

ACFID Member Toolkit for Submissions to Australia’s New International Development Policy 2022

QUICK GUIDE TO THE REVIEW

WHAT’S BEEN ANNOUNCED?	WHAT HAS ACFID SAID?	WHEN, WHERE & WHO?
<p>At the Government’s request, DFAT is designing “a new policy to set the long-term direction for Australia’s international development engagement.”</p> <p>DFAT has released a Terms of Reference (TOR) for this process and guidance for submissions.</p>	<p>Prior to the Federal Election, ACFID argued that “one of the first tasks of an incoming government will be to renew the process for a standalone development policy that articulates Australia’s goals, priorities, and how the program will work with partners.”</p> <p>ACFID called for the process to be “expert-led, evidence-based, and include consultation with regional partners, delivery partners, civil society, and the wider foreign policy community.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foreign Minister Wong formally announced the at UNGA on 23 September 2022. ACFID has written to Ministers making recommendations on the process and objectives of this new policy. Submissions to inform the new IDP are due by 30 November, with an expectation that the policy is completed and announced ahead of the May 2023 Federal Budget.
<p>The Government has stated that the policy will “deliver on Australia’s commitment to work in partnership with our neighbours to achieve a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific” and “see Australia contribute to a global system that can help meet present and future development needs.”</p> <p>The policy will incorporate findings from DFAT’s review into Development Finance.</p>	<p>ACFID believes the policy should set a 10-year horizon for Australia’s International Development program, and works towards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Putting sustainable and inclusive development at the centre of the new policy by tackling the root causes of poverty, inequality and injustice; Delivering on localisation commitments and promoting local ownership of all development activities; Elevating the role of civil society in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance; Rebuilding evaluation and aid management capability to deliver an evidence-based, effective program; and Increasing the ODA budget in line with need, and the commitments of the SDGs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACFID will be making a submission that represents its members, covering key issues (see below). ACFID encourages members to make their own submission. ACFID has launched a webpage for members. Submissions (limited to five pages) should be lodged via development.policy@dfat.gov.au
<p>The Government has stated that the new development policy will aim to reinforce the foundations of a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific, with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> building effective, accountable states that can sustain their own development enhancing states and community resilience to external pressures and shocks connecting partners with Australia and regional architecture, and generating collective action on global challenges that impact our region. 	<p>ACFID suggested that the new policy feature:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a strategic assessment of Australia’s international operating environment, including the priorities and human development needs of partner countries; clear long-term objectives and focus areas designed in consultation with partners, matched with capabilities and clearly communicated to the Australian public; a clear framework that ensures decision making and investment for program designs is aligned to the objectives of the policy, is evidence based and enables multi-year budgeting; a workforce and capability plan to rebuild thematic expertise, evaluation and aid management capability across Government and implementing partners; and a review and accountability mechanisms to enable regular, rolling updates to the policy during its lifecycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Minister for International Development and the Pacific will oversee the creation of the new policy. DFAT’s Development Policy Division, Development Strategy Branch, will lead the process on behalf of the Australian Government. The Government has appointed an External Advisory Group “to provide strategic, independent advice on the new policy and performance framework”. A series of consultations will be held following the 2022-23 Federal Budget (October 2022) and will include a stakeholders in Australia and internationally

ACFID'S WORKING PRINCIPLES FOR THE IDP

A CLEAR PURPOSE

The new policy should invest in human development and poverty alleviation, prioritise inclusivity, good governance and helping those furthest behind according to development indicators (including adverse climate impacts).

Priority should be given to strategies that address the root causes of the challenges which undermine peace, prosperity, and global and regional cooperation. The new policy should explicitly articulate how Australia will integrate approaches to development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding, and progress its commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Gender equality (including non-binary gender approaches), the inclusion of people with disability, a commitment to justice for First Nations peoples, and a strong focus on human rights must be at the forefront of the new policy.

The policy should reflect Australia's commitments to good international development donorship and humanitarian principles, which include: the Grand Bargain commitment to humanitarian effectiveness; the Paris Declaration on Development Effectiveness; and the OECD DAC Principles and Standards (such as the Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance).

In the minds of the Australian public, creating sustainable, long-term change for the poorest and most marginalised is where Australian international development derives its legitimacy. Not only this, but it is critical for peace and shared prosperity and creating a stable region which is aligned with Australia's interests.

CREATING DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

This new policy must demonstrate how Australia will rebuild design, evaluation and aid management capability and redress recent backsliding in the transparency and accountability of the program. It also offers the opportunity to deliver on localisation commitments and promote local ownership of all development activities.

To address these implementation challenges, and deliver a more effective locally led program, the new policy could:

- Outline a roadmap for the localisation of Australia's aid program, including targets for local leadership in the design, delivery, and evaluation of programs.
- Implement all recommendations of the ANU Transparency Audit.
- Re-establish the Independent Office of Development Effectiveness with a significant increase in resourcing and authority, including independent reporting mechanisms to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for International Development and the Pacific.
- Re-invest in DFAT's specialised development policy, aid management and performance areas, appoint senior representatives for development partnerships (Minister Counsellors) at key regional and multilateral posts, and appoint an Associate Secretary for Aid and Development.
- Reinstate an annual performance reporting system, including detailed breakdowns of performance by country and thematic priorities, as well as cross-cutting issues such as gender, disability, and First Nations justice.
- Commit to an annual ministerial statement on development effectiveness to Parliament to enhance transparency, maintain bipartisanship and strengthen public confidence in a growing development program.
- Reinstate the 'Performance of Australian Aid' reports. These performance reports were based on the Department's Investment Monitoring Reports and collated data on the quality and effectiveness of aid programming.

ADDRESSING MAJOR REGIONAL ISSUES

The IDP must be clear in addressing the scale of climate change and environmental degradation such as, increasing natural disasters, water and food shortages, shifting disease patterns, and pandemics. This should be achieved through climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience and be consistent with the Boe and Nadi Bay Declaration.

The IDP must be clear in addressing fraying international norms, human rights and closing civic space. Creating open and thriving societies should be a key objective for the IDP. Supporting and strengthening civil society not only enables Australia to deliver a more effective and locally led development program – it also supports pluralism, strengthens effective and accountable governance, builds deeper partnerships and people-to-people linkages, and contributes to stability.

The IDP must be clear in addressing extreme poverty, but also growing inequality, which is creating unrest, stifling growth and further alienating marginalised people. It should explicitly focus on inclusive growth and consider access to basic health and education as key investments.

The IDP must be clear in maintaining its commitment to principled humanitarian action and fair-share contribution as the growing number of people in need of assistance grows.

A GREATER AND MORE CONSISTENT BUDGET

Australia's current development budget settings do not reflect our changing strategic circumstances, our regional and global interests, or our values. In 2021-22 Australia's ODA is estimated to reach just 0.21 per cent of GNI and, on current projections, will fall to an estimated 0.18 per cent in 2025-26 (the lowest point in Australia's history).

A new development policy should outline a pathway towards legislated, stepped targets for achieving the 0.7 per cent ODA of GNI by 2030 target that Australia has agreed to, as a signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals. This should include a legislated commitment to reaching 0.5 per cent ODA/GNI by 2025-26 as an interim target and 0.7 per cent by 2029-30.

The new policy and its corresponding performance framework apply to all development financing modalities (ODA and non-ODA). This sets a high standard for all development finance initiatives to achieve development impact.

GENERATING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The IDP should be delivered by the whole-of-government and by the whole-of-society. It should represent the character of Australia, bringing First Nations Australians, diaspora communities and our diversity to the fore, harnessing the best of civil society, businesses and universities. DFAT should invest heavily in programs and approaches which achieve maximum development impact, and through development providers who are heavily invested in the communities where they work.

DFAT should better tailor, brand and resource IDP communications to the Australian public. This should include a strategic communications plan and accompanying resources.

APPROACHING YOUR SUBMISSION

ACFID recommends that you choose a small number of issues to address and provide propositional ideas or solutions to the problems you identify. To assist this, you may wish to include:

- Description of the changes you want to see in a new development policy
- Proposed focus areas, sectors or priorities for a new development policy
- Recommendations for improving internal processes, systems and incentives within aid management, program design and funding
- Concrete examples of strongly performing programs or approaches, with supporting evidence
- Examples of new initiatives, and
- Embedded links to evidence, public commentary or other documents which support the points you wish to make.

In creating a new IDP, and in an environment of change, there will be greater scope for initiatives from the sector. This may include initiatives which have been proposed in the past, but which the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have previously not been able to explore. Consider revisiting your ideas and proposals and matching them with the objectives and questions the Government is seeking to address in the creation of the new IDP.

You may wish to use this set of questions to help inform your submission. They are questions which ACFID advises will be crucial to the shape of the new international development policy.

- Australia's international development program must deliver maximum impact and effectiveness. Consider how your programs deliver this and seek to channel this in your submission. Bring your best examples to bear. How should the current program change to deliver maximum impact and effectiveness?
- The Government has said it "will listen to and respect the priorities of our partners and seek their ideas on how we can work together to achieve the SDGs." What does this look like in practice? And how could this be strengthened?
- What changes in policy, funding, systems and practices do you believe would help promote a locally led humanitarian and development assistance?
- Poverty and inequality look different in South Asia compared to the Pacific; how does Australia's international development program approach each region differently?
- Given the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the vulnerabilities in health and social protection systems this crisis exposed, what could the government do differently to strengthen these systems, adopt a more preventative and long-term approach and ensure that pandemic recovery is inclusive and equitable?
- How does Australia's international development program help create free and open societies, and protect civic space within its region? What examples can you draw upon from international and national civil society organisations which help achieve free and open societies?

- How does Australia’s international development program create inclusive growth and support community resilience? Cite examples of how civil society organisations can help achieve this by focussing on those most marginalised, including women and girls, and people with disabilities.
- How could delivery systems and processes be reformed to enable more effective and evidence-based programming and partnership? What steps should be taken to improve the transparency & accountability of the program?
- To your organisation, do targets within the international development program work effectively? What performance metrics should guide the international development program? If targets remain as a key measure, what targets should be removed or retained?
- The Government has indicated that its approach will be “guided by Australia's strengths – the power of our economy, institutions, culture, expertise, regional ties and the quality of our engagement and partnerships.” Are there other strengths the government should maximise? What are some tangible examples of these strengths within the existing program which should be uplifted?
- In a 2015 Review, DFAT’s own Office of Development Effectiveness described the ANCP program as “one of the best performing programs”, reporting that it delivered 18.2 per cent of DFAT’s development results for only 2.7 per cent of the aid budget. The 2022 Independent Evaluation of ANCP confirmed the unique value of the program. What improvements, expansions or alternatives do you envisage for the ANCP program? Is there another NGO-funding stream you would propose?