



AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 1-2022

Decolonisation, Anti-Racism and Locally Led Action

ACFID AGM 2022

Preamble

A resolution can simply be a statement or a motion. But it is our intent that this resolution – on de-colonisation and locally led action – translates into tangible action across the humanitarian and development sector. We acknowledge that members have a diverse range of operating models, terminology, approaches and practices, and that there will be a variety of actions taken to address these issues. But we believe that it is not an option to not discuss or action these matters.

Noting that the sector is inherently shaped by politics and power, we recognise that we have a shared responsibility to establish more equitable partnerships, and to create a more just aid and development system where local actors are resourced, supported and trusted, to lead and respond to the needs of their communities.

Noting ACFID Resolution 1-2020 on Race, Diversity and Australian INGOs, this resolution aims to advance our sector's commitment to more equitable and just ways of working, which prioritise local knowledge, expertise, leadership and autonomy.

Noting ACFID's Development Practice Committee and ACFID's Humanitarian Reference Group work in collaboration with La Trobe University on Decolonisation and Locally Led Development, and the subsequent development of a Framework for Locally Led Action, we recognise the need to reflect on and enable the conditions that allow the wielding and yielding of power at individual, organisational, and systemic levels.

Noting ACFID's value of "Equity: We are committed to overcoming prejudices and disadvantage and promoting fair and just access to resources and opportunities" and ACFID Council's commitment to "Participation, Empowerment and Local Ownership" as set out in the ACFID Code of Conduct.

Resolutions

ACFID Council acknowledges the inherent power imbalances and colonial legacy of our sector. We commit to working to redress these inequalities, through a commitment to locally led approaches across all dimensions of our work.

To this end, ACFID Council resolves to:

- a. Stand in solidarity with local organisations in combatting development challenges and integrate their strengths, priorities, and vision for more equitable partnerships that mobilise and respect their expertise, autonomy and agency.
- b. Pursue transference of power to local partners while addressing our organisational structures and practices that contribute to power imbalances and hinder local ownership.
- c. Continue to develop a shared understanding among members about what localisation, decolonisation and anti-racism means to sector practices, which integrates and reflects the diversity of member organisations, including the development and adoption of tangible actions which seek to shift power and promote local ownership. These actions include, but are not limited to, access to core funding, prioritising local knowledge and expertise, mutual learning and two-way accountability.
- d. Continually strengthen the ACFID Code of Conduct to reflect this commitment to locally led action and shifting power, decision making and resources. We recognise that this will require changing our conception of good practice.

ACFID Secretariat resolves to:

- a. Resource the development of a shared understanding among members about what decolonisation, localisation and anti-racism means to sector practices, which recognises and reflects the diversity of member organisations.
- b. Create spaces for amplifying the perspectives, knowledge and expertise of local actors to influence the Australian international development and humanitarian sector and input to strategic decision making and advocacy.
- c. Continually engage with global partners and the international sector to advocate and learn, including through the ICSC and Accountable Now.
- d. Advocate with and to the Australian Government to address barriers to delivering a locally led humanitarian assistance and development cooperation program and to implement its commitments to localisation, including the Grand Bargain Agreement, and the OECD DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance.

Background

Localisation and the sector (as per the 2020 resolution)

Noting leaders of civil society organisations in developing countries have been calling on Australian NGOs and elsewhere to support local-led development through progressive principles of “localisation” which include transference of: power, priority setting, decision-making and ownership including leading engagement of local civil society in donor, and funding arrangements as outlined through the Charter for Change: <https://charter4change.org/>

Noting the general absence of peoples from developing countries sitting on the governance bodies of Australian INGOs, despite their mandate to work in other societies and culture; and

notwithstanding that under the Charity Act, and with modern communication, there is no legal or technical impediment per se to developing country representation on Australian charity boards occurring as so to diversify and inform governance.

Decolonisation and the sector

Noting ACFID's prior work on yielding and wielding power that recognises that systemic change is necessary for decolonisation within the development industry to take place, and to enable locally led programs and organisations. This work extends to the power of individuals and organisations.

Noting that this includes asking how organisations are perceived within the colonial legacy of development (organisational) and how race factors into personal and professional achievements (individual).

First Nations foreign policy and the sector

Noting recent government announcements that it will deliver a First Nations foreign policy that promises to weave the voices and practices of First Nations peoples into the way Australia talks to the world, better engaging with its Pacific family.

Noting the great potential to create a shared community in which Indigenous peoples are afforded equitable power and mutual respect.

Noting a renewed focus on truth-telling about colonial structures and legacies.

Proposed by: Christian Nielsen, Live & Learn

Seconded by: Sureka Goringe, Uniting World and Peter Walton, CARE Australia (proxy Hayley Conway)

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