

13 February 2020

Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women
The Hon Alex Hawke MP
Assistant Defence Minister and Minister for International Development and the Pacific
development.submissions@dfat.gov.au

Dear Ministers,

Re: Marie Stopes International Australia Submission on Australia's New International Development Policy

Marie Stopes International Australia (MSIA) welcomes the opportunity to engage in the consultation process for a new Australian international development policy. It presents an opportunity to reflect on the focus and purpose of our development cooperation, and explore where we can do better.

MSIA has been working in partnership with the Australian Government to ensure access to quality, equitable sexual and reproductive health services in the Asia-Pacific region for over a decade. With Australian support, MSI has been able to improve the lives of millions of women and girls in a region that suffers some of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

In a context where reproductive rights are more at risk than ever, we appreciate Australia's continued commitment to sexual and reproductive health in its international development and foreign policy agenda. This continued support remains critical to the realisation of gender equality and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for Australia's development partners.

Our recommendations

MSIA invites the Ministers to consider our submission made to the 2018 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade '*Inquiry into the strategic effectiveness and outcomes of Australia's aid program in the Indo-Pacific and its role in supporting our regional interests*'.

We have included our 2018 submission as an Annex to this letter.

In the context of the development of Australia's new development policy, MSIA affirms the recommendations made in our 2018 submission, in particular:

- **Increase support for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health programs** delivered through the Australian development program as a critical enabler of gender equality and sustainable development in our region.
- **Continue to explore mechanisms to integrate sexual and reproductive health in non-health programs** within Australia's development assistance such as women's economic empowerment, education, water sanitation and hygiene and climate change.
- **Maintain the 80 per cent gender target and retain gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a core focus.** A significant strength of Australia's development program is its leadership in supporting women and girls in our region.

I would also ask the Ministers and Department to consider the following additional recommendations, which I raised at the recent Health and Health Security Round table with Minister Hawke on January 29 in Melbourne:

- **Improve the long-term planning and sustainability** of Australia's development program with transparent, consistent and predictable investments that provide an ability to build on success. Severe and sudden ODA budget cuts are reducing the impact and effectiveness of Australia's development program and our reputation with partner Governments.

- **Value for money should remain a key principle** of the program given the current budget trajectory. Investment in family planning offers excellent value for money and DFAT's investments with MSIA and its partners have had demonstrated impact and return on investment in the region. In this context, the managing contractor model should also be given careful scrutiny in consideration of the additional costs it generates.

In addition to these recommendations, MSIA also supports the principles and recommendations outlined in the forthcoming submissions from the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), Global Health Alliance and the International Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Consortium.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the new international development policy. I remain available to discuss these recommendations or provide further information to the attached as needed.

Yours sincerely,



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