



Australia's International Development Policy

FOR A PEACEFUL, STABLE AND PROSPEROUS INDO-PACIFIC



Papua New Guinean man dressed in cultural attire at 80th Anniversary of Kokoda commemoration ceremony, November 2022. Credit: DFAT

2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent

Endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) leaders, the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent provides the blueprint to advance Pacific-led regionalism. The strategy was developed by the people of the Pacific and articulates the future the Pacific wants to create together, and a framework to realise it.

The strategy reflects Pacific priorities. It resulted from extensive national and regional consultation with PIF members, the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific, Pacific-based civil society organisations, and specialists from within and beyond the region.

Australia is committed to listening to and being guided by the wisdom of Pacific voices. We understand that a strong, united region is central to protecting our shared interests in a peaceful, prosperous, and resilient Pacific.

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OUR REGION'S PRIORITIES

ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific

As its first Dialogue Partner in 1974, Australia is a leading economic, development and strategic partner for ASEAN. We are committed to working with ASEAN to advance the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, in support of ASEAN centrality and underpinned by our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Australia's development program is a key vehicle for our support to implement the ASEAN Outlook.

Our practical collaboration supports ASEAN members to cooperate effectively on complex economic, security and other challenges. By working together, we are tackling some of the region's most pressing shared priorities—climate change, rapid digitalisation, and knowledge and skills development.

It is up to all of us to work towards a strategic equilibrium in the region—with ASEAN at its centre.

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South Asia

South Asia is an important part of our vision for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Our engagement with its dynamic countries is growing. Almost half of the population of South Asia is aged under 24 years, and over one million people are set to enter the workforce every month until 2030.¹¹ The growing effects of climate change and continued social inequality are dampening opportunities. We will support partners expand education programs and build resilient cities and infrastructure. Australia is connected to many South Asian countries by the Indian Ocean, and we will continue to support the productive and sustainable use of its resources.

Beyond the Indo-Pacific

Shaping our world for the better also requires acting beyond the Indo-Pacific. In our interconnected world, events in any one region can reverberate globally. Australia has important partnerships in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Amongst the diverse array of countries in these regions, some have a high prevalence of food and water insecurity, fragility, and displacement. We will continue to play our part in responding to development and humanitarian needs in these regions, including through our multilateral engagement.



The amount of plastic in the ocean will at least double by 2040

More than 17 million metric tons of plastic entered the ocean in 2021. This is projected to double or triple by 2040.¹²



Solomon Islands student washes their hands with water from newly-installed water tanks. Credit. Save The Children

CHAPTER 3

A development program that meets the needs of our region

Australia's approach to sustainable development will reflect our interests, values, and enduring connections to our region. Our investments will be guided by context and our partner countries' priorities. We will focus on what is needed and how we can best support countries to achieve their goals. We will deploy both our ODA and non-ODA support flexibly and creatively, to achieve the highest quality outcome in each circumstance. We will draw on the expertise and experience of others to find the best solutions.

OUR COMMITMENT

Development Capability

To deliver an effective development program, we must invest in the people who will deliver it, and value their skills and experience.

The May 2023 Budget delivered an immediate and ongoing investment in the core skills required to deliver an effective and high quality international development program, including program design, monitoring and evaluation, procurement and transparency.

Through ongoing efforts to lift DFAT's broader capabilities we are investing in the skills required to deliver the commitments in this policy. We will pilot and implement innovative ideas and approaches to develop a skilled cadre of development professionals. We will also encourage officers to undertake postings in the Indo-Pacific; ensuring high quality training and learning opportunities are available and encouraged for all staff, including Senior Executive Service officers; and developing a capability pipeline for emerging thematic priorities.

This policy recognises that DFAT has a unique role to play as the lead government agency implementing the international development program. Whole-of-government agencies and staff that are responsible for ODA implementation and broader Indo-Pacific engagement will also participate in DFAT training to ensure consistent and impactful approaches that meet our partner countries' priorities.

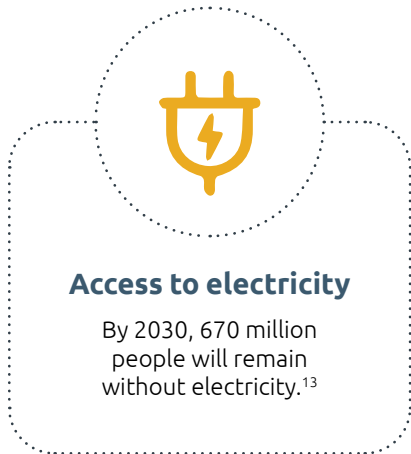
We recognise the vital role of locally engaged staff in delivering a high quality development program. They know the landscape, they have the insights that we rely on and they have the management skills we need. We will continue to invest in their skills, opportunities, and careers. We will deliver opportunities for development-focused locally engaged staff to take greater responsibility and leadership. Having our locally engaged staff as the face of our international development program is the first step we can take to ensuring an effective locally led approach to our program delivery.

This is the start of a longer-term process, and we recognise that building up development capability does not end at DFAT. All parts of the development ecosystem, including our commercial partners, civil society organisations, and bilateral and multilateral partners, have a role in building the collective capability we need to address future development needs.



Our development program is enriched for the knowledge, networks and experience of our locally engaged staff. In their more than 26 years at the Australian High Commission, Setaita and Tina have been a critical part of delivering our Vuvale Partnership with Fiji. Credit: DFAT

We recognise the vital role of locally engaged staff in delivering a high-quality development program.



We will start from a place of respect and an appreciation of the strengths and interests that all partners bring to the table.

We will work closely with, and be guided by, our partners to ensure their needs are reflected in country plans and program implementation. We will ensure diverse voices are heard and make sure women and girls are engaged in meaningful ways. We will start from a place of respect and an appreciation of the strengths and interests that all partners bring to the table. We have strong and enduring relationships in the region on which we will build.

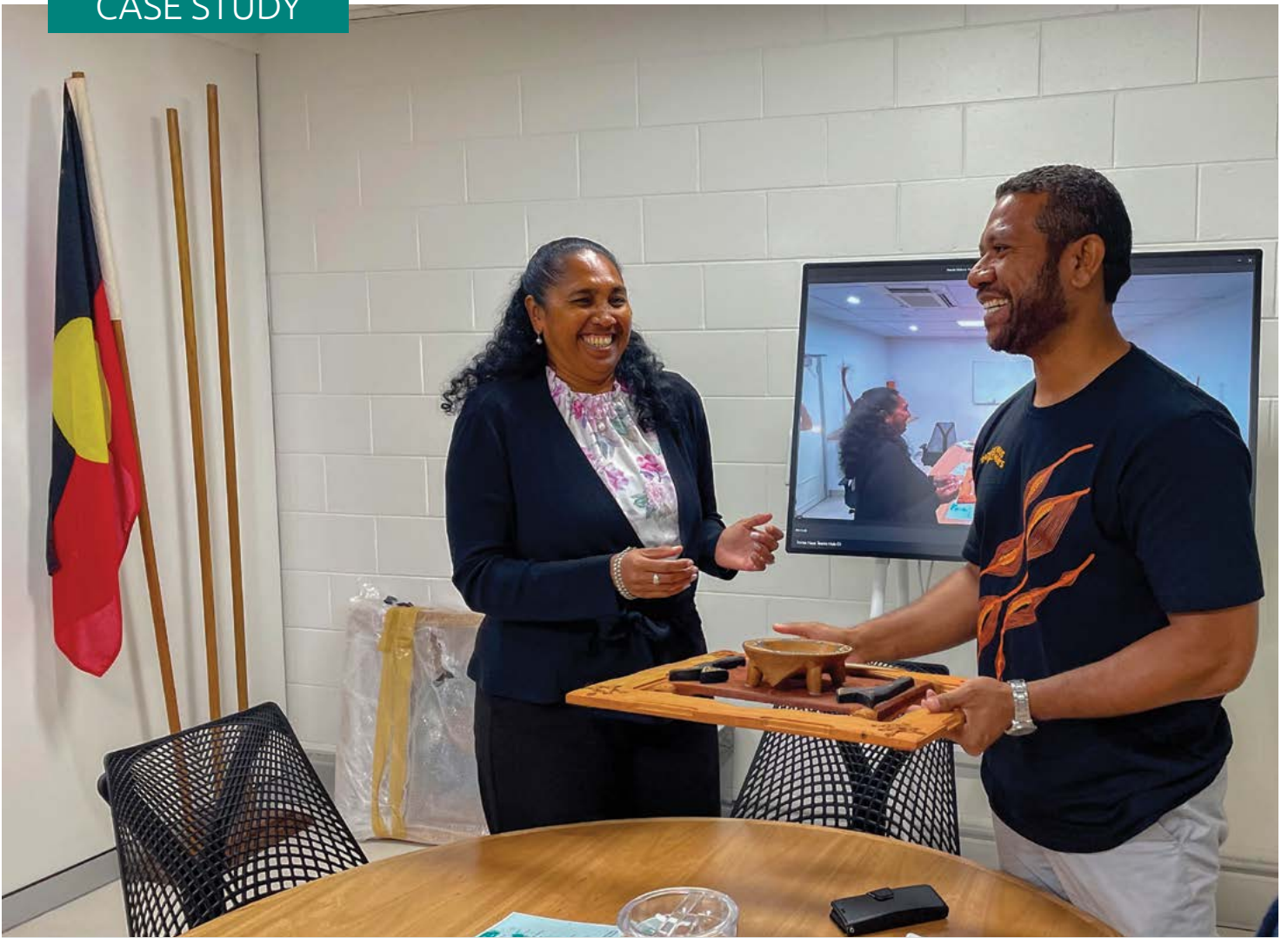
Our partners have been clear that they expect Australia to take ambitious action on climate change at home and abroad. It remains a foremost concern of our Indo-Pacific region and is the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security, and wellbeing of Pacific peoples. We will do more to help partners achieve their commitments under the Paris Agreement and accelerate global ambition to address the climate crisis.

We will harness the valuable connections, knowledge and expertise that reside in local communities. Civil society organisations bring strong relationships, networks and knowledge that can deliver development impact. We also value the important connections and work being done by diaspora, labour, youth, and faith-based groups across Australia in partnership with the region to support development outcomes.

With daunting challenges facing the world, we have much to learn from Australia’s First Nations peoples. Elevating the perspectives of First Nations Australians to the heart of our development program will take time and involve new ways of working, but better connecting our domestic and international experiences will create opportunities for mutual learning and benefit us all.

To deliver our new approach to partnership, Australia will:

- **enhance** our country and regional planning, finalising new Development Partnership Plans together with our partner countries
- **undertake** a mid-cycle review of Development Partnership Plans that captures, shares, and applies learning about our progress
- **consider** climate risk in all bilateral and regional Development Partnership Plans
- **ensure** that, from 2024–25, at least half of all new bilateral and regional investments valued at more than \$3 million will have a climate change objective, with a goal of reaching 80 per cent in 2028–29
- **align** bilateral programs with partners’ Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans
- **ensure** 80 per cent of investments address gender equality effectively, and all new investments over \$3 million include gender equality objectives
- **foster** cooperation between First Nations Australians and regional partners through the development program.



Embedding First Nations Australians' perspectives in development

Indigenous Pathways is an First Nations Australians-led initiative of the Australian Volunteers Program that aims to expand and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and connect Australian First Nations Peoples and organisations with overseas counterparts.

In Papua New Guinea, the South Fly Ranger Program has adapted the Indigenous Australian community ranger model to support remote communities. They now have a cohort of 178 community rangers, 38 per cent of whom are women.

In 2018, two community rangers from Western Province participated in the Indigenous Rangers Forum held in Australia, which brought together representatives of 72 ranger groups from across northern Australia.

Programs like Indigenous Pathways demonstrate the mutual benefits of engaging First Nations Australians in the development program. While modest, they provide a foundation on which we can build. Australia's Ambassador for First Nations People will lead the efforts to embed the perspectives and experiences of First Nations Australians into the development program and foster cooperation with regional partners.

Torres Strait Regional Authority CEO, Vonda Malone (left), meeting with Australian Volunteers Program's Deputy Director for the Pacific, Apai Rokotuni (right), during a community engagement visit to Thursday Island. Credit: Australian Volunteers Program

Programs like Indigenous Pathways demonstrate the mutual benefits of engaging First Nations Australians in the development program.

Australian institutions, culture, expertise, economy, and regional ties

We recognise that Australia’s development program cannot deliver the outcomes we seek in isolation. All elements of our national power must be deployed to respond to the needs of our region — integrating development with our diplomatic, trade, economic, defence, immigration, sporting, cultural, scientific and security efforts. Australian Government agencies have great expertise, experience, and capabilities to support sustainable development. Their networks and peer relationships with our region help us to deliver timely, effective, and tailored support that draws on Australia’s assets.

CASE STUDY



Participant from WINS initiative conducting an interview. Credit: WINS

Focusing on skills training and mentorship, WINS connects early-career and senior journalists to strengthen best practice.

Connecting through common goals

Women in News and Sport (WINS) provides Indo-Pacific female journalists with the tools to forge successful careers in the male-dominated world of sports media.

Focusing on skills training and mentorship, WINS connects early-career and senior journalists to strengthen best practice. A growing alumni program adds to this valuable network.

WINS has supported 355 participants from 11 countries to deliver ground-breaking coverage of the world’s biggest sports events, including the FIFA Women’s World Cup.

By promoting women in sport from elite to community levels, and amplifying women’s voices in sports coverage, WINS makes an important contribution to gender equality and social inclusion in our region, highlighting the crucial role of media development.

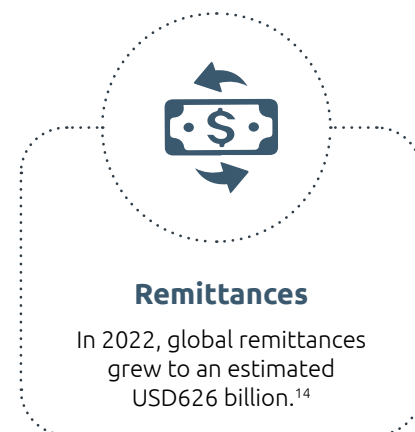
We also recognise Australia's strengths and contributions to development beyond government. We will draw on our labour market and migration pathways. We will strengthen trade and business ties with the region, including through Australian banks and superannuation funds. We will build on our existing connections through education, religious and cultural institutions, trade unions, philanthropic organisations, youth organisations, the arts, and the media. We will seek to expand our sporting connections as well as links with diaspora communities across the Indo-Pacific.

Australia's world-class science, innovation, and technical agencies, as well as our tertiary and research institutions, are a valued source of expertise and ideas in our region. We will continue to build our region's capacity, including through scholarship and training programs that support a diverse array of future leaders. Australia's electoral system, legal and economic institutions, free media, and labour movement are national assets. We value their strong networks, peer support and sharing of expertise, and will seek to strengthen existing relationships among our institutions together with our partners.

This policy will serve as a signpost to our institutions and entities operating in the region to guide engagement that supports positive development impact.

To make the most of our national strengths, Australia will:

- **maximise** the value of Australian expertise by expanding research funding and outlining a clear development research agenda
- **deepen** the partnerships between Australian institutions and the region, including through the reinvigorated Australia Awards Fellowships program
- **expand** joint training and collaborative analysis with development organisations.



This policy will serve as a signpost to our institutions and entities operating in the region to guide engagement that supports positive development impact.



Australia Awards Women Leading and Influencing 2023 program participants and Steering Committee members.
Credit: DFAT/Esh Photography

Our international scholarships have enabled more than 100,000 leaders to study in Australia or the Pacific.

Investing in leadership and influencing change

From the establishment of the Colombo Plan in 1951 to the current Australia Awards program, education has been central to Australia's partnerships with the region. Our international scholarships have enabled more than 100,000 leaders to study in Australia or the Pacific and are a foundational feature of our bilateral relationships. Australia Awards will continue to contribute to development outcomes by investing in the education of a new generation of local leaders with strong links to Australia.

Following pandemic disruptions, we are rebuilding the Australia Awards program to ensure it remains competitive to attract future leaders. We will expand the mix of short and long-term study options as well as professional placements and leadership initiatives. Alongside the New Colombo Plan, this will help deepen individual and institution connections with our region.

The Women Leading and Influencing program is a Pacific-led initiative to support Pacific Australia Award's students and alumni build skills and networks to exercise leadership in their communities. We recognise gender equality in leadership matters and the crucial importance of women having a voice and participating in decision-making.

A quality, efficient and accountable program

Effective development relies on a tailored approach that responds to different development contexts. We will strengthen the evidence base underpinning our programming and enhance our evaluation and learning. This will be key to achieving sustainable outcomes. We will ensure these insights are accessible and inform the decisions we make together with our partners.

Our assistance will continue to be delivered in unpredictable and uncertain environments, including in fragile and conflict-affected places. Making a real difference requires maintaining a long-term focus while trying new options and learning as we go. We must balance accountability with space for innovation and a greater tolerance for risk. We will work with the partners best able to deliver the outcomes we seek in each context and ensure all of them are held to high standards of performance and value for money.

We will need to engage with uncertainty and reduce transaction costs to drive efficiency. We will maintain our high standards, including our robust risk management processes to prevent fraud, as we explore new ways of working. We are committed to supporting communities where we work and operate, respecting people and preventing harm to them. We have no tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, or for harm to children. We will maintain safeguards that protect these communities and the environment.

We will deliver our accountability to Australians and our partners through improved transparency that makes it easier to access data and documentation on our programs in a timely way. We will continue to undertake annual assessments to ensure the effectiveness of our investments. We will also produce a multi-year evaluation workplan, continue to publish evaluation reports, and apply evaluation findings.

To sustain our commitment to a world-class development program, Australia will:

- **create** a new development portal that increases the accessibility and transparency of information on Australia's development programs
- **report** annually on the performance of Australia's development program, including whole-of-government development activities, through a Performance of Australian Development Cooperation Report
- **give** development expertise a higher priority across DFAT, including through creating a cadre of Senior Responsible Officers for bilateral and regional development programs to improve transparency, accountability and program coherence
- **enhance** coherence in our approach through whole-of-government representation on DFAT's governance committee overseeing the development program
- **expand** our reporting to provide a better picture of Australia's whole-of-government ODA and relevant non-ODA support.



Violent conflicts

The world is witnessing the largest number of violent conflicts since 1946, with a quarter of the global population now living in conflict-affected countries.¹⁵

We will deliver our accountability to Australians and our partners through improved transparency.



Vanuatu Skills Partnership. Credit: DFAT

A strong connection to Vanuatu leaders and community is central to the Vanuatu Skills Partnership.

Supporting local coalitions for change

The locally led Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) is building the skills Vanuatu needs to grow its economy, adapt to climate change, and drive low-carbon growth in tourism, agribusiness, handicraft, and construction sectors.

A strong connection to Vanuatu leaders and community is central to the VSP. It works within local structures and institutions and supports local coalitions to achieve positive systemic change. By mainstreaming gender equality and disability inclusion, the VSP is working to enhance prosperity for everyone.

Locally led efforts to drive change

Governments, businesses, communities, and people in the Indo-Pacific are the key actors in achieving their own development ambitions. Our partners have told us that local opportunities to engage in Australia's development program are currently limited and that the transaction costs are too high. We will seek to reduce these barriers by increasing program flexibility while maintaining robust risk-management processes and compliance with all relevant legislative requirements.

We will support local leadership, solutions, and accountability, including by channelling funding to local actors. This includes providing direct financing to partner governments, particularly in the Pacific, facing fiscal distress. Funding for local partners has a double dividend, creating local jobs and delivering direct economic benefits, as well as improving our impact. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution, and we will continue to adapt our approaches.

Australia recognises the value of civil society, and that civic space is shrinking in many parts of the world. Direct support for, and engagement with, civil society organisations will continue to be an integral part of how Australia implements its development program.

Australia also recognises that social exclusion, marginalisation, and poverty are interconnected. Marginalised people are disproportionately impacted by economic shocks, climate change and humanitarian crises. Supporting our region to ensure the benefits of prosperity and stability are extended to all, means we must tackle the unequal power systems and structures that stifle economic growth and human development.

To better support local leadership Australia will:

- **take** a more flexible and innovative approach to program planning and implementation, including design, contracting and delivery arrangements, and monitoring and evaluation approaches that increase participation from local actors
- **provide** multi-year funding and capacity development to local organisations, with support as needed to meet policy requirements
- **take** risk-informed opportunities to provide direct financing to partner governments to support them in achieving their economic and social development aspirations
- **design** a new Civil Society Partnerships Fund that will support local civil society organisations.

We will support local leadership, solutions, and accountability, including by channelling funding to local actors.



Palau solar plant. Credit: DFAT

This project is an example of the AIFFP's market-leading approach to infrastructure financing, innovation and quality.

High-quality finance to meet our partners' energy needs

Australia is partnering with Palau to reduce its dependence on imported fossil fuels in support of low-emissions, climate resilient development.

Through the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP), Australia provided financing to Solar Pacific Pristine Power to help construct Palau's first major solar and battery energy storage facility. When operational, it will generate over 20 per cent of the country's energy needs.

The project is an example of the AIFFP's market-leading approach to infrastructure financing, innovation, and quality. It exceeds global standards on social and environmental safeguards, including by ensuring supply chains are not exposed to modern slavery.

This project also demonstrates how Australian financing can leverage private sector investment to deliver critical infrastructure projects without imposing unsustainable debt burdens.

Maximising collective impact

We welcome increased international interest in the Indo-Pacific and will work with our partners in the region to harness this attention in the most effective way. Australia will cooperate with others to amplify collective efforts, reduce duplication, and support development outcomes.

We will work through regional partnerships, including the PIF, ASEAN, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) to ensure a coherent approach to regional engagement on development. The Quad will also afford opportunities to coordinate development programming, deliver public goods, and provide partner governments with choices.

Collective action is needed to address global challenges such as climate change, conflict, and pandemics. To promote and support our regions' priorities, we will continue our strong work with multilateral partners across the United Nations system and with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), thematic funds, and multilateral development banks.

We will continue to champion the voices of the Pacific in our global engagement. When we work together, we are better able to secure outcomes that advance our region's shared interests—from supporting the leadership of the Pacific on climate change in the

International Court of Justice, to addressing harmful, unsustainable fisheries subsidies through the WTO.

A lack of access to high-quality financing for development throughout the Indo-Pacific remains a major constraint to economic growth. Demands cannot be solely met by the public sector. We will continue working with partner countries to find new avenues for growth and manage debt burdens, including advocating for countries in our region to attract finance from the private sector, multilateral development banks and philanthropies. We will also do more to leverage Australian funding by developing innovative financing solutions.

To strengthen our collaboration with international actors, Australia will:

- **implement** recommendations from the Development Finance Review by expanding the scale, effectiveness, and transparency of Australia's development finance to enhance Australia's position as a relevant, reliable, and responsive partner in the Indo-Pacific
- **commit** to ongoing engagement with the SDGs and the Voluntary National Review process
- **ramp up** and reset whole-of-government coordination and proactive collaboration with developed and developing countries to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We will continue to champion the voices of the Pacific in our global engagement.

Development Finance Review

The Government commissioned DFAT to review how new forms of finance can address increasingly complex development challenges facing the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

The Review's recommendations build Australia's capability to use the full suite of development financing approaches to support our Indo-Pacific family address urgent development needs and vulnerability to climate change. It will also support greater transparency of Australia's development finance, including reporting on development impact. The Government accepts all eight recommendations of the Development Finance Review.

The Government will continue to provide sovereign finance through grants or highly concessional loans, particularly to Pacific Island countries. This will be done without exacerbating economic and fiscal fragility, including by ensuring our lending does not lead to unsustainable debt burdens.

The Government will expand its use of innovative development finance to catalyse private sector financing, particularly in Southeast Asia. This includes Australian Development Investments (ADI), which will be capitalised up to \$250 million to catalyse private impact investment into the Indo-Pacific. ADI will build on the Emerging Market Impact Investment Fund pilot program, which has demonstrated the power of crowding in private capital for development impact. This will deliver development impact and address climate challenges at a scale beyond what can be achieved through traditional development assistance.





The Australian Volunteers Program along with HELP (Health, Education, Livelihood and Participation for all) resources supported fisherwomen from Wewak, Papua New Guinea, to improve their long-term economic options. Credit: Australian Volunteers Program/ Harjono Djoyobisono

CHAPTER 4

A development program that advances our shared interests

The objective of Australia's development program is to advance a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. This depends on supporting sustainable development and lifting people out of poverty. Achieving this will require sustained action through the development program and beyond.

We will support our partners to:

- build effective, accountable states that drive their own development
- enhance state and community resilience to external pressures and shocks
- connect with Australia and regional architecture
- generate collective action on global challenges that impact us and our region.

This broad framework will guide how and where we use our resources and capabilities, together with our partners. Underpinning our efforts is the recognition that investing in people is indispensable to lasting progress.

Australia will be active and agile in helping our Indo-Pacific neighbours navigate their development needs now and into the future. Our goals must be matched with our means, which will require focus and discipline. Our long-term focus also requires agility—we will need to be responsive to new opportunities and threats. Balancing these demands will at times require difficult decisions about where and how to allocate our resources, in coordination with other partners.

Underpinning our efforts is the recognition that investing in people is indispensable to lasting progress.

CASE STUDY

Investing in future generations

Australia and Laos are working together to ensure every child receives a quality education, and create a lasting legacy for future generations.

The Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos program (BEQUAL) is giving more children, especially those experiencing disadvantage, the skills they need to thrive. This locally led initiative has supported the development of a new primary curriculum, accompanying teaching and learning materials, and the training of teachers nationwide. It is now focusing on improving professional development. This significant partnership is laying the foundations of an inclusive, high-quality education system in Laos.



Global learning crisis

COVID-19 has deepened the global learning crisis, with 24 million students who may never return to school.¹⁷



Inequality

The pandemic caused the first rise in income inequality between countries in a generation.¹⁸

Rather than seeking to replicate Australian models, our approach will be specific to the needs and circumstances of each country.



Child labour

1 in 10 children are subjected to child labour worldwide.¹⁹

Effective and accountable states

Australia will work with partners to improve essential services that are foundational for tackling poverty and inequality, expanding economic mobility, and driving sustainable growth. We will support efforts to strengthen social protection systems and break down barriers that unfairly exclude people.

Australia's international development program works in partnership to support reform, service delivery, and system strengthening—it is not a substitute for a partner country's own resources and efforts.

Structural reforms can improve economic performance and prevent serious downturns and crises. We will share our expertise and own experience with partners as they design and implement their own reforms, including to diversify and open economies, create decent jobs, and improve business-enabling environments. With pressure on many public budgets, we will increase our blended finance capability to catalyse private sector investment.

Rather than seeking to replicate Australian models, our approach will be specific to the needs and circumstances of each country. Where local strategies are already working, we will look to strengthen their efficacy. Australia will respect and promote civic space, recognising the distinct nature and value of civil society in each country.

Effective states and their citizens benefit from transparent, accessible, and responsive governance. We will work with partners to strengthen their public institutions, including as they mediate and manage disruptive influences. As we learn and adapt together, Australia will offer support for positive technological change and an open, free, and secure internet.

Where corruption and money laundering occur they are impediments to sustainable development. We will support compliance with relevant international standards. Recognising security and development are indivisible, we will help partners combat threats to community safety, stability, and security, from terrorism and violent extremism, human and drug trafficking, and other types of transnational crime. We will continue efforts to end forced labour and other forms of modern slavery.



The Australia-Indonesia Partnership towards an Inclusive Society (INKLUSI). Credit: INKLUSI

Strengthening vibrant civil society networks in our region

The Australia-Indonesia Partnership Towards an Inclusive Society (INKLUSI) increases the contribution of civil society, in partnership with government, to gender equality, and disability and social inclusion. INKLUSI supports civil society organisations to mobilise around issues that align with their mandates, constituencies, and values while also strengthening the enabling environment for this engagement.

For example, INKLUSI civil society partners have worked with government to strengthen access to health, education, and other social services, and helped women and marginalised groups participate in government policy and planning processes. INKLUSI also supports platforms and networks to bring together civil society organisations with similar goals, and uses funding models that facilitate equal partnerships, promote long-term sustainability, and allow for locally led solutions.

INKLUSI supports civil society organisations to mobilise around issues that align with their mandates, constituencies, and values.

State and community resilience

Impacts from climate change and associated disasters are growing more severe and are outpacing our collective ability to manage risk. In response, we will prioritise prevention and risk reduction across Australia’s development investments and humanitarian assistance. Our multilateral partnerships will advance this goal and we will support and amplify Pacific voices to shape international negotiations and action. Finding local solutions will be critical to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and to implement measures to avert, minimise, and respond to loss and damage.

Wellbeing is often linked to the state of the natural environment and the opportunities it offers. Complementing our work on climate change, we will expand support for environmental protection and biodiversity conservation, including to combat plastic and other pollution. We are committed to supporting our partners to protect biodiversity and achieve a nature-positive world.



Species extinction

The current rate of global species extinction is 10–100 times higher than the average over the past 10 million years, and the rate is accelerating.²⁰

We will ensure infrastructure programs prioritise local employment and procurement as another way of driving local development outcomes.

Infrastructure is the backbone of every economy and society. Australia will work with its partners to deliver development projects that can cope with, and adapt to risks, including from climate change, disasters, and cyber intrusions. We will share our experience and expertise in infrastructure policy, planning, preparation, procurement, and financing. We will ensure infrastructure programs prioritise local employment and procurement as another way of driving local development outcomes. We will support partner governments to establish the systems and resources they need to maintain new infrastructure. We will also work to expand partners' financing choices, including from the private sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of many health systems. Australia can share our knowledge, experience, networks, capability, and learning. In our global engagement, we will play our part to strengthen global health architecture, so our region is better prepared for future shocks. We will support efforts to prevent and manage the spread of disease, including for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, and for non-communicable diseases and mental illness. We will also help expand universal health coverage, support for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

CASE STUDY



Australian High Commissioner, HE Emily Luck, visiting the SFHA team in Savai'i. Credit: DFAT



Infrastructure

The infrastructure investment gap is estimated to reach USD15 trillion by 2040.²¹

Expanding access to essential health services

Barriers remain to Samoan women and girls accessing information about their sexual health and reproductive rights.

In response, Australia has partnered with the Samoa Family Health Association (SFHA) to run mobile clinics that bring essential sexual health and reproductive health services to rural villages. These mobile clinics help overcome transportation and cost barriers, as well as the stigma associated with seeking medical care.

Providing comprehensive medical services and education on sexual health and reproductive rights empowers women and girls to take control of their own health and make informed decisions about their bodies and futures.



Connections with Australia and regional architecture

Strong regional architecture supports a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous region—where all voices are heard, countries cooperate and trade, and disputes are managed and resolved in accordance with international law and norms.

We stand strong with, and continue to respect and support, Pacific led regionalism and unity. As a member of the PIF, we value its role in directing our collective strengths to shared challenges. We are also committed to the centrality of ASEAN, which has brought increased order, security, and prosperity to our region. We are focused on realising the shared benefits of our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with ASEAN.

Australians engage with our region in a range of ways, and we will invest further in this connectivity through our international scholarship, volunteers, education, and labour mobility programs. In doing so, we will create more opportunities for the region's future leaders and better harness the expertise of alumni from our programs.

Facilitating greater linkages between education systems will help achieve better outcomes and new pathways. This will complement our support for education, which is fundamental to expanding opportunity for everyone and to forging the next generation of leaders. We will invest in partner-led initiatives that improve schooling, vocational training, and employment services.

All countries rely on the sustainable, secure, and lawful use of our oceans and seas. Through strong whole-of-government partnerships with our region, we will increase the resilience of ocean ecosystems and continue to support the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Francisca, a leader of her local Water User Group in Timor-Leste attending to crops after a water system was installed in her village. Credit: WaterAid/Tariq Hawari

We respect and support Pacific led regionalism and unity, and the centrality of ASEAN.



Illegal fishing

Around one-third of the world's annual fish catch is from illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing.²²



Jowave (left) and Marcellus, both commis chefs, are friends and colleagues at Ayers Rock Resort. Credit: Pacific Labour Facility

We work with all participating countries to maximise benefits and ensure labour mobility delivers economic dividends for the region.

Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM)

PALM fosters links between people, businesses, and communities, creating deeper connections and understanding between Australia and the Pacific. PALM workers make an important contribution to the Australian economy, including addressing longstanding workforce issues across key sectors in the Australian economy. PALM enhances the cultural vibrancy of regional and rural communities across Australia.

Remittances from offshore workers also make up a significant share of gross domestic product for many Pacific countries and Timor-Leste. In a region where more than one-third of people live on less than \$1,000 per year, long-term PALM workers send home an average of \$15,000 per person per year.

We work with all participating countries to maximise benefits and ensure labour mobility delivers economic dividends for the region. We will deepen our focus on skills development so that PALM delivers a 'brain gain'—ensuring that after workers return home, they bring not only remittances but also new capabilities they can use to support the development of their communities and nations.

PALM illustrates how strong policy coherence across different tools of statecraft can deliver benefits for both Australia and our region. The Australian Government works with private sector partners under the scheme to provide access to job opportunities and ensure PALM workers have a positive experience while living and working in Australia.

Collective action on global challenges

Global public goods give form to our shared values and benefit all nations, including Australia. We must all play our part if we are to achieve our vision for a better world — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Increasing global support to address the needs of our region, including the unique vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States, is central to our agenda.

Australia partners with multilateral agencies to provide development and humanitarian assistance at scale in our region and beyond, including to tackle crises in countries where we are not present. Working in partnership with these agencies also provides a valuable platform to give voice to priorities and concerns of our region and progress international norms, standards, and agreement on critical issues such as human rights, human trafficking, and modern slavery.

International financial institutions are vital for global financial stability, open rules-based trade, and sustainable development. We will work with them to address our partners' needs, particularly around climate change, infrastructure, and debt sustainability. We will support reforms that ensure these institutions can meet contemporary challenges, including demand for innovative forms of finance and delivery of high quality, climate-resilient infrastructure that maximises local opportunities.

We will continue to shape the creation of norms to optimise technological interoperability and interconnectivity to help bridge the digital divide and ensure we can all benefit from the continued growth of the digital economy.

Trade and investment can create more and better jobs, lower prices and stimulate economic growth. We will support partners to benefit from global rules-based trade — as they integrate into the multilateral trading system through the WTO, implement their free trade agreement commitments, strengthen their economies through APEC and IPEF, and increase their participation in the green and digital economies.

We will build partnerships to support regional economic resilience, including through supply chains, debt sustainability and sustainable foreign investment. Our support will be transparent and demand driven, designed to improve business environments and regional economic integration.



World hunger

About 1 in 10 people worldwide are suffering from hunger.²³

Global public goods give form to our shared values and benefit all nations, including Australia.

In the aftermath of cyclones Judy and Kevin (March 2023), Vanuatu Mobile Forces unload Australian aid for affected communities. Credit: Australian Government/Department of Defence



Addressing humanitarian needs

Every year, humanitarian action saves millions of lives. However, the gap between acute need and global response capacity is widening.

To build resilience, Australia will support partner governments and communities in our region lead their own national adaptation and to disaster risk reduction efforts. In doing so, we will increase investment in disaster and climate risk-informed development, all-hazards early warning systems, anticipatory action, and shock-responsive social protection systems.

In the Indo-Pacific, we will continue to support each other before, during and after times of disaster. We will deliver timely and effective humanitarian assistance. Core to our approach will be a focus on gender equality, social inclusion and locally led action, ensuring diverse participation and leadership. Our assistance will prioritise those most impacted by disasters and be environmentally sustainable, transparent, and accountable to affected populations.

We will strengthen our mechanisms to coordinate assistance, such as with Quad and France, Australia, New Zealand (FRANZ) partners. We will also share Australia's experience and expertise in the Pacific to improve regional disaster preparedness and response capabilities.

Australia will work globally too—meeting humanitarian needs where they are most acute. Our investments will strengthen the multilateral humanitarian system to take collective action, ensuring our support is coordinated and guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence, and neutrality, and by International Humanitarian Law. We recognise and respect the ability of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements, and civil society partners to 'stay and deliver' in areas affected by conflict, enabling humanitarian assistance to reach people in vulnerable situations.

In responding to protracted crises, Australia will provide long-term support to build resilience and focus resources on humanitarian need, including assisting governments and communities hosting displaced populations. Humanitarian assistance alone cannot prevent or resolve protracted crises—we will focus on root causes and build durable solutions through aligning humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, diplomatic and security efforts.

A humanitarian strategy will be developed to ensure we have an adaptable, responsive, and effective framework for delivering results for affected populations to help reduce humanitarian need and build resilience. This will complement our efforts across all of Australia's development investments to reduce disaster and climate risk.



One in every 23 people now needs humanitarian assistance

In 2023, a record 339 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection – a significant increase from 274 million people at the beginning of 2022.²⁴

We will focus on root causes and build durable solutions through aligning humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, diplomatic and security efforts.



Empowering girls and young women through education in Nepal.
Credit: Caritas Australia/Richard Wainwright

CHAPTER 5

A development program that makes a real difference

Australia will deliver a high-quality, effective development program that responds to partner needs by fostering a strong, performance-based culture that generates robust data on performance, drives improvement in the quality and effectiveness of investments, and promotes accountability. Our performance culture will be underpinned by effective senior leadership and governance, and strengthened monitoring, evaluation, and learning approaches that use evidence to learn and adapt.

A new performance and delivery framework will underpin the policy. It will drive reform and improve how we plan, design and deliver our programs; communicate our results; provide timely and transparent information on investments and performance; and deliver accountability to the Australian Parliament and public.

The framework will have four main elements:

- a reinvigorated approach to country and regional Development Partnership Plans that involves deep consultation with partners and sets out shared objectives, expected outcomes, and approaches to evaluation and learning
- a three-tier set of performance indicators for the whole of the development program that are aligned with the SDGs, and track our regional context, what we achieve and how we work
- Strategic Partnership Frameworks with multilateral organisations
- investment-level monitoring and evaluation systems.

Each element is designed to reinforce implementation of the policy.

Performance and Delivery Framework

Level	Policy settings	Performance assessment	Reporting
Whole of Development Program	International Development Policy	Three tier indicator framework	DFAT Annual Report
Country and Regional Programs	Development Partnership Plans	Annual reporting Mid-cycle strategic review	Annual bilateral Development Partnership talks Annual Performance of Australian Development Cooperation Report
Multilateral Programs	Strategic Partnership Frameworks	Periodic multilateral performance assessment	Online data portal
Investments	Aid Programming Guide	Investment reports Independent evaluations Impact assessments	

We will identify where Australia can add value to a country's national development priorities and how we work with other development actors.

Translating policy into action

The first two elements of the new performance and delivery framework will be critical for putting the policy into practice.

Reinvigorated country and regional plans

First, country and regional plans will translate into action the development priorities we share with our partners. These new Development Partnership Plans will be prepared with our partner countries, in consultation with broader stakeholders, to set our agreed Australian Government activities to be delivered through bilateral and regional programs.

Development Partnership Plans will identify where Australia can add value to a country's national development priorities and how we work with other development actors. The duration of each plan will vary, informed by the timeframes of partner governments and regional planning frameworks. Development Partnership Plans will consider climate risk and align bilateral programs with partners' Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans.

We will undertake and publish mid-cycle reviews of implementation of the Plans. This will lead to updates and improvements to the Plans in consultation with partner governments. We will also hold regular in-country dialogues with stakeholders to share information, learning for delivery and progress.

Updated performance indicators

Secondly, the indicator framework will reinforce implementation of the priorities of the policy. It will include indicators to track results directly attributable to Australian development efforts, organised against the four focus areas of the development policy. The policy charts shifts in how the Government will deliver the development program. The indicator framework will prescribe targets reinforcing the required shifts in our approach.

Key policy commitments will directly re-shape the investments that make up Australia's development program. All new investments over \$3 million must now include a gender equality objective. From 2024–25, at least half of all new bilateral and regional investments that are valued at more than \$3 million will have a climate change objective. Together, these commitments will drive meaningful change in the development program over time.

Strategic partnerships for global programs

Our global programs and our work with multilateral organisations will be regularly assessed to ensure partnerships are performing effectively and delivering results. Strategic Partnership Frameworks will drive outcomes expected from our partnerships with multilateral organisations. Global programs such as the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, Australian Volunteers Program, and Australia Awards will report against specific implementation frameworks and engage closely with partners on performance.



Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

Effective monitoring, evaluation, and learning are critical to achieving results and ensuring our programs continue to innovate, improve, and reflect best practice.

We will continue to undertake robust annual assessments of the effectiveness and efficiency of individual investments. These are an essential tool for promoting continuous improvement and ensuring we are adapting our approaches to achieve effective outcomes. We will also continue to collect disaggregated data, including by gender, disability inclusion, and other relevant aspects of social inclusion, as a critical part of our approach. Independent evaluations are completed on investments and programs to generate evidence and learning to improve implementation and inform future designs.

To strengthen our approach to evaluation and learning, we will:

- **introduce** multi-year evaluation planning and increase the number of sector and thematic evaluations
- **pilot** new approaches to monitoring and evaluation including real-time reviews to better inform project implementation and post-completion impact assessments for major investments
- **increase** internal and external communication of evaluation findings, including analysis and examples of investments that have achieved outcomes and those that have underperformed.

A student with disability from Sumba Timur Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia is learning from home accompanied by her mother. Credit: INOVASI Program

We will continue to undertake robust annual assessments of the effectiveness and efficiency of individual investments.



BEQUAL is Australia's long-running flagship education program in Laos. Credit: DFAT

We will increase our accountability to Australians and our partners through improved transparency that makes it easier to access data and documentation in a timely way.

Enhanced accountability and transparency

DFAT will enhance senior managers' accountability for delivering an effective development program. We will appoint Senior Responsible Officers for bilateral and regional development programs. We will seek feedback on implementation of the performance and delivery framework and our performance culture through a biennial perceptions survey of partner country governments, civil society organisations and sector experts. We will use this survey to test how the rollout of the performance and delivery framework is perceived by partners, and to ensure that we continue to strengthen our reputation as an effective and valued development partner.

We will increase our accountability to Australians and our partners through improved transparency that makes it easier to access data and documentation in a timely way.

A Performance of Australian Development Cooperation Report will be published annually. This report will focus on assessing the implementation of the policy. It will also present key performance information for country, regional, and multilateral programs and for selected sectoral and thematic areas.

We will improve the timeliness and comprehensiveness of the information published on DFAT's website through developing an online data portal for key data and documentation on program expenditure and investments.

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