Strengthening Australia’s relationships with countries in the Pacific Region

ACFID appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Joint Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade’s examination of the conditions necessary to strengthen Australia’s relationships with the countries of the Pacific region to meet current and emerging opportunities and risks facing the region.

CONTENTS

ACFID’s Submission to JSCFADT follows in four parts:

PART I
The Pacific Context

PART II
Strengthening Australia’s Pacific Step-Up

Inquiry Reference: The implementation of Australia’s Pacific Step-up as a whole-of-government effort to deepen and coordinate Australia’s Pacific initiatives

PART III
Inclusive Development Relationships

Inquiry Reference: Exploring prospects to strengthen and broaden Australian engagement in the Pacific Step-up, through non-government and community-based linkages, and leveraging interest groups such as the Pacific diaspora

PART IV
Maximising Relationship Dividends from Development Impact

Inquiry Reference: Measures to ensure Step-up initiatives reflect the priority needs of the governments and people of Pacific island countries
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Now, perhaps more than ever, “the quality of Australia’s relationships with its Pacific Island neighbours has a direct bearing on Australia’s security interests and the security of the wider neighbourhood.”

A fractured global order and intensified competition between great powers has resulted in a more contested and complex geopolitical environment for Australia and its Pacific neighbours.

These trends have been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic — the world’s largest peacetime crisis since the end of World War II — and its disruptive effects on international health, prosperity, and stability. Australia’s world-leading success in tackling the domestic health and economic consequences of the virus place us in a unique and important position to work with our partners in the Pacific to tackle our shared regional challenges.

But the window of opportunity is small and is narrowing. Australia must seize this opportunity to cement and enhance its position as an international partner of choice for the Pacific. How we respond in the coming months will be remembered for decades to come and it will shape Australia’s capacity to navigate the inevitable future crises — including those associated with climate change — that will confront us and our region on the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Australia to continue to build credibility as a trusted development partner and foster confidence, stability, and sustainability in the Pacific region, ACFID presents the following recommendations to the Australian Government:

**Recommendation 1:** In implementing its Partnerships for Recovery strategy, the Government should re-balance the focus of ODA expenditure in accordance with ACFID’s proposed strategic framework for a new Australian Development Cooperation Policy. This includes ensuring that 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. This has never been more important as the COVID-19 pandemic threatens a catastrophic reversal of poverty trends in our region.

**Recommendation 2:** The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) lead the design and implementation of a whole-of-government Performance Framework against which to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Pacific Step-Up.

**Recommendation 3:** Ensure that Australia’s ongoing support for the global and regional COVID-19 response and recovery does not come at the expense of other parts of the Pacific Step-Up, our wider Asia-Pacific development partnerships or our existing multilateral commitments by allocating a new, one-off $2 billion injection into the international development program over four years in the 2020–21 Federal Budget.

**Recommendation 4:** 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.

**Recommendation 5:** Urgently meet the commitment in the White Paper to provide $500 million annually in global humanitarian assistance and, as outlined in the ACFID Humanitarian Reference Group’s submission to the New International Development Policy, move to scale this commitment up to meet our fair share of global humanitarian assistance by providing at least $696 million per year.

**Recommendation 6:** Ensure that new infrastructure financing in the Pacific is positioned to support the Pacific’s recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and is climate-resilient, gender-sensitive and bundled with grant-funded “soft infrastructure” or community development initiatives.

**Recommendation 7:** Use the Research for Development Impact Network’s principles for inclusive and sustainable infrastructure in the Pacific in planning any new Pacific infrastructure investments.

**Recommendation 8:** Consistent with official medical advice and in consultation with Pacific Island governments, businesses and civil society organisations, the Australian Government must support a safe, staged resumption of regional
economic ties, including Pacific labour mobility and support for Pacific workers in Australia to remit their income.

**Recommendation 9:** Establish clear, whole-of-government country strategies to guide engagement in the region, aligned to Australian foreign policy objectives, co-designed with government and non-government actors in partner countries and Australia.

**Recommendation 10:** Establish an oversight advisory committee comprising local actors from both nations to advise Government on the quality and performance of the bilateral program.

**Recommendation 11:** Increase the proportion of Australian ODA channelled to and through civil society to 20 per cent, for both humanitarian and development funding.

**Recommendation 12:** Establish a new ‘Development for All Strategy to 2030’ as part of driving long-term disability inclusivity, with a focus on the Indo-Pacific.

**Recommendation 13:** Raise the performance target of investments effectively addressing gender equality issues in their implementation, to 85 per cent by 2023.

**Recommendation 14:** Develop a Youth Strategy to guide implementation of the new Partnerships for Recovery policy.

**Recommendation 15:** Enhance Australia’s commitment to mainstreaming climate change in the development program by ensuring 90 per cent of all new development cooperation investments programs over $10 million incorporate climate change risk, impacts and opportunities.

**Recommendation 16:** Invest in an Australian development cooperation parliamentary program focused on the Pacific.

**Recommendation 17:** Resource DFAT to lead Australia’s sustainable development engagement in the Pacific.

Bridi Rice, Director of Policy and Advocacy
Australian Council for International Development
DEVELOPMENT IS AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITY, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE PACIFIC

There is enormous diversity across the Pacific Islands region, ranging from Papua New Guinea (PNG)—the Pacific’s largest country with a current population of over 8.5 million and which is projected to reach 30 million by 2050—to Tuvalu and Nauru, with current estimated populations around 11,000 each. As the World Bank has observed, “these latter countries are small in size with limited natural resources, narrowly-based economies, large distances from major markets, and vulnerability to external shocks, all of which can affect growth and have often led to a high degree of economic volatility”.2

In the larger countries such as PNG, there are limited formal job opportunities for the growing employment age population. Other risks include environmental management, population growth, political fragmentation, economic inequality, and social exclusion of some groups. Pacific Island countries are also some of the most vulnerable in the world to the effects of climate change and natural disasters. The unfolding human development and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the Pacific’s unique vulnerabilities.

But the Pacific also possesses enormous sources of strength and resilience, including community-based social safety nets, deep church, sporting and other civic networks, and local forms of environmentally sustainable resource management. These strengths are reflected in a diverse array of Pacific conversations about the region’s future, many of which centre upon the importance of inclusive and sustainable development. At the local level, this includes conversations about how local forms of knowledge and support can best help communities prepare for and respond to natural and climate-related disasters. At the national level, they include conversations about how Pacific Island countries can best reap the economic and development opportunities arising from a more diverse set of external trade, investment, and aid partners. At the regional level, these conversations are focused on the development possibilities surrounding the “Blue Pacific” agenda and expanded conceptions of security like those included in the 2017 Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific3 and the 2018 Boe Declaration which focus on human security, humanitarian assistance, environmental security, and building resilience to disasters and climate change.4

EFFECTIVE, LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS THAT ARE RESPONSIVE TO PACIFIC VOICES AND PRIORITIES WILL BE A CRITICAL DETERMINANT OF THE QUALITY OF AUSTRALIA’S RELATIONSHIPS

The extent to which Australia is able to strengthen effective, long-term development partnerships that are responsive to Pacific voices and priorities will be a critical determinant of our ability to be included in these conversations, build deeper relationships and continue to be regarded as a ‘partner of choice’ in the region. By respecting the Pacific’s strengths, recognising our shared history and interests, and drawing upon Australia’s own expertise, we are in a position through our development cooperation program to work in genuine partnership with our Pacific neighbours. Genuine partnership will facilitate co-design and delivery of investments that can change people’s lives through better education, improved health, increased political and economic agency for women and enhanced economic opportunity.

In short, this means co-designing our cooperation and co-designing our future. This process of co-design will require a genuine commitment to listening to Pacific voices, increased and predictable resourcing of our development and diplomatic capabilities and jointly assessing our results and impact in collaboration with partners and communities. In contrast, attempts to use Australia’s development cooperation program to either impose our own vision of what development in the Pacific should look like or, alternatively, frame it exclusively in terms of geo-political competition, are likely to be viewed negatively by
the region and will fail to achieve either national interest or development objectives.

In this context, ACFID draws the Committee’s attention to the 2020 Whitlam Institute policy research project, *Pacific Perspectives on the World: Listening to Australia’s Island Neighbours in order to build strong, respectful and sustainable relationships*. Led by the peacebuilding NGO Peacifica and a group of Pacific and Australian researchers, the research found that Australia’s engagement in the region risks being perceived as motivated more by Australian-centric objectives, rather than Pacific interests. This diminishes Australia’s standing in the context of rising geopolitical competition in the region. According to Leanne Smith, Whitlam Institute Director:

“While Australia is perceived to have a long-term historic relationship with the region, and the Pacific Step Up brings a focus to that relationship, one of the critiques that our research has revealed is that it is perceived to be a unilateral Australian initiative, something being done ‘to’ the Pacific rather than ‘with’ countries of the region.”

Professor Brendan Sargeant, head of the ANU’s Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, has argued in similar terms:

“*Australia needs a larger vision of the Indo-Pacific as a community in which the broader strategic goal is directed towards building shared community interests... This might be a more productive long-term framing of the Indo-Pacific idea in the context of the Pacific Islands, rather than just seeing them as an arena for an emerging strategic competition between major powers.*”

**DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS THAT ARE PACIFIC-LED, INCLUSIVE AND BUILD RESILIENCE WILL BE CRITICAL TO THE PACIFIC’S ABILITY TO MANAGE FUTURE CRINES AND INTENSIFIED STRATEGIC COMPETITION**

As well as advancing our own interests and influence, effective, long-term development partnerships that elevate local voices will strengthen the ability of Pacific communities, nations and the region to meet shared development and security challenges, including the negative impacts of climate change. COVID-19 shows that stability and prosperity require several preconditions. We need capable, sovereign, and accountable governments. We need communities with voice, and multilateral institutions that reflect shared values, aspirations, and goals. This will also strengthen the region’s ability to gain access to additional sources of development financing whilst resisting forms of external influence that might seek to impose their own vision upon Pacific communities through economic coercion and other forms of foreign interference.
A principled and well-designed Development Cooperation Policy and Program, sustained through long-term partnerships, is a principal and critical tool of Australian foreign policy.

Alongside diplomatic, trade and defence cooperation, our development investments have earned Australia a reputation as a committed, enduring, 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 economic governance, gender equality, disability inclusion and humanitarian action to save lives. This history has contributed in no small part to Australia’s strong regional relationships.

However, in recent years Australia development efforts have faltered. Alongside cuts to DFAT’s diplomatic budget, the resourcing of our international development budget has seen sustained reductions and, under the banner of “flexibility”, a shift to short-term issues management. As millions in our region face the prospect of falling into poverty as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, these trends must be arrested and reversed. They must be replaced with long-term investments that are properly planned and resourced and that can help us reap the relationship dividends associated with positioning Australia as a genuine and credible “partner of choice”.

ACFID welcomes the Australian Government’s renewed engagement the Pacific, including the creation of the Office of the Pacific within DFAT and the Australian Government’s Pacific Step-Up initiative. Consistent with Australia’s national interests — outlined in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper — in supporting a peaceful, prosperous, and cooperative region, poverty alleviation and sustainable development must remain the focus of this increased investment.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, ACFID also welcomes the new Partnerships for Recovery Strategy, released by DFAT in May, which includes a strong focus on the Pacific, as well as Timor-Leste and Southeast Asia. We appreciate the enormous effort that has gone into supporting our region through this crisis, including DFAT’s support for
NGO partners to pivot and target development assistance programs.

While the Pacific has largely been protected from the health crisis to date, the region faces a severe and unprecedented economic shock from COVID-19. Analysis by the ANU’s Development Policy Centre predicts that a 20 per cent contraction in household income arising from movement and economic restrictions imposed to contain COVID-19 would result in an additional 1.2 million people in the Pacific and Timor-Leste being pushed into extreme poverty, an increase of over 40 per cent on pre-COVID-19 levels — “the impact will be especially sizeable in PNG where hundreds of thousands of people would be pushed into extreme poverty”.10

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic — and in response to the Australian Government’s planned review of Australia’s development cooperation policy — in late 2019 and early 2020 ACFID worked closely with our members and experts to develop a comprehensive submission outlining the steps required to place Development Cooperation at the heart of Australian Foreign Policy. ACFID draws the Committee’s attention to the submission, available on ACFID’s website, as its key messages speak directly to the Terms of Reference for this inquiry.11

The submission calls for a bipartisan focus on human development and poverty alleviation, prioritisation of those furthest behind, the establishment of contemporary development partnerships, and regional leadership on rising illiberalism and climate change, supported by a rising budget trajectory.

COVID-19 AND INDO-PACIFIC HEALTH SECURITY

As the COVID-19 crisis has vividly demonstrated, shifting disease patterns and pandemics represent a direct risk to Australia’s strategic and economic 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 pandemic 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.
In line with the Australian Government’s interests in a peaceful, prosperous, and cooperative region, the success of the new Partnerships for Recovery implementation should be measured in terms of its contributions to human development and poverty alleviation. Implementation of the policy should be resolutely focused on the people and communities of Australia’s partner-nations.

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 development investment 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. In May 2020, 72 per cent of the Australian public supported the provision of expertise and increased financial support to the poorest nations to help tackle COVID-19.

Australia’s focus for the Pacific needs to be investing proportionate to development needs, recognising that core development investments should be the primary focus of the development cooperation program, but that each country requires a different mixture of investments to achieve their sustainable development aspirations. Australia’s investments should be 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. 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.

MEET EXISTING AND NEW COMMITMENTS THROUGH A PLANNED AND PREDICTABLE APPROACH TO INCREASED ODA

ACFID recommends that that DFAT lead the design and implementation of a whole-of-government Performance Framework against which to assess the impact of the Pacific Step-Up. The Framework should set out the anticipated development outcomes that are expected to come with record levels of investment in the region, as well as specific indicators against which to measure Australia’s objectives in terms of strengthened relationships in the Pacific.

The Framework would inform annual assessments of the Pacific Step-Up and its supporting initiatives across the Australian Government. It would do so by establishing a baseline against which to assess whether Australia’s development and diplomatic efforts in the Pacific are delivering on their shared objectives, including how they are perceived by our partners and beneficiaries.

In the absence of such a Framework, it will be impossible to assess the overall effectiveness of the Step-Up, measure progress against high-level foreign policy and development objectives and make evidence-based adjustment to policies, programs, and funding.

**Recommendation 2:** The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) lead the design and implementation of a whole-of-government Performance Framework against which to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Pacific Step-Up.

In line with Australia’s stated commitments to development effectiveness and transparency, MEET EXISTING AND NEW COMMITMENTS THROUGH A PLANNED AND PREDICTABLE APPROACH TO INCREASED ODA

**Recommendation 3:** Ensure that Australia’s ongoing support for the global and regional COVID-19 response and recovery does not come at the expense of other parts of the Pacific Step-Up, our wider Asia-Pacific development partnerships or our existing multilateral commitments by allocating a new, one-off $2 billion injection into the international development program over four years in the 2020–21 Federal Budget.

**Recommendation 4:** 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.
While Australia has shifted its focus to its Pacific neighbours, at just 0.2 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) Australia’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget is at its lowest level in history. The Australian Government has cut bilateral development programs in key Indo-Pacific countries such Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam by around 30-40 per cent over the last seven years, abolished bilateral assistance in countries such as Pakistan and reduced or deferred payment of replenishments for global funds that help meet the basic health and education needs of the world’s poorest.

It is well established that development assistance is most effective when it is predictable. Effective development partnerships take time because they require trust with local partners built on knowledge of local contexts. A lack of predictability makes it hard for our partners to plan and, in doing so, undermines trust and the long-term, deep relationships and knowledge that effective development requires.

Recommendation 5: Urgently meet the commitment in the White Paper to provide of $500 million annually in global humanitarian assistance and, as outlined in the ACFID Humanitarian Reference Group’s submission to the New International Development Policy, move to scale this commitment up to meet our fair share of global humanitarian assistance by providing at least $696 million per year.13

THE AUSTRALIAN NGO COOPERATION PROGRAM: DELIVERING RESULTS THROUGH LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS

NGOs and civil society have been working in partnership with the Australian Government, particularly through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), for over 40 years to deliver development outcomes. 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.14 These results represent a clear opportunity to leverage greater investment in the resourcing of NGOs to deliver outcomes for Australia’s development program. This notable result was achieved in cooperation with Government, utilising the expertise, networks, and partnerships of NGOs, thereby extending the reach of Australia’s development cooperation program.

ANCP members contribute $1 for every $5 received from the Australian Government. 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 engagement with marginalisation and exclusion that would likely otherwise remain unreachable.
As well as undermining development effectiveness, the repeated cuts to, and reprioritising of the ODA budget, diminish Australia’s ability to advance our interests by building stronger bilateral relationships and projecting “soft power”—key objectives of Australia’s 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper.

Bolstering assistance to the Pacific region by cutting other development programs directly undermines Australian interests and influence in other strategically important parts of the Asia-Pacific, including Southeast Asia and South Asia. It is short sighted and unrealistic to expect Australia to foster the degree of confidence and stability required to remain a ‘partner of choice’ when Australia’s ODA as a proportion of GNI has consistently been in decline.

For these reasons, ACFID has called for the ongoing support for COVID-19 response and recovery efforts to be funded over and above the existing aid budget. Specifically, we propose that the Australian Government allocate a new, one-off injection of $2 billion over four years into the development assistance program at the 2020–21 Federal Budget (see Figure 1). This would help ensure that our focus on COVID-19 response does not come at the expense of our other aspects of the Pacific Step-Up, our existing multilateral commitments, our other Indo-Pacific development partnerships and global humanitarian assistance.

COVID-19 is a once-in-a-century threat to health and livelihoods, and the Government’s ambition to become the Indo-Pacific ‘partner of choice’ in response to this pandemic is the right one. But to date, the Government has only drawn on the existing development cooperation budget and has repurposed existing programs in its response. Domestically, the Government has rightfully pulled out all the stops in responding to COVID-19. Our response into the region needs to do the same.
**GLOBAL RESPONSE | $800M**

**EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM**

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<tr>
<td>Protect the world’s most vulnerable by providing Australia’s fair share of global humanitarian funding, including increased support for crises that have escalated due to COVID-19.</td>
<td>$166m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevent second crisis of communicable diseases due to lower vaccination rates.</td>
<td>$300m (GAVI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure equitable and timely access to a COVID-19 vaccine.</td>
<td>$300m</td>
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**REGIONAL RESPONSE AND RECOVERY | $1.2BN**

**PARTNER OF CHOICE FOR OUR NEIGHBOURS**

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<tr>
<td>Strengthen health and frontline services through the provision of testing kits, PPE, medical equipment, WASH and public information campaigns.</td>
<td>$150m</td>
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<tr>
<td>To prevent secondary health impacts, support ongoing foundational health and social care provision in areas such as, non-communicable diseases, maternal and child health and gender-based violence prevention.</td>
<td>$300m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthen the resilience, inclusiveness, and accessibility of health systems to support COVID-19 preparedness and beyond.</td>
<td>$200m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support a COVID-safe and inclusive economic recovery that builds back better by advancing the interests of all people left behind and ensures that all assistance provided is compatible with the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement.</td>
<td>$350m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protect vulnerable groups who have no/limited access to social protection, social safety nets and/or food security in the wake of the economic downturn.</td>
<td>$200m</td>
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**POLICY COHERENCE**

**WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT**

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<td>A safe, staged resumption of regional economic ties, including Pacific labour mobility, and increased support for Pacific workers in Australia to remit their income.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhance the concessionality of the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific in order to finance vital health infrastructure and kick start pro-poor economic recovery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia uses its influence as part of G20, IMF, and Paris Club to push for permanent cancellation of all external debt payments due to be made in 2020 and 2021.</td>
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**Figure 1:** Investing $2 billion of additional funding between 2020/21 to 2023/24 for Australia’s COVID-19 response and recovery
Consistent with the recommendation from the 2019 bipartisan report of the JSCFADT, ACFID also urges the Australian Government 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, consistent with the approach taken by like-minded countries such as the UK. Any major re-prioritisations of ODA spending should be undertaken transparently and based on evidence.

Further, the Australian Government should urgently meet the commitment in the White Paper to provide of $500 million annually in global humanitarian assistance and, as outlined in the ACFID Humanitarian Reference Group’s submission to the New International Development Policy, move to scale this commitment up to meet our “fair share” of global humanitarian assistance by providing at least $696 million per year. The Asia-Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world and Australia plays a major role in supporting Pacific governments and communities prepare for and respond to disasters. Australia must continue to provide this support to the Pacific while also providing its fair share to protracted crises in other regions.

**INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Recommendation 6:** Ensure that new infrastructure financing in the Pacific is positioned to support the Pacific’s recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and is climate-resilient, gender-sensitive and bundled with grant-funded “soft infrastructure” or community development initiatives.

**Recommendation 7:** Use the Research for Development Impact Network’s principles for inclusive and sustainable infrastructure in the Pacific in planning any new Pacific infrastructure investments.

In the shift to a greater focus on infrastructure in the Pacific, Australia must ensure that it does so with development outcomes and beneficiary nations’ interests foremost in their design. Achieving health, education and long-term development outcomes must drive infrastructure investments. The Government is allocating $500 million in grants between FY19/20 and FY22/23 to fund its new $2 billion Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) from within the existing aid budget. As part of the consultations leading up to the establishment of the AIFFP, ACFID called for the Australian Government to ensure that new infrastructure projects were driven by Pacific interests and leadership; were climate-resilient; gender-sensitive; and bundled with “soft infrastructure” or community development initiatives, funded by grants.

Considering the severe economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in the Pacific, ACFID has also called upon the Government to enhance the concessionality of AIFFP loans. The repurposing of the $1.5 billion non-concessional loan component of the AIFFP, into either more concessional loans or grants, would help free-up additional resources to fund social infrastructure such as health facilities and support pro-poor economic recovery, without adding substantially to Pacific debt burdens. This is particularly important for PNG and other Pacific island countries whose international borrowing options are limited and whose only other sources of debt finance rest largely with the multilateral development banks (whose resources are already stretched), or with loans from China. It is worth noting that Australia’s $500 million in reconstruction and development loans to Indonesia — provided by the Howard Government after the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami — were on highly concessional terms, even though Indonesia is a much larger and richer economy than those in the Pacific.

According to the World Economic Forum COVID Action Platform publication, investing in technologically advanced, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure is vital for post-COVID economic recovery: “The ongoing coronavirus crisis has amplified the growing calls for resilient and adaptable infrastructure that can effectively operate during moments of crisis. Given this big opportunity, it is imperative that when the nations of the world look to embark on infrastructure
investment programs, they strive to provide infrastructure that is sustainable, technologically advanced, and resilient. It is the financially, environmentally, and socially responsible thing to do for the world.”

The Research for Development Impact (RDI) Network, in collaboration with Pacific Connections (Australia) produced a 2020 report with seven recommendations to follow for shared decision-making and accountability with respect to Australia increasing its investment into building new roads and facilities in the Pacific. Building Together: Seven principles for engaging civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure in the Pacific islands outlines best practice standards for infrastructure investment in the Pacific based on the understanding that if lasting development outcomes are to be assured, civil society will need to play a greater role in prioritisation, design, implementation and maintenance of new infrastructure in the Pacific islands. (See Figure 2 and 3, below).

Figure 2: From infrastructure ‘outputs’ to development ‘outcomes’.

Building quality infrastructure in the Pacific islands requires meaningful engagement with civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive, and sustainable infrastructure. It means going beyond a narrow focus on building hard assets, to thinking about the ways that new infrastructure, and the services they provide over time, will contribute to lasting development outcomes.
Principle 1 emphasises that civil society is a key partner for the delivery of quality inclusive infrastructure. Ensuring high quality infrastructure means collaborating with civil society in the governance and decision-making around infrastructure and supporting civil society organisations to be involved in the delivery of infrastructure.

Principle 2 explains successful investment in built infrastructure requires corresponding support for ‘soft infrastructure’ – institutional strengthening, policy reform and robust regulatory frameworks are just as important as hard assets, as infrastructure needs to effectively deliver services over time.

Principle 3 suggests renewed investment in infrastructure should be leveraged to strengthen Pacific enterprise. New projects can stimulate economic growth, through employment, skills transfer and capacity development, and through partnership with local business and civil society organisations. Efforts must be intentionally inclusive so that they benefit marginalised groups.

Principle 4 notes that community-driven infrastructure is key for Pacific contexts. Many Pacific islanders live in rural areas, and the state often provides limited services outside island capitals, grant financing for smaller-scale projects is therefore crucial for alleviating hardship.

Principle 5 emphasises that Pacific infrastructure should build resilience to disaster, climate change and environmental risks; more than protecting hard assets, this means ensuring new infrastructure contributes to enhanced community resilience for all and protects the biodiversity upon which Pacific Island communities and economies depend.

Principle 6 explains that, if planned and implemented well, new infrastructure can help to create a safe, inclusive and accessible environment for people with disabilities. Key to this is meaningful engagement with civil society groups representing people with disabilities.

Finally, Principle 7 suggests that all new investment in infrastructure in the Pacific should be designed from the outset to address gender inequality and to ensure it does no harm. Robust mechanisms should be established to monitor outcomes.

Figure 3: Seven principles for implementing good practice and engaging civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure in the Pacific islands.
Infrastructure – and the associated lending – must be guided by criteria which has these sustainable and inclusive development principles embedded. Ultimately, building quality infrastructure in the Pacific islands requires meaningful engagement with civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive, and sustainable infrastructure. Loans must also be accompanied with high levels of social and environmental safeguards and transparency. Debt-servicing to Australia should also not remove public resources for supporting essential services in recipient nations. It is essential that loan-financed infrastructure consider sustainability, including resilience to climate change and ongoing benefits to local communities. This can be achieved through complementary grants to support the systems and institutions for education, health, and governance.

Public, international, multisector expert consultation and co-design needs to take place to establish a credible and transparent infrastructure financing facility – and a sustainable and effective footing for broader development financing – which maximises sustainable and inclusive development, creating mutually beneficial partnerships. Planning for and building quality infrastructure in the Pacific must go beyond a narrow focus on hard assets, to thinking about the ways that new infrastructure, and the services they provide over time, will contribute to lasting development outcomes. It is only through adopting this approach that Australia will distinguish itself – both from the past, and from other donors - as a trusted international partner of choice.

ACFID welcomes the Australian Government’s decision early in the pandemic to extend visas for Pacific and Timorese workers in Australia under the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), enabling them to remain in Australia for up to 12 months. This reflects the important contribution that well-managed and effectively regulated labour mobility can make to incomes and lives of Pacific workers, communities, and countries.

As part of ongoing discussions with New Zealand regarding a trans-Tasman travel corridor and the possible inclusion of some Pacific Island countries in this arrangement, ACFID supports the Australian Government’s ongoing efforts to examine the viability of re-starting Pacific labour mobility programs. These discussions should be made consistent with official medical advice and in consultation with Pacific Island governments, businesses, and civil society representatives. DFAT should also continue to work closely with other parts of the Australian Government to enhance the cost-effectiveness and transparency of platforms to enable Pacific workers remit their income.

**Recommendation 8:** Consistent with official medical advice and in consultation with Pacific Island governments, businesses and civil society organisations, the Australian Government must support a safe, staged resumption of regional economic ties, including Pacific labour mobility and support for Pacific workers in Australia to remit their income.
Part III: Inclusive Development Relationships

It is vital that Australia’s contemporary development partnerships in the Pacific are grounded in clear, long-term whole-of-government strategies that are mutually agreed, implemented, and assessed.

As well as strengthening our bilateral and regional relationships, these strategies present an opportunity to enhance the Australian people’s engagement in the Pacific Step-Up, including community and diaspora groups.

At a time where there is such a strong emphasis on the role that Australia’s values in areas such as democracy, human rights and transparency play in our foreign policy, there is an acute need to re-orient the development cooperation program towards investment to and through civil society organisations.22 Alongside the state and the private sector, effective civil society is a cornerstone of regional stability. Civil society investments also provide a vehicle to diversify vital people-to-people linkages between Australia and the region and build public support for our shared development efforts. This should include continuing to build on Australia’s strengths by investing in gender equality and disability inclusion as cross-cutting focuses. This carries forward Australia’s 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.

**Recommendation 9:** Establish clear, whole-of-government country strategies to guide engagement in the region, aligned to Australian foreign policy objectives, co-designed with government and non-government actors in partner countries and Australia.

Almost all Aid Investment Plans (AIPs), which set the strategic framework for the provision of bilateral and regional DFAT administered Australian ODA, expired this financial year. In its new Partnerships for Recovery policy, the Australian Government has committed to develop new, whole of government country and regional strategies to guide it response and recovery efforts. These country strategies should be developed in a transparent manner, in consultation with partner governments, civil society and implementing partners, including Australian NGOs. They should include both ODA and non-ODA funded programs and include clear, measurable results against which development impact can be assessed.

As set out in the table below, these strategies should be supplemented by 10-year development cooperation agreements developed in consultation with government and non-government actors in partner countries and Australia. 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 positive and more enduring relationships. The Government should establish an oversight advisory committee comprising partner governments and civil society organisations from both nations to advise Government on the quality and performance of the bilateral program.

**Recommendation 10:** Establish an oversight advisory committee comprising local actors from both nations to advise Government on the quality and performance of the bilateral program.
The priority of delivering sustainable and inclusive growth across the Pacific, founded on a basis of addressing inequality, promoting multilateralism, and defending human rights, is as important to regional prosperity and stability as Australia’s diplomatic efforts around trade and national security. As a proud and stable democracy, Australia is well placed to champion the important role of civil society and seek to protect and extend the spaces for civil societies to engage in their own countries and in global policy and governance. It is in Australia’s interests that there be a growing number of free, equal, inclusive, and open societies in the decades ahead.

ACFID recommends that the Australian Government recognise the comparative advantage civil society institutions, including Australian International Development NGOs, deliver in terms of development results, value for money, leveraged financing and soft power gains; and invest proportionately. 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. tenderers should demonstrate how they propose to engage, strengthen, and work with civil society.

ANGOS AND THEIR LOCAL PARTNERS: WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT PACIFIC COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Australian NGOs and their local partners have been working together to support local governments, businesses and communities respond to the health and economic challenge posed by COVID-19 across the Pacific.

In PNG, WaterAid has developed COVID-19 messaging packs and provided briefings to government teams on delivery in East Sepik Province, comprising 1,252 villages/wards in six districts (Boiken Rural, Dagua Rural, Wewak Islands Rural, Wewak Rural, Wewak Urban), engaging with 23 local partners, with a potential reach of 450,000 beneficiaries. The messaging focuses on hand hygiene and includes COVID-19 prevention behaviours: handwashing with soap, respiratory hygiene, maintaining social distancing, cleanliness and food hygiene.

Also in PNG, Australian Doctors International (ADI) has hosted online webinars with Australian alumni doctors and medical technology company, Becton Dickinson (BD) in Australia, into four rural PNG hospitals, training 96 health workers. The webinars covered COVID-19 preparedness, incident management, triaging, logistics, correct
PPE use and managing maternal health during COVID-19. ADI has provided PPE to the PNGDF, including to personnel stationed along the Western Province border where 3 positive COVID-19 cases were identified.

In the Solomon Islands, Mission World Aid partners with Clean Water 4 Life (CW4L) and has a geographic reach across six provinces working alongside 13 local partners. Operating for 10 years, CW4L has developed excellent relationships on the back of significant achievements, including sinking of 490 wells to date and bringing clean water to over 100,000 people in remote communities across several provinces in the Solomon Islands.

CREATE GENUINE, BALANCED PORTFOLIOS WHICH PLAY TO OUR STRENGTHS

Recommendation 12: Establish a new ‘Development for All Strategy to 2030’ as part of driving long-term disability inclusivity, with a focus on the Indo-Pacific.

Recommendation 13: Raise the performance target of investments effectively addressing gender equality issues in their implementation to 85 per cent by 2023.

Recommendation 14: Develop a Youth Strategy to guide implementation of the new Partnerships for Recovery policy.

For over a decade, Australia has been a global leader at the forefront of advancing disability inclusion in international development policy and practice and driving international momentum to include people with disabilities as key agents of development. Australia’s Development for All strategies have been foundational to this global leadership. The inclusion of people with disabilities (about 15 per cent of the world’s population) as active participants in development processes benefits families and communities, reduces the impact of poverty and contributes to prosperity. Disability and poverty are connected in a cycle of reinforcement, each exacerbating the exclusion and vulnerability caused by the other. Australia is a recognised world leader on disability inclusive development and is well placed to ensure consideration of the needs of people with disabilities is mainstreamed across development cooperation investments, particularly by implementing its strategy Development for All: 2015–2020.

Australia’s consistent leadership on disability-inclusive development is now more important than ever. The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) evaluation released in 2018 stated that good progress was made in strengthening disability inclusion under the Development for All strategies across the past decade with inclusive development ‘now a crosscutting priority’. However, the evaluation also noted that ‘the Australian aid program is still far from being fully disability inclusive’ and sustained efforts are central to Australia maintaining and advancing on the achievements made.

ACFID recommends establishing a new ‘Development for All Strategy to 2030’ as part of building on success to date, and driving long-term disability inclusivity, with a particular focus on the Indo-Pacific where Australia can make the most difference. When implemented well, the Development for All strategy has a substantial soft power role to play as it guides Australian development cooperation to broker new regional and global partnerships, strengthens national systems, and brings about normative change with Australian values of inclusion at its core.

As per ACFID Council Resolution 3-2019, Resolution of Disability Inclusive Development, proposed by CBM Australia and Motivation Australia and unanimously supported by the ACFID membership, this third strategy should be designed and implemented in partnership with people with disabilities and their representative organisations. Consultations should encompass those currently benefitting from development cooperation program investments, as well as ensuring inclusion of diverse members of the disability movement, including commonly marginalised groups and those from rural and remote areas.
Australia is a regional leader when it comes to promoting the rights and opportunities of women and girls in the Pacific, including the prevention of and protection from gender-based violence. ACFID welcomes the strong personal commitment to these issues from Minister Payne in her capacity both as Foreign Minister and the Minister for Women, the ongoing appointment of a dedicated Ambassador for Women and Girls and the 2014 commitment that over 80 per cent of development investments effectively address gender equality issues in their implementation. We propose lifting our ambition of this latter element and raising the target to 85 per cent by 2023. To achieve this, Australia will need to increase its investments in gender related programmes and strengthen evaluation frameworks to assess how gender equality is integrated into programs and partners organisations.

Developing nations across the Indo-Pacific are experiencing a “youth bulge” of considerable proportions, amounting to a mass force of working-age individuals who will need to be fully employed in productive activities, included in political decision-making, and consulted at every stage of the development project cycle. In the Pacific alone, over half of the region’s total population of 10 million is under the age of twenty-five. The rapid growth of this youth population is placing strain on key resources, national infrastructures, and basic services. The conventional approach to this demographic phase is to improve the job-readiness of young people, yet the scale of the present challenge will also require a considerable demand-side intervention. This should consist of stimulating demand for young people’s labour through sustainable and inclusive development.

The development of new approaches to economic and social inclusion is essential to mitigating risks and capitalising on opportunities presented by the present ‘youth bulge’. It is in Australia’s best interests to adopt a youth strategy that adequately responds to current socio-cultural dynamics and ultimately prevents further regional instability and economic stagnation. Only by acknowledging, involving, and targeting the key demographic at the centre of these trends will we craft the best solutions to our shared regional challenges.

Youth participation refers to the inclusion of young people in decision-making and implementation through the program cycle, particularly for programs that affect them, rather than simply engaging young people as passive beneficiaries. Youth-oriented NGO, Oaktree, has developed a framework for this form of inclusion, and the Australian Government should adopt this framework to identify the extent to which the development cooperation program is currently empowering young people to consult, partner or lead in programming.
As the impacts from climate change in the Pacific unfold, Australia’s ability to draw relationship dividends from our development efforts will be increasingly linked by our partners to the extent to which these efforts are helping the region prevent, adapt and respond to this existential threat. This encompasses our domestic, regional, and global climate policy settings.

Maximising relationship dividends will also depend significantly on to the extent to which our decision makers and institutions are resourced to cultivate and effectively manage these relationships. This will compliment and give direction to enhanced civil society and private sector efforts and should include both greater parliamentary engagement with the Pacific and adequate resourcing of DFAT’s ability to manage the enhanced diplomatic and development partnerships associated with the Step-Up.

DEMONSTRATE REGIONAL LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE CHANGE

ACFID welcomes both the release of DFAT’s Climate Change Action Strategy, 2020-25 and the elevation of climate change as a development priority, along with DFAT’s intention to develop closer working relationships with implementing partners through harnessing and reinforcing capability and strengthening knowledge. Consistent with the Boe Declaration, the strategy identifies climate change as an “existential threat” for some Pacific Island countries. However, the Australian Government continues to pursue a policy which means Australia will not meet its Paris Agreement emissions targets. Without a national ambition in line with the scale and pace of action necessary to help limit warming to 1.5°C, the efforts to address climate change through our development assistance program will be undermined, as will our regional relationships, reputation and influence.

Climate change adaptation at the community level is under resourced throughout the Pacific region. While the announcement of $500 million for the Pacific over five years (from 2020) for climate finance is welcome, this comes from within the existing development cooperation budget envelope, meaning that other parts of the development assistance program will have to be run-down in response.

Australia needs to go beyond traditional environmental safeguards to effectively address climate change and environmental risks while seeking opportunities to make positive environmental and climate impacts. Australia should prioritise initiatives and models, such as innovative green infrastructure approaches, ecosystem-based resource management, and nature-based disaster risk reduction solutions, which deliver social, economic, and environmental benefits. Mainstreaming environmental sustainability and climate change action builds on Australia’s strengths in inclusive development.

Recommendation 15: Enhance Australia’s commitment to mainstreaming climate change in the development program by ensuring 90 per cent of all new development cooperation investments programs over $10 million incorporate climate change risk, impacts and opportunities.
Australia should enhance its commitment to mainstreaming climate change in the development program by ensuring 90 per cent of all new development cooperation investment programs over $10 million incorporate climate change risk, impacts and opportunities.

As part of an ACFID Council resolution passed in 2019, over 120 Australian international development NGOs and members of ACFID backed Pacific calls for Australia to cease thermal coal exports by 2030 whilst increasing Australia’s domestic climate ambition in-line with the Paris Agreement and refraining from using Kyoto ‘carryover’ credits. The Resolution highlighted the imminent threat climate change poses to the wellbeing, culture, security and sovereignty of Australia’s Pacific neighbours and called on the Australian Government to increase Australia’s national ambition, in line with the scale and pace of action necessary to help limit global warming to 1.5°C.

In a June 2020 online forum hosted by the Australian National University (ANU), senior regional political leaders raised concerns about action on climate change taking a back seat during the COVID-19 pandemic. Samoa’s Deputy Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mata’afa, said “I think it is very important for Australia, as a member of the Pacific [Islands] Forum, that it comes in strongly as one of our larger members, with the Pacific and the message: to ensure that the 1.5 [degree] objective that we’ve been advocating for and that we raise the global ambition in regards to [cutting] emissions.” It is critical to Australia’s relationships that it listens and responds to the Pacific on the existential threat posed by climate change and delivers a response commensurate with the threat.

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 within DFAT 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.

As well as Australian and Pacific publics and civil society, it is also critical that our new and emerging leaders have the chance to engage with one another. For example, ACFID welcomed the newly formed Friends of the Pacific Family parliamentary group. Further to this, an Australian development cooperation parliamentary program, similar to the ADF Parliamentary Program, would further complement on the long-standing, people-to-people links and educational exchanges between Australia and its neighbours. Enhancing ‘Pacific literacy’ among both Australian policy makers and the Australian community is key to ably demonstrating Australia listens to and respects local needs and priorities, which is cited as key to DFAT’s recently launched COVID-19 driven strategy, Partnerships for Recovery.

In terms of institutional capacity to deliver on our goals, expenditure on international relations in Australia has dropped from 9 per cent of the Federal Budget in 1959 to 1.3 per cent now. DFAT’s departmental budget has been in relative decline while the budgets of Defence, ASIO and the Australian Secret Intelligence Service have seen increases of 291 per cent, 528 per cent and 578 per cent, respectively.

The Government’s move towards a whole-of-government (and whole-of-society) contribution to sustainable development in the Pacific is not matched by the capacity to coordinate and evaluate such efforts. Australia should properly resource DFAT through heightened funding and capability. 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. Examining the coordination provided by the Office of the Pacific could offer a pathway to strengthening the Office and extending the Department’s wider whole-of-government coordination role.
Appendix A: Endnotes

5. Research Director Dr Tess Newton Cain (Griffith University), Mr James Cox (Peacifica), Ms Linda Kenni (Consultant, Vanuatu), Development Services Exchange, Solomon Islands, Citizen’s Constitutional Forum, Fiji, and Dr Geir Henning Presteurudstuen (Western Sydney University).
6. The Pacific Perspectives on the World research report was published in February 2020 and launched at the Australasian Aid Conference. It identified several key messages drawn from conversations with 150 Pacific islander people and made recommendations across several areas of Australian policy. Available here.
8. Find the ACFID submissions to the Government’s review here: https://acfid.asn.au/content/international-development-policy-review
15. “The Australian Government’s development priorities have changed. Aid funding is being redirected to meet new commitments in the Pacific. This has reduced bilateral aid to Pakistan from $39.2 million in 2018-19 to $19 million in 2019-20 and funding for bilateral programs will fully cease in 2020-21. We have commenced responsible wind down planning, focusing on consolidating gains and ensuring the sustainability of results.” DFAT, Pakistan Aid Program Performance Report, 2018-19, 20 September 2019.
21. RDI, Building Together: Seven principles for engaging civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure in the Pacific islands, Dr. Wesley Morgan, Rebecca McNaught, Sally Baker, Fulori Manoa and Jope Tarai, February 2020.
22. OECD figures show a sharp and declining trajectory of Australian Official Development Assistance budget channelled to and through civil society organisations. Between 2016-17 alone, Australia reduced this spend by $94m USD, at the very same time as Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom all made increases. OECD - Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC), *Aid for Civil Society Organisations*, January 2019.


25. Lin, Justin Yifu, ‘Youth Bulge: A Demographic Dividend or Demographic Bomb in Developing Countries?’, *Let’s Talk Development*, World Bank, blog, 5 January 2012.


30. Melissa Conley Tyler and Mitchell Vandewater Holman, ‘Australia is spending less on diplomacy than ever before – and its influence is suffering as a result’, *Australian Outlook*, blog, 6 November 2019.
ABOUT ACFID

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the peak body for Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) involved in international development and humanitarian action. Our vision is of a world where all people are free from extreme poverty, injustice and inequality and where the earth’s finite resources are managed sustainably. Our purpose is to lead and unite our members in action for a just, equitable and sustainable world.

Founded in 1965, ACFID currently has 122 members and 27 affiliates operating in more than 86 developing countries. The total revenue raised by ACFID’s membership from all sources amounts to $1.615 billion (2018), $846 million of which is raised from over 1.5 million Australians (2018).

ACFID’s members range between large Australian multi-sectoral organisations that are linked to international federations of NGOs, to agencies with specialised thematic expertise, and smaller community-based groups, with a mix of secular and faith-based organisations.

ACFID members must comply with the ACFID Code of Conduct, a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development and humanitarian action outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of signatory organisations. Covering 9 Quality Principles, 33 Commitments and 90 compliance indicators, the Code sets good standards for program effectiveness, fundraising, governance, and financial reporting. Compliance includes annual reporting and checks. The Code has an independent complaint handling process.

ACFID’S VALUES

Respect for human rights. We champion human rights as a precondition for sustainable and equitable development and promote rights-based approaches that hold power-holders to account.

Gender justice. We stand for social, political, and economic gender equality and see gender justice as both an end in itself and a means to alleviating poverty, reducing inequality and building peace.

Systemic and transformational change. We are committed to development that addresses the root causes of poverty, conflict, and injustice, and transforms the lives of the poorest and most marginalised people.

A strong independent civil society. We believe that a vibrant civil society is an essential feature of free societies, bringing benefits to the public that governments and the market cannot do alone.

Environmental sustainability. We promote environmentally sustainable development solutions because poverty reduction, natural resource management and development are inextricably linked.

Accountability and transparency. We promote accountability and transparency as a standard of good practice for NGOs and other development actors, particularly downward accountability to people affected by poverty or crisis.

Quality and innovation. We exist to support and promote quality, innovation and continuous improvement in NGO governance, management, and practice.