

# Submission on Australia's New International Development Policy



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

**Humanitarian  
Reference  
Group (HRG)**

The Australian Council for International Development's (ACFID) Humanitarian Reference Group (HRG)<sup>1</sup> is pleased to present this submission, and the attached policy report *Fit for the Future: Priorities for Australia's Humanitarian Action*, on the Australian Government's New International Development Policy. Drawing on current global challenges and opportunities, and the experiences of Australian agencies working at the frontline of humanitarian crises, this submission and the attached report provide recommendations on humanitarian aspects of Australia's international development policy. It should be read in conjunction with the ACFID submission on Australia's New International Development Policy.

The attached policy report *Fit for the Future* contains a wide range of recommendations on Australia's humanitarian investments. For the purposes of this submission we have identified those we consider most relevant for Australia's New International Development Policy relating to three key areas: principles for Australia's humanitarian assistance; maximising Australia's impact; and operationalising Australia's commitments. As DFAT assesses its Humanitarian Strategy, the HRG encourages a full review of *Fit for the Future*.

The HRG recommends that the Government's international development policy incorporates policy guidance for Australia's humanitarian assistance, and for bringing together Australia's humanitarian and development policy and programming. The HRG provides the following recommendations for the policy:

1. The Australian Government should use the development of a new international development policy to **affirm a global focus for Australia's humanitarian action and a commitment to operating with the primary purpose of alleviating human suffering wherever it is found**, in line with the humanitarian principles.
2. The Australian Government should **promote policy coherence** across its humanitarian and development policy and its trade, defence and diplomacy agendas
3. The Australian Government's International Development Policy must build **coherence across humanitarian, development and peace-building policies and programming**, including through fully utilising the comprehensive framework set out in the 2019 DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, including the development of multi-year plans and funding for protracted crises.
4. The Australian Government should establish a trajectory for **Australia to meet its current global fair share of humanitarian financing of at least A\$696 million per year**. This increase in humanitarian funding must come from an increasing Official Development Assistance program.
5. The Australian Government must commit to **promoting locally led humanitarian action** through developing new ways of working, forming new partnerships, removing barriers to participation and investing in capacity strengthening of local organisations. To support this, the Government should work towards the Grand Bargain target of providing at least 25 percent of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible.
6. The Australian Government should commit to **sharing responsibility for addressing global displacement crises** in line with the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). It should endorse the GCM and work collaboratively with other states to find effective means of responding to the humanitarian impacts and challenges of migration. It should also **scale up its annual refugee and humanitarian intake to 44,000 by 2022-23** and support complementary pathways such as family reunion, work visas, scholarships and student visas and community sponsorship, in consultation with UNHCR and other relevant actors.
7. The Australian Government should **systematically embed Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation across all its humanitarian and international development investments**, ensuring that underlying risk factors are reduced through long-term development assistance.
8. The Australian Government must recognise that **delivering lifesaving assistance in countries experiencing fragility, violence and conflict is consistent with Australia's foreign policy**, and carries operational risk which is best managed by empowering delivery partners to assess risk according to their specific program and context. A zero tolerance to risk in fragile, violent and conflict environments is not sustainable for an Official Development Assistance Program.

The HRG also recommends that DFAT review and update its Humanitarian Strategy in line with the broader recommendations in *Fit for the Future: Priorities for Australia's Humanitarian Action*.

# Introduction

The United Nations predicts that in 2020, 1 out of every 45 people in the world will require humanitarian assistance. It estimates that 167.7 million people will need humanitarian assistance, appealing for US\$28.8 billion in response.<sup>2</sup> As global humanitarian need grows, the complexity of humanitarian crises is also increasing as we grapple with the impacts of climate change, food insecurity, urbanisation, infectious disease outbreaks, protracted conflicts, and their complex interrelationship.

Australia has a proud history of supporting people affected by crises. It has been a champion for the rights of women and girls, led the charge on disability inclusion, and been a steadfast supporter of disaster-affected countries around the world. As the global humanitarian landscape changes, Australia must realign its approach to humanitarian action to ensure it continues to reach the people in greatest need. The persistent gap between needs and available funding demands all governments increase their support to better respond to the most pressing global challenges.

As Australia renews its international development policy, it is a critical opportunity to consider how to better strengthen its humanitarian assistance and build coherence between Australia's humanitarian action, development policy, and trade, defence and diplomacy agendas.

Australia is well positioned to aim higher in taking a principled, Whole-of-Government approach to humanitarian action, in line with our role as a wealthy, middle-power actor. Directing humanitarian assistance to proven and effective partners; supporting humanitarian reforms that improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian system; and increasing efforts to address the root causes of humanitarian crises are necessary and tangible steps Australia can take to realise this ambition.

# Principles for Australia's Humanitarian Assistance

## A PRINCIPLED APPROACH TO AUSTRALIA'S HUMANITARIAN POLICY

The humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence are the internationally agreed foundation of humanitarian action. They have been endorsed by UN General Assembly Resolutions and are at the core of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, of which Australia is a member.

In these times in which global principles, agreements, norms and institutions are under threat, the HRG urges the Government to ensure that the humanitarian principles remain central to Australia's future humanitarian action. In line with the principles, Australia must commit to ensuring that humanitarian funding is allocated on the basis of need alone, irrespective of where that need arises, and must ensure its humanitarian program's objectives are independent of any political, economic, or military motivations.

A concrete test of Australia's ability to apply the humanitarian principles will be in how the Government implements the Pacific Step-up. The Government's decision to prioritise its development assistance to the Indo-Pacific region must not limit the provision of humanitarian assistance globally, especially to countries where need is most acute or under-funded. This is particularly important as the highest humanitarian needs remain in the Middle East and Africa. In 2020, nearly one third of all people requiring humanitarian assistance will come from just three countries: Yemen, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>3</sup>

Australia's humanitarian response must be principled in both its intent and in the way it is perceived and must uphold a clear and firm distinction between military and humanitarian objectives. To this end, the Government must ensure that it adequately resources civilian agencies to lead Australia's humanitarian responses, including in the Pacific.

### RECOMMENDATION 1

The Australian Government should use the development of a new international development policy to affirm a global focus for Australia's humanitarian action and a commitment to operating with the primary purpose of alleviating human suffering wherever it is found, in line with the humanitarian principles.

## WHOLE OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY COHERENCE

Effectively preventing and responding to humanitarian crises requires Whole-of-Government policy coherence. To effectively respond to complex crises, Australia must: ensure that humanitarian funding decisions remain principled; ensure that Australia's development, political and economic objectives do not undermine effective humanitarian action; and take steps to address the root causes of crises.

Wherever Australia provides humanitarian assistance, it must assess how it may also address the root causes, contributing factors, and any enabling factors that result in, or perpetuate, crises. Australia must consider all dimensions of its own relationship with crisis-affected countries, as well as parties to conflicts, and examine whether any aspects of its engagement contributes to the drivers or perpetuation of the crisis. Trade relationships and military cooperation require particular scrutiny, especially in cases where a trade partner nation, its leaders or military forces have been implicated in human rights violations.

Other peer governments have an established practice of developing public, Whole-of-Government strategies and appointing high-level humanitarian envoys to guide their engagement in relevant crises. We encourage the Australian Government to adopt these approaches for regional and major global humanitarian crises. Such an approach would ensure that Australia's policies and approaches do not work against one another – for example, by ensuring that Australia does not sell or export arms to a state accused of perpetrating rights violations, while simultaneously providing humanitarian assistance to mitigate the impacts of those abuses.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

The Australian Government should promote policy coherence across its humanitarian and development policy and its trade, defence and diplomacy agendas.

# Opportunities for Maximising Australia's Impact

## BRIDGING THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS

Coherence and coordination between humanitarian, development and peace efforts are vital in order to move from delivering humanitarian assistance to ending humanitarian need over the long term. Such coherence requires a recognition of the importance of protecting and promoting 'humanitarian space'<sup>4</sup> where necessary, a shared understanding of risk and vulnerability to crises, and an approach that prioritises prevention and building resilience.

Resilience-building requires joint strategies across the humanitarian and development continuum, closer collaboration, and the building of flexible, long-term programming which can adapt to changing circumstances. There is an increasingly large body of evidence demonstrating the wide range of benefits of multi-year approaches in protracted and recurrent crises.<sup>5</sup> Multi-year programs assist in building community resilience, foster linkages between relief, recovery and development, and produce significant efficiency and effectiveness gains. Multi-year approaches also ensure that partners on the ground can maintain their responsive capacity and quickly scale up to deliver assistance in the advent of a conflict spike, or recurrent shock (e.g. drought or monsoonal flooding).

The Australian Government has already made the welcome commitment to multi-year funding for protracted crises in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan/Pakistan, and planned multi-year support for Myanmar and Bangladesh. The HRG believes that all responses to protracted crises should be planned and financed on a multi-year basis and recommends that the Government develop additional multi-year packages for countries or regions experiencing protracted crises and significant humanitarian need, such as Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Somalia.

Aid Investment Plans or equivalent for country and regional development programs should also include an analysis of root causes (or potential causes) of crises, drivers of conflict and local resilience mechanisms.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

**The Australian Government's International Development Policy must build coherence across humanitarian, development and peace-building policies and programming, including through fully utilising the comprehensive framework set out in the 2019 DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus,<sup>6</sup> including the development of multi-year plans and funding for protracted crises.**

## AUSTRALIA'S FAIR-SHARE OF HUMANITARIAN FINANCING

International humanitarian financing has not kept pace with growing global needs. In 2019 the gap between humanitarian funding required and that received was US\$13.7 billion, up from US\$0.7 billion in 2007. This financing gap means that some people in need don't get the assistance, or the level of assistance, that they require.

Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper committed the Australian Government to increasing Australia's global humanitarian funding to A\$500 million per year. However, new calculations based on GNI find that Australia's fair share of global humanitarian assistance in 2020 is at least AU\$696 million.<sup>7</sup> We recommend the Government establish a trajectory for continuing to grow Australia's humanitarian assistance to be in line with Australia's global fair share.

The HRG believe that a new ambitious international development policy must be matched with a more ambitious budget trajectory, for both development and humanitarian expenditure. Increases in Australia's humanitarian assistance funding should not come at the expense of Australia's development expenditure, which plays a critical role in supporting economic and human development, in building resilience, and in preventing crisis situations from escalating.

### RECOMMENDATION 4

**The Australian Government should establish a trajectory for Australia to meet its current global fair share of humanitarian financing of at least A\$696 million per year. This increase in humanitarian funding must come from an increasing Official Development Assistance program.**

## CHAMPIONING LOCALLY LED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

At the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 Australia signed on to *The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need*.<sup>8</sup> The Grand Bargain commits signatories to implementing reforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian system to address the humanitarian financing gap and deliver better results for people affected by crisis.

The Grand Bargain commits donors and international agencies to promote and support locally led humanitarian responses. It acknowledges that national and local actors are first responders in crises, have the greatest knowledge of local contexts, and that affected governments have a sovereign right and responsibility to lead humanitarian responses. To this end, the Australian Government should work towards the Grand Bargain target of providing at least 25 percent of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible. They should ensure that this funding is directed to both implementing organisations and local coordination mechanisms and includes targeted funding for women's organisations so as not to replicate gender inequalities in access to resources.

The HRG commends the Australian Government for listening to voices from the Pacific and making 'localisation' a priority at and since the WHS. However, for localisation to move from rhetoric to reality, a major reallocation of power and resources to national and local actors must occur, requiring a step-up from discussion into action and implementation.

### RECOMMENDATION 5

**The Australian Government must commit to promoting locally led humanitarian action through developing new ways of working, forming new partnerships, removing barriers to participation and investing in capacity strengthening of local organisations. To support this, the Government should work towards the Grand Bargain target of providing at least 25 percent of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible.**

## RESPONSIBILITY SHARING FOR GLOBAL DISPLACEMENT

We are living in a time of immense challenge for people on the move around the world. By the end of 2018, 70.8 million people were experiencing forced displacement.<sup>9</sup> In the same year, less than 5 per cent of those identified as needing resettlement by UNHCR were resettled – just 0.2 per cent of the global refugee population.<sup>10</sup>

At such an unprecedented moment of global migration and displacement, Australia must play its part in sharing global responsibility for displacement crises in line with the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

Given the linkages between displacement and migration, and the importance of global solidarity and coherence in addressing the humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities of people impacted by displacement, the HRG believe it critical that the Australian Government endorse the GCM and work collaboratively with other states to find effective means of responding to the humanitarian impacts and challenges of migration.

Australia has historically had strong bipartisan commitment and public support for a robust Refugee and Humanitarian Program and settlement services that contribute to global responsibility-sharing. Against the challenging backdrop of escalating need when the availability of global resettlement places is declining, a further scale-up of contribution and strengthening of related initiatives, such as special humanitarian intakes and complementary pathways is highly warranted.

As a high-income country Australia should commit to its fair share by increasing its annual refugee and humanitarian intake to 44,000 by 2022-23.<sup>11</sup> There is strong evidence that refugees contribute positively to the societies and economies in which they settle. In addition to the rich social contribution of refugees, analysis commissioned by Oxfam suggests that increasing Australia's annual intake to its fair share level would increase the size of Australia's economy by \$37.7 billion, in today's dollars over the next 50 years.<sup>12</sup>

### RECOMMENDATION 6

The Australian Government should commit to sharing responsibility for addressing global displacement crises in line with the GCR and GCM. It should endorse the GCM and work collaboratively with other states to find effective means of responding to the humanitarian impacts and challenges of migration. It should also scale up its annual refugee and humanitarian intake to 44,000 by 2022-23 and support complementary pathways such as family reunion, work visas, scholarships and student visas and community sponsorship, in consultation with UNHCR and other relevant actors.

## CHAMPION DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

The Asia Pacific region is the most disaster-prone region in the world. A person living in the region is five times more likely to be affected by natural disasters than a person living elsewhere, and the impacts of climate change will exacerbate disaster risk in the region. Disasters not only pose a high cost to individuals and communities, but they also wreak havoc on whole economies. The UN suggests that economic losses due to disasters in the Asia Pacific region could exceed \$160 billion annually by 2030.<sup>13</sup> Investments in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation are thus critical for protecting lives, safeguarding development gains and ensuring ongoing economic development.

Despite the well-known efficacy of DRR interventions, investments in DRR remain a small fraction of international development finance, and largely remain activity-based and focussed on disaster preparedness, rather than concentrating on comprehensive planning to reduce disaster risk.

The HRG commends the Government for the leadership it has shown in promoting DRR through its humanitarian and development programs, and through its leadership of the 2020 Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on DRR.

However, to be effective, DRR must be integrated across the entirety of Australia's development program to not only ensure investments are protected from hazards, but to ensure they all contribute to building the resilience of partner countries and communities. DFAT's organisational structure places the DRR section within the Humanitarian Response, Risk and Recovery Branch. But Australia's contribution to DRR should not be the sole responsibility of humanitarian actors. In line with DFAT's strategic approach to climate change, DRR should be embedded in aid management policies and cohesively aligned across all areas of the Department's work. The ACFID submission on Australia's New International Development Policy provides further information and recommendations on strengthening climate change action including ensuring 90 per cent of all new development investments over \$10 million incorporate climate change risk, impacts and opportunities. The Australia Pacific Climate Change Action program and facility will be a valuable resource in supporting this in the Pacific.

Gender and social inclusion must also be embedded throughout all DRR programs, with specific attention given to women's leadership and women's participation in community decision making. DRR programs which do so have greater impact on protection of vulnerable community members and disaster resilience outcomes.<sup>14</sup>

### RECOMMENDATION 7

The Australian Government should systematically embed Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation across all its humanitarian and international development investments, ensuring that underlying risk factors are reduced through long-term development assistance.

# Operationalising Australia's Commitments

## MANAGING RISK TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Over the last few decades the risks facing humanitarian actors have evolved. Security risks have increased for organisations working in countries affected by fragility, violence and conflict, while organisations continue to manage the risk of funds and resources being diverted from their intended use. In the face of an evolving risk environment, humanitarian organisations must balance the humanitarian mandate of their organisation to relieve suffering wherever it is found, with risk mitigation strategies to reduce the risk of harm to their staff, their organisation, and the populations they seek to serve.

Australian humanitarian agencies have developed, and remain committed to, professional and comprehensive risk management. DFAT's accredited Australian NGO partners have also met comprehensive due-diligence requirements associated with accreditation and have significant risk management capacity.

HRG members are strongly committed to working in partnership with the Australian Government, through DFAT, to determine how to best strike the balance between delivering life-saving assistance to those in need, while managing risks related to operating in insecure environments and diversion of funds to designated terrorist organisations. This balance is critical to ensure that no one is left behind. We strongly encourage the Australian Government to implement the Financial Action Task Force call to 'apply focused and proportionate measures to address terrorist financing in line with a risk-based approach',<sup>15</sup> and ensure that all of Australia's counter-terrorism laws, policies and procedures comply with international humanitarian and human rights law as per UN Security Council Resolution 2462 (2019).<sup>16</sup>

## RECOMMENDATION 8

The Australian Government must Recognise that delivering lifesaving assistance in countries experiencing fragility, violence and conflict is consistent with Australia's foreign policy, and carries operational risk which is best managed by empowering delivery partners to assess risk according to their specific program and context. A zero tolerance to risk in fragile, violent and conflict environments is not sustainable for an Official Development Assistance Program.

# Endnotes

1 The HRG is the independent voice of ACFID-member humanitarian agencies in Australia and the principle mechanism for sector-wide humanitarian policy and advocacy. HRG members are supported by a wide cross-section of the Australian community to deliver humanitarian action around the world and are delivery partners in the Australian Government's humanitarian program.

2 UN OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2020*, p. 27, available at: [https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020\\_v9.1.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020_v9.1.pdf).

3 Ibid, p. 27.

4 The operational environment in which humanitarian actors can access affected populations and provide assistance and services in line with the humanitarian principles and global humanitarian frameworks, including the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. See: ICRC, *The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols*, 2014, available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/geneva-conventions-1949-additional-protocols>

5 See: World Vision Australia, *Shockproof: Building community resilience to recurrent crises*, 2019, available at: [https://www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/publications/emergency-and-humanitarian-affairs/8825\\_multi\\_resilience\\_policy\\_final.pdf?sfvrsn=d606d93c\\_6](https://www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/publications/emergency-and-humanitarian-affairs/8825_multi_resilience_policy_final.pdf?sfvrsn=d606d93c_6)

6 See: OECD, *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*, 2019, available at: <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/public/doc/643/643.en.pdf>

7 The fair share methodology examines countries' ability to provide humanitarian support in light of how much global humanitarian support is needed. This fair share methodology includes all high and upper-middle-income countries as potential donors, in recognition that upper-middle-income countries are increasingly assuming responsibility for responding to emergencies, particularly in their immediate region. However, it is acknowledged that it is difficult for many middle-income countries to provide humanitarian assistance when they have significant development challenges themselves. Therefore, this fair share should be seen as the absolute minimum a wealthy country like Australia should be expected to allocate towards humanitarian action.

8 Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/grand-bargain-shared-commitment-better-serve-people-need>.

9 UNHCR, *Global Trends at a Glance: 2018 in Review*, 2019, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/>

10 Oxfam International, *Welcome, Support, Pledge, Resettle: Responsibility Sharing in the Global Compact on Refugees*, 2019, p.2, available at: <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620923/bn-global-refugee-forum-111219-en.pdf>

11 This fair share was calculated by Oxfam Australia based on the principle that a country's fair share is proportionate to its capacity to absorb (population) and accommodate (wealth). The formula is based on population and GDP as the key metrics to calculate Australia's fair share of the 2.04 million resettlement places needed.

12 Oxfam Australia, *Stronger Together: The impact of family separation on refugees and humanitarian migrants in Australia*, 2019, p.20 <https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-AC-012-Families->

13 UN News, *Disasters could cost Asia-Pacific region \$160 billion per year by 2030, UN Warns*, 24 April 2018, available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/04/1008182>.

14 See: CARE International, *Does Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction Make a Difference? A comparative study of Category Five Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu*, 2017, available at: [https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/CARE\\_Vanuatu\\_DRR\\_Impact\\_Study\\_3\\_FINAL\\_web\\_amend.pdf](https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/CARE_Vanuatu_DRR_Impact_Study_3_FINAL_web_amend.pdf)

15 Financial Action Task Force, *International Standards on Combating Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation: The FATF Recommendations*, 2019, p. 11, available at: <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/recommendations/pdfs/FATF%20Recommendations%202012.pdf>

16 See: UN Security Council Resolution 2462 (2019), available at: [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2462\(2019\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2462(2019))



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**Cover photo:** Habiba\* lives in Kutupalong Camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, with her three children. Oxfam has recently installed four handpumps near to her home. "We are really thankful for this water. Before it was here we were using the stream as there was no other option. The children were sick and we had no medicine."

"The children haven't seen water like this for a while so they are really excited. The water tastes good - tastes so much better. The other water was so smelly."

Photo: Tommy Trenchard/Oxfam.

\*Name changed to protect identity


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