

POLICY BRIEF:

# Combatting climate change – the greatest threat to livelihoods, security, and wellbeing



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
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INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT



## Key points

Climate change is already disrupting and reversing economic and human development. This will only worsen with further global warming. In achieving strong climate objectives in our region and beyond, the Government can strengthen partnerships and improve the security and well-being of all.

Climate change threatens decades of development progress. Climate impacts hinder progress across a wide range of development goals, including health, education, poverty reduction, human rights, food security, gender equality, and peacebuilding.

Addressing poverty and inequality cannot be effective without addressing global climate change and environmental degradation. Australia's international development program must successfully address the threat of climate change on the livelihoods and socio-economic development of low-income communities, many of which are dependent on natural resources. Australia's political ambition must be matched by programs and funding that change outcomes in our region.

To build more genuine and respectful partnerships in the region and further afield, the Australian Government must implement domestic and foreign policies that achieve greater progress on climate mitigation, adaptation, finance and resilience.

Australia's current climate finance contributions sit on average at \$AUD 629 million per annum – a shortfall of \$AUD 3.37 billion below the fair share calculation.<sup>1</sup>

As stated in the Government's International Development Policy, responding to the calls of the Asia-Pacific region requires increasing our climate investments and better-addressing climate risks. To achieve this, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) has laid out a series of recommendations in this brief. These recommendations reflect the UNFCCC's three pillars of collective climate action: mitigation, adaptation, and climate finance.

Facing the biggest global challenge and threat to humanity, Australia should continue to demonstrate increasing ambition in becoming a global leader in climate action. By taking concrete and meaningful actions as outlined in this brief, Australia stands to benefit, as does the stability, economy, security and well-being of the region.

<sup>1</sup> Australia's fair share of \$AUD 4 billion is calculated by Oxfam's Responsibility and Capability Index, which considers both a country's responsibility for historical emissions and their relative economic capability to pay. Oxfam Australia et al. (2022), *Falling Short: Australia's Role in Funding Fairer Climate Action in a Warming World*, [https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-ACT-004-Climate-Finance-Report\\_Digital.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-ACT-004-Climate-Finance-Report_Digital.pdf), p. 10.

# Recommendations

1. **Develop a whole-of-government approach to meet Australia's climate finance fair share<sup>2</sup> to achieve the collective global climate finance goal.** This must be new and additional finance to existing levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and include upfront annual budget commitments to support effective planning and programs.
  - a. Contribute Australia's fair share of \$AUD 4 billion per year by 2025 towards the \$USD 100 billion collective finance goal, and advocate for an ambitious and inclusive New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) at COP29.
  - b. Fund climate finance mechanisms that do not add to sovereign debt distress (i.e. grants not loans) and prioritise direct access modalities to enable funding for developing countries in our region (including delivering a greater proportion towards local civil society). Any new mechanisms designed must also follow these principles.
  - c. Develop and publish a transparent and consistent approach to reporting on climate finance that reflects its real value to partner countries. This should include details on resulting climate outcomes achieved, not just inputs. As well as making more public the projects, budget, methodology of calculating climate finance volumes, and the share of climate finance provided at the local level.
2. **Fund Australia's fair share of Loss and Damage** (including non-economic) to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on the societies, economies, and cultures of developing countries most vulnerable to climate change impacts.
3. **Demonstrate Australia's commitment to a genuine partnership with Pacific Island countries** by strengthening the Government's domestic and exported greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets in line with the pathway to limit global warming to below 1.5°C. This will show Australia is listening to Pacific Island countries who have repeatedly called for a global phase-out of fossil fuels, including through the Port Vila Call for a Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific. It will also deliver on the Australian Government's stated commitment to use all tools of statecraft to deliver improved outcomes for international development.
  - a. Redirect fossil fuel subsidies to provide new and additional sources of climate finance. This will also assist in achieving mitigation goals.
4. **Commit to a genuinely equal partnership with the Pacific**, including if co-hosting COP31. This means prioritising the ambitions and voices of Pacific peoples and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – being sure to include Indigenous peoples, women and girls, sexual and ethnic minorities, peoples with disabilities, children and youth, the elderly, migrants, and refugees (thereafter 'all marginalised groups').
5. **Redevelop DFAT's Climate Change Action Strategy beyond 2025** to ensure that Australia's development investments succeed at achieving Australia's new climate commitments, objectives and targets. This new Strategy should ensure strong mitigation and adaptation outcomes are achieved in DFAT's climate investments, and support partner countries to achieve their climate change goals. The Strategy should also outline the whole-of-government approach being taken to reach Australia's climate finance fair share, as described in Recommendation 1. The strategy should also:
  - a. ensure that investments reported as climate finance produce measurable climate outcomes, such as in the form of tonnes of CO2 reduced, avoided or sequestered; and/or the number of people with reduced vulnerability to climate hazards that can be attributed to the programs.
  - b. ensure that investments follow a strengths-based approach to the inclusion of all marginalised groups, as outlined in ACFID's submissions including but not limited to the LGBTQIA+ Human Rights Engagement Strategy, the International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy, and the International Gender Equality Strategy.
  - c. support locally-led approaches, recognising that local communities have localised expertise and networks and are often best-placed to implement climate programming, as outlined in ACFID's feedback on DFAT's discussion note for partners.
  - d. explicitly recognise child rights, and support the involvement of girls and young women in climate decision-making in their communities, regionally and globally, recognising that they have contributed the least to the climate crisis but will bear the brunt of its impacts.
6. **Develop a new Climate Adaptation Funding Window** specifically for civil society organisations across the Asia-Pacific region to access climate finance and mobilise their localised expertise and networks. The Funding Window should deliver genuine adaptation outcomes and follow a strengths-based approach to inclusion of marginalised groups.
7. **Elevate the voices of First Nations people**, their expertise and knowledge systems (formal and informal) in Australian foreign policy, international climate negotiations and development programming, to improve Australia's leadership in responding to climate change.

2 As agreed by parties under the Copenhagen Accord.

# Climate finance

Climate finance is central to delivering climate justice to those in low-income countries who have the fewest resources to address climate change and are the lowest historical emitters. Fair, accessible, and reliable climate finance commensurate to the scale of need is critical to the stability, security, and resilience of low-income countries and regions.

At COP15 in Copenhagen, developed countries agreed to jointly mobilise \$USD 100 billion per year in climate finance for developing countries between 2020 and 2025.<sup>3</sup> As we near the end of this period, the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance will be negotiated and eventually agreed at COP29 in Azerbaijan in late 2024.<sup>4</sup> It was agreed at COP21 in Paris that negotiations on the new climate finance goal would start at a floor of \$USD100 billion per year.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst developed countries ostensibly met the \$USD 100 billion goal in 2023, analyses on the quality of finance mobilised continue to find that a minority of this spending (between \$USD 21 billion and \$USD 24.5 billion) counts as real support.<sup>6</sup> Climate finance has been overcounted by many donors, who have overstated the climate component of development projects, and has mostly been delivered as loans rather than grants.<sup>7</sup> Loans risk exacerbating the debt distress already experienced by low-income countries.<sup>8</sup>

Further, most of the finance to date has been provided for climate mitigation despite the dire need for adaptation – particularly for low-income countries that rank highly on climate exposure and vulnerability.

Climate finance for Small Island Developing States, including our Pacific Island neighbours, has increased markedly in the past few years but still falls far short of actual needs.<sup>9</sup>

Australia was instrumental in discussions at COP15 that led to the establishment of the \$USD 100 billion climate financing goal. Since then, the strengths of Australia's climate finance have included the equal distribution of finance between mitigation and adaptation and its delivery through grants rather than loans. However, Australia currently sits near the bottom of global rankings for financing commitments and broader climate action.

In 2022-2023, Australia spent \$AUD 571.1 million on ODA climate finance, approximately 12.5 per cent of its overall ODA spend that year, and a further \$AUD 96.1 million on non-ODA climate finance.<sup>10</sup> This is significantly below Australia's fair share of \$AUD 4 billion per year of the overall \$USD 100 billion per year goal. There are also concerns about the inconsistent accounting methods that allow countries, including Australia, to report funding for projects with limited or no climate action objectives.<sup>11</sup>

Australia has the responsibility and capability to expand climate finance commitments and ensure that low-income countries, including our Pacific Island neighbours, can adapt to worsening climate impacts. Based on Australia's wealth and greenhouse gas emissions, Australia's fair share is estimated to be \$AUD 4 billion per year by 2025.<sup>12</sup> This fair share calculation will need to be recalibrated when the New Collective Quantified Goal is agreed at COP29.

Australia could meet its fair share target via a simple reallocation of some of the resources that are currently funnelled into fossil fuel subsidies (which stand at \$AUD 11.1 billion per year<sup>13</sup>).

**THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT CONTINUE TO DRAW ON A STRETCHED AID BUDGET, IT SHOULD PROVIDE FUNDING THAT IS NEW AND ADDITIONAL TO EXISTING ODA, AND THAT IS GRANTS-BASED.**

## CLIMATE MAINSTREAMING<sup>14</sup>

Climate mainstreaming refers to the integration of climate considerations into a wider policy context - extending into realms that are not explicitly climate related. The essentiality of this is underscored when assessing the widespread impact of climate change. Climate action is no longer able to effectively occur in silos. Instead, by adopting a climate lens in all areas of policy, progress can be made to move towards a climate responsive future.

It is crucial, however, that in mainstreaming climate across all programs and policies that Australia's real contribution towards climate finance is accurately measured and transparently reported. In recommendations 1 and 5, we outline the international development sector's expectations when it comes to reporting on the climate components of development investments. Funds counted towards Australia's climate finance contributions must genuinely achieve mitigation and/or adaptation objectives, and serious effort needs to be taken to monitor, measure and report transparently on progress against these objectives.

This is supported by a recent evaluation of climate finance conducted by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, which found that effective mainstreaming of climate "requires clearer criteria and a sharper focus on climate-specific outcomes in programme design, including in how these link to other objectives (going beyond generic links)."

3 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2022), *Report on progress towards achieving the goal of mobilizing jointly USD \$100 billion per year to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation*, [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/J0156\\_UNFCCC%20100BN%202022%20Report\\_Book\\_v3.2.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/J0156_UNFCCC%20100BN%202022%20Report_Book_v3.2.pdf)

4 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (n.d.), 'New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance', <https://unfccc.int/NCQG>

5 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2016), *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twenty-first session, held in Paris from 30 November to 13 December 2015, Part two: Actions taken by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-first session*, <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/10a01.pdf#page=2>, p.8., para. 53.

6 Oxfam (2023), *Climate Finance Shadow Report 2023: Assessing the Delivery of the \$100 Billion Commitment*, <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621500/bp-climate-finance-shadow-report-050623-en.pdf;jsessionid=6F4127B619767DE5211DEB8A79C1A46A?sequence=19>, p. 9.

7 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2021), 'The Climate Finance Question', <https://unfccc.int/news/the-climate-finance-question>

8 The World Bank (2023), *International Debt Report 2023*, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/83f7aadd-dc5a-406b-98d4-9624e93993e5/content>

9 ODI (February 2022), *Climate Finance Regional Briefing: Small Island Developing States*, [https://climatefundsupdate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CF12-SIDS\\_ENG-2021.pdf](https://climatefundsupdate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CF12-SIDS_ENG-2021.pdf)

10 Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (n.d.), 'Delivering on our climate finance commitments', <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/climate-change/supporting-indo-pacific-tackle-climate-change/delivering-our-climate-commitments>

11 CARE Denmark and CARE Netherlands (2021), *Climate Adaptation Finance: Fact or Fiction?*, [https://www.care-international.org/files/files/CARE\\_Climate\\_Adaptation\\_Finance\\_Fact\\_or\\_Fiction.pdf](https://www.care-international.org/files/files/CARE_Climate_Adaptation_Finance_Fact_or_Fiction.pdf)

12 Oxfam Australia et al. (2022), *Falling Short: Australia's Role in Funding Fairer Climate Action in a Warming World*, [https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-ACT-004-Climate-Finance-Report\\_Digital.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-ACT-004-Climate-Finance-Report_Digital.pdf), p. 10.

13 The Australia Institute (2023), *Fossil Fuel Subsidies in Australia 2023*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/P1378-Fossil-fuel-subsidies-2023-Web.pdf>

14 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2023), *Development Assistance Committee, DAC Network on Development Evaluation, Lessons from Evaluation: Rapid Review of Bilateral Climate Finance Evaluations*, pdf (oecd.org), pp. 11-12.

# Loss and damage

At COP28 a historic agreement on the establishment of a loss and damage fund was made to support developing countries and communities most vulnerable and impacted by climate change. The establishment of the fund was first committed to at COP27, more than three decades after Small Island Developing States first called and pressured for the existence of a loss and damage fund.

Several wealthy countries, including Germany, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Japan and the United States of America, made initial pledges to the fund bringing it to a cumulative total of \$USD 661.39 million by 2 December 2023.<sup>15</sup> Australia announced support of the loss and damage fund yet made no commitments to contribute to the fund.<sup>16</sup>

In developing countries, economic and non-economic loss and damage is already estimated to be greater than \$USD 400 billion annually, a figure which is expected to increase as climate change impacts grow in severity.<sup>17</sup> With the scale of the fund needing to be commensurate with the urgent needs of developing countries (the current funding accounts for only 0.2 per cent of their annual needs), it is critical that Australia contributes its fair share to the fund and advocates for the fund to be operationalised in a way that works for recipient countries and communities. Contributions to the fund should be new and additional to existing ODA and climate finance contributions under the collective finance goal. Contributions should also be given in the form of grants, not loans, to minimize the deepening of debt distress.

## CASE STUDY: TUVALU'S SINKING ISLANDS

Tuvalu, the fourth smallest nation in the world, with less than 26 square kilometres of total land area, is sinking. This tiny Pacific archipelago, home to around 11,000 people, is on the frontlines of climate change with most of the islands now barely sitting above sea level. Livelihoods, food security and drinkable water are threatened by the events of inundation, flooding, king tides and droughts. People's homes are threatened by the increasing frequency and severity of climatic hazards, such as cyclones.<sup>18</sup> Many of the locals say that the sea will soon swallow them for good, with scientists predicting that in the next 50-100 years Tuvalu will be uninhabitable.<sup>19</sup>

Tuvalu is a clear example of the critical need of developing countries and communities most impacted by climate change to have direct access to loss and damage funds. Whilst Australia's emerging leadership in climate change migration is welcomed, with Australia and Tuvalu signing an unprecedented cooperation agreement known as the 'Falepili Union', this further underscores the urgency of loss and damage funds as irreversible damage is already being done to the societies, cultures, and economies of the Pacific Islands. In particular, this migration agreement cannot account for non-economic loss and damage including trauma, loss of community due to displacement, loss of cultural heritage, and loss of traditional ways of living.

# Greater domestic ambition

In 2022, the Labor-led Government increased the ambition of Australia's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) from the previous target of 26-28 per cent reduction (on 2005 levels) by 2030 to a target of 43 per cent reduction (on 2005 levels) by 2030 (this target includes Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry [LULUCF]).<sup>20</sup> The international development sector warmly welcomes the 15 percentage point increase in Australia's NDC; however, it is important to note that Australia's fair share emissions reduction target, to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, is 61 per cent by 2030 (including LULUCF).<sup>21</sup>

The Australian Government is due to submit its second NDC to the UNFCCC in 2025. The sector calls upon the Government to use this opportunity to increase the ambition of its emissions reduction target from 43 per cent to 61 per cent by 2030, to ensure that Australia is adequately addressing its contribution to the climate crisis.

Another area of climate mitigation in which the Government can greatly improve is in avoiding new greenhouse gas emissions. In 2022-2023, the Australian Government paid \$AUD 11.1 billion from the public purse to subsidising the fossil fuel industry.<sup>22</sup> Based on forward estimates, this yearly spend is set to increase despite the impacts of climate change being felt more severely in Australia, in our region and worldwide.<sup>23</sup> A straightforward reallocation of budget currently allocated to fossil fuel subsidies would cover Australia's climate finance fair share almost three times over and would also help in meeting our domestic emissions reduction target.

If Australia increases its domestic ambition and follows through on its climate commitments this will produce a multitude of benefits, including huge gains to the stability, security, and well-being of populations in the Asia-Pacific region. Further, it will greatly strengthen Australia's partnerships with Pacific Island countries. Pacific Island leaders have repeatedly called on Australia to reduce its domestic emissions and to rapidly transition to renewable energy. In March 2023, government ministers from Tonga, Fiji, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu met in Port Vila, Vanuatu, for the 2nd Pacific Ministerial Dialogue on Pathways for the Global Just Transition from Fossil Fuels. As a result of the Dialogue, those nations signed onto The Port Vila Call for a Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific, which commits to calling for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and spearheading the global phase out of fossil fuel production.<sup>24</sup> When Australia was invited to sign onto the agreement at the Pacific Islands Forum in 2023, it refused to sign. The resolution makes clear what Pacific Island countries expect from Australia and other large emitters, and the Australian Government has an opportunity to show genuine partnership with the Pacific by signing onto the resolution and following through on actions needed to limit warming to 1.5 degrees.

15 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (n.d.), 'Pledges to the Loss and Damage Fund (as communicated by the COP28 Presidency)', <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/funds-and-financial-entities/loss-and-damage-fund-joint-interim-secretariat/pledges-to-the-loss-and-damage-fund>

16 Adam Morton (2023, December 8), 'Australia commits \$150m to climate finance for vulnerable Pacific countries', *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/dec/08/australia-commits-150m-to-climate-finance-for-vulnerable-pacific-countries>

17 UUSC (2023), *Standing in Solidarity with those on the frontlines of the climate crisis: A loss and damage package for COP28*, [https://assets-global.website-files.com/605869242b205050a0579e87/655b50e163c953059360564d\\_L%26DC\\_L%26D\\_Package\\_for\\_COP28\\_20112023\\_1227.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/605869242b205050a0579e87/655b50e163c953059360564d_L%26DC_L%26D_Package_for_COP28_20112023_1227.pdf)

18 Mohseen Riaz Ud Dean (2020), 'Climate Tragedy: If We Drown Tuvalu, We Drown the Entire World', *United Nations Development Program*, <https://www.undp.org/pacific/blog/climate-tragedy-if-we-drown-tuvalu-we-drown-entire-world>

19 Eleanor Ainge Roy (2019, May 16), "'One day we'll disappear": Tuvalu's sinking islands', <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/may/16/one-day-disappear-tuvalu-sinking-islands-rising-seas-climate-change>

20 Anthony Albanese and Chris Bowen (2022, June 16), 'NDC 2022 Update Letter to the UNFCCC', <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/NDC%202022%20Update%20Letter%20to%20UNFCCC.pdf>

21 Climate Action Tracker (2023, December 11), Country Profile, 'Australia', <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/australia/>

22 The Australia Institute (2023), *Fossil Fuel Subsidies in Australia 2023*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/P1378-Fossil-fuel-subsidies-2023-Web.pdf>

23 Ibid, p. 13.

24 Fossil Fuel Treaty (2023, March 17), 'Block of 6 Pacific Countries Commit to Spearhead Global Fossil Fuel Phase-Out Effort', <https://fossilfuel treaty.org/fossil-free-pacific>

# Climate justice

Human-induced climate change is an inherently social issue, where the burdens of climate impacts are not all created or distributed equally. Those peoples and communities that have been historically marginalised or underserved, are being disproportionately impacted whilst having contributed the least to global emissions. Sudden and slow onset climate impacts, such as rising sea levels and temperatures, as well as the increasing frequency and intensity of climatic events, exacerbate the existing structural vulnerabilities of marginalised groups such as Indigenous peoples, women and girls, sexual and ethnic minorities, peoples with disabilities, children and youth, the elderly, migrants and refugees.

*“Vulnerability of ecosystems and people to climate change differs substantially among and within regions, driven by patterns of intersecting socio-economic development, unsustainable ocean and land use, inequity, marginalisation, historical and ongoing patterns of inequity such as colonialism, and governance.”<sup>25</sup>*

To effectively address the threats of climate change and protect those who are most vulnerable, approaches to mitigation and adaptation must strive for meaningful inclusivity, involving all parts of society. There is an urgent need for climate action to simultaneously address structural and systemic injustices, such that progress made to date on poverty reduction, food security, gender equality and access to basic services are not lost and that advancement continues. However, in many decision-making forums at the global, national, and local level, marginalised groups are either invisible or underrepresented.<sup>26</sup> Their inclusion is critical to driving more targeted, contextually appropriate and transformative policy and programmatic responses to climate change impacts. We urge Australia to demonstrate strong climate leadership by elevating and centering the voices of marginalised groups, including the recognition, mobilisation and valuing of Indigenous knowledge systems. To achieve this, direct access to core funding for local civil society should be prioritised.

## CASE STUDY: CLIMATE CHANGE LEADING TO INCREASED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) IN BANGLADESH

The Sundarbans, spread across both India and Bangladesh, are a cluster of low-lying islands which are famous for their unique mangrove forests.

Despite being UNESCO Heritage Listed, the Sundarbans have recently been the site of major climate disruption. Rising sea levels, intrusion of salt water and increasing cyclone risk have severely impacted the 4.5 million islanders who rely on the region’s natural resources for their livelihoods.

This impact has disproportionately been felt by women. For instance, due to the environmental degradation caused by climate change, women in Sundarbans often need to walk over a mile to fetch fresh drinking water and food – significantly increasing their risk of GBV and sexual assault.

While Bangladesh has long grappled with high rates of GBV, possessing one of the highest violence estimates among married/partnered women in South Asia region, a clear link can be observed between the increase of this violence and climate change.

This is confirmed by a study completed in 2011 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), International Centre of Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), and Centre for International Climate and Environmental Research (CICERO), which revealed that the trafficking of girls and women and other forms of sexual GBV have considerably grown due to climate-induced disasters in South Asia.

“Women suffer more from climate implications in Bangladesh, due to their lesser social standings than men in the patriarchal societies”, said Raihanatul Jannat, a Bangladeshi researcher whose study at the University of Eastern Finland is in the fields of gender and climate law. This underscores how the impacts of climate change, within an already vulnerable region like the Sundarbans, serve to only exacerbate existing gender inequalities and forms of GBV.

25 IPCC (2022), *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/>

26 World Resources Institute (2021), ‘Climate Action Isn’t Reaching the Most Vulnerable – But it Could’, <https://www.wri.org/insights/how-climate-action-can-help-vulnerable-populations>

# COP31: Commitment to building genuine partnerships

Australia’s shared ambition with Pacific Nations to co-host COP31 is a significant opportunity to assert Australia’s climate change leadership and strengthen the quality of partnerships across the region. Conversely, if not handled with care, Australia risks further straining these important relations.

Whilst Australia is the Pacific’s biggest country with the largest economy, the co-hosting of the COP should be approached as an equal and genuine partnership such that Australia supports the priorities of the Pacific on climate change and does not dominate decision-making. As stated by the UNFCCC and reflected by past hosts, hosting a COP requires “unprecedented levels of cooperation and communication within the different departments of the host country government, as well as with their secretariat counterparts”.<sup>27</sup> The requirement for cooperation and communication is likely to be even greater when two or more nations are co-hosting, and the number of government departments and agencies involved is higher. This will require being on the same page about key climate commitments and objectives for the COP.

The effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in climate discussions is key to developing sustainable and equitable solutions to climate change.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the intergenerational expertise, knowledge systems (informal and formal) and networks of Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be elevated and centred at COP31. The active, meaningful participation of all marginalised groups in the preparation for COP and during the Conference itself should also be prioritised, as these groups are often invisible or underrepresented in decision-making spaces.

27 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2014), *How to COP: A Handbook for Hosting the United Nations Climate Change Conferences*, [how\\_to\\_cop\\_unfccc.pdf](https://www.unfccc.org/publications/how_to_cop_unfccc.pdf), p. 9.

28 Nia Tero, (2023), ‘Indigenous Peoples Demand Effective Participation and Justice in the COP28 Energy Transition’, <https://www.niatero.org/stories/articles/indigenous-peoples-demand-effective-participation-and-justice-in-the-cop28-energy-transition>



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**Cover photo:** A woman working in a vegetable garden, credit: LWF Kenya.

**Inside front cover:** A man sits at a sewing machine, repairing a garment. Stewart Muchapera/ Tearfund UK

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