relationships between Australia and the world, Australia's investment to and through civil society and civil society organisations (CSOs) has been in consistent decline.¹⁷ A failure to invest in the future of state-civilian relations in our region undermines development objectives and regional stability. It is also a missed opportunity to build critical people-to-people linkages between Australia and the region.

Solution for the Government:

Australia should make all efforts to prevent the closing of civic space in the region.

A civil institution target should be established, aimed at driving international development program performance on building open, resilient and inclusive governance. The introduction of such a target will assist in elevating the importance of civic space and its role in good governance as part of all country strategies, political economy analysis and investment performance. It will assist in aligning the existing focus

in DFAT on gender, disability and social inclusion, people-to-people links and diplomatic relationships.

A new civil society partnerships strategy should be established by the DFAT for peace and stability building through local and Australian CSOs. This should include initiatives such as fostering engagement between CSOs and the private sector through trilateral partnerships, blended finance instruments or matched funding.

Measures should be introduced to increase the proportion of Australian ODA channelled to and through civil society to 20 per cent, for both humanitarian and development funding. This is commensurate with OECD averages but would still fall behind leaders such as Sweden at 40 per cent.

Australian development procurement processes should engage, strengthen and work more with CSOs in program design and project implementation. In addition, tenderers should demonstrate how they propose to engage, strengthen and work with civil society.

BEYOND 'AID INVESTMENT PLANS' TOWARDS 'TOTAL AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS'

Challenge the Government is facing:

Almost all Aid Investment Plans (AIPs), which set the strategic framework for the provision of bilateral and regional DFAT administered Australian ODA, have expired. AIPs operate on a timeframe that is shorter than required to see real change, and do not adequately capture Australian efforts beyond ODA towards development goals. (As nations in the Asia-Pacific, such as Malaysia, become ineligible to receive ODA, Australia will be required to adapt its relationship 'beyond ODA'. The Australian Government also maintains Other Official Flows (OOF) which are defined as official sector transactions but do not meet ODA criteria.)

Solution for the Government:

The Australian Government should establish clear, whole-of-government country strategies to guide engagement in the region, aligned to Australian foreign policy objectives. Country strategies should be an expression of the Australian Government's policy intentions at a strategic level. They should refer to implementing the goals of the new Development Cooperation Policy where the country is a recipient of ODA.

For countries with whom Australia has a development assistance partnership, Australia should also establish tailored 10-year development cooperation agreements which set out partner country development aspirations, and Australia's agreed areas of contribution.

These agreements should be developed in alignment with the new Australian Development Cooperation Policy, and through a process of extensive consultation and co-design with government and non-government actors in partner countries and Australia. An Interdepartmental Committee which includes representatives from the development sector and civil society should be established to coordinate ODA efforts. All Australian agencies engaged in ODA-funded and non-ODA funded but development-oriented work should align their work to the 10-year development cooperation agreements. In 2019-20, \$444m of the \$4.044bn ODA budget will be delivered by other government departments making it vital that it is coordinated and aligned.

Monitoring of these agreements should be complemented by rigorous measurement of Australia's performance from partner-nations' perspectives. Regular feedback loops and perception tests on Australia's bilateral and regional programs will allow them to be responsive, locally driven and more likely to generate stronger and more enduring relationships. The Government should establish an oversight advisory committee comprising local actors from both nations to advise Government on the quality and performance of the bilateral program.

COUNTRY STRATEGIES AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

	Country Strategy	10-year development cooperation agreement
Purpose	Set out Australian Government strategy	Set out partner country development aspirations, and Australia’s agreed areas of contribution
Policy authority	Australian Government foreign policy (White Paper)	Australian Development Cooperation Policy Partner country sustainable development policy or plan
Process	Whole-of-Government, in consultation with key actors	Co-design between partner nations including Government and non-Government actors
Monitoring	Regular Australian Government policy monitoring process	Regular ODA Performance Framework processes, informed by bilateral advisory committee comprising government and non-government representatives from each nation to ensure regular feedback loops and adaptive programming according to partner interests.

BALANCING FLEXIBILITY WITH CONSISTENCY

Challenge the Government is facing:

Australia is committed to delivering development assistance in accordance with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) principles and standards. This promotes consistent, ethical expenditure for globally agreed development purposes. Some perceive this as lacking flexibility for key decision makers to use the development assistance budget for a range of purposes which fall beyond the OECD guidance, but which are nonetheless considered to be in the interests of Australia or partner nations.

Solution for the Government:

It is in Australia’s interest to continue to foster good donorship for existing and emerging donors. Australia has much to be proud of in the history of its international development program, and peer nations look to Australia in some areas as leaders in the delivery of ODA. The OECD DAC principles are expansive, providing guidance on blended finance, private sector, social impact, triangular cooperation, civil society engagement, conflict, fragility and resilience amongst other things.

The OECD DAC principles enable significant flexibility within which Australia can operate a highly effective development assistance program. ACFID supports an adaptive approach to all development projects but cautions that this must be within the strategic constraint of long-term goals and evidence-based decision making for the overall development cooperation program.

This long-term vision for development is what generates development impact, as well as deriving trust and legitimacy in Australia’s bilateral relations. Ad-hoc decision making under the guise of flexibility is counterproductive. Budget allocated for expenditure on sustainable development purposes should be spent in accordance with OECD DAC principles, noting that this is only one component of Australia’s international relations budget portfolio and that other budget portfolios may be better suited to pursuing a broader variety of activities.

RESOURCE DFAT TO LEAD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Challenge the Government is facing:

Expenditure on international relations in Australia has dropped from 9 per cent in 1959 to 1.3 per cent now. DFAT’s budget has been in relative decline while the budgets of Defence, ASIO and the Secret Intelligence Service have seen increases of 291 per cent, 528 per cent and 578 per cent respectively.¹⁸ The government’s move towards a whole-of-government (and whole-of-society) contribution to sustainable development is not matched by the capacity to coordinate and evaluate such efforts.

Solution for the Government:

Australia should properly resource, through funding and capability, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This includes reimagining the Department’s role as a central point of authority, leadership, communication, coordination and advice to Government and non-Government development actors. It also includes investing in new and more inclusive development governance models alongside improving key capabilities such as development program design, delivery and performance management.



If you don’t fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition.

The more that we put into the State Department’s diplomacy, hopefully the less we have to put into a military budget.

Former United States Secretary of Defense, James N. Mattis

PERFORMANCE

Please refer to the joint submission to the review by ACFID, the Research for Development Impact (RDI) Network, and the Development Practice Committee (DPC).¹⁹

Endnotes

SUBMISSION ENDNOTES

- Australia focuses its attention on generating outcomes for the bottom 60 per cent of the population by income in the Pacific, and the bottom 40 per cent elsewhere. World Bank, 'End Extreme Poverty and Promote Shared Responsibility' (Report, World Bank, 2013) 7. <<https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/WB-goals2013.pdf>>
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ANNEX 2:

List of ACFID Members

FULL MEMBERS:

ACC International Relief
Act for Peace - NCCA
Action on Poverty
ActionAid Australia
Adara Development Australia
ADRA Australia
Afghan Australian Development Organisation
Anglican Aid
Anglican Board of Mission - Australia Limited
Anglican Overseas Aid
Anglican Relief and Development Fund Australia
Asian Aid Organisation
Assisi Aid Projects
Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine
Australia for UNHCR
Australian Cervical Cancer Foundation
Australian Doctors for Africa
Australian Doctors International
Australian Himalayan Foundation
Australian Lutheran World Service
Australian Marist Solidarity Ltd
Australian Medical Aid Foundation
Australian Mercy
Australian Red Cross
Australian Respiratory Council
AVI
Beyond the Orphanage
Birthing Kit Foundation (Australia)
BridgIT Water Foundation
Brien Holden Vision Institute Foundation
Bright Futures Child Aid and Development Fund (Australia)
Burnet Institute
Business for Development
CabrinI Outreach
CARE Australia
Caritas Australia
CBM Australia
ChildFund Australia

CLAN (Caring and Living as Neighbours)
Compass Housing
Cufa
Diaspora Action Australia
Diplomacy Training Program
Door of Hope Australia Inc.
Edmund Rice Foundation (Australia)
EDO NSW
Engineers without Borders
Every Home Global Concern
Fairtrade Australia New Zealand
Family Planning NSW
Foresight (Overseas Aid and Prevention of Blindness)
Fred Hollows Foundation, The
Friends of Femili PNG
Global Development Group
Global Mission Partner
Good Return
Graceworks Myanmar
Habitat for Humanity Australia
Hagar Australia
HealthServe Australia
HOST International
Indigo Foundation*
International Christian Aid and Relief Enterprises
International Justice Mission Australia
International Needs Australia
International Nepal Fellowship (Aust) Ltd
International Women’s Development Agency
Interplast Australia & New Zealand
Islamic Relief Australia
KTF (Kokoda Track Foundation)
Kyeema Foundation
Leprosy Mission Australia, The
Live & Learn Environmental Education
Love Mercy Foundation
MAA International
Mahboba’s Promise Australia
Marie Stopes International Australia
Marist Mission Centre
Mary MacKillop Today

Mary Ward International Australia
Mercy Works Ltd.
Mission World Aid Inc.
MIT Group Foundation
Motivation Australia
Murdoch Children’s Research Institute
NTA East Indonesia Aid
Oaktree Foundation
Opportunity International Australia
Our Rainbow House
Oxfam Australia
Palmera Projects
Partner Housing Australasia
Partners in Aid
People with Disability Australia
Plan International Australia
Quaker Service Australia
RedR Australia
Reledev Australia
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
Salesian Missions
Salvation Army International Development
Save the Children Australia
School for Life Foundation
SeeBeyondBorders
Sight For All
So They Can
Sport Matters
Surf Aid International
SUSTAIN Projects Myanmar
Symbiosis International
TEAR Australia
Transform Aid International (incorporating Baptist World Aid)
UNICEF Australia
Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA
UnitingWorld
Water for a Village
WaterAid Australia
World Hope International Australia
World Vision Australia
WWF-Australia
YWAM Medical Ships

ANNEX 3:

ACFID External Reference Group

AFFILIATE MEMBERS

- Asia Pacific Journalism Centre
- Australian Federation of AIDS Organizations
- Australian National University – School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences
- Charles Darwin University – Menzies School of Health Research
- Deakin University – Alfred Deakin Research Institute
- Global Health Alliance Australia
- James Cook University – The Cairns Institute
- La Trobe University – Institute of Human Security and Social Change
- Monash Sustainable Development Institute
- Murdoch University – School of Management and Governance
- National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance
- Queensland University of Technology – School of Public Health and Social Work
- Refugee Council of Australia
- RESULTS Australia
- Swinburne University of Technology Centre for Design Innovation
- Transparency International Australia
- United Nations Association of Australia
- Unity Housing
- University of Adelaide - Dept of Anthropology and Development Studies
- University of Melbourne – School of Social and Political Sciences
- University of New South Wales- International
- University of Queensland – Institute for Social Science Research
- University of Sydney – Office of Global Engagement
- University of Technology, Sydney – Institute for Sustainable Futures
- University of Western Australia – School of Social Sciences
- Vision 2020
- Western Sydney University- School of Social Sciences and Psychology
- * Denotes Interim Full Member
- ** Denotes Interim Affiliate Member

The following experts provided insights and input to this submission during various stages of its development:

- Sally Baker**
Social and Disability Inclusion Advisor– Pacific and Asia
- Roger Burton**
Chairman, Micah Australia
- Melissa Conley Tyler**
Director, Asialink, University of Melbourne
- Aaron Davy**
Standards and Humanitarian Manager, Council for International Development New Zealand
- Dr Robert Glasser**
Visiting Fellow, Australian Strategic Policy Institute
- Allan Gynge AO**
National President, Australian Institute of International Affairs
- Linda Kelly**
Director, Praxis Consultants
- Josie Pagani**
Director, Council for International Development New Zealand
- Professor Brendan Sergeant**
Head, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Studies, Australian National University and former Associate Secretary of Defence
- Dr Pichamon Yeophantong**
DECRA Fellow, Australian Research Council and Senior Lecturer, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, UNSW Canberra at the Australian Defence Force Academy

In the Philippines, many children with disabilities are segregated from other learners because they attend Special Education schools. International evidence shows there are numerous benefits to shifting to inclusive classrooms for all children. The Philippines-Australia Basic Education Sector Transformation (BEST) Program supports teachers to improve their capability for managing inclusive learning classrooms.

Photo: Basic Education Sector Transformation Program/Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade





AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

पहिलो हुने निर्वाचित हुने निर्वाचन प्रणालीको
ल्याउने उम्मेदवार विजयी हुन्छ ।

The candidate securing the high
number of votes in the election
be declared the winner in the First
Past the Post Electoral system




Cover photo: A group of students
go through the interactive learning
process at the Electoral Educational
and Information Centre with an
electronic vote counter, Nepal.
Photo by Jim Holmes for AusAID.

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 <https://acfid.asn.au>

 main@acfid.asn.au

 +61 2 6285 1816

 @ACFID

 /ACFID

 /ACFID

 ACFID, 14 Napier Close, Deakin, ACT 2600