

New International Development Policy Submission

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TEAR
AUSTRALIA

1. Purpose of Australia's development cooperation

Recommendation: The purpose of Australia's development cooperation should be poverty reduction

Reducing poverty has been a central tenet of Australia's development cooperation for many years. TEAR recommends this principle be central in the new Development Cooperation Policy. This is in keeping with the first Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030. As evidenced by the current response to the bushfires, Australians both understand and respond when people's livelihoods and possessions are stripped from them.

By any global measure, Australia is a prosperous nation: A prosperous nation surrounded by developing countries in the most disaster-prone region in the world. As such and in line with the values framed in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, we have a moral responsibility to play our part in reducing poverty and inequality around the world. Aside from the inherently valuable benefit for those who bear the heavy burden of poverty, it is also in Australia's strategic national interest to do so. Generous and effective development cooperation, targeted at poverty reduction, not only benefits recipient communities, it also simultaneously serves Australia's own national interest.

Sustained cuts to Overseas Development Assistance have resulted in Australia now being ranked 19th out of 29 in OECD aid donor countries¹. Australia should work to return to the top half of rich country aid donors as a mark of its commitment to addressing poverty and sustainable development. Australia should increase its development cooperation budget over this term of Parliament to 0.3% of GNI with a long-term goal of reaching the internationally agreed benchmark of 0.7% of GNI. This would put Australia at an OECD ranking of 14th position, and around the levels of Canada and New Zealand.

To reduce poverty it is critical to have a multidimensional approach and to understand the factors that lead to poverty, which is why targeting prosperity on its own is not enough. Poverty is the result of multiple factors, and being a complex problem, complex solutions need to be found that address the factors at a systemic level. Economic development is essential, and both community-based and higher-level systemic initiatives need to be supported to bring about sustainable, accessible and equitable economic development for people living in poverty. The aim of economic development is not to merely provide subsistence-level status, but to enable people to reduce the vulnerabilities in their context and communities that can lead to them falling back into poverty if a crisis strikes. Enabling people to engage with and participate in the economic system requires a broader and more holistic approach than just an economic intervention. Participation in economic development means addressing challenges of access and inclusion, working in complexity and fragility, and overcoming climate impacts on agriculture, food security and disasters. Development cooperation also needs to be framed within growing moves towards local sovereignty and ownership of development initiatives on one hand, and the need to work alongside and strengthen local actors who are embedded in their local contexts and communities on the other.

Recommendation: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals should be prioritised and adequately resourced throughout Australia's development cooperation

Recommendation: Australia's development cooperation budget should increase over this term of Parliament to 0.3% of GNI with a long-term goal of reaching the internationally agreed benchmark of 0.7% of GNI

2. Principles for delivery

2.1 Recommendation: Australia's development cooperation should prioritise **fragile states, conflict affected areas and protracted crises**

Fragility, conflict, and protracted crises not only threaten to reverse development gains made in the past decade, but it is also estimated that regions facing such complex issues will be home to nearly half of the world's extreme poor in the next ten years². TEAR and its partners are experienced in working in volatile environments. Short term measures or approaches are not sufficient to address the rights of people who face extreme poverty in such environments.

Australia's development cooperation should have a strategic priority around the vulnerabilities faced by people in complex operating environments. In particular, development initiatives should address levels of malnutrition, chronic poverty, food insecurity and a lack of economic opportunity.

Humanitarian crises are becoming increasingly protracted, complex and long-term. Meeting the needs of people facing crisis now transitions into broader areas traditionally covered by development financing. For example, amongst the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh nearby host communities are also facing loss of livelihoods, and the displaced Rohingya population is facing ongoing and long-term needs such as education, health, and social infrastructure. Australia's development cooperation must aim for a coherent response in such situations, recognising the lines between humanitarian assistance and development are increasingly blurred. Programs should factor in the longer term development financing needs for people in protracted crisis situations.

Fragility and conflict lead to migration and the large-scale flow of people both within and between countries, blurring formal national boundaries in many cases and creating humanitarian crises. For example, the pressures on the Rohingya population, unless addressed through a combination of humanitarian, developmental, and diplomatic responses, will increasingly lead to attempts of migration and people smuggling, thereby affecting the whole region and presenting severe risks to those who are desperate enough to try to improve their lives through this means³. Addressing the increasing mobility of people will require positive and developmental engagement in responding to the causes of their mobility. The increasing rates of mobility among the world's population will mean increasingly urban-based populations, porous borders, diverse societies, and risks to global health through disease transmission that will change the nature of development and complicate international relations.

To respond to, and assist in preventing, the further expansion of fragility and conflict affected areas, a committed engagement at a senior political level, and the inclusion of civil society into the process is required. A whole of government approach including diplomacy, capacity building in governance and transparency, aid and development, private enterprise and employment opportunities across the sectors will be necessary to enable those living in poverty to engage productively.

Australia's development cooperation should facilitate the resourcing of Australian NGOs that have extensive reach into areas of fragility and conflict. With strong "on-the-ground" monitoring, security, financial and safeguarding systems in place, accredited NGOs provide the Government with a highly useful channel to address extreme poverty in the most challenging environments.

2.2 Recommendation: Australia's development cooperation should prioritise climate change, mitigation and adaptation

Climate change is a poverty issue and the biggest threat to global development. Thanks to the success of development interventions, today more women and men have the chance to experience lives free from poverty than ever before. However, a recent report for the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights warns that climate damage threatens to undo the last 50 years of progress in development, global health and poverty reduction, and could push more than 120 million more people into poverty by 2030⁴. Climate change must be a central part of Australia's development cooperation as the impact is most severe on the people living in the world's poorest communities. It is one of the greatest injustices of our time: the people least responsible for climate change are often the most vulnerable to its impacts. The impacts of climate change are already harming people's health, livelihoods and homes, and their access to food and clean water.

Within Australia's region, over the coming decades, large numbers of Pacific people – and in some cases entire nations – face displacement from their homes and livelihoods due to climate change.

Australian action on climate change impacts international development and security. Australia's development cooperation must adequately address climate change and support Australia's commitments to the Paris Agreement. One of the important aspects of this needs to be a commitment to providing funds for climate adaptation for developing countries. A 2018 report tracking countries' progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, identifies Australia as the worst performing country in the world on climate action.⁵

It is in Australia's national interest, and critical for the achievement of Australia's international development objectives, to be globally responsible on climate change. Not only in terms of the far-reaching impacts on Australia itself that more than 1.5C increase will have, but also in terms of its standing in the region and globally. The region now faces a greater number of prospective development and security partners, and if Australia is to remain a trusted partner in the region and a valued member of the Pacific family, it must adequately prioritise climate action.

In the 2019/20 Federal Budget, the Government allocated \$200million to climate finance initiatives in line with its \$1 billion by 2020 commitment under the Paris Agreement. As the Department itself has written, it is possible to do more to

support our neighbours in developing countries “to” adapt and build their resilience to climate change⁶ by allocating additional funding.

2.3 Recommendation: Australia’s development cooperation should prioritise localisation

Australia has committed to The Grand Bargain of changes in the working practices of donors and aid organisations, including a focus on the localisation of humanitarian aid. TEAR strongly endorses this direction, and advocates for the importance of working alongside and through local actors in development as well as in humanitarian action.

To enable good local development, led by local capable and sustainable organisations and communities, it is essential that, as well as program funding, these organisations are supported through training, capacity-strengthening and organisational support.

The four core organisational capabilities which were identified in a recent study as the most important for effective partnerships were: Project design, planning and management; Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL); Financial management and reporting; and human resources (HR) management. International partners add value to partnerships by contributing fundraising capability, technical expertise and providing capacity strengthening support⁷. These areas of organisational strengthening should be incorporated into development support that is provided through local partner organisations. Capacity strengthening also needs to be done in a way that is meaningful to the local partners and their context rather than the simple imposition of western requirements.

The greatest barrier to effective localisation is a lack of trust and respect. Partnerships across the development program should therefore be characterised by a mutual commitment to learning, recognising the respective strengths of each party, acknowledging the local knowledge and understanding held by local organisations and actors of their development contexts, and ideally, mutual sharing of risks.

2.4 Recommendation: Australia’s development cooperation should prioritise inclusive development Interconnecting sectors: disability, poverty, gender crisis and conflict and mental health

Poverty and disability are interconnected – poverty being both a cause and consequence of disability . Poverty causes disability through factors such as inadequate water and sanitation, malnutrition, poor living conditions and lack of access to healthcare. Having a disability often leads to additional stress, and social exclusion, resulting in decreased opportunities for work, education and healthcare and hence reinforcing a cycle of poverty^{9, 10}.

These factors are exacerbated for people living in conflict affected areas or fragile states, where displacement, exposure to trauma, increased health and obstetric risks and increased vulnerability in living conditions leads to higher prevalence of physical disability and mental illness/psychosocial disability¹¹. In addition to disability there are other intersections – including gender, caste or ethnicity that are crucial to consider¹².

It is important that Australia’s development cooperation:

- Recognises that disability and mental illness are disproportionately present in areas of extreme poverty, and conflict affected areas.
- Upholds and promotes inclusive programs which pay particular attention to those additionally marginalised through gender, disability, mental illness and due to other reasons.
- Demonstrates commitment to addressing social inequality and multidimensional poverty through long-term community development approaches, which contribute to both prevention of mental illness and strengthen recovery and inclusion of people with psychosocial disability.
- Shows leadership in creating space for hearing the views of those with disability and psychosocial disability throughout community development processes.

Inclusion and inequality

The significant reduction in levels of poverty achieved over recent decades has been mirrored by ever-increasing levels of inequality within countries. For development to be truly inclusive, and to achieve social stability and prevent conflict, care must be taken to ensure that development initiatives bring benefits to all people who currently live in poverty¹³.

2.6 Recommendation: Australia's development cooperation should include **Africa in its geographic focus** given the link between poverty, weak governance, conflict and poor development results

Australia needs to ensure that it has strong relationships with countries in regions beyond the Indo-Pacific. This is especially important when global trends are considered. TEAR urges consideration of the place of Africa in Australia's development cooperation.

Africa will increase in significance in terms of foreign policy priorities, including development and trade in the next fifteen years. It is expected that Africa will gain in significance in three key areas that will be relevant to Australia and to the global community.

- Growth of a large young labour force of one billion people, increasingly urbanised and with growing disposable income.
- The discovery and utilisation of large amounts of natural wealth
- Opportunities to leapfrog in some technologies, such as innovative use of the mobile phone, to expand and encourage growth of small and medium enterprises

In parallel to these positive trends, it is also predicted that by 2030 Africa will shoulder 82% of the global share of poverty. While significant strides have been made in addressing poverty in Africa, if current growth rates continue a quarter of all Africans will still be consuming less than \$1.25 per day by 2030.

Given the link between poverty, weak governance, conflict and poor development results, it is critical that efforts are renewed within Africa. Australia should invest in appropriate development assistance in Africa, promote good governance, and build fair trade links that share Australian expertise in natural resource management that also enables Africa to lead its own development in sustainable ways.

For more information please contact Matthew Maury, CEO
E. matthew.maury@tear.org.au T: 03 9264 7000

Endnotes

1. TEAR is a member of the Micah Australia coalition. See also the Micah Australia submission.
2. International Development Association <http://ida.worldbank.org/theme/conflict-and-fragility>
3. <http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/1/16/Rohingya-trafficking-refugees-forced-marriage>
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6. Department of Foreign Affairs (2019) Climate Change Action Strategy: Tackling Climate Change through Australia's Development Assistance Program 2020-2025 (Australian Government, Canberra).
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9. World Health Organization; World report on disability: World Health Organization; 2011. Available from: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789240685215_eng.pdf
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11. Charlson, F. et al, (2019). New WHO prevalence estimates of mental disorders in conflict settings: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet*; 394: 240–48
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13. Koubi, V. & Böhmelt, T. (2014) "Grievances, economic wealth and civil conflict" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol 51(1), 19-33

Who we are: About TEAR Australia

TEAR Australia is a Christian aid, development and advocacy organisation that has worked for nearly 50 years with local partner organisations in Africa, South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific. TEAR Australia (TEAR) is focused in places of great need, partnering with local Christian agencies to end poverty, challenge inequality and build sustainable communities.

TEAR represents a constituency of more than 60,000 supporters across Australia and for many years has been actively speaking out on issues of poverty. TEAR is part of the global Tearfund family of relief and development agencies.

TEAR is fully accredited by the Australian Government and receives funding through the Australian NGO Co-operation Program (ANCP). TEAR is also an active member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), including participating in board leadership with ACFID, the Campaign for Australian Aid and Micah Australia.



Cover image: Forced to flee her home in South Sudan, Rachel* walked for three days to find safety for her nine children in a refugee camp in Northern Uganda. Despite experiencing severe adversity, Rachel and her children are incredibly resilient. Through the support of Tutapona, our Christian partner working in the refugee settlement, Rachel has begun a journey of healing. Rachel's story testifies to TEAR Australia's calling to work in the world's most desperate and hardest places.

*Name has been changed to protect identity

TEAR Australia

We're focused in places of great need, partnering with local Christian agencies to end poverty, challenge inequality and build sustainable communities. Together, we act with courage, tackling injustice in order that all may experience fullness of life.

National Office:

PO Box 164
Blackburn Victoria 3130
1/4 Solwood Lane
Blackburn Victoria 3130
ABN 85 085 413 832

Toll Free: 1800 244 986
T: (03) 9264 7000
E: tearust@tear.org.au
Website: www.tear.org.au



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