



GENDER ACTION PLATFORM (GAP) OVERVIEW



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✓ GAP SUMMARY

The Gender Action Platform (GAP) strengthened Australian non-government organisation (NGO) programming to achieve gender equality outcomes in developing countries. In summary:

- The GAP included six projects to address women's economic empowerment, gender-based violence and women's leadership.
- The GAP design prioritised innovation, collaboration, and shared learning
- Implementation dates: July 2017 to December 2020
- The GAP reached 226,131 people including 144,139 women and girls (64%); 96,340 women (42%) and 47,779 girls (21%) and 4,217 people with disabilities (2%).

👥 PROJECTS, PARTICIPATING NGOS AND LOCATIONS

Lead NGOs	Project	Location
Marie Stopes International Australia, WaterAid Australia	Keeping girls in school through improved reproductive and menstrual health	Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste
Act for Peace	'I'm Prepared' Equality for refugee women in the return- reintegration context	Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and Myanmar
ActionAid Australia	Gender Responsive Alternatives on Climate Change	Cambodia, Kenya, Vanuatu
CARE Australia	Enhancing Women's Voice to Stop Sexual Harassment (STOP)	Cambodia, Myanmar
ChildFund Australia	Rights, Respect, Resilience: skills for safe, equitable and respectful relationships	Papua New Guinea
World Vision Australia	Action Against Gender Violence: Engaging Men, Youth and Children	Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu





GENDER EQUALITY APPROACHES AND OUTCOMES

Good gender programming focuses on increasing understanding of gender equality, as rooted in unequal power relations, women's access to and control of resources, changing policies and challenging gender norms and harmful attitudes, and mainstreaming considerations of women's safety¹. All of the GAP projects were implemented in line with this good practice:

All projects focused on **awareness and consciousness-raising** that increased knowledge for men, women, girls, and boys on gender equality, menstrual health and hygiene, refugee repatriation processes, violence against women, gendered impacts of climate change and how to access violence against women and sexual reproductive health services. Women who participated in the **Act for Peace** project gained vital information relevant to their status as refugees, donor support and options for return and reintegration. Women also became more informed about risks and opportunities for protection in camps and as part of return and reintegration processes. In addition, men and women became more aware of sexual abuse and family violence. As a result of the project, refugee women had increased self-confidence. They felt empowered to make informed decisions for their protection and access to financial resources through the repatriation and return process.

Delivering **gender equality awareness and training activities in tandem with increasing women and girls' access to violence response services** is considered good practice in preventing violence against women.² Gender equality training often results in the disclosure of violence. Developing partnerships with existing violence response services is an essential first step in implementing gender equality programs to support women to realise their rights to be free from violence. All projects had an element of linking violence response services to awareness programs. For example, **ChildFund Australia** facilitated family violence response services to visit schools and communities to provide counselling and support for adolescent boys and girls. The family violence support services also supported teachers with strategies to discuss sexual reproductive health and family violence. These linkages resulted in a commitment from schools to improve formal referral pathways to family violence response services.

All six of the GAP projects aimed to **challenge gender norms**. In many contexts where GAP projects were implemented, decision-making was male-dominated. Therefore, several projects supported women's leadership. As a result of GAP projects, women reported having more status with their communities and influencing decision-making in public and private spheres. For example, **ActionAid Australia** in Cambodia, Kenya and Vanuatu increased women's knowledge on the gendered impacts of climate change and leadership skills. Men and women's attitudes about women in leadership were shifted through increasing women's access to local and national government decision making processes about climate change policy. The project resulted in women influencing policy changes such as the Baringo Country's Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2018-2022 in Kenya.

All **six projects successfully influenced policies**, practices, and curricula within national government and the private sector. **The GAP partners were well-placed as ANGOs to leverage existing long-term relationships with government officials to influence policy change** within the three-year timeframe. For example, the Myanmar Occupational Safety and Health Law approved by the Union Parliament incorporated changes advocated by **CARE Australia** and its partner organisations, such as the expansion of the scope of the provisions, the participation of women on Occupational Safety and Health committees, and inclusion of the need to provide Occupational Safety and Health training to committee members.

¹Rao, Sandler, Kelleher and Miller (2016): *Gender at Work: Theory and Practice for 21st Century Organisations*, Routledge

²UN Women (2015). *A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevention Violence Against Women*.



INNOVATION

Act for Peace pioneered a refugee-led approach to strengthen women's resilience and gender equality in the return and reintegration process for Tamil and Karenni refugees while developing evidence-based guidance to help women prepare for safe, dignified voluntary repatriation. This was a world-first approach based on engagement with regional and international refugees. The approach was featured as an example of good practice on the [UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees digital platform](#). The platform shares projects and initiatives that are based on learning and can inspire others to support refugees.

Marie Stopes International Australia and WaterAid Australia integrated and adapted previously discrete approaches to sexual and reproductive health and menstrual health and hygiene to better meet adolescent health needs in secondary schools. This project was the first of its kind in the Asia Pacific. In PNG, a substantial impact of GAP was the development of a Comprehensive Sexuality Education curriculum and a teacher's toolkit. In addition, teacher training was implemented alongside the curriculum to build the capacity and confidence of teachers. The curriculum was a significant achievement as it is the first Comprehensive Sexuality Education curriculum endorsed by the PNG Department of Education. Educating students at a young age about puberty, their menstrual health and how to prevent pregnancy provides them with the knowledge and skills needed to make clear decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

LEARNING

The GAP accelerated learning and documentation of effective approaches within projects. Knowledge products were shared widely with the development sector, including:

- Act for Peace and Institute for Sustainable Futures: [I'm Prepared Policy Brief](#), which documents the refugee-led approach to strengthen women's resilience and gender equality in the return and reintegration process for Tamil and Karenni refugees.
- Marie Stopes International and WaterAid: ["Integrating Menstrual Health, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene and Sexual and Reproductive Health in Asia and the Pacific Region"](#) This resource is focused on integrating menstrual health and hygiene and sexual and reproductive health into the school curricula.
- ActionAid Australia and Monash Gender Peace and Security. Monash University: [Gender Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change Research Brief](#).
- CARE Australia: [This is Not Working: Stopping sexual harassment in workplaces across our region](#).

